

## CHAPTER FOUR

### TOTOSO TAQALO

### TIME OF LIGHT/CLEANLINESS

Most of the missionaries deplored the concept of despotism in its European context, many of them had even preached liberty, "England's boast", to the Tahitians in the years of pagan domination, but they quickly realized that under a benevolent despotism, guided by their principles and indoctrination, both civil order and their own influence would best be preserved.

Gunson, 1964-65: 300

I never heard the assertion that Christianity was a white man's religion . . . In Polynesia . . . [a]fter the people accepted Christianity, they incorporated it as an integral part of their cultures. The church—Roman Catholic or Protestant—became their church, and the identification with it was complete.

Latukefu, 1990: 90

If Tinoni Simbo interpreted defeat in terms of superiority and inferiority, they were still far from aspiring to European secular or sacred practices. As both Rivers' quotation about working for white men and Luxton's admission of lack of enthusiasm about missionaries shows, until about 1910 no such "conversion" occurred. There are a number of references in Hocart's papers to the Simbo substitution of European material objects for local (e.g. n.d.h.: 1-2,4; n.d.i.: 5), to the decay of the chieftainship (n.d.a.: 20), and even to the formal abandonment of ritual accoutrements (1931: 310), but there is no mention of novel religious practices. By 1930, however, virtually the entire population was avowedly Christian. So comprehensive was the change that in 1932, when a local man established the SDA on Simbo, the opposition came from loyal Methodists, outraged at the challenge to Methodist Mission sovereignty. What induced or compelled Tinoni Simbo to abandon ancestor veneration and all that it entailed? Even allowing for pacification having expunged the ancestors' credibility, why did they accept Christianity? I would see the answer to this in their acceptance of missionary adjudications about them at a time when the ancestors had not only been made to appear ineffectual, but even those aspects of ancestor veneration not directly related to headhunting carried a load of associations which were "simply too much to bear" (R. Rosaldo, 1984: 181, apropos Ilongot conversions following pacification). How, for example, were people to "respect" *banāra* who had been humiliated by Europeans? What was the worth of

making offerings to ancestors who had abandoned them? The loss of certitude must have been overwhelming.

and making offerings, offering to the ancestors.

### ***Qoqono Misioneri*—Missionary Discourse**

Throughout both of my fieldtrips I pondered the extent of, and motivations for, the transformations wrought over the previous ninety years. Every inquiry I made about reformulated practices received the same response: “the missionaries told us”.

PRU What prompted reduced breastfeeding periods? “The missionaries told us it made mothers weak”.

PRU “Why did you cease making puddings on ancestral shrines?” “The missionaries told us to.”

PRU “But why did you obey them?” “Because they told us to.”

PRU What happened to the communal houses? “The missionaries told us not to build any more.”

I was determined that there was more to it and asked about the famed missionary propensity to dish out corporal punishment:

PRU No, they didn't punish us. Why would a missionary hit anyone? Listen, Christina, they told us so we did it. We “heard them”.<sup>1</sup>

and again,

PRU When they went away [after a high death rate from malaria] we did the old things again . . . but then they came back and told us to stop, so we stopped.

Finally I concluded that some explanations do not require elaboration: “[e]ither you understand it or you don't. And, in fact, for the longest time I simply did not” (R. Rosaldo, 1984: 178, *passim*). If Tinoni Simbo said they altered their practices in accordance with missionary injunctions, perhaps it is because they did indeed do so. Barker argues against such straightforward interpretations. He was also faced with Maisin claims about changing cultural practices in response to missionary injunctions. He notes, rather ingenuously, that “[i]t was only after months of research . . . that I realized that the people themselves had made most cultural modifications” in response to their incorporation into the national economic system (1992: 156). Once again this denies that missionary enterprises were part of colonial or capitalist encompassment and ignores the possibility that “the people themselves” made their changes in response to missionary injunctions and/or political or social imperatives. In the stratified social relationships entailed in missionary presence, missionaries need not have been coercive—they were not on Simbo—but they were endowed with authority. Even on Santa Isabel, where they were actively solicited, they engaged in powerful symbolic struggles with traditional practices.

PRU This is not to say that Tinoni Simbo absorbed missionary logics and practices unadulterated—they certainly did not stop believing in spirits, supernatural forces and

sanctions, sibling relationships, and so on. The ravenous spirits of the bush are as real as ever, *tabuna* still emit strong and, (now that the ancestors have been abandoned) malicious forces and magic remains efficacious. The vital proviso to all these continuities is that they have been confronted and attenuated by Christianity. A common phrase, in talking about spirits, is that “they are weak now because *lotu* is strong”. Good Christians, for example, can supposedly go close to ancestral *tabuna*, with immunity to the dangerous powers of neglected ancestors. It is not that people see indigenous beliefs as invalid—even if some ancestral practices, such as divorcing frequently are regarded as “crazy”—rather Christianity, like the Europeans who brought it to the Solomons, is superior. Just as European force disabled local warfare, so Christianity has debilitated the ancestors and the spirits, a characteristic of conversion since Christianity’s formative days (K. Thomas, 1985: 27-28; see also Monberg, 1962: 148-150).

864: I cannot know the missionaries’ words and statements, but, given contemporary Simbo descriptions of the Christian era as the “Time of Light”, it is probable that they used typical missionary tropes of the time—of leading the way out of darkness into the light, of saving benighted souls from darkness and savagery—and conveyed messages about the need for tying cultural reform to religious change. In the process, Tinoni Simbo developed their own models of inferiority to the Christians so clearly connected to the administration (Boseto, 1981: iii). The claims of their inferiority accorded with their own interpretations of pacification—had not the very fact of their subjugation established that? New Georgians are very conscious of the darkness of their skin and when their purported inferiority was explicitly linked, as I suspect it was, to skin colour, Tinoni Simbo could also accept the self-evident equation black : white :: pagan : Christian :: inferior: superior (cf. Hogbin, 1969: 184-190). On Roviana, the cosmopolitan character engendered by headhunting was reinforced by the location there of the Methodist Mission station (Harwood, 1971: 8). Conversely, its non-location on Simbo had the effect of further marginalizing that island. The fact, further, that Simbo had Islander missionaries, when their erstwhile allies Roviana and Vella Lavella had Europeans, can only have reinforced both missionary messages and local perceptions of the significance of defeat. The equations between colour, belief systems and value may well have imbued missionary pronouncements with authority. However, the adoption of Christian practices did not result in ideas of the intrinsic value of reformed ways or of equality with Europeans. It is often asserted that Christian missionary teachings were predicated on the value of human equality (e.g. Burrridge, 1978: 23,25; Whiteman, 1983: 380-382; see also Smith 1990: 151). This is an interpretation of doctrine conspicuously at odds with missionary

attitudes and behaviour in New Georgia, as Latukefu (1978) and N. Thomas (1992a) cogently demonstrate. Christian ways may now be seen as vastly superior to pagan ways, a view obvious in scathing remarks about the “naked” pagan Kwaio of Malaita, but Tinoni Simbo saw—and still see—themselves as inferior to their conquerors.

Missionaries have made much of bringing the “light” into the “darkness” of Melanesia. On Simbo, “time of light” is translated as *totoso taqalo*; “time of darkness” is *totoso rodomo*. However, while the equation between *rodomo* and “darkness” is straightforward, *taqalo* is more complex. The missionary sense of light as illumination would have been more accurately translated by *zuke* (“torch”, “lamp”). *Taqalo* means “light” but it also means “clean” or “cleanliness”. These apparently disparate concepts are linked by the idea of “brightness” or “shine”: the sunshine—“light”—is “bright”; washed and oiled skin glows or “shines” and is thus visibly “clean”; aluminium saucepans are only “clean” when they are shining “bright” or “light”. The “time of light” then, is necessarily a “time of cleanliness”, a linguistic connection made more germane by missionaries’ condemnation of indigenous ways as “dirty” (*paze*) and their insistent intervention in local hygiene practices. On Simbo, as elsewhere in New Georgia they were instrumental in introducing, among other reforms, floored housing, penning of domestic animals and the adoption of chaste clothing. Cleanliness, an extremely important value, has thus come to be linked to Christianity.

The Methodist Mission, according to Harwood (1971: 221, *passim*), was, never overly concerned with doctrinal issues, focusing, rather, on behavioural reforms—obedience, discipline, humility and marital reform. Whereas pre-pacification practices associated with the supernatural were strongly discouraged, there was never any attempt to discredit ancestors and spirits; the mission, she argues, was content to rest on their reputation of relative strength *vis-a-vis* local supernatural forces. The disregarding of doctrinal issues may, in fact, have made Christian conversion an easier process once initial steps to join the mission were taken, for points of contradiction were never central. Of course, Simbo was not an isolated, static society. The adoption of foreign metaphysics was always part of its history, (see also Hocart’s (n.d.n.) speculation as to the importation of the Mateana cult).<sup>2</sup> Hocart notes that whale’s teeth were regarded as

fact money “belong Tamasa”, [but] it is hardly credible that these teeth became ascribed to Tamasa within a period of seventy years or less since whalers began to call in Mandegusu (n.d.h.: 4).

He ponders the means by which they could have been known before the whalers arrived. As the depth of subsequent Christian conversion indicates, however, seventy years was more than ample time to absorb a new cosmological artifact.

constructed tips, the whalers’ teeth were regarded as a valuable commodity.

The question about conversion is not how changes could have occurred, but of how those changes incorporated such radical transformations of outlook and belief. As both Carrier and Carrier (1991) and Comaroff and Comaroff (1991: 16-19) argue, the relationship between process and structure is reciprocal and can facilitate *fundamental* historical changes. I have already noted Nihill's and R. Rosaldo's arguments that ritual and symbolic elaboration are not necessarily related to cultural significance, with the implication that apparent transformations can mask structural continuities. *Contra* both assertions of continuity under a veneer of transformation and alternative observations that apparent continuity can mask change (Carrier, 1992a: 124; Rodman, 1984: 61, 66-67), on Simbo the appearance of change largely fits the reality, although those deep, "real" changes are tied to undeniable continuities. It is important, first of all, to note that Christian and indigenous religious practices were not entirely incompatible. In order to be successful, new ideologies "must appeal to and activate pre-existing cultural understandings, which are themselves compelling. . . . [I]deologues . . . do not create these cultural models *de novo*, nor are they able to guarantee the power of any cultural models to grip us" (Quinn & Holland, 1987:13; cf. Whiteman, 1983: 118). Where there are close or approximate parallels between indigenous and Christian models, then, movement from one to the other is a reasonably comfortable cognitive transition. On Santa Isabel, an important component of successful missionary interventions was the congruence of the Anglican ritual and religious framework with indigenous concepts of *mana* and the supernatural (White, 1991: 103-114). On Simbo, too, there were affinities—between the benevolence of ancestors and that of Tamasa, between Satan and the afflictions of bush *tomate* or between the mundane and metaphysical powers of *banara* and *iama* and those of government and missionary for example. The Christian ideal of "love" is also highly compatible with the empathy and nurture implied in indigenous notions of love. There are, of course, significant differences but, as Barker (1990a) demonstrates, it is the *appearance* of compatibility that is vital.

### ***Bei Kinorapa—Transforming Continuities***

Some Christian concepts, then, were culturally palatable to Tinoni Simbo, a fact which facilitated both the behavioural changes demanded by missionaries and the continuity of key cultural themes concerning the nature of sociality and the metaphysical. Bush *tomate* may have been verbally transformed into "devils", but local models have determined the kind of mutant devils that emerged. Indigenous logics have remained unchallenged. Christianity is constructed upon the defeat of local forces, both religious and secular, but the metaphysical

underpinnings of belief are locally derived, and Christianity is superior simply because of its greater potency. This differs from the kind of pluralism (discussed by Barker 1990b: 18-20), which consists of simultaneous practices derived from competing or incongruent worldviews. Exemplified by PNG, such pluralism sees exotic and indigenous religious forms co-exist with or without tensions between sets of belief or practices. On Misima Island, for example, two mutually exclusive belief systems—Christianity and an indigenous cult—coexist, sharing adherents who are convinced of the validity of both (Macintyre, 1990). The Simbo situation is better described in terms of an incorporative *bricolage* than a pluralistic separation. This is perhaps best demonstrated by a local minister's cooptation of the property taboos (*kezo*) mentioned in the previous chapter and in responses by strong Christians to an apparently dangerous encounter with indigenous supernatural entities.

#### i. *Meke*

On my first excursion out of my village I was taken to Ove, the now uninhabited heartland of reputedly authentic traditional practices, for an Easter picnic with most of the small SDA congregation.<sup>3</sup> While there I noticed a piece of planking about 18" x 6" bearing the words "Meke Minister" and a number in blue paint. I (correctly) interpreted it as a property marker of some kind and thought no more of it. Far more interesting was an upright stick with a cleft at the top, into which was inserted a number of folded leaves, sitting at the edge of a megapode house:<sup>4</sup> "Oh that's just a *kezo*, a devil thing from the time before. Some people believe they are still potent", I was told, with what was to become a constant refrain—"But these things are weak now because *lotu* is strong."

Over the succeeding weeks I saw large numbers of the blue painted signs throughout the island, always with the same words but different numbers. Finally, I decided that Meke Minister was a very wealthy person and asked why I never met them. No, it was not a person at all. These signs were the minister's injunction against people stealing and, having the power of *lotu*, they would bring down retribution against anyone who violated the ban. *Meke* is a Roviana word (Simbo: *muke*) meaning "do not". It is used because, said the minister, it means "*meke hiko*" (Roviana: "do not steal"), the Eighth Commandment. There is more than an abbreviation here: the use of the Methodist Mission *lingua franca* and the insistence that the word was necessary to constitute the *kezo* both suggest that biblical power is somehow distilled in it, in the same way that ancestral *tomate* inhered in pre-Christian *kezo*. The minister's appended title implied that he alone authorized the *kezo*, in a manner analogous to Jehovah's authorization of the Ten Commandments, on which it was modelled. (The board,

blue paint and numbers were simply practical and administrative materials to which no arcane knowledge applied.) People who sought *Meke Minister* signs paid the minister a small sum of money which covered the manufacture, blessing with holy water and erection by people from each village, who were authorized to do so. While it was in force nobody could use the protected property without dire supernatural consequences. Its eventual removal was achieved in like manner, in exchange either for another fee or a set quantity of the protected produce. Eventually I learned that they shared the same generic name (*kezo*) as those few split sticks I had seen and had, indeed, superseded them. Like the indigenous *kezo* described in the previous chapter, these depended on access to supernatural power to protect property from "theft" by others. Further, only confession to the *kezo* owner, who held the cure, could avert or undo the consequences of violation. The (Meke Minister) *kezo* (henceforth, *meke*) were rapidly displacing the old *kezo* although the minister had been on the island only a few weeks.

*Meke* successfully synthesized indigenous, Methodist and extraneous elements. The old understanding that supernatural forces could be controlled by strong individuals emerged in the minister's power in potentially unleashing the destructive supernatural forces associated with Tamasa. Not just here, but in many realms, *banara* have been eclipsed by ministers, *maramar* and, to a lesser extent, pastors. The token cleft stick and leaves blessed by ancestral invocations was clearly displaced by the painted board blessed by the minister and sprinkled with invigorating holy water. When Keana (the minister), whose father had been a pagan *banara* on a nearby island, was forced to leave, indigenous *kezo* again appeared, but everyone groaned that they had no strength. As one man lamented, all a thief had to do was to pray to Tamasa and the *kezo* would be inactivated. Carrier cautions that apparent cultural continuities in the wake of interaction with foreign forces may actually be novel practices which appear "authentic" because they are exotic to outside observers. The fact is, however, that "the 'same' institution can appear in two very different ways at different times" without taking on a European form (1992a: 122; see also Rapp, 1987). In similar vein, I would argue against interpreting syncretic practices as novel recombinations of old and new elements which simply substitute for earlier practices. Apart from contemporary judgements about their relative potency, there were also significant cultural differences between Christian *meke* and ancestral *kezo*.<sup>5</sup> The incorporation of holy water suggests the first of these departures. *Meke*, never adopted by the majority of ministers, was devised by the local minister, and another from Roviana, when he was stationed on Guadalcanal, which has a significant Roman Catholic population. It was a deliberate adaptation, not of New Georgian *kezo*, but of a Catholic property taboo. While the sprinkling of holy water is redolent of the spitting of

turmeric, ginger or betelnut juice which accompanied pagan *kezo* (described at length in Hocart, n.d.g.), it was an attempt to replicate the power of a Roman Catholic priest, who sanctified his property taboos with holy water. The minister had been given a bottle of holy water, which he claimed to be potent because the priests' power derived from Rome. This holy water was considered essential. When a number of SDAs, dissuaded from using the minister's *meke* by their more fundamentalist pastor, began erecting their own unblessed duplicates, those people who were aware of which were SDA signs, were adamant that they had no potency because they had no holy water to make them strong. Similarly, UCs argued that although Keana's predecessor had painted *meke* signs, they were worthless because they had no holy water. The minister, also described it as indispensable and gave convoluted accounts of how his near-empty bottle, left outside, was miraculously refilled during an electric storm, centred entirely over his house one midnight.

In thus clearly positioning himself close to Tamasa, he approximated the *banara* and powerful persons of a previous time, who had implicated themselves to ancestral forces. But the minister does not simply substitute for the *banara*, who have been so progressively disabled. In particular, supernatural power has become more centralized and more potent. This began with the substitution for pagan festivities of Christian festivals, such as Easter, which were focused on mission stations and involved all converts, irrespective of lineage identity. A linked substitution of a centrally located church for dispersed traditional leaders developed (Tuza, 1977: 112). Ancestral *kezo* were personalized, both in belonging to particular individuals, who either purchased or inherited them, and in appealing to particular ancestral spirits (Hocart, n.d.g. provides instances of this). Anyone with the wealth and strength to control *tomate* could erect their own *kezo* to protect their property or be paid by others to do so. On Simbo, however, only the minister controlled *meke*, both because of his monopolization of holy water and because of his claims to channel the word of Tamasa directly into *meke*. (Likewise, first Goldie and, recently, the former Bishop Boseto, were ascribed far greater powers than the greatest of *banara*, Ingava of Roviana, was ever held to possess.) Thus in the Roviana Area, Hocart (n.d.g.) records that the power of the *meke* was also held that *meke* was more potent than ancestral *kezo* ever was, because of its inherently greater potency. A popular tale told of some Guadalcanal youths who, disbelieving *meke*, burned a sign: by nightfall all were dead. This contrasts with the action of ancestral *kezo*, which was to make people ill until such time as they paid the *kezo* owner to cure them. There were two (complementary) interpretations of this event—firstly, that the power of the sign, derived from ministerial control, had afflicted them and, secondly, that Tamasa, outraged



at the sacrilege, had destroyed them. The former interpretation verifies the minister's legitimacy and potency; the latter reinforces the validity of *lotu*, reflected in discussion about Bili's death (below). Other accounts of local violations—a chronic betelnut thief tortured by hallucinations after stealing from a tree marked with *meke*, for example—reinforced the representations of *meke* as a dangerous power. This was more than representation, however. With the exceptions of the official SDA disbelief and that of a few fundamentalists and sceptics, *meke* was consistently respected. On one occasion I happened upon a visibly anxious man at the minister's house. He had been passing a tree belonging to his *bubutu* and had consumed one of the fruits. As he left, he noticed a *meke* sign and realized what he had done. He hastened to the minister, who was hardly consoling:

Minister: How do you feel?

Man: All right, a bit. I sweat and I am dizzy. Nothing more.

Minister: *Meke* is extremely potent. You know that? I will pray and beseech Tamasa to relieve you, but it's a very strong taboo. You are better to avoid things "stopped" by *meke*. The power of Tamasa is not easily put aside.

Papa God, look at this man and "love" [pity] him. He has confessed; he is fearful of your *meke*; he did not want to break *meke*; he only wanted to steal fruit. Look down and love him, Papa God. This I beseech you. Amen.

Now you go home and wait. I beseeched Tamasa to make you live. Go home and pray and beg Tamasa's forgiveness.

In similar vein there were extremely serious discussions at two Quarterly Meetings about whether *meke* should be banned from villages, where illiterate children might unknowingly violate the taboo. A number of people were adamant that their children were more important than property. Others claimed that Tamasa was capable of discerning intentionality—of course small children would not be afflicted. The minister's adjudication was revealing: parents should teach small children not to take other people's property without permission and to recognize *meke* signs from their earliest days.

This was particularly significant because it points to new ideas about property which are sustained by the novel morality revealed in the concept of "theft" (*iko*). Ancestral *kezo* prohibited the legitimate as well as illegitimate use of property by kin. It was patently designed to reserve the resource for a particular person's use, rather than to protect it from trespassers. Thus, in the Roviana *kezo*, Hocart consistently reproduces the words by which violators are turned into thieves in invocations to *tomate*: "the man [generic] who eats thee, steals thee; afflict him" (n.d.e.: *passim*). *Meke* by contrast is connected to "individually" owned property,<sup>6</sup> what might be designated "private property".

Although Tinoni Simbo posit that, in the past, particular persons owned produce, this did not remove it from use by others. The ethos of mutuality within *tavitina* meant that produce could be used interchangeably, provided a degree of reciprocity was maintained.

Thus, while the root crops brought home by a woman unambiguously could not be removed from her house without her express permission, a member of her *tavitina* passing by her garden could freely take a small amount of produce (and ideally inform her later). She had similar rights in their property. This was neither theft nor appropriation.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, Rivers (1924: 104, 115-116; see also Goldie, 1909: 24-25) regarded this informal give and take as a form of “communal ownership”. In such circumstances, the concept of theft is often rather ambiguous. While it was clearly theft to go to someone’s house and take money, wealth items or food without clear notice and permission, interpretations of taking other things, or in other circumstances, clearly depended on the person’s relationship to the things and locations. Thus, a garden owner might regard another person’s taking crops as unreasonable—either on the basis of degree of relationship, frequency of occurrence or quantity of produce—and thus as “theft”. The alleged thief, however, may regard themselves as behaving entirely appropriately. Such positions were constantly negotiated as individuals juggled interests, needs, obligations, wants and desires for prestige in a world in which ownership evoked autonomy of disposal as much as right of retention. It was presumably out of such negotiations that *banara* ultimately attained their wealth and authority, being precisely those who were able to extract more from others while developing reputations for generosity and helpfulness (see Josephides, 1982: 31). Thus, individuals “gave” their labour to *banara* (*taviti venia*: “work/do [&] give to”) who, in turn, “gave them” (*venidia*) feasts, sponsorship, etc. and amassed prestige.

I do not mean to overdraw the contrast to contemporary patterns—Hocart (n.d.a.: 13) mentions people who preferred to keep their wealth to themselves. Inversely, today, many people continue to be well regarded as generous redistributors (Chapter Nine). Such variability was presumably always characteristic of social relations. Nonetheless, I would argue that *meke* sustained an emphasis on a significantly different kind of property relation in which goods were protected, not to ensure later redistribution, but to guarantee private retention of the benefits of the interdiction (see also Hogbin, 1969: 217). In the 1990s, *meke* guarded property which people claimed as belonging unambiguously to themselves. I never saw a canarium tree, in which *bubutu* members have broad rights, protected by *kezo*. On the other hand, small coconut groves, with much more clearly defined and restricted ownership, were frequently protected. So were megapode houses and other sources of cash income. Thus, when I asked a small group, who jointly protected their megapode houses, what they intended to do with the proceeds, answers included buying rice, paying school fees and going to Honiara. The reasons were diverse, but the fundamental thing they had in common was

cash generation for private use. In all cases in which I was told about reasons for *meke*, it was explicitly intended as a negative sanction against the denigrated “thieves” who would otherwise take it, rather than a temporary stay of usual rights. Theft is a sin, therefore Tamasa was willing to intervene. Indeed, Tamasa ultimately punished all theft. *Meke*, however, made it immediate and more devastating. This contraction of property rights has been developed in close association with a general trend toward a nuclear family form and the emergence of notions that individual wrongdoing generates individual, rather than collective, consequences (Chapters Six & Nine).

## ii. *Rerege*

If *meke* may be argued by many people to be a new practice, as indeed it is in a number of respects, the continuity of ancestral forces is axiomatic even, as the following incident suggests, to those who refuse to openly acknowledge as much. Iqu, my research assistant, helped with transcribing and translating tapes. One Thursday she arrived and plunged into an account of a cynical pastor’s encounter with a traditional force known as *rerege*. This motley congregation of forest *tomate* is one of the most dreaded of spirit manifestations. *Rerege* travel erratically through the bush, rushing down gullies, in particular, and flattening bushes and grasses as they go. Trees may be felled or split open. The same happens to humans who find themselves in their path. Kera, the pastor involved, always denied that he was fearful of *tomate*. Only poor Christians feared *tomate*, he claimed. Thus it was that his adventure added to the value of the account then circulating. In Iqu’s account:

Last Tuesday was the Men's Fellowship, so Kera [and named others] joined *lotu*. They went, they participated and then they left to return home. They were few, only five, so they walked back [i.e. they did not hire a canoe].

All right, in the middle of their journey it was *resana* [fine rain in sunshine]<sup>8</sup> but they kept walking because they wanted to reach home quickly. But, in the middle of their journey, they heard the *rerege*. They FLED! You know the road, Christina. It's steep; it's slippery and when it rains, it's extremely muddy. So, they heard the *rerege* and they fled! [begins laughing] They fled because they were terrified; they wanted to run but it was a mire. They slipped, they fell, they fell in the mud, they truly fled to the village.

All right, when they arrived in the village [laughs] I saw them. They had mud all over their bodies. Mud on their clothes, their legs and arms bespattered, mud in their hair, one thong on, others lost in the bush . . . [extended laughing description of their appearance].\*

They had, she added, stumbled into the village, wild-eyed and gasping for breath, like madmen, babbling “*Rerege* on the road! *Rerege* on the road! We [?were ?are] nearly dead . . .”.

This was a particularly graphic demonstration of contemporary knowing that *tomate* prevail, but it was just one of many large and small encounters between Tinoni Simbo and of denominational difference, or conjoined denominational practices and contemporary

those ubiquitous forces which are, with just as much certainty, *known* to have been suppressed by the Christian *lotu*. Even SDAs find rationalizations for acting as if they believe in the persistence of *tomate*, despite some dramatic gestures designed to demonstrate otherwise (see Chapter Seven). Thus, they used *meke*, claiming that they knew it had no force but it deterred superstitious UC people from stealing, yet on other occasions they also avoided taking from areas protected by *meke*. Some people make attempts to synthesize or rationalize their apparently contradictory knowledge; others don't regard them as contradictory. Indeed, they are not contradictory—*tomate* are “devils” (see Chapter Seven) and the pastor's flight is little different, conceptually, to some European Christians' anxieties about encounters with Satan.

### ***Vahesia Tamasa*—Worshipping God**

In accounts of colonially induced Christianity, it is sometimes unclear what people believe, or hold to be true, in regard to their acquired religions (but cf. Hogbin, 1969: 184-190).

Although recent literature (in particular Barker, 1990a; 1990b; Barker *et al.*, 1990; Comaroff, 1985) acknowledges or even highlights Christianity as cultural practice, some accounts of conversion imply a lack of religious conviction or true belief. Depending upon perspective this may be characterized as insincerity, as in numerous missionary laments on the subject, or celebrated as autonomy or resistance (e.g. M. Kahn, 1983). In both, there is an implication of inauthenticity. Indeed, I have also interpreted conversion in terms of coercion rather than *metanoia*. There is a clear distinction, however, between past Christian conversion and contemporary Christian practice. Conversion refers to the inherently coercive processes by which Tinoni Simbo were prevailed upon to shift to Christian practice. If the ancestors had abandoned them, punished them or been defeated, it nonetheless required potent alternative supernatural forces to replace them. Acceptance of Christianity on Simbo was categorically an acknowledgment of defeat and an acquiescence to the forces which enabled the victors. Only the old men, as Lodu argues, resisted at all. Soon, all but two of them capitulated. That, however, was many years ago. Whatever the reason for their ancestors' submission and whatever the consequences of that submission in terms of contemporary self-perception (see Dureau, n.d.c.), Tinoni Simbo are now unreservedly Christian because they hold Christianity to be self-evidently “true”.

Christianity is an ethos, in the sense that it explains the universe, provides the logic for people's actions and pervades social life. Debate, strategies and disagreements occur within the context of Christian belief. Thus, lineage or personal difficulties may be resolved in terms of denominational difference, or conjugal disputation sees recourse to alternate church or

biblical sources. Atheism is not an option (see also Levy, 1969: 127). It is in this context of indubitable Christianity that the apparent cooptation of ancestral forces, described in later chapters, must be interpreted. It is inappropriate to speak of it as "faith" or "belief", in the sense of something that may potentially be doubted or contested; it is rather, "the truth" or "knowledge" of the world in the way of ancestor veneration, as the account of Liam Gold (below) indicates.

It is usually the domain of mission propagandists, apologists or sympathisers to attest the reality of Christian worldviews. However, of all the "facts" about Simbo this is probably the only one which is unambiguously and universally true. It is, simply, nonnegotiable. People dream about Zisu; they sign letters to distant friends or kin with words like "Tamasa will bring us together again"; they know Bible passages intimately; spontaneously sing hymns; leave a cookhouse to enquire whether food has been blessed. The normal childhood socialization into Christianity was quite apparent in my daughter, who arrived from a secular Australian household. Astrid acquired Christianity as she acquired language and behaviour. I retain a graphic memory of walking with her (then aged four and half) when she suddenly pointed to the sea and urged me to look at Tamasa, whom she could see above the waves. Now six and half, she remains firmly convinced that she saw Tamasa. On returning to Australia, for many months she eagerly pointed at any cross she saw, with the words "*Doma Mama, nana ke na korosi te Zisu!*" [Look, Mama, there's the cross of Jesus]. "Tamasa" remains one of the few Simbo words she retains, just as saying Grace and attending scripture classes are among the few Simbo practices she persistently follows.

Accounts of Astrid's socialization as representative cannot stand alone. However, the configuration of insider-outsider interactions and responses can be a particularly instructive source of anthropological understanding. In this sense, Astrid's incorporation into Simbo sociality can be usefully contrasted with an adult European's non-incorporation, despite his attempts to live sympathetically with Tinoni Simbo, and their attempts to accommodate him.

Liam Gold lived on Simbo for about three months as a member of a volunteer team, working on a locally initiated development project. While some of his colleagues were disapproved of or somewhat disliked, Liam was widely approved of and popular. Young and old, male and female liked him; he was welcome in all households and constantly invited for meals, picnics, singing parties, etc. It was at a meal given by one family that the "problem" of Liam first came to my attention.

The meal was held at midday on a Sunday, before which a local *lotu* was held, as usual. Liam arrived early and there was some perplexity: everyone knew he was Jewish. He had told them that in response to the invariable question as to his denomination. It was known that he was not Christian and he did not *lotu*. What, then was to be done on a Sunday morning? It was a small village, they could not all just walk off and leave him, could not really just leave him with one person to keep him company without ascertaining his wishes. Finally Lupa asked him in Pidgin: "My family and I are about to *lotu*. We know you do not follow Jesus. We know you do not *lotu*. If you like you can come with us; if you do not like you can rest in the shade. We do not like to

force you but you are welcome if you care to participate.” After I told him what this entailed he responded that he respected their custom and, although he did not follow their religion, would be happy to participate.

It is the sequel to this event that demonstrated the unquestionability of Christianity. While Liam sat oblivious in the shade of the verandah beside us, Lupa, Gure and Somo launched into their own ethnographic research with me as informant. Why, they wanted to know, did Liam not *lotu*? This seemed easy enough and I replied that it was because he had a different religion and explained, as best I could, that Jews do not believe Jesus is the Messiah. Oh, they responded, he did not believe in Tamasa; but he is such a good man. I tried to explain the relationship between the Old Testament Jehovah and the New Testament Son of God. It is just that Liam did not actually hold that Jesus was the Son of God. I did not know what Liam believed, but many Jews thought the Messiah was yet to come. Then came the question that stymied me: *Asa vea?* [Why/how?] I repeated my words about belief and heard the same question. We went round and round in circles but constantly came back to *Asa vea?* Finally, in frustration, Somo exclaimed “But he is a good person, a person who helps, a person who socializes well. How/why is he not a person of *lotu*?”

Here we come to the crux of the matter. Good people today are definitively *lotu* people.

Liam, in not believing in Zisu, rejected him. *Vasosoto* (“believe”) is, literally, to “make true”, a concept which entails rather more conscious volition than the English concept of “belief”.

While this enabled people to shift almost *en masse* to Christian worship—in accepting the practice they made it true—it makes of non-belief a refusal or rejection of, rather than an inability to accept, *lotu*. Thus, my constant reiteration that Liam did not believe (*sake vasosoto*) in Zisu was received as an assertion that he rejected him. But this, too, contradicted the evidence regarding Liam: an authoritative, successful and observably “good person” he not only did not *lotu*, he did not believe in Zisu. If active participation in *lotu* is not absolutely essential—and many men, in particular, do not join public worship—acceptance of Zisu is.

The power of Tamasa dictates that. The consequences to non-believers are dire. It is generally held that failure to respect *lotu* or “talking down *lotu*” ultimately results in death to miscreants—in particular they may be eaten by a shark or crocodile or die in a marine disaster. Such events occurred often enough to reinforce those beliefs. Thus, one day Bili disappeared in his outboard powered canoe and was never found. The word, phrased in terms evocative of responsibilities to ancestors, quickly spread that it was because he had no respect for *lotu*:

It began when he got his engine. He forgot everything but fishing. From morning until night he fished. He had no time for anything else and he forgot *lotu*. Even on Sunday he went fishing! Every day! But Tamasa sees everything, he waits for them to remember him, then he punishes them. Thus [it was with] Bili.<sup>9</sup> White (1991: 106) reports a similar Maringe death.)

Another death saw the same themes reiterated. Rona was an old man who was out fishing in his dugout one night. There was a sudden squall and his companions could no longer see him. No trace of him was ever found, although he disappeared close to shore. Although his close family regarded this as an act of assassination by his opponents in a land dispute, many other people held that it was divine intervention because of Rona’s reputation as a strong “*kastom* man”. In a sense Rona’s death was the end of an era. Much arcane knowledge died with him.

So, to a great extent, did control of a force called *mateana* (very different to the entities described by Hocart, n.d.n.) which were said to have protected Simbo in the past. He was, however, in contrast to other famous men of *kastom*, a strong Christian. On Simbo the two sit uneasily together, given the association of old supernatural forces with being anti-Christian or non-Christianity. In the end, many people felt, the old powers exercised by Rona were simply eclipsed by the Christian force which tolerated no divided loyalties.

To resist Tamasa, tremendous control of indigenous forces was required. That, as the last chapter suggests, is why conversion occurred so precipitously. Very few people stood for any time against the power of *lotu*. There was a short period when, due to a high death rate from malaria, there were no missionaries on Simbo. During this time people reverted to making offerings on ancestral shrines, but ceased when "the missionaries returned and told us to stop".<sup>10</sup> At all other times since about 1915, however, the vast majority of Tinoni Simbo have been conscientiously Christian. A few people continue to make property *kezo*, which no-one holds to be particularly efficacious, and the (lesser) powers of *tomate* and other indigenous forces continue to be acknowledged. These, however, invariably occur in a context of loyalty to Tamasa. I have accounts of only two people who persistently opposed Tamasa (although presumably there were others). These accounts provide a strong contrast to the fate of Bili. I give a brief account of Tumi, whose story I have in greatest detail.

Tumi's descendants stress his outraged opposition to *lotu*. When it became clear that everyone was going to follow *lotu*, Tumi destroyed his house (a sign of repudiation of all social ties with village co-residents) and cut himself a new one-house hamlet in the forest. He stayed there until he died somewhere between 1940-1955 (accounts are variable), loudly defying *lotu* and sacrificing to his ancestors. When he died, enormous storms beat upon the coast and the spirits were particularly rife.

Accounts about Tumi stress his phenomenal control of the old forces. Thus his descendants tell about his being challenged by a European visitor. Instead of turning his force upon this man, Tumi chose to demonstrate his own powers: he took a piece of clamshell which he marked in a special way and led the man to a piece of rugged coast where he threw it into the depths. The stranger was amazed, on returning to Tumi's house, to find the very same piece of shell hanging on the wall. Tumi challenged the visitor to replicate the feat.

These stories are often presented in the context of claims by Tumi's direct descendants to the local *banara*-ship which has bypassed them. They are, however, generally held to be true and a continual theme in commenting upon the accounts is the strength needed by resisters if they were to defy *lotu*.

Burt (1994: 133-135, 155) and Keesing (1992a: 72-73) both depict Malaitan pagans flying to Christian settlements in order to evade vengeful ancestors. Burt (1994: 134; see also Hogbin, 1969: 180) holds that although, to some Kwara'ae, the Christian deity was stronger than the ancestors, many find Christian worship less arduous, a theme which echoes pagan Kwaio women's derisive comments about Christian converts. In both cases, the ancestors

remain highly potent, an implicit match to the Christian forces. On Simbo, the crisis of faith in the ancestors precipitated by colonial incursions seems to have been resolved far more in terms of disparities of power than in either Kwara'ae or Kwaio. Although shrines (*tabuna*) and *tomate* remain highly potent, Christianity is stronger than the ancestors. Thus, in discussing *rerege* with a group of people there was some disagreement about whether the bishop could have dispersed the force that terrified Kera: the minister could *not* have, the bishop *might* have, John Goldie *could* have. White (1991: 15) reports Santa Isabel Christians incorporating parts of *tabuna* into church buildings and baptizing shrines—a usurpation of their powers, a legitimization of continuity between old and new beliefs and a symbol of Christian incorporation.<sup>11</sup> Tinoni Simbo needed no such gestures; nor did they need the destruction characteristic of other areas (White, 1991: 104; Macintyre, 1989), for they were already convinced of the powers of the Christians. Thus it is clear why only two people resisted—only the most powerful controllers of ancestral forces *could* resist. Further, as Tumi's history indicates, this was best achieved by moving away, isolating oneself from the new force. *tani kame rany, that is, "I must believe"*

*They did not know the power of the ancestors, but they did know the power of the Christians.*

#### ***Tinoni Zonana pana Totoso Rodomo—Good People of the Time of Darkness***

There is great respect for Tumi's resistance to Christian incursions. An oscillation between admiration and castigation informs adjudications about pagan ancestors. The pre-Christian past is unambiguously regarded as the "time of darkness" in which ancestors followed "dark ways" (*hahanana rodomo*), the critical term applied to any behaviour held to ignore the knowledge of right and wrong illuminated by *lotu*. It was a time of sin (*sini*). There is a subtle difference, however, in assessing the ancestors. If they were "people of darkness" who followed "ways of darkness", they were not necessarily people of sin. Again and again, in one form or another, I heard:

to ee. It's hard to say. They were people of darkness; they followed the ways of darkness, but they were good people. Not like people today, people living in the light. They were truly good people, people who shared properly, people of mutual help, people of love and peace.

It is noteworthy that such moral adjudications, while referring to Christian inspiration are actually founded on local, as much as Christian, notions of ideal sociality.

The people of darkness were "good", not because they followed the commandments or the universalizing fellowship of Christianity but because, within their *tavitina*, they observed the norms of generosity, helpfulness, compassion and peaceful coexistence which are now perceived as endangered.<sup>12</sup> They were sinners because they behaved in ways condemned by mission and church—engaging in extramarital sexuality, veneration of ancestors, killing



unwanted or deformed neonates, for example. The people of darkness, then, were effectively good sinners. Today, too, a “good person” displays their ideal social traits. A “bad person” violates them consistently through greed, selfishness, violence or quarrelsomeness. But the term “sinner” is not applied to them. Here, too, a sinner is one who violates church norms (with the exception of extramarital sexuality which has consistently avoided categorization as sinful) and, additionally, one who defies *lotu* through (theoretical) overt opposition or through passive or symbolic opposition, such as refusing to rest on the seventh day.<sup>13</sup> This is not to say that all “behaviour of the darkness” is now appreciated. To characterize someone’s behaviour in those terms is definitively to criticize it. Thus, women may criticize their *luluna*’s excessive violence as behaviour of the darkness. Similar adjudications are made about someone who has had five or six marriages. Some people regarded the minister’s *meke* in those terms, others anything redolent of superstition.

Such adjudications do not apply to characterizations of ancestral practices. Indeed, these may sometimes be alternatively described under the far more neutral “behaviour of one day” (*hahanana kame rane*), that is, “past behaviours”.

They did not know, the people of “one day”. *Lotu* had not come yet so they could not [know]. They had not heard. They were good people but *lotu* had not yet come down so they remained in the darkness.

Here, the puzzlement over Liam Gold becomes clearer. His “goodness” and his categorical denial that he believed in Tamasa were absolute contradictions. The ancestors were good only because they had not heard but Liam, having heard, remained perplexingly both obdurate and admirable.

### **Bei Lotu—Changing Denominations**

Barker’s (1990a: 18-19) analysis of pluralism (above) draws on a contrast between societies in which Christianity was rapidly absorbed into local practice and religious duality is restricted to denominational rivalries, and those in which there is a division between mission and indigenous religious forms, expressed in separate socio-religious practices. The former, exemplified by the long-Christian Polynesian societies such as Tahiti, Samoa and Tonga, present no contradiction between Christianity and tradition (see also Levy, 1969). Simbo, despite the relative recency of its conversion, fits firmly this category. It is noteworthy that I know of no-one since the death of Tumi who has ever questioned the legitimacy of *lotu*. There have, however, been a number of dramatic upheavals involving changes of denomination which have left bitter feelings years after the event. In general these changes have been shifts of allegiance, led by one or two men, in which most of a lineage segment

changed denomination (see also Hogbin, 1969: 182) or, less dramatically, inter-denominational marriages.<sup>14</sup> Santa Isabel, as White (1991: 93) observes, is unique in that a single mission effected conversion of the entire population. From the Simbo perspective, indeed from the Methodist Mission perspective, the remarkable thing is that, with an insignificant exception, Santa Isabel has *remained* within a single church. In 1930 a Simbo man named Zonaton, suffering from leprosy, received treatment from SDA doctors. Subsequently he and one of his brothers, Davi, attempted to establish a SDA congregation on Simbo. Their motives are obscure. Zonaton's marriage had been dissolved by his affines when he developed leprosy and many UCs hold that he converted out of spite for his rejection.<sup>15</sup> SDAs, on the other hand, argue that he converted because of the authentic compassion (*taru*) of the SDA pastors in face of the indifference of UCs to his suffering. Steley (1983: 73, 87-88) maintains that he was convinced of the authenticity of SDA beliefs, arguing against Harwood's (1971: 13,56) and Jackson's (1978: 16, 307-310) arguments that denominational switches were precipitated by internal dissent, such as leadership disputes. No explanation necessarily contradicts the others. A number of Zonaton's siblings converted immediately, others not for a number of years. Most adult offspring of those siblings also converted eventually.

The response to Zonaton and his siblings was vehement. Loyal Methodists were outraged. Whether or not there were local reasons for the outrage, Goldie had always vigorously opposed the SDA presence in New Georgia. Unlike the other major Protestant denominations, the SDA church refuses to recognize the formal and informal spheres of influence carved out between denominations. If the London Missionary Society, the Methodist Mission or the Melanesian Mission agreed that the objective was to prevent heathens writhing in hellfire and tacitly agreed that any conversion was better than no conversion, the SDAs disagreed. Like their self-perceived opposites, the Roman Catholics, they staunchly defended their right of proselytization and conversion anywhere, on the grounds of the fundamental invalidity of the doctrines and practices of other Christian denominations (Langmore, 1989a; *pace*, Steley, 1983: 46, 84-86). Goldie regarded the SDA Mission as a constant threat and devoted great time and energy to opposing them. In doing so, he must inevitably have inflected missionary teachings throughout the Group with anti-SDA sentiment.

If nothing else, opposition to the SDA indicated loyalty to the converting power on the part of Simbo Methodists. Indeed I find no other explanation for their vehement reaction. Although it is tempting to speculate that Zonaton's marginality contributed to his

conversion—and the two other cases of spontaneous conversion with which I deal below contribute to this possibility—that does not explain the opposition of Methodists. As I've noted, Simbo has a long history of adopting foreign rites and beliefs. While it is true that older people reacted against the Methodist Mission when it first arrived, that was a reaction against a body which spelled danger in its determined defiance of ancestral power. The same could hardly be said of the SDA converts unless it had been specifically construed as such by Methodist leaders.

Methodists reacted, as their parents had a generation before, by surrounding the house whenever services were in progress and hammering on the walls, yelling and banging saucepans. They physically removed the SDA missionary from the island and only the intervention of the District Officer in Gizo assured him of his safety and his right to return to Simbo. Eventually the small group of Adventists moved to a separate village located away from the others and were allowed to remain in peace. The name of the village, Tuku ("closed"), is regarded as particularly apposite by both denominations: to UCs, it points to the way in which SDAs have isolated themselves from local society and to SDAs, it expresses their shunning of the UCs sinful ways. Adventists today maintain their kinship linkages with UCs and participate in general Simbo affairs, but deep bitterness over the denominational split remains some sixty years later. While many people can give no account of the arrival of *lotu*, young and old people of both Christian denominations recount versions of the SDA schism. These accounts are remembered particularly when UC women convert upon marriages but I deal with a second denominational upheaval first.

In the 1960s many New Georgians enthusiastically embraced a Methodist revival which culminated in the formation of the indigenous Christian Fellowship Church (CFC) with congregations scattered throughout the West (see Harwood, 1971). One of these was established on Simbo when the "spirit came down" on a man and a number of his siblings and their children at Nusa Simbo.<sup>16</sup> The reaction of Methodists was an extreme form of that against the SDAs. This time people were assaulted and the rumour rapidly spread that the government was going to gaol CFC adherents. This was undoubtedly fed by the Methodist Mission's vociferous condemnation of the new movement as anti-Christian and by their authoritarian attempts at suppression (Harwood, 1971: Ch 4, 5). The Simbo CFC leaders, reacted like the SDAs, by leading an exodus to a new area where they were permitted to remain only after winning a land rights case. Here, too, there is lingering hostility, although at least on the part of UCs this is not as great as against SDAs who continue to be regarded as a threat to UC stability, as indeed they are. The SDA mission still claims the right of

evangelization amongst other denominations, which the CFC does not. Further, the SDA constructs itself, and is therefore constructed, as an opposing force, whereas the CFC constructs itself as an outgrowth of Methodism.

Issues of denominational loyalty thus tend to be more fraught between SDAs and UCs in situations where the two are forced to mix, especially in marriage. Inter-denominational marriage is the second main source of conversion. It differs from the first in being significantly less dramatic, more prolonged and widespread over a number of lineages. There is no rule of marital conversion. Rather, there is a pronounced ideology of freedom of worship coupled with the pragmatic recommendation that each should follow the *lotu* of the other when they are in their respective places. There is, however, a countervailing expectation that women will adopt their husband's religion where that is possible. This expectation is expressed both in the proportion of women who do convert on marriage and in community evaluations of those cases in which the issue causes conjugal friction. Marriages involving dual worship are quite acceptable and men who acquiesce to such marriages are widely applauded for their benevolent nature. However, in cases in which women remain resolutely committed to their own *lotu*, in the face of their husband's demonstrated opposition, they are regarded as unreasonably intransigent<sup>17</sup> (except by members of their own denomination).

Where mixed denominational marriages also involve inter-island marriage, the recommendation that couples follow denominational practices depending upon residence virtually always applies except in the case of SDA-UC marriages. When Gure married her first husband, a Roman Catholic, she was baptized in that church and while they lived in Honiara they attended RC services; but when they lived on Simbo they adhered to UC behaviours. Una, who refused to follow her husband in joining the CFC, nonetheless attends CFC services when they go to Paradise, the New Georgian home of the church. Likewise Pula and Meri, both married to Malaitan men, attend SSEC services on Malaita and their husbands join UC services on Simbo.

This rarely occurs in the case of SDA-UC marriage. It is difficult to generalize in the case of UC men and SDA women for I know of few such marriages. This, however, is the situation entailing most friction because SDA doctrine comes into conflict with Simbo social practice. I know of only two cases of UC men converting to SDA when they married, but there have been a number of times when UC men have been infuriated by their wives' refusal to abandon SDA worship. This is an impossibility to committed SDAs, who hold the absolute authenticity of their own church and the definitive non-Christianity of other faiths. Much more involved in study of the Bible, SDAs insist absolutely on Saturday Sabbath and the

sanctity of dietary restrictions. For SDA women who marry UC men, then, the issues of doctrinal dogma and obedience to husbands (also enjoined) come into great conflict, especially when obedience may be physically sanctioned.

\* The situation seems eventually to reach an impasse in which the woman attends neither service. Thus, when Samu married Ani, he beat her every Saturday when she attempted to return to Tuku for SDA services. Eventually she stopped going to Tuku but did not begin attending UC services. There is an ongoing tension, however, over her continuing refusal to follow the usual practice of going up to the gardens on Saturdays to prepare for the Sunday midday meal. At one point, I lived next door to a newly married couple going through the same situation. Solo had married Nenisi, an SDA woman from another island and brought her back to live on Simbo. Once there his parents, already unhappy over his sister's marital conversion to SDA, urged him to prevent her going to services at Tuku. Both persisted. His sister began encouraging Nenisi to persist. He began physically restraining her on Saturdays. For a time she remained quietly in the house on Saturday. Then his family began arguing that it was unreasonable because she was not going to the garden on that day. The tension again escalated but she persisted in refusing. He threw her out and told her to go and "stay in Tuku". She did so. His mother went and fetched her back. The local pastor (Solo's FB), the minister, the SDA pastor and, briefly, the UC bishop became involved in negotiations to no avail. The situation was not resolved when I left.

This situation rarely, if ever, arises when UC women marry SDA men, although there are far more of these marriages. In the vast majority of these cases, the women convert to SDA. I use the word "convert" here in its full sense of changing both religious practice and denominational affiliation through baptism. With the exception of the woman who was re-baptized a RC, I know of no other case of changing affiliation being accompanied by baptism. People thus shift readily between participation in various denominations. For SDAs this is insufficient; true conversion requires being born again through immersion in water. I would argue that this is doubly symbolic: not only does it mark the converts' reformation, it also publicly attests to the SDA's ability to make incursions into the ranks of their UC opponents. This is certainly the way UCs perceive the sporadic SDA ceremonies featuring one of their former number.

\* SDA men proceed differently to UC men. To UCs, they are seen as "sneaking" to gain UC converts. Their mission strenuously privileges persuasion over coercion in securing conversions. Being more familiar with the intricacies of the Bible, they seem to persistently nag at women until they "see the light". In this they are helped by a very strong tendency to

virilocal residence, which is enhanced by UC hostility to marriages with SDA men. Thus, in the two cases of which I am aware in which UC women did not convert, the couple were living uxori locally and the men had to leave the village to practise their faith. As one wife said, "I told him I did not want to hear it. What could he do?" Hilida, in contrast, was a woman who had ultimately converted to SDA on her marriage to Doni. Their marriage had been strongly opposed by her family. None of her sisters had facilitated her assignments and her parents had threatened to inform her *luluna* of her intrigue. When she finally eloped it was impossible to reside other than virilocally. Within a year of marriage she chose to convert: and on the eve of WWII. I have mentioned the lessons of this in the local

found No-one forced me. I stayed with them and saw what they did. I joined their *lotu* and they helped me read the Bible. Before that I did not know the Bible truly. I did not understand but they helped me understand, all the SDAs. They helped me understand the true word of Tamasa. I saw they truly followed the word of Tamasa so I wanted to join. Now I am truly happy because I truly follow the Word.

Immersion in the practices and discourses of a village set off from the rest of Simbo society, then, predisposed Hilida to accept the SDA teachings.<sup>18</sup> Perhaps more revealing of the role of post-marital residence in affecting such outcomes is the case of Keli's inability to change faiths. Before I commenced this work, the village was almost entirely UC but

work He was UC but had heavy kinship linkages to the SDA on his father's side. A number of his siblings had also joined. He and his wife, Esi, lived uxori locally on land her sister, Zila, let them use and had invested considerable money in an "iron house". When Keli began touting the idea of converting, Esi apparently concurred. Zila and their mother Lina, however, were irate (see Fig. 5.2.)<sup>19</sup> Fiery Lina had inherited a large amount of prime land from an old man who had successively adopted both her mother and herself as young girls. She bluntly informed Esi that she would be evicted if she and Keli did any such thing. Lina, more calmly, called Esi and simply forbade her to convert. Keli and Esi were isolated in the midst of clear disapproval. No more was heard of the plan.

I conclude this section on conversion by looking at what is very much a minority process— independent, individual conversion. Although a number of Simbo people have spontaneously converted either to Baha'i or to fundamentalist movements in Honiara, only two people have done so on Simbo itself. One of them died some years ago. Their conversion could be attributed to idiosyncrasy if it were not for a notable convergence with features of, and discourse about, SDA conversion. Both converted as people socially disabled by physical conditions. The first, Mebelo, had been lying ill in Gizo hospital with terminal breast cancer.<sup>20</sup> According to SDAs, Mebelo was moved by the fact that women from the SDA women's fellowship, Dorcas, came to comfort her despite being strangers, whereas her UC fellows left her alone. Her husband tried to discourage her, but she was adamant in being baptized and taking her young children to SDA worship with her. UCs provide no contrary story to explain Mabelo's conversion and those most closely related to her prefer not to talk

about the case. Some ten years later, her widow appears regretful about the whole incident. In the second case, Sai, a boy lamed by childhood tetanus, spontaneously converted to SDA. According to his story, it was also the compassionate face of the SDA which attracted him. Now aged about 25, he continues to live with his UC siblings and mother, but participates in Tuku events. His conversion seems to have provoked little response but, as a disabled person unlikely ever to marry or have offspring, his act was presumably not seen as threatening.

There are two points I want to stress—the marginality of the SDA converts and the ways in which SDA stories tie in with local accounts of the founding of the mission on New Georgia Island on the eve of WWI. I have mentioned the leprosy of Zonaton, the local founder of the SDA mission. While the absolute number of people marginalized by physical disability and converting to SDA is small, these people and their stigmata are prominent in local accounts and, indeed, took a prominent part in establishing and legitimating the Simbo SDA. This is a distinct contrast to the usual corporate image of SDA converts. Ross (1978: 195-196) noted some time ago that they tend to be energetically devoted to enterprise. Poewe (1981: 80-81) makes a similar point. This seems to be a well accepted characterization of the mission. Before I commenced fieldwork, for example, I was advised by a colleague not to work in an SDA village on the grounds that “all they do is make copra all day” or that they sacrificed “all the custom” to the capitalist work ethic which the SDA ideology supports so well. There may be something to this. Certainly the people of Marovo Lagoon, the core of the SDA in the western Solomons, have enthusiastically commoditized their marine resources (Hviding, 1992). However, the preceding Methodist Mission already directed its “industrial policy” at facilitating capitalist development in the western Solomons (although their emphasis was on obedient production, in contrast to the individualist stress of Adventism). Further, as I reiterated in previous chapters, New Georgians were enthusiastically commoditizing resources over a century before Christianity arrived. The association between Christianity and development ideologies so pertinent to Malaita (Keesing, 1992a: 141-142; Ross, 1978) is much less germane to the western Solomons.

Bennett (1987: 114), echoing Methodist Mission literature, claims that Methodism was initially appealing to marginalized people in Roviana, a pattern patently inapplicable to Simbo. (Harwood [1971] makes a similar claim about marginalization in the emergence of the CFC.) It does appear, however, that this process may have applied to the later series of conversions to the SDA mission. Steley (1983) argues that the SDA mission attracted those who were disaffected by Goldie’s abrasiveness and autocratic style. Simbo suggests that other kinds of disaffection may have been formative. The SDA Mission placed great emphasis on

provision of health services (see also Ross, 1978) but so too did the Methodist Mission, establishing a hospital at Munda and becoming involved in health and hygiene interventions from its earliest days. While medical care, freely given as it was by both missions, may be construed as "love" in the Simbo sense, what is notable about the marginalized converts to SDA on Simbo is that none of them were cured. The "love" which they are said to have received was purely compassionate.<sup>21</sup> This image of compassionate SDA love is apparently quite pervasive in New Georgia. Steley reports that oral histories about the establishment of the mission stress the same theme. In a sequence which he holds to be impossible,

[l]ocal tradition in the Solomons has it that in 1912 [trader Norman] Wheatley became a patient in the Sydney Sanitarium Hospital and while there contacted Griffin Francis Jones whom he invited to come as a missionary to the Solomons (Steley, 1983: 38).

This representation, by Adventists, of their denomination as kind or loving differs substantially from the power and authority the Methodist Mission was seen as possessing on its arrival. It is hardly my place to adjudicate the relative moral or compassionate standards of the denominations and I certainly detected no differences in the standards of their respective adherents. Nonetheless it is, I think, obvious that some people detect a degree of comfort provided by the SDAs which has led to conversions that cannot necessarily be ascribed to expediency or strategic discourses.

### ***Lotu Kolopiri*—Contemporary Christianity**

Earlier, I argued that Simbo religion could not be isolated from mundane life, given the ancestors' involvement in all human enterprises. Under Christianity, although *lotu* is described as a separate category, the same principle applies. If *lotu* is a formal aspect of life—revealed most strikingly in concerns over denominational separations—it is nonetheless pervasive, intrinsic to all undertakings. It is not only in the context of interdenominational-marriage that issues of private experience or personal perspective articulate with public issues. Throughout life, Tinoni Simbo negotiate their actions in the context of biblical texts, church doctrines and statements by church authorities. While their actions are appraised in light of Christian standards, Tinoni Simbo are now able to manipulate Christian discourse to their own ends (see below).

If Christian conversion has often been indicative of cultural suppression, Christian practice can be potentially subversive or, indeed, revolutionary or liberating (Comaroff, 1985: 260-263; Hill, 1975: 15; 1993: 6-20; Smith, 1990: 170-171). The rootedness of Christianity in Simbo life facilitates discussion and strategies that ensure greater local autonomy in social life than at any time since pacification. Today, the early Christian notion of submission, so



stressed by Goldie's Methodist Mission, and reinforced by the experiences of pacification, are not readily discernible. There is an ongoing tension within the church between authoritative and individualist tendencies. The church's officers may have usurped and centralized the power of *banara* but they did not retain it absolutely. To have unquestioned authority, ministers must demonstrate unquestioned metaphysical control. That was readily apparent in the wake of pacification but it is less so now. Keana's *meke* is partially explicable in these terms and Keana was, indeed, seen as a strong man. But while "Tamasa the *Banara*" is not accessible to everyone, the loving "Papa God" is—all are entitled to the love of God and everyone, as members of a literate society, has access to Him through their Bibles (Hill, 1975).<sup>22</sup> As obedient Christians they are also able to play off one set of implications against another. Thus, when Bishop Leslie Boseto, renowned and loved as a man of both compassion and great power, carefully suggested that Simbo's many intense land disputes were a violation of Christian kinship, a number of people who found themselves tugged in conflicting directions agreed. They were readily answered by others who argued that the bishop had neglected to recognize the need to "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's." While no-one had the temerity to say this to him directly, they did make that claim in church meetings, chaired by the minister. The individual's distance from church authority is again illustrated by comparison with the contemporary situation in Santa Isabel, where the church, as opposed to Christianity in general, remains central. In citing the case of Bili (above) I noted that White reports a similar Maringe case. There is, however, a critical difference. Bili died because he disregarded *lotu* principles rather than because he failed to observe the kind of formal observances expected of Santa Isabel people. The Isabel man died because, to quote White's informant, he "did not make offerings or stay within the church" (White, 1991: 106). White's informant also says that the church is "hot" because of "offerings and prayer". There is an implication here that the Isabel church is, like earlier ancestors, as dependent on the people as they are on it, in a relationship of mutual dependence. Tinoni Simbo are far more "outside" the church. This is perhaps reflected in the fact that UC Tinoni Simbo give little money to the church (SDAs pay tithes) without being harangued, although there are notable collections at Christmas. This is in contrast to what

White notes to be an enthusiastic practice elsewhere, following

the cultural understanding that power (mana), protection and prosperity may be enhanced through ritual relations with potent spirits . . . Not to do so, particularly when ancestral sites had already been abandoned, would leave one vulnerable to the ravages of sorcerers or malevolent spirits (White, 1991: 106).

... were on the M... The... delegation of men from the... explanation from...

The Simbo church, then, is “hot” independently of Simbo people today, as it was in the beginning. Their individual access to Tamasa now makes them, too, somewhat independent.

The unquestioned authority of early missionaries was perhaps a temporary situation. Thompson (1981: 46-50) argues that Methodism has always entailed friction between democratic and authoritative impulses, but the Simbo version of this tension—between consensus and obedience—also owes something to local authority patterns. As I noted in the discussion of *bubutu* and *tavitina* (Chapter Two), individuals were always able to play *banara* off against each other to maximize their own well-being. Individuals moved between submission and autonomy. *Banara* were also, necessarily, the epitome of virtue and subject to local criticisms of their behaviour. Contemporary ministers are also subject to challenge and assessment (*pace* Burman, 1981: 264). Their behaviour is constantly monitored and widely discussed. While they retain great power in the community, they may be publicly challenged in the Quarterly Meetings attended by representatives from all congregations. Ideally, they exercise sway through the benign authority previously ascribed to *banara* and now justified by the ideology of Christian love. I give here an abbreviated version of the rise and fall of the powerful minister, Keana and *maramar* Zulian.

Keana and Zulian regarded themselves as the supreme authorities on Simbo. They arrived shortly before Easter one year and left shortly before Easter of the next year. They were quickly involved in trying to raise money and invigorate the Men's and Women's Fellowship. Keana brought with him his famous *meke*. Although the previous minister had also painted *meke*, his had lacked holy water and no-one respected them. Keana also made overtures to the SDA pastor and was the first Simbo minister to accept an invitation to join services there.

It was not long, however, before small disputes began. First Zulian and Keana began complaining that Tinoni Simbo were stingy: they made scant offerings, did not make first fruit offerings and, unlike their previous posting, did not help provision the minister and *maramar* who found their stipend inadequate. Then, at a Quarterly Meeting, representatives chastised the minister for spending money without authorization. He justified himself and this was accepted but the issue arose repeatedly at every Quarterly Meeting. This was soon enhanced by disputation over the proceeds of *meke*. Keana reserved the right of disbursement of those funds, which soon eclipsed the circuit's official funds which were under the control of the committee. Although he provided justifications of expenditure, his claims of stationery costs and transportation were received with incredulity. On each occasion his threat to withdraw *meke* drew grudging compliance, but hostility grew.

Disquiet about Keana's and Zulian's arrogance began to circulate. Their criticisms of a former minister were less and less acceptable. Their predecessors had been Tinoni Simbo and their kin began to contrast the manners of the two couples unfavourably. Zulian's predecessor had been a “peaceful” woman, a distinct contrast to Zulian, they argued. Suddenly there was a rush of criticisms of Zulian's propensity to joke with men and raise her eyebrows when she talked, which is regarded as a non-verbal invitation to sexual intrigue. In the trail of these accounts, rumours about her purported adultery in a previous posting swept the island.

There was a particularly heated Quarterly Meeting after which Keana did not organize the annual celebration of the missionary arrival. This was resented, but he retorted that he had not been invited. Before this settled down, the final rumour raced around the island in less than 24 hours. According to a local woman, widely despised for her adultery, Keana had committed adultery with her. She confessed to a minister in Gizo. His Simbo wife told Tinoni Simbo at the market there on the Monday. They brought the news back at night and by the next morning a delegation of men from that village had both spread it in other villages and demanded an explanation from Keana.

He denied it, but was disbelieved and declared that he was leaving because he was insulted at people's refusal to believe him. That evening, a large number of women carried gifts of food or store bought goods to their house. Kena and Zulian gave speeches claiming their innocence, and the next day at sunrise they left.

Whether or not Keana had committed adultery is not the major point. The point, as his defenders pointed out, is that the account of a "crazy" woman had been seized upon, by those most strongly opposed to him in order to depose him. Unlike every other Simbo minister or missionary who had to leave Simbo for adultery—and there were many—Keana alone did not admit to it. Nonetheless he was ousted because he had alienated too many people by being too like the early missionaries.

This represents a phenomenal shift from the receptivity of Tinoni Simbo and the absolute power of missionaries in the early years of Christianization. The Methodist Mission theocracy no longer prevails in either fact or imagination. The Solomon Islands are independent of the military power that so graphically repressed New Georgians. The laws of colonial, and later national, government have gradually displaced theocratic regulations and provided an often alternative framework for negotiation of interests. Finally, as foreign missionaries have been displaced by indigenous personnel, Christianity has not only visibly come under local control, but the clear initial linkage between missionary authority and government repression has been dissipated. Not only have local people assumed control, but as locals they are susceptible to adjudication in local terms by people who are, themselves, now assertive Christians. If Christianity has moved from imposed ideology to lived hegemony, that shift also provides room for symbolic manipulation. Discourse is not one-sided. Melucci's analysis of complex societies is equally applicable to Simbo, where "reality" is determined both by "powerful organizations which attempt to define the meaning of reality *and* actors and networks of actors who use the resources of those same organizations to define reality in novel ways" (quoted in Yeatman, 1991: 116, emphasis in original). That, I would argue, is precisely what was manifested when Tinoni Simbo used church norms to oust a minister and (in later chapters) when people deploy various strategies within the perduring and true context of Christianity.

Methodist Mission building, which was the first church in the area, was built in 1911. It was a simple structure, with a thatched roof and a small bell tower. The building is quite distinct from the many other churches in the area.

12. The church does not, of course, depend solely from the church. It is a part of the community, and its standards are not absolute. It is a part of the community, and its standards are not absolute. It is a part of the community, and its standards are not absolute.

13. Saturday or Sunday depending on the day of the week.

14. The marginalization of the poor is a common theme in the study of the church. The marginalization of the poor is a common theme in the study of the church.

## NOTES

- 1: *Nonoria*: "hear", "listen", hence "understand", "heed".
- 2: Hogbin (1969: 174) held that such adoptions, which he observed on Malaita, were responses to the loss of traditional lore. In New Georgia, it pre-dated pacification.
- 3: Easter Monday is a picnic day, especially for young people. I had not known I would be left on a beach with a cluster of strangers who turned out to be the SDA pastor and his flock but it was a fortuitous event, leading as it did to easy relationships with the group who, as one (antagonistic) minister put it, "stay in their village and leave us alone to get on with our affairs". This picnic involved one of the symbolic gestures to which the SDAs are partial (see Chapter Seven): the site was one of four taboo places (*tabuna*), which are said to have not been weakened by Christianity (because they were inhabited by entities, known as *Mateana*, which, like "Guardian Angels", protected Simbo from attack and were thus categorically distinct to the *tomate*/devils, which *lotu* has invalidated). The other three sites are in isolated places and thus easily avoided. This site, however, was at the point of easiest entry to Ove and thus difficult to avoid. It was therefore necessary to bathe in the sea and utter invocations on first going there. The SDAs, of course, did not. This was one gesture which backfired somewhat: the place was riddled with snakes (including one which we all saw wriggle into the fire and not re-emerge) and a violent thunderstorm broke after a couple of hours and forced the abandonment of the excursion. That evening, one SDA woman broke out in ulcers and was eventually so tortured by the pain that she sought an old man to heal her by traditional invocation (or so I was told many times by UCs. She denied it.)
- 4: Thatch or corrugated iron sheeting erected over megapode egg holes. The birds bury their eggs less deeply in these than in uncovered holes.
- 5: It hardly needs saying that it departs significantly from what Methodist missionaries would have regarded as legitimate Christian practice; the contemporary church's hierarchy also regarded it with considerable ambivalence.
- 6: By which I mean property held to belong to a particular individual, family, sibling group or other consciously designated group.
- 7: It was to "take" (*tekua*), part of the "mutual help" (*varitokai*) of *tavitina* relations. It assumed the same dimensions as one who "requested" (*tepa*) and was "given" (*venia*). This is all conceptually discriminated from exchange relations (*varibei*) in which equivalence was demanded.
- 8: Which, as Hocart (n.d.n.: 2, 15) notes, is much feared as a time when *tomate* are particularly prevalent.
- 9: Everybody held to this view until one of his *luluna* confessed to adultery, precipitating a marriage separation. From this time some people abandoned speculation about divine retribution. Others combined the two—her adultery had caused mishap to a *luluna*, the one who happened to be most deserving of disaster.
- 10: One missionary, married to a local woman, remained. He converted to paganism and joined his erstwhile flock in making ancestral offerings until "Mr Goldie came and took him away".
- 11: Tuza (1977: 113) holds that Methodist Mission buildings were analogous to skullhouses, shrines and altars in their functional similarity—offerings and prayers were offered at both and each proffered mystical protection. This substitution is quite distinct from the taming of ancestral forces on Santa Isabel.
- 12: This opposition does not, of course, derive only from, Christian-pagan contrasts. Kwaio pagans make complaints about declining standards in almost identical terms, despite their approval of the decline of violence (Keesing, 1992a: 16).
- 13: Saturday or Sunday depending upon denomination.
- 14: In general the observations I make about Simbo Christianity cannot be held to apply to the SSEC congregation. The marginalization of the group is perhaps attested by the fact that none of the other three

denominations hold strong critical views of SSEC doctrine and behaviour, a distinct contrast to the mutual bitterness prevailing between SDA-UC and CFC-UC congregations.

15: Anyone whose body is deformed or disabled in any way is regarded as inadequate: people disabled from polio or accidents, those with fulminating skin diseases from youth, prematurely bald men, hunchbacks, lepers, etc. Zonaton's marriage was only relatively new when he contracted leprosy. If it had been of longer duration, or if it had produced children, his wife's family might not have so readily enforced a divorce.

16: I complied with CFC elders' request that I not conduct research in their community. However, I have spent considerable time with CFC members. My perspective is necessarily limited and I feel constrained not to report some data available to me. Nonetheless, I consider it appropriate to present UC representations of the CFC's emergence and to speculate as to CFC motivations and logics, on the basis of general Simbo social views and practices.

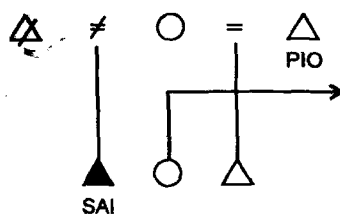
17: I must stress here that I am dealing overwhelmingly with UC evaluations of (mainly) SDA women who refuse to convert to the UC despite their husband's insistence. The great numerical superiority of UCs—some 85% of the resident population—make this inevitable. The more patriarchal ideology of SDAs, combined with the fact that women marrying SDAs do almost inevitably convert, both suggest that the same attitude prevails. It must be allowed that the simmering UC resentment at both the establishment of the SDA on Simbo and the linked view that SDA men “steal” UC women may affect the behaviour of UC men married to SDA women.

18: Tiki, who also converted when her husband did so, found the vital SDA issue of “the true” *lotu* to be rather irrelevant: “It's not important. Tamasa is Tamasa, *lotu* is *lotu*”. Unlike Hilida and most other female converts to SDA, Tiki was, in a sense, coerced into converting when her husband, from whom she was estranged, made reconciliation contingent upon her switch to Adventism.

19: Pita, being away, made no contribution to the debate.

20: Mabelo's oldest son eventually married an SDA woman and remained in the SDA village, Tuku. Her youngest son, Timote, has always attended UC services with his father. He also smoked and chews betelnut. Nonetheless his scant association with the denomination was, at least rhetorically, used to bolster Aneta and Zoni's opposition to his marrying their daughter Miri (who appears in later chapters).

21: This forms a beautiful contrast to an account I have of a re-conversion from the SDA to the UC. It involves Sai's MH:



Many years ago he converted to SDA with his entire family but, after some time his youngest son became chronically ill, to the perplexity of doctors. According to his daughter, Pio finally sought out Bishop Leslie Boseto, renowned for his healing powers. He told them the SDA religion had made the boy sick, then prayed over him, and healed him. Pio with his family immediately converted back to UC. It was some years after this that Sai joined the SDA.

22: I knew of only two children who did not attend school in recent years. One was the ZD daughter of an impoverished unmarried woman, Sera (Chapter Five), who could not afford the fees and uniform costs (about SBD \$20p.a.) and one girl refused to return to the class of a violent teacher. Some years previously, a lame boy (now aged about 25) did not go to school. He is ambulant, however, so I do not know whether his lameness related to his absence from school. A generation previously, a boy was so badly disabled by polio that he could not reach school. He ultimately taught himself to read and write by looking at hymnals while the congregation sang.

23: Zulian also had some kinship linkages there.

### PART THREE

#### SIMBIO

Our place is really called Mandagusa. That's what the people of that place call it. The word means "Four Islands" and the village of Simbio has eight islands. It's not one island, but the language is understood. They don't get it right. Atandegusa is that's what the word is. It's a Mandagusa word. So it's a mistake. The maps and other people all say "Simbio" instead of "Mandagusa". So they say Simbio. But we're Tifoni Simbio but the people of that place don't know the word Mandagusa.

## CHAPTER FIVE

## PART THREE

## SIMBO

11978

The following chapters are ostensibly patterned according to a chronology that suggests each moves from birth through various stages to death and beyond. While this model is fairly useful, I deploy glimpses of individual life histories in order to illuminate the significance of historical changes in Simbo society over seventy years and the complex parameters of identity.

Our place is really called Mandegusu. That's what the people of the Time One Day called it. It means "Four Districts." Simbo means Nusa Simbo, the small [adjoining] island, because we're not one island. But the Europeans misunderstood. They thought Simbo was the whole of Mandegusu so that's what they called us. It's a Mandegusu word, but it's not straight. Now the maps and other people all say "Simbo" instead of "Mandegusu". So we say Simbo, too. We say we're Tinoni Simbo but the People One Day said they were Tinoni Mandegusu.

Rona Barogoso

what is and what may come to be. That, however, suggested a starkness, a sense of change, as if one social form was directly transformed into another and then another as a result of spreading "happening". The fluidity of social life and its process of historical transformation disappeared and was replaced by events—both routine lifecycle events and unique historical events. It reinforced an impression that the oldest history, the old baseline from which the others had been recognized and that the old social forms had been. But the difficulties of depicting historical transformations through the life histories of individuals also arose from the nature of those key social forms. In not knowing, subject to question, consider the lifecycle as a model for ethnographic research. I follow this with a brief critique of "life histories". The final group of chapters consider some general patterns of social change evinced in life histories on Simbo, such as changing perceptions of property, authority and kinship.

## Lifecycles

The chief advantages of the lifecycle as a model for ethnographic research are that it thus avoids homogenizing persons by highlighting the different stages of culturally constructed personhood. Further, it demonstrates flux in the dynamics of identity and

control over the lifecycle. Lifecycle  
women as they progress from the

## CHAPTER FIVE

grandmother. In many Mediterranean soci-

elsewhere, it has illustrated indigenous pe-

accepted ideas about political relations and agency in a

Lifecycles also apply to collectively as w-

age that the "developmental ratio" is a vi-

ment and of the relationship. I am summarizing the

### LIVES

The following chapters are ostensibly patterned according to a conventional lifecycle which moves from birth through various stages to death and beyond. Within this model of lifecycle, I deploy glimpses of individual life histories in order to illuminate the significance of historical changes in Simbo society over ninety years and the contemporaneous diversity of "lives". This began as a simple, straightforward way of demonstrating continuity and change. It has been anything *but* simple and straightforward in its execution. This partly derives from the historical dimension of my project which would not have been adequately served by a simple juxtaposition of lifecycles in 1901 and 1991. My initial intention was to concentrate on the lives of three women—Neli, Lidia and Mari (Fig. 5.1) in order to illustrate what was, what is and what may come to be. That, however, suggested a staccato view of change, as if one social form was directly transformed into another and then another as a result of something "happening". The fluidity of social life and the process of historical changes disappeared and was replaced by events—both recurrent lifecycle events and unique historical events. It reinforced an impression that the oldest lifecycle, that of Neli, was some kind of baseline from which the others had been transmogrified and that they were somehow aberrant. But the difficulties of depicting historical transformations through lifecycles and life histories also arose from the nature of those analytical tools. In the following section, I critically consider the lifecycle as a model for ethnographic material. I follow this with a similar critique of "life histories". The final parts of the chapter consider some general patterns of social change evinced in life histories on Simbo, concentrating particularly on demography and kinship.

### Lifecycles

relationships, as it is symbolically recovered by women who effected self-empowerment and

There are undoubted advantages to the lifecycle. It makes movement through life visible and thus avoids homogenizing persons by highlighting the different stages of culturally constructed personhood. Further, it demonstrates flux in the dynamics of autonomy and



control over the lifecycle. Lifecycles have revealed, for example, the increasing power of women as they progress from the status of young wife to that of mother-in-law and grandmother in many Mediterranean societies. (e.g. Dubish, *et al.*, 1986; Rogers, 1975). Elsewhere, it has illustrated indigenous perceptions of time or power which undermine accepted ideas about political relations and agency (e.g. Weiner, 1977; Gillison, 1980). Lifecycles also apply to collectivities as well as persons. Fortes (1958: 3) noted some time ago that the "developmental factor" is a vital determinant of the nature of a given domestic group and of the relationship of its members to the wider community. While his conceptualization of the domestic unit is pervaded by biological essentialism (Yanagisako, 1987: 113-115), his wider point, about the sequential nature of domestic groups, stands. Simultaneously, while illustrating the life trajectory, lifecycles demonstrate commonalities and regularities, as Fortes (1958: 6-8) argues.

The suggestion of regularity and progression, however, also delimits the benefits of lifecycle models. Thus it appears an ideal methodology in those situations in which people's actions, status or "rights" seem largely determined by kinship, age-sets, age-grades and demarcated roles, etc. (e.g. Dyson-Hudson, 1963; Eisenstadt, 1956) (although historical factors in their development and maintenance should also be considered). However, imposing life cyclical order on cultural process may impose a false sense of uniformity and regularity (see also Carrier, 1992b: 14). In eliciting the progression from unmarried girl to married mother on Simbo, or from Karimojong warrior to elder, or from *baloma* to human *dala* member in the Trobriands, the movement of the "typical person's" life is demonstrated and variations within each phase may be elided.

Weiner's (1977) reanalysis of gender in Trobriand exchange relations illustrates the benefits and shortcomings of this methodology. Weiner convincingly demonstrates ways in which Kiriwinan women, operating within indigenous temporal understandings and enmeshed in exchange relations with their natal brothers, husbands and members of in-marrying *dala* (lineages), utilize those exchange relationships to participate in the regeneration of their own *dala*, simultaneously maximizing their position and prestige in mortuary exchanges and in non-mortuary exchange relationships. Weiner's cycle demonstrates the normal progression of *dala* "substance", accumulated by a deceased person through a lifetime of exchange relationships, as it is symbolically recovered by women who effectively reciprocate and thereby cancel those transactions in order to return "pure" essence to its rightful *dala*. The essence, thus freed, is again able to circulate via rejuvenated *baloma* (ancestral spirit) through generations of Kiriwinans (Weiner: 1977: 22, 39, *passim*; cf. Malinowski, 1916). In the

process, Weiner demonstrates indigenous conceptualizations of personhood and the ways in which these structure social behaviour. Only by recognizing the metaphysical existence of *baloma* (ancestral spirit) and their reincarnation as *waia* (spirit child), which enter women's uteruses to be reborn as lineage members (1977: 120-122), can the significance of mortuary exchanges be understood. Death must thus be recognized as integral to birth, if Trobriand sociality is to be comprehended.

One could depict a lifecycle progression of a Simbo man of a century ago thus: from infant dependent upon mother, sisters and extended female kin; to young boy engaged in war play with other young boys; to youth engaged in serious training for headhunting; to warrior who had taken (a) head/s; to lineage elder; and ultimately ancestor. One could demonstrate how as warrior he engaged in exchange or patron-client relationships with *banara* or how *luluna* regulation contributed to his efficacy as a warrior. As in Weiner's Trobriand analysis, the local metaphysical world would be recognized as a vital factor in determining the flow of life occurred in the course of the history of

There is a truth here, but there is also a deterministic implication that *that* is *what* Simbo men did or were like. Those who did not follow the ideal lifecycle, then, must be abnormal, exceptional or peripheral; anything *but* typically Simbo. It also implies routine compliance with accepted social roles and obligations and the absence of tensions or open expression of social contradictions. The oscillation between ideology and hegemony is here rendered impossible. Thus, variation is obscured by the "typical" and dissent or negotiation of social reality are elided. Weiner's lifecycle proffers an account of "the" Kiriwinan model of social reality with its entailed projection of social regeneration of *dala* substance, *baloma*, etc. "The" Kiriwinans perpetuate this epistemology and practise its requirements. Shared understandings are, apparently, unanimously endorsed. Alternative life trajectories are not represented. While the lifecycle facilitates the delineation of her argument about Trobriand cosmology, it also transforms Kiriwinan people into icons. In my portrait of the representative Simbo man of the 1890s, too, individuals are eclipsed, and possible alternatives are negated. Thus, the phase of the male warrior, although unarguably "ideal" at the time, was only one of several alternative but non-exclusive lifeways. As I have pointed out, not all men became warriors and fewer actually took heads. Many Simbo men, even at the height of raiding, remained island-bound, their lives lived as horticulturalists under threat of enemy raids. Although all men, except the major *banara*, gardened, those with specialized occupations obviously did less. Some men—numbers are hard to ascertain—were specialists

*dala* substance ensuring the "regeneration of persons through social and economic

in the large *bonito* hunts organized by *banara* and obtained considerable wealth and prestige. Others were *iama* (Chapter Two).

In the section on life histories (below), I argue that it is possible to handle lifecycles sensitively in order to display variability and alterity, dissent and negotiation. There is however, a further problem. Lifecycles can enhance anthropological depictions of historical stasis or evolutionary backwardness, a tendency which has been cogently criticized in recent years (e.g. Carrier, 1992b: 13-15; Carrier and Carrier, 1991; Fabian, 1983: 11-12, 25, 31). The necessary juxtaposition of new born infant and old man or woman impresses the idea of replication. While a span of over ninety years may separate the two, the implication is that a well-trodden path awaits the infant, leading unerringly to the ultimate destination reflected in the situation of the contemporary aged. Such a perspective suppresses the implications of natural demography—it is, after all, the extraordinary infant who will survive to white-haired old age. More importantly, it also elides the often extreme socio-historical changes which have occurred in the course of the ninety years lived by the older people and those which will occur in the ninety years which potentially await contemporary infants. Some 180 years of social history—spanning the birth of the oldest to the future death of the youngest—are thus suppressed through the implications of continuity in temporal cycling. The marked progression from infant through to venerable elder or ancestor, with its implied sameness from generation to generation—the childhood of a contemporary two year-old approximates that of the contemporary ninety year-old, whose current elderhood is akin to that of her or his own grandparents—contributes to the imagining of unchanging societies “out of time” (Fabian, 1983.; see also R. Rosaldo, 1980: 10-12).

This may be especially so in those societies in which local cosmologies posit a repetitive cycling of ancestral essence, spirits or souls, as Weiner’s Kiriwinans do. Such cosmologies facilitate the construction of lifecycles as, literally, closed circles. While it is vital to elucidate the “total culturally constituted environment” (Weiner: 1977: 120, 221, *passim*), Weiner effectively conflates indigenous temporal and metaphysical frameworks with Trobriand culture. Trobriand images of eternal society mirror Weiner’s image of timeless Trobriand culture. Weiner has already been criticized for her elision of the significance of the far-reaching social changes which have occurred in the Massim since long before Malinowski’s sojourn (Jolly, 1992a: 49-51). Her ethnography is ahistoric, not simply because she denies the relevance of Trobriand history to the *kula* and local exchange networks which are central to her work (Weiner, 1980; cf., Berde, 1983; Irwin, 1983), however, but also because her depiction of *dala* substance ensuring the “regeneration of persons through social and cosmic

time" (1977: 221) itself implies the homogeneity of all equivalent phases of that cycle today, yesterday and tomorrow.

This is not to argue that Kiriwinians did not espouse the recycling of ancestral essence at the time of Weiner's fieldwork. However, her constant comparison of the Trobriand lifecycle to Malinowski's ethnography ignores the possibility that historical changes may have contributed to the contrast, suggesting that he simply got it wrong because he disregarded women (Strathern 1981: 666-669). As previous chapters have argued, however, it is easy to conflate exoticism and cultural continuity. While being enmeshed in the world system affects indigenous cultural expression, it does not necessarily produce the homogeneity or easily identified "Westernization" which is presupposed by much anthropological analysis. Rather, the outcome is the product of interaction between global forces, the particular colonial culture and local cultural models, politics and historical trajectories which shape indigenous approaches to those forces (Carrier, 1992a: 122; Carrier and Carrier, 1991; J.L. Comaroff, 1989: 662-663; Comaroff and Comaroff, 1991: 54-55; Douglas, 1992: 88-89; Jolly, 1992c; N. Thomas, 1992b). Weiner's ethnography partially exemplifies this problem of mistaking difference in the late twentieth century for cultural continuity or survival. As Jolly (1992a: 39) argues, Trobriand women's exchanges have particular modern relevance:

Exchanges of women's wealth have assumed an inflated and novel significance since Malinowski's time—not only securing the regeneration of Trobriand persons but ensuring the perpetuity of Trobriand culture in the face of competing values. Women are, as Weiner has portrayed them, at the core of Trobriand traditions. But such traditions are, I contend, not unselfconscious persistences but self-conscious resistances to modernity and monetary values.

The constant recycling of dala essence through women's exchanges, which is so central to local identity, may similarly suggest an assertion of local cultural integrity in the face of external forces for change. It is probable, then, that the lifecycle described by Weiner is temporally specific. Indeed, although the consequences of colonial and postcolonial incorporation have been highly variable, I would suggest that all atemporal lifecycle descriptions are actually depictions of historically specific situations.

In the Simbo case, Mari, the youngest granddaughter of Neli Qoele at the time of writing (see Fig. 5.1), has experienced a fundamentally different life to that which her grandmother experienced as a one year-old. Neli lived in a heavily camouflaged hamlet, hidden in the bush on top of the hills with her mother, father, some of her father's siblings, and her only natal sibling, the two of them products of the last generation before the explosion of fertility rates on the island. She was continually in company of a strong adult capable of snatching her and fleeing into the bush in the event of a headhunting raid. Socialized from an early age not to cry, because of the awareness of the ubiquitous threat of enemy raids and the need to hide

effectively, she watched men walking around *always* carrying *maza* (“headhunting axes”) and heard constant discussions of enemies, the care of ancestral shrines and the omnipresence of *tomate*. She presumably heard talk of the colonial government’s suppression of New and Georgian men’s headhunting raids and of the arrival of South Sea Island missionaries on the other side of the island where the Ove people were beginning to settle at Tapurai.

Mari, by contrast, lives temporarily on Rendova where her mother teaches school and her father keeps a “store” in their house. They live down on the shore, close to running tap water. She freely travels between districts or islands by motorized canoe. She socializes with the descendants of those whom her MM and her MM’s parents thought and spoke of as intractable foes. If she cries, she cries lustily and people rush to please her. The talk of the Christian outsiders is now of SDAs in contrast to her own family’s staunch UC affiliation. She eats a large proportion of store-bought food, and will consequently suffer miserably from untreated childhood dental caries, unlike Neli, who would rarely have eaten such items as a child. Mari will experience interactions, education, occupations, health, illness, and spirituality such as Neli would never have imagined or undergone. Neli, too, has lived a life to which Mari could never aspire, much of which she will never hear of. The gap between Mari and her mother Lidia’s, infancy is large, as is that between Lidia and Neli: that between Mari and Neli is a yawning chasm.

Neli, about 90, frail and settled, will soon die as the respected matriarch of her *bubutu*. Living in a family hamlet on land held through her father, she is surrounded by various family members—others work or have married in PNG, Malaita, Ranongga, Vella Lavella<sup>1</sup> and elsewhere on Simbo—with her family shrines and those of her dead husband’s family nearby, maintained by her eldest son, Beni. She has access to cash such as she needs through her working children and those who make copra or market locally. The mother of eight living offspring, she has approximately fifty grandchildren and an increasing number of great-grandchildren. Mari’s own old age cannot be predicted. It will categorically, however, not be the same. Of course there are continuities: people still watch anxiously for *tomate*, which *lotu* has not eliminated. Mari will hear some of the local stories her grandmother heard as a toddler; like Neli she will be socialized from an early age to be wary of her *luluna*; she will still be obligated and enabled by kin ties. Many other strands of continuity could be teased out. But, even these continuities will differ by context, be experienced in different frameworks and rationalized from alternative perspectives.

Thus, in my demarcations of the lifecycles of the women in the forthcoming chapters there is no intention to present the experiences of older generations as projections of the

futures of the younger. The attribution of lifecycle stages is simply my way of dealing with the diversity of personal and social histories and disparate rights and responsibilities, statuses and actions of people within those general categories of persons recognized by Tinoni Simbo. Let me now say something about the problem of telling the lives of the particular women who are the focus of the life histories which follow.

these distinctive characters' accounts must be seen in the context of the realities experienced by other women in their society. (Shostak, 1981: 358)

## Life Histories

...that other than being "unusually articulate" and having had exceptional life

Life histories are not necessarily deployed in anthropological accounts of lifecycles, although they are inevitably implicitly told. Even in the most abstract of lifecycles, the history of numerous individuals is tacitly preordained. When life history approximates individual biography, however, the two diverge. Indeed, while indigenous conceptualizations of a lifecycle may be recognized, life history is a far more contentious category. Some see it as a historically specific European concept, dependent on notions of the individual (see Weintraub, 1978). Life history focuses on real individuals and tells more particularized stories.

Individuality is further reflected in the way that life histories are usually centred on events (Biersack, 1991: 6), derived from autobiographical accounts, rather than from diverse sources.

Nisa's famous life, explicitly solicited in an attempt to gain deeper comprehension of !Kung women (Shostak, 1981: 349-350, 358; Clifford, 1986: 105) is told in her own words, although with authorial reference to !Kung women; so are the glimpses of Bedouin women offered in Abu-Lughod. (Although Abu-Lughod, 1993: 30, disclaims the life history genre.) Young's Kwahihi is likewise a self-account, with clarifications from the assistant who solicited the account (1983: 484). It is in this individuation that the difficulty arises, first, in how the lives of individual women are made to represent an entire social category. Faithorn's lifecycle of a Kafe woman is perhaps an extreme. She illustrates the lifecycle through the life history of a particular woman (1990: Chapter Five). The actual words of this woman are virtually never heard. Rather, Faithorn describes her own imaginings of the experiences of her character. Indeed, it is never certain where imagining ends and "knowledge" takes up.

The second problem with the individuation of histories derives from the nature of the concept of "a life". Crapanzano (1984, cited in Abu-Lughod, 1993: 30) questions the degree to which "a life" is universally meaningful. Rather, "the exemplary, coherent self" of the life history may be "a potent and pervasive mechanism for the production of meaning in the West" (Clifford, 1986: 106; Abu-Lughod, 1993: 46). It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that those women who do speak in ethnographic autobiographies are idiosyncratic but come to represent the typical. Shostak admits that Nisa was different because of the extreme tribulations she

had suffered (1981: 350, 358). Fenaori, the first Kwaio women from whom Keesing (1985b: 29-30) ultimately acquired lucid, moving, illuminating accounts of women's perspectives "had struck me by her independence and force of character". Kwahihi (Young, 1983: 482-484) was, like Nisa and Fenaori, unusual in her willingness to speak about herself at all. The problem, then, is to establish the degree to which these distinctive characters' accounts can be held to reflect the realities experienced by other women in their society. Shostak (1981: 358) reassures herself that other than being "unusually articulate" and having had exceptional life experiences, Nisa "was a typical !Kung woman".

There are three points to be made here. First, I would suggest that male life histories are also obtained from singular persons. The Kwaio male feastgiver, 'Elota, whose account Keesing sought to parallel with that of a female protagonist was, for example, "the leading feastgiver of his generation" (Keesing, 1985b: 29) and therefore clearly remarkable. Perhaps an ordinary Kwaio man would be as inarticulate and diffident as Keesing first thought women to be. Secondly, social life is polyphonic, so the issue of how representative a woman's voice is, is somewhat irrelevant (Young, 1983: 479). Kwahihi opens her account with the words "I am Kwahihi. This is *my* story." (Young, 1983: 484, emphasis added). Neither she nor Young claim representativeness (nor uniqueness). Neither does Keesing make Fenaori emblematic of Kwaio womanhood (Keesing, 1987: 55). Rather, with time, he gathers the accounts of an array of women, including "surprisingly rich materials" from women who were not "regarded as particularly important; neither was assertive or particularly knowledgeable". Keesing, and his colleague Shreiner, eventually obtained floods of words . . . [which] have surprised and overwhelmed us. Kwaio women, it is clear, can be articulate raconteuses, wise observers of their social worlds, and ideologues at least as forceful and voluble as their male counterparts. (Keesing, 1985b: 31)

Their success, Keesing argues, arose from his and Schreiner's discovery of appropriate contexts for elicitation. This is the third point. Ardener (1975: 3-4) argued that although women generate distinctive models of their world, they are mute, relative to men. This has become something of an unexamined truism (Young, 1983: 478). Young's and Keesing's papers both demonstrate that women's histories may be elicited very successfully if the ethnographer finds the appropriate contexts. These may be quite different to those in which men are prepared to speak. For Keesing, that context was one in which he worked with a female colleague, was well known over many years (see also Abu-Lughod, 1993: 38) and women perceived their accounts as complementing the codification of *kastom* on which Keesing worked with men (1985b: 32). For Young, it was his own fortuitous absence which allowed Kwahihi to speak to the tape in company of her FBSS (Young, 1983: 482).

The problem of a unique individual becoming iconic of all of her class because other women are inarticulate may be addressed, then, by admitting the polyphony of voices and the difficulty of finding the appropriate contexts in which any person is willing to talk. The reticence of women may be an image evoked by contrast to accounts of eminent men, which obscure the relative silence of ordinary men. Yet there is little doubt that men and women say different things in their self-accounts. Kwaio women's accounts are moral texts in which they talk "less to explicate a sense of self or individuality than to comment on the values of A Woman's Life" (Keesing, 1987: 41; see also 1985: 33). Indeed, their accounts are as much about their mothers and MMs as about themselves. In the genre of life histories, their accounts "hover in epistemological limbo". This difference in self-reflectiveness and individuation between male and female accounts is, according to Young (1983: 483), partly because men go abroad for migrant labour where they learn an individuated mode of self expression.

### Simbo Life Histories

Finally, one day, she agreed, arguing that she did not know of well. The outcome was a brief Simbo women have far greater contact with foreigners than do the Kalauna and Kwaio women depicted by Young and Keesing. Some have been to schools with European teachers in Munda and Honiara; many have been nurses and teachers in hospitals and schools scattered throughout the Western Solomons. Large numbers have married abroad into other Solomons islands, PNG, England, Australia and Canada. They have been migrant labourers as public servants, "housegirls", waiters, shop workers and domestics or have lived with wage-migrant fathers or husbands. Nonetheless their accounts differ substantially from those of men. I now concentrate on the characteristics of Simbo life histories and the manner in which they were told.

I would note, first, that neither men nor women are more or less articulate or eager to tell their lives on tape. Only one person ever sought me out to tell his life history, a man who was often joked about for being self-important. Others agreed to my requests or were brought forward by their families. With the exception of the aged Leoke, whose exegesis of headhunting is prominent in Chapter Two, no-one was ever comfortable having their accounts recorded on tape. In my first week, Ata encouraged me to record an autobiography of his father Bela, who was a *banara* and had been a missionary. The old man sat and spoke *sotto voce* into the tape for about five minutes and then paused—he was finished and the tape was inaudible. When I solicited an account from Zebedi, his hand trembled as he spoke and he



kept looking towards his sons for guidance as to what he should say. Both of these men have been important actors in their communities and abroad. ~~edly. This goes some way to~~

Women flatly refused to speak into tape recorders except on very rare occasions and when they did, their words were as abbreviated as those of men. Lina Qoele (Fig 5.2) once gave a breathtaking account of the legendary female warrior Lipuriki. For forty minutes her daughter, Zila, and I sat enthralled. When she spoke of the duplicity of the Ranonggans who waited till the warriors left, we shivered; when she evoked the silence and stillness of the fortified defence area where the women and children took refuge, we could feel the tension and hear the minute shufflings of those present and when at last Lipuriki took up the *maza* and smote the head of the leader, we saw the spurt of blood, saw the Ranonggans turn and flee, stumbling over each other, falling down the cliff-face and being splattered by the boulders the women rolled down upon them. Zila finally took a breath and resumed peeling potatoes with an offhand remark about dinner being late that night because of the “strong account” (*pipito neqi*). The next day when I said I would like to record the tale, Lina refused. I persisted. Finally, one day, she agreed, arguing that she did not know it well. The outcome was a brief account, lasting less than ten minutes, that is well crafted and quite compelling, but lacks the vivacity and rhetorical elaboration of the original. Analogous curtailment characterizes recordings from both men and women. ~~she had seen, because a European would~~

Where women's and men's self-accounts differed was in their approach to biography. Brief as men's accounts were, they were unambiguously autobiographical: *I* was born at such-and-such a time. This happened and *I* did this or that—*I* was like that and now *I* am like this. Women, by contrast, located themselves genealogically: *My* mother was X and *my* father was Y. They then spoke of their moral qualities, as Kwaio women did, although the subject matter differed, in stressing their superior nurturant qualities—*my* mother/father worked hard/never fought/were generous, etc. Their marriages were handled in similar ways: *I* married A whose parents were B & C from here and there. Then they detailed offspring, offsprings' spouses, residential patterns, grandchildren. I will not digress to analyze these marked differences. The salient point here is that I am dealing with my attempts to formally elicit life histories.

Informal situations were very different. Apart from the brevity of recordings, or, indeed, statements such as “Turn that off! I won't talk, I refuse”, women and men talk candidly, and at length, about their life experiences and their own adjudications. What is said depends entirely upon context. In front of their *luluna*, for example, women might tell of their encounter with a raving European suffering malarial rigours at the hospital. Away from them they would

discuss birth or other women's scandals. What they said to me alone, to me in company of others and to others in company of myself differed markedly. This goes some way to explaining people's consistent avoidance of recording. Quite apart from the issue of intrusion or surveillance implicit in electronic data collection, Tinoni Simbo are always conscious of the composition of their audience: important people might be affronted by an ordinary person's presumption in being presented as an authority; affines, *luluna* or spouses might be angered by claims, reminiscences or revelations; foreign audiences may think them stupid, inferior or dirty. People are well aware of the relative permanence of tapes and photographs, of the indelibility of their personal identity inscribed on them and of the way these can turn up in unexpected places. In 1908, after all, Hocart was displaying pictures of Ziruviri from Guppy's book. Words said into air, company or an ear, are gone. On tape, they can be heard by anyone and heard repeatedly and significant social consequences may result. Perhaps with Keesing's long acquaintance my integrity may have been granted. Perhaps not.

When people spoke directly to me, they often did so in the course of casual conversation. Often, however, they told me things about themselves or about their thoughts that they could not articulate to others. Kata, for example, claimed that her extramarital pregnancies were a deliberate ploy to escape marriage; Miri (Fig 5.2) told me about her feelings for Timote in terms of romantic videos she had seen, because a European would understand. An urban-raised, university graduate confided his feelings of alienation in both indigenous and European worlds. A woman confessed her jealousy of her beautiful and accomplished sister. There were not only accounts of alienation. Some stories were given out of kindness or a sense that I would understand because of my own experiences. When I had been visibly worried at Astrid's intractable high temperature, Lisa sat down and shared the death of her two year-old son from measles four years previously. She concluded, quietly crying, by remarking that people said she should forget because of the time lapse, so she never spoke of it. I will never know whether she gave or sought sympathy or comfort. I do know a recording would have been an obscenity. Other accounts were, of course, just relaxed anecdotes relayed in a context of lengthening acquaintance and mutual familiarity.

Where people spoke to me in company of others, a kind of informal exchange of anecdotes occurred. Why should they tell about themselves without reciprocity? Women and men were as interested in Australia as I was in Simbo. Someone would ask me about my family members, my response would stimulate them or someone else to speak about an analogous experience and others would follow. Suddenly I would have two or three accounts of a similar event, complete with commentaries. It was, however, when I was lounging about

in a cookhouse, reclining on a verandah, or sitting in a crowd waiting for some event that self-accounts flowed most unselfconsciously. I would be visible but half forgotten while the women or men swapped their own life experiences with one another. One of my friends might sidle up and help to explain the topic or dialogue or unknown concepts.

In everyday life, then, most adults are autobiographers. The distinguishing feature of this, from a European perspective, is its episodic, rather than progressive, form. "A life" as experienced is not a tidy sequence with beginning, middle and end, although it has assumed such a progression in Chapters Six-Ten. Nor is it a seamless fabric. It is, rather, a melange in which particular experiences stand out from time to time. Thus, when I asked Kali Qoele about her experiences of birth, she had nothing to say. A week later her pregnant daughter hoped her own impending confinement would occur at night, when there was no-one about. Kali remarked that she should be glad it was indoors. I asked what would have happened had it rained when she was giving birth in the forest. She responded with what turned into a prolonged account of birth long ago and, as a few neighbouring women clustered around, she recounted her own first birth and her feelings about it. When she finished, I prompted her for the sequel.

"Nothing, it was over".

"But what about after it was over?"

"Oh, I rested and then I went home, that's all".

My own rendition of life histories follows this melange of miscellany. Rather than forcing narrative flow out of the lives of one or two particular women, as I originally intended, partial accounts from many women are scattered throughout. (Those who recur most frequently appear in Fig 5.1 & Fig 5.2). This has the advantage of conveying the diversity of experiences and perspectives and qualifying my generalizations. Without conscious deliberation, there are similarities to Abu-Lughod's (1993) rendition of Bedouin women's accounts. Her volume both entices and tantalizes. So do the frustratingly incomplete but forthright accounts that Simbo women give of themselves. There is, however, a major difference between Abu-Lughod's and my own life histories. She refuses conclusive analysis. Although, I do not finish with a formal conclusion, my authorial interventions are manifest: the life histories are clearly subordinated to the project of historicizing the lifecycle and clarifying the historical changes to Simbo's *Weltanschauung*.

*Tina Simbo—Simbo City*

Simbo lives and not change.

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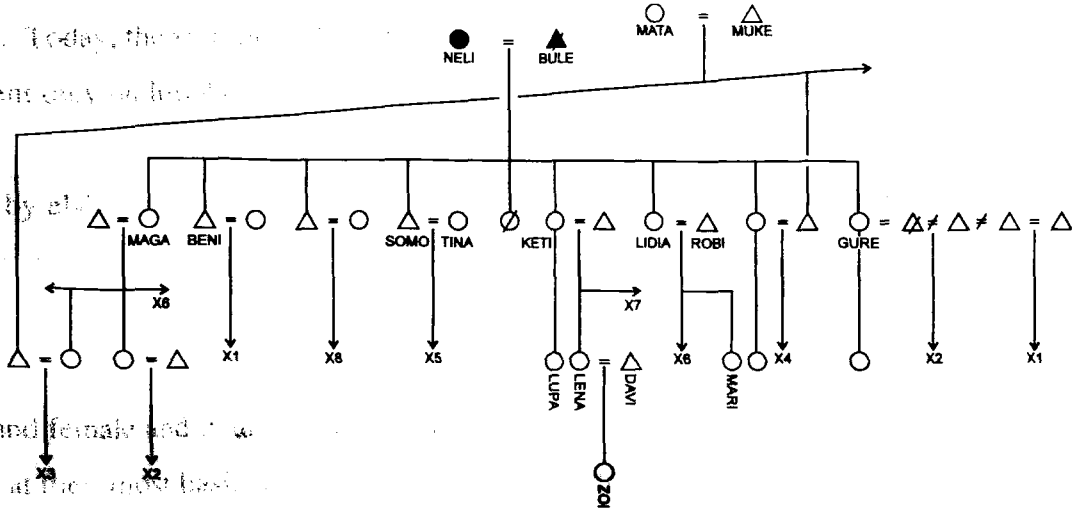
child

all in

river) and female and

man at the river bank.

*kobura zereko* *kobura*



**FIG 5.1: BULE-NELI DESCENDANTS.** (Named persons are those who appear in this work.)

and her husband, a descendant of the

what constitutes a person's

on the basis gradually different

ultimately being reversed

terms whereas to an only child

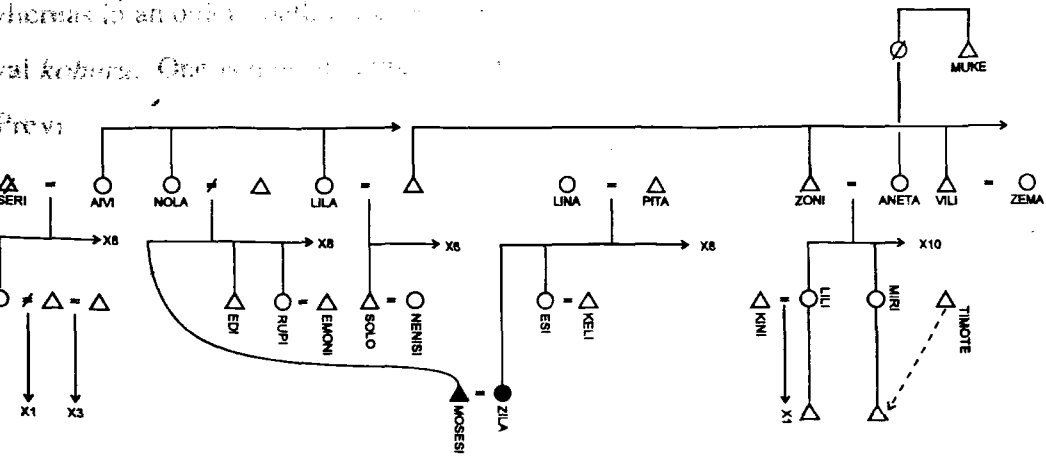
adjectival *kobura*. One example of this

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**FIG 5.2: RELEVANT KIN & AFFINES OF ZILA & MOSESI** (Named persons appear in this work).

### *Tinoa Simbo—Simbo Lives*

Simbo lives are not characterized by elaborate ruptures, marked by life crises or rites of passage. Today, the significant transition from child to adult—marked by marriage—is dependent only on low-key exchanges (Chapter Seven) and even these are not invariably performed. The same can be said of the transition from life to death, which was previously marked by elaborate and prolonged ritual (Hocart, 1922; Chapter Ten). People distinguish only minimally between life stages. Briefly, they recognize the stages of neonate (*melalu*); child (*koburu*), which is appended to all unmarried persons; adults (*tinoni iviva*)—ascribed to all married persons and more marked by sex; as woman (*rereko iviva*) and man (*marane iviva*); and female and male old persons (*goele* and *barogoso* respectively). *Rereko* and *marane* at their most basic level refer respectively to female and male. Thus one speaks of a *koburu rereko* or *koburu marane*. However, when used unqualified they also mean, categorically, “woman” and “man” respectively. Although this indicates that Simbo people do not share European distinctions between sex and gender, it also reveals Simbo notions of what constitutes personhood. As youths progress from child to unmarried “adult”, the stress on the nouns gradually shifts from *koburu* to the gendered term, the adjectival and noun forms ultimately being reversed: thus in a young child the noun *koburu* is qualified by the gender terms whereas in an older youth the gendered *marane* or *rereko* are qualified by the now adjectival *koburu*. One is now an unmarried male or female rather than a female or male child. Previously ancestors (*tomate*) were also recognized as social actors who continued to affect their descendant’s lives and ideally to maintain reciprocal relations with them. Whether these should be regarded as social persons is discussed further in Chapter Ten. These stages, described in Table 5.1 and Table 5.2, and the demographic changes which have restructured them, provide the framework for succeeding chapters.

STAGE	DESCRIPTION	ACTIVITY
<b>Melalu</b> (0-1 yrs)	"Infant"	Dependent Indulged
<b>Koburu</b> <b>i. K. ite</b> (1-6 yrs) <b>ii. K. lavata</b> a. (7-15 yrs)  b. (15-24 yrs)	"Child" "Small Child"  "Big Child"	Dependent Dependent Minimal responsibility. Minimal dependence. School Females: Increasing household responsibility. Childcare Females: Household responsibility +/- waged work +/- early parenthood Males: Freedom +/- gardening +/- waged work.
<b>Tinoni iviva</b>	"Adult" "Significant Person"	Marriage Independent Household Parenthood/adoption Subsistence Care of Aged. Males: +/- waged labour.
<b>Qoele</b> <b>Barogoso</b> (45-death)	"Elderly Woman" "Elderly Man"	Less subsistence responsibility Foster parenthood Helping Offspring.
<b>Tomate</b> (death)	"Corpse"	Nothing

Table 5.1: Approximate Contemporary Lifecycle Phases

<b>Tomate</b>	<b>Ancestor</b>
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Table 5.2: Approximate Pre-patriarchal Lifecycle Phases

(Note: 1. less reliable than Table 5.1  
2. inability to attribute age to categories)

There are other categories of people who are excluded from the lifecycle phases. These include people who are considered to be of low status, such as the *neko* (men), disabled people (*itutu*), and the *itutu* (disabled people). However, these do not mark exclusion from the lifecycle phases, but rather mark exclusion from the lifecycle phases with particular attainments.

There are few absolutes. A *Sole* (man) is not necessarily a *Sole* (man) if he is not a *Sole* (man) on the commonalities I encountered. I encountered a *Sole* (man) who was not a *Sole* (man) on the commonalities I encountered.

STAGE	DESCRIPTION	ACTIVITY
<b>Melalu</b>	"Infant"	Liminal—at risk Dependent Indulged.
<b>Koburu</b> <b>i. K.ite</b> <b>ii. K.lavata</b>	"Child" "Small Child" "Big Child"	Dependent Minimal responsibility Minimal dependence. Females: Increasing household responsibility (little childcare) Early preparatory stages of marriage. Parenthood—rarely Males: learning fishing, hunting, warfare skills. +/- Warriorhood Fishing (not <i>bonito</i> ) Gardening
<b>Tinoni iviva</b>	"Adult" "Significant Person"	Marriage Subsistence Parenthood Care of Aged Offerings to ancestors Females: +/- specialization in healing, exchange, <i>tapa</i> production, politics, <i>kezo</i> Males: +/- specialization in healing, <i>bonito</i> fishing exchange, politics, <i>kezo</i> , +/-warfare, +/- <i>iama</i>
<b>Qoele</b> <b>Barogoso</b>	"Elderly woman" "Elderly man"	Less subsistence responsibility Grand parenthood Foster parenthood Pre-ancestorhood +/- Political ascendancy.
<b>Tomate</b>	"Ancestral Spirit"	Monitoring of moral community Enhancement of descendants' efficacy +/- affiliation with particular <i>kezo</i> OR Haunting of forests/affliction of humans.

**Table 5.2: Approximate Pre-pacification Lifecycle Phases.**

(Note: 1: less reliable than Table 5.1

2: inability to attribute ages to categories).

There are other categories of person, particularly those regarded as misfits or somehow inadequate and thereby disqualified from marriage and social adulthood—prematurely bald men (*veko*), disabled people (*qao*),<sup>2</sup> those whom no-one will marry (*qiru*) and "crazy" people (*tuturu*). However, these do not coincide with lifecycle categories, except insofar as they obviously mark exclusion from them as one attains an age which is chronologically associated with particular attainments.

There are few absolutes in Simbo lifecycles. My generalizations are just that, alighting on the commonalities I encountered, recognized and or had drawn to my attention. For every

statement I make about Tinoni Simbo, there are people to whom it is inapplicable. There are few absolutes in another sense: in general, nothing changes precipitously or definitely at particular times of life. The move from foetus to neonate (*melalu*), although formally marked by birth, is seen as a gradual transition, only fully achieved at the point of *ranepodo* (Chapter Six). The *melalu* is, essentially, an infant whose likelihood of survival is not yet firmly established. It is thus a variable appellation—a sickly infant will remain categorized *melalu* much longer than a patently healthy one—although the term is rarely applied, other than rhetorically, to anyone past their first birthday. Likewise, the move from *melalu* to “small child” (*koburu ite*) continues as the child is gradually seen to develop into a “larger child” (*koburu lavata*) and then one who is ready for marriage and adulthood. *Koburu*, at its most inclusive, means any person past one year of age, who is not married. This includes those females who are unmarried but already mothers. *Tinoni iviva*, *rereko* and *marane* refer fundamentally to those who have achieved adulthood through marriage. *Tinoni iviva*, like many Simbo titles, has a range of semantic connotations. At its most basic level it means a significant human actor and it is in this sense that it is applied to married people. It can, however, also be used as a synonym for an important person—*tinoni lavata* (big person) or *banara*.

Maternity, too, is a status only gradually developed with the birth of several children. Likewise the status of elder. *Qoele* and *barogoso* refer to those past middle-age, usually those with no small dependent children of their own, although they continue to parent their own children and frequently foster children. In these relationships, the dependency gradually reverses as the older parties become less independent and ultimately come to be sustained by those they previously nurtured. *Qoele* and *barogoso* also continue to be *tinoni iviva* unless marginalized by senility. Death alone might be seen as a fundamental break, but even here, at least in the case of old people, it is ideally a culmination of a long process, as the account of Lodu Qoele’s death (Chapter Ten) indicates. In the pre-Christian worldview, it was simply part of the transition to ancestors, who gradually faded away as they were forgotten by the living. Even today, the persistence of remnant *tomate* and ambiguity about the nature of death and the thereafter limits the closure associated with death, although this is less true of younger people’s perceptions.

These indigenous lifecycle categories provide the structure for the succeeding chapters. Simultaneously I strive not to erase the slippages and overlaps between apparently neatly demarcated stages, or the variability of Simbo women’s perceptions, actions and life events. As the lifecycle progression itself indicates, women’s lives vary significantly as they move



from birth to old age and death. However, the life histories which are examined within the contexts of the shifting phases of the lifecycle, display the degree to which women's lives differ from each other. This has been true of both pre-Christian and Christian Simbo societies. Lifecycles have also been historically transformed. I demonstrate the historical variability of women's lives on Simbo. In doing so, I not only illustrate the effects of Simbo-missionary interactions and trace a changing *Weltanschauung*. I also implicitly oppose the assumptions, underlying domestic-public and nature-culture models of gender relations, that female lives are essentially unchanging or invariable (Moore, 1988: 24-30; Yanagisako, 1987; Yanagisako & Collier, 1987: 16-29; cf., Rich, 1977: 11; M. Rosaldo, 1980: 399-400).

Contemporary analyses strive to balance variability and sameness, structure and process. Doing so through the structure of local lifecycle categories and the ephemerality of life histories has been extremely difficult. This is partly because variability mitigates against tidiness. It is also because of the different kinds of temporality which I deal—cyclical time, biographical time and historical time. The first and last, in particular, are discordant. The difficulty occurs, further, because talk of social transformation must refer to social manifestations of the changes. These manifestations have their own themes—the economy, parenthood, political authority, ritual and so on, which could be more cohesively addressed independently of lifecycle structures, although we would then lose the sense of lived history which these lifecycles try to impart. The incompatibility of institutional transformations and lifecycles is reflected in a kind of pastiche in the following chapters : *tomate*, *banara*, *luluna* and *tavitina* relations, for example, appear more sporadically than cohesively, although the corpus of references to them adds up to an account of their respective transformations. Finally, the usual categories of a lifecycle—conception, birth, childhood +/- initiation, marriage, parenthood, elderhood, death +/- ancestorhood/regeneration—are too tidy to capture people's lived experiences. Does birth, for example, belong in a chapter on childhood or a chapter on adult women's experiences? The essentialism of kinship studies, whereby womanhood and motherhood are often equated does not seem to have made this problematic in the past. However, birth is of very different moment to mothers and infants. This is most apparent in the changes instigated by missions, which both tightened and reformed control over female corporeal autonomy and ensured greater maternal-infant survivability. Maternity on Simbo also overlaps childhood and adulthood today, if we take indigenous lifecycle categories as the model for shaping the academic lifecycle. Doing so captures the transformations that have occurred, but results in combinations that may appear incongruous to a European observer. This, in turn, suggests that there may be a forced naturalism

underlying our assumption of a normal or universal lifecycle progression. In keeping with Simbo usage, for example, I deal with sexuality in a chapter on childhood.

### **Binei—Changes**

If anthropology has denied history to its subjects, the predominance in Pacific ethnography of studies of recently contacted societies, such as the New Guinea Highlands, has further contributed to impressions of indigenous societies struggling to come to terms with the impact of dramatic encounters with Western forces. In New Georgia, however, those initial encounters are long past and there has been prolonged interaction with the rest of the world. Not, of course, that “indigenous society” was ever stable *before* contact with the West (Chapter One). I therefore make no apologies for not attempting to reconstruct “traditional” or “authentic” Simbo culture, not simply because 200 years of interaction makes that impossible without detailed oral and documentary records, but because that entity arguably never existed. There is an implication in much anthropological literature that dissent, dialogue, even doubt, only emerged in the face of that compelling contact with the European world. In Chapter Two, I portrayed what I take to have been common practice and belief on the eve of colonization. I do not, however, project that as representative of the entire nineteenth century, which was a period of constant political flux. Nor do I assume that Simbo society was “stable” even before initial contact.

In the following section, I outline the major changes which have influenced lifecycles on Simbo over the past century. In doing so, just as in Chapter Two, it is perhaps inevitable that the variability and flux of contemporary life is highlighted in contrast to the apparent relative uniformity of the past. This is an artifact of the various types of data informing the construction. My sources on the past—oral and written histories, and writings and manuscripts from 1908—all tend to stress the stability of pre-Mission life,<sup>3</sup> a stability which appears more fixed with increasing distance. Sources on contemporary Simbo, by contrast, are more evocative of fluctuation and reaction, deriving as they do from comparative statistics, life histories and the dynamism characteristic of memories of recent events in the lives of contemporary protagonists. I can demonstrate wide variability in the present, and changing forms and general attitudes over the last ninety-odd years. Such demonstrations cannot be applied to the previous era. However, just as issues of alliance to a particular *lotu* or women’s roles within family and *lotu* are contemporary areas of contention, so too, we must assume that there was greater contention about the acceptance of *lotu* than is demonstrated by Lodu Qoele’s account (see Appendix III), that there were various responses to the availability of

muskets for headhunting around 1840, and that Tinoni Simbo did not uniformly rush to participate in the direct trade with Europeans which eventually facilitated their rise to headhunting dominance. Hocart (n.d.n.: 25) points to one such possible instance, in which a man named Kundakolo was apparently the only man on the island to adhere to rites connected with an entity called *kita*. Historical sources, too, attest to deep disagreements in the more recent past. Phillips, who conducted the first Land Commission in the early 1920s, for example, was confronted with constant disagreements about the systems of land inheritance, people making claims on the basis of matrilineal, patrilineal and cognatic descent (Scheffler, 1965: 35-36). It might be argued that there is less scope for dissent in warfare societies, that monopolization of force by a particular category of people may effectively silence others. M. Ross' (1986: 850-851) finding that external warfare tends to be associated with low female status suggests as much. It is now accepted, however, that even the most oppressed may have alternate visions of social reality. The Comaroffs' analyses suggest precisely that. Perhaps the greater complexity of the South African polity facilitates such diversity, but the point is that alternative perspectives suffuse social life, although some groups have greater autonomy of expression. Taking Simbo *luluna* relations as an example, it is possible that a century ago, women were disquieted about men's violent powers, and therefore that they acted accordingly in some way, but it is probable that they were less able to express that dissent even to the limited extent that they do today. That muted alterity may go some way to explaining Falk's (1985: xvi) observation that women have often been in the vanguard of religious innovations in societies in which their status can be shown to have been declining relative to those of men. With this diversity and dissent in mind, I will now consider the gross changes that have occurred over the last nine decades.

### **i. Demographic Changes**

There is considerable disjunction between my own lifecycle categories and those of Tinoni Simbo. This is undoubtedly an outcome of cultural differences in ways of categorizing personhood. However, to a degree, the sparseness of modern Simbo age category terms may be an outcome of a lag between demographic changes, impinging on life expectancy, and linguistic expression. Thus, youthful and mature marriages; parenthood of young and mature offspring; mature adulthood, grandparenthood and old age are all covered by the general Simbo terms *rereko/marane* and *qoele/barogoso*. But these are terms which Simbo people sometimes struggle to utilize descriptively in daily speech. This is especially notable in the categories *koburu* (child) and *qoele/barogoso* (old woman/man; see Chapters Six and Ten).

There have undoubtedly been phenomenal demographic changes on Simbo over the past century. Bennett (1987: 9) claims that for the precontact Solomons as a whole, average life expectancy was approximately thirty years. This is obviously partly an artefact of high infant mortality rates. As Lancaster and King (1985: 15) note, life expectancy at early adulthood (from about sixteen) is always notably higher than life expectancy at birth and is therefore a superior index in particular societies. In places such as the pre-contact Solomons, the difference may be remarkable. The first year of life is a period of particular vulnerability and for those who survive it, life expectancy increases markedly, especially in societies without access to reliable medical remedies. Malaria, for which there were no indigenous cures, made the Solomons one such area. Infant mortality rates in the Solomons, however, were not the only relevant factor: introduced diseases, low fecundity and warfare also had considerable demographic impact. Thus, even if Bennett's figure exaggerates Solomon's morbidity, I would suggest that life expectancy at sixteen was nonetheless remarkably low by current standards.

The pre-contact epidemiology of PNG was similar to that of the Solomons, as was the history of disease contact. However, contact with much of PNG occurred later than in the Solomons. I therefore rely on sources on PNG as well as the Solomons for my depiction of Simbo epidemiological history. Indigenous diseases such as malaria and yaws kept mortality rates elevated and enfeebled survivors, but in the absence of contrary data it can be assumed that island populations remained at least stable over time, despite the depredations of these diseases. Other diseases, such as leprosy and tuberculosis were rife by the mid-nineteenth century, when colonial administrators and missionaries began recording the health statuses of local populations, but it is by no means certain how and when these diseases reached the islands, whether introduced in the course of interaction with Europeans or endemic prior to that contact (Frankel & Lewis, 1989). Introduced diseases such as smallpox, measles, mumps and influenza also purged local populations which had no resistance.<sup>4</sup> Although endemic yaws (Hocart, n.d.p.: 2) conferred immunity to syphilis, gonorrhoea, transmitted by sailors who sought sexual services from local women, contributed to female infertility. This must have compounded the low birth rates which were almost certainly associated with yaws—which causes miscarriage—and chronic malaria—which causes chronic anaemia and thus late menarche, early menopause and frequent amenorrhoea or other disruptions to menstrual cycles. In areas where crude fertility rates were already marginal because of indigenous disease, this effect of exotic diseases often contributed to serious population decline (Bennett, 1987: 38-39, 98-99). Assumptions that the "Melanesian race" was doomed to extinction for

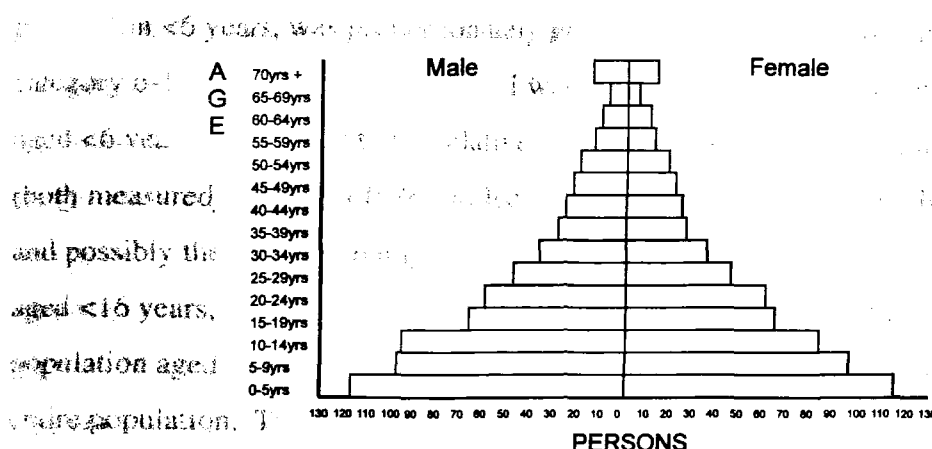
reasons ranging from the injudicious and inappropriate wearing of European clothing, to disease, to psychological disablement (Rivers, *et al.*, 1922) was a central feature of anthropological discourse early in this century. Darwinian social theory was on the rise and, although commentators such as Grimshaw, Speiser, Pitt-Rivers and Rivers “stress the centrality of introduced rather than pre-existing causes, they also tend ultimately to find the deeper explanation within the bodies and more especially the minds of Pacific people” (Jolly, n.d.: 11-13). By implication, the less fit races were doomed to extinction following contact with Europeans. Such assumptions about depopulation were premature and manipulated to provide justification for colonial policies such as the acquisition of large tracts of land (Jackson, 1978: 147-148). They also reflected the incontrovertible reality of precipitous population decline in particular areas throughout the second half of the nineteenth century (McArthur, 1976: xvi; Stannard, 1989).

New Georgia, as one of the areas of earliest contact, suffered greatly from population decline. This was due not only to the depredations of disease but also to the scale of headhunting following the adoption of metal and firearm technologies (Bennett, 1987: 36; cf., Shineberg, 1971a: 61). The population of Simbo, as one of that Group was also affected. Rivers (1922: 97-104) reported that in 1908 the Simbo population was not reproducing at rates sufficient to maintain population levels, and my genealogies and oral histories suggest that reproduction rates were very low in the period before pacification (Dureau, n.d.b.). But, there were a number of factors affecting population in New Georgia—disease, warfare and cultural interventions in reproduction. These had variable effects on each island. Thus, for example, Kolombangara and Gizo were decimated by raiders. With less direct contact with Europeans, however, exogenous diseases were possibly of less significance to their populations, although interisland networks would have diminished any quarantine effect. On Vella Lavella, where coastal groups maintained contact with Europeans and where intra-island warfare occurred, both raiding and disease probably affected demography. On Simbo, yet another pattern prevailed. Here direct raids had little effect, but foreign disease and local interventions in reproduction were particularly pertinent. These effects also varied over time. By about 1870, we would expect local populations to have been developing some kind of resistance to European epidemic diseases, such as measles and influenza. The impact of gonorrhoea, to which the development of resistance in minimal, would have risen with the intensity of European contact. Malaria would have afflicted infants in unchanging proportions. With greater rapidity of movement between Sydney and the Solomons new epidemics, such as polio, would also have swept the area from the late nineteenth century.

The broad stages of Simbo lifecycle terminology accords well with the shortened lifespans consequent upon the epidemiology which was prevalent until after the 1930s. In an area where life expectancy hovers at around thirty years and infant mortality, if we may extrapolate from PNG (Scragg, 1969:73), about 189/10005 and only marginally less for children less than five years, the significant age categories are indeed those of infant, child, adult and elder (those who, against the odds, survived to at least early middle age). Although it is dangerous to conjecture, and oral histories assert the contrary,<sup>6</sup> marriage was presumably fairly early with parenthood usually occurring soon thereafter (but not as reliably as at present). Although birth rates were consciously restricted, it is important, as McDowell (1988a) points out, to distinguish between three reasons for fertility restriction. The desire to space births, to delay the onset of childbearing or to absolutely limit the number of children are all rationales for practising contraception. All, however, have distinctive effects on local demography. On Simbo, contraception was informed by the ideal of having no more than two small dependent children at any one time because of the need for mobility, caused by raiding (see also Ogan, Nash & Mitchell, 1976, cited in McDowell, 1988b: 23) and by the particular intensity of *luluna* relations (Chapter Seven). The basic Simbo linguistic categories would have matched the prevailing realities of age and development. Many infants (*melalu*) died, as did many children and adolescents (*koburu*). Re-marriage was frequent following widowhood or divorce. The category of unmarried adults, either waiting for or between marriages would, then, have been virtually non-existent, unlike today. Likewise, there were few old people or grandparents.<sup>7</sup> While there were doubtless people who lived to a very old age, these were probably exceptional. The Simbo categories *qoele/barogoso* therefore cover all those aged from about 40 years onwards, despite the discernible range of stages within those categories: mature adults with older children (with or without grandchildren); elderly adults with primarily grandparental roles; and old age, in which responsibilities gradually decline as frailty and/or senility occur.

So, not only has the overall population of Simbo grown dramatically from around 400 at the turn of the century and in 1930, to some 2000 presently, of whom about 1400 are permanently resident on the island, but the age distribution within that population has certainly shifted, with Simbo displaying a characteristic demographic transition pattern of high youth dependency ratio (< 15 years) and, although much lower than in developed countries, an increased aged dependency ratio (> 60 years).

the variable rate of increase within the categories of age which is very apparent suggesting that



**FIG 5.3: Simbo Population by Sex & Age, Census 1986**

Source: Solomon Islands 3/88

Table A (Population on census night by sex and ward)

Table B (Population on census night by sex and five year age groups)

Figure 5.3 shows age and sex distribution on Simbo in 1986, the date of the most recent census.<sup>8</sup> The only previous census to include data on Simbo was the inaugural census of the BSIP in 1930 when the total Simbo population was 376. Even leaving aside the number of Simbo people absent for the most recent census, which I would estimate at between 400-500, this indicates a phenomenal population increase. The 1930 census cannot be put into a pyramidal form because of the broad age categories used in the census (and the way in which age distribution has changed makes it impossible to extrapolate backwards). The following table, however, summarises the shift in population to a degree:

1930			1986			% Increase
Age Cat.*	No. Persons	% Pop.	Age Cat.*	No. Persons	% Pop	
<6yrs	75	19.95	<5yrs	231	17.4	308
6-16yrs	91	24.2	5-14yrs	385	28.99	423
>16yrs	210	55.85	>15yrs	712	53.61	339
TOTALS	376	100	TOTALS	1328	100	353

**Table 5.3 : Simbo population by age distribution, 1930-1986**

\*(Note that age categories do not exactly correspond. I have used the 5 year age categories of the 1986 Census which most closely correspond with the 1930 census categories. This has the effect of slightly understating the relative 1986 youth ratio (<15yrs) and slightly overstating the 1986 relative adult ratio (>15yrs). No aged ratio can be surmised from the 1930 figures.)

Even disregarding the graphic population growth of 353% in 56 years, (and 459.6% if we assume 400 Tinoni Simbo living elsewhere on census night), the most notable feature is the variable rate of increase within age categories. While it may appear surprising that the

population <6 years, was proportionately greater in 1930, it is significantly lower in the age-category 6-16 years, relative to 1986. I would suggest that the higher proportion of population aged <6 years, juxtaposed to the relatively lower proportion within the age category 6-16 years (both measured relative to 1986), reflects higher infant and child mortality rates at that time and possibly the very beginning of the fertility boom discussed in Chapter Seven. For those aged <16 years, the increase measured 371%, significantly higher than the 339% increase in population aged over 16 years, despite the undoubted improvement in morbidity within the entire population. These changes inflect contemporary life on Simbo.

## ii. Parenting

Simply stated, there are now more children and elderly people, proportionate to the adult population, than previously.<sup>9</sup> This obviously has ramifications throughout the lifecycle, not simply in increased work demands and stress on resources, but in increased accents on particular aspects of people's lives. Thus, there is now an enhanced concentration on physical nurturance as a major aspect of adult lives, especially those of women. The changes in conjugal and familial practices which have evolved in the context of political, economic and religious change have also significantly altered the circumstances in which parenting occurs. Accounts about women's reproductivity before Christianity diverge. On the one hand, women today strongly assert that pre-Christian women actively controlled their fertility by means of local contraceptives, abortifacients and infanticide. Women, especially those older women with some claimed knowledge of their mothers' and grandmothers' reproductive lives, speak of this change in terms of lost autonomy or a diminished quality of life. Men make similar claims, although from a different perspective—from the position of defending their views that female sexuality must be controlled in the interests of Christian marriage. They maintain that the behaviour of the ancestors has now been "straightened" by *lotu*. Rivers (1922: 104) also implies active, effective constraint of reproduction. On the other hand, those genealogies, from which data about the mortality of offspring in previous generations<sup>10</sup> could be obtained suggest that the characteristic one or two offspring of pre-Christian genealogies may well have been due to infant mortality and those fertility-linked features of local epidemiology previously mentioned. I presume that there is validity to both local reports of deliberate fertility control and academic claims of high morbidity, although it is hard to imagine birth control strategies for married women being prevalent in a society in which the reproductive lifespan was necessarily short and infant mortality high (see Chapter Seven).



Whatever the cause, the effect was low levels of reproductivity with most women successfully raising only about two children to adulthood. Today the average is about 5.6 (Dureau, n.d.b.). This ramifies throughout the lifecycle: relationships with siblings are fundamentally altered by closer spacing and the obligations on girls to care for numerous younger siblings. Both women and men are obliged to spend more time and effort in providing food and material support for their offspring. This is no doubt related to the shift in emphasis from cognatic to nuclear kinship. Both maternity and marriage are now more central to women's existence than previously,<sup>11</sup> despite their enhanced survival past childbearing age, both because of the increase in the number of live offspring per woman and because of changes in the social, economic and ideational contexts in which motherhood and marriage occur.

Finally, as previously noted, the elderly and aged now constitute, for the first time, a large social category whose significance has been transformed since the ancestors have declined. While older people have absorbed many of the tasks and responsibilities arising from other demographic changes, they also impose increased obligations on their offspring as they age, and probably contribute thereby to the narrowing of the range of extended kin included in the *tavitina*.

### iii. adoption/fosterage

This is also a parenting relationship which has persisted in novel ways. Carroll (1970: 7) distinguishes between adoption and fosterage in Eastern Oceania by arguing that "the natives clearly distinguish, terminologically and conceptually, between 'fosterage' (temporarily taking care of others' children as an obligation of kinship) and 'adoption' (permanently assuming the major responsibilities of natural parents)". The distinction is problematic on Simbo, where, as I argued in Chapter Two, the biological basis of parenthood is by no means presupposed (see also Carrier & Carrier, 1991: 31). Adoption, in the sense of a full transfer of rights in a person from one family to another is very rare. It occurs only in those uncommon cases in which a man accepts his wife's adulterously conceived children as his own, or in even rarer cases in which a woman pretends that she actually gave birth to the child of a natal sister. Yet the temporary nature of a relationship, implied by fosterage, does not convey the sense of a binding tie—and often jural rights—arising from the transfer of children between households. The relationship referred to as *pausia* partakes of both fosterage and adoption, as conventionally defined: it is seen as an enhancement of social networks, as adopted/fostered persons engage in mutually nurturant relationships with two or more households. The

*pinausu*, in the vast majority of cases, gains rights in their new household and retains rights in their natal household. Adoptees often inherit land from adoptive parents, merging identity and locale.<sup>12</sup> Affective relationships are also extended, rather than transferred. I therefore tend to use the words interchangeably.

Adoptive relations, although ostensibly persistent, have changed markedly. The discussions of captive-*pinausu* and of classificatory and natal kinship (Chapter Two) reflected the broad inclusiveness of kinship practices c. 1900 and for some time thereafter. Somo, for example was raised by an unrelated woman who pitied him when his mother, carrying a smaller child, outstripped him as they fled into the bush at the sight of military aircraft during WWII. Other kin or the children of friends and strangers could, through nurturance, come to belong to another locality. Such relations today are much more focused on the natal family. Where someone actively solicits children for adoption, they may make broadly based approaches to kin. From time to time, they may be unable to explicate their precise relationship to those they adopt, save to say that they share a *bubutu* through a known common cognate. Elderly bachelors or infertile couples are exemplary here. A few individuals are simply so eager to nurture small children that they consistently seek out children when their own childbearing days are over. Keri, for example, cannot account for the number of children she and her husband have fostered—temporarily or permanently—since her own seven reached adulthood. Generally, however, adoptions now occur between natal kin, either between siblings or between parents and their offspring. Zila, for example, fostered her youngest sisters when her already mature mother gave birth to twins after eight earlier births. Somo and Tina's oldest son was adopted by her mother at one year of age. Another of their daughters later became extremely attached to Ketu, Somo's younger sister, and remained with her (Fig 6.5).

Movements due to inclination, solicitation or necessity, probably always occurred. The unprecedented proliferation of premarital births, however, has seen a new form of adoption. The parents of unmarried women frequently undertake to care for such children once they are weaned. While the natal mother remains unmarried and living with her parents, the situation is ambiguous. On her marriage, however, the child usually remains with her parents, either because they insist on not trusting her new husband or because he will not accept the child (see Chapter Seven). This practice does not merely resolve a difficult situation. The contraction of acknowledgment of obligation between kin, under the impetus of an increasingly monetized society, also encourages older people to retain the young children of their daughters or sons who are thereby prevented from "forgetting" their parents. Parents

might, for example, send a bag of rice or money regularly to their own parent who is maintaining one of the children. As Aneta told me of Miri's child, whom she wished to foster, "How can Miri forget me when she will be thinking of her baby?"

#### iv. *luluna*

Opposite-sex sibling relations continue to be predicated on the conflicting principles of hierarchical *luluna* respect relations and egalitarian *tasina* affective relations. Like modern marriage, they are fraught with the difficulties of balancing love and power. The manifestations of female *luluna* respect have been considerably modified. Thus, it is about fifteen years since the last man finally relented his insistence on the customary practice of forbidding his *luluna* to sit on his verandah. Older women recall having to pass behind their *luluna* or to crawl in front of them. This reflects the fact that *luluna* relationships no longer represent the closest gender tie, as they did in pre-Christian days. It was not merely the abolition of warfare that caused the attenuation of ties between *luluna*. The adoption of Christianity, with its stress upon conjugality has progressively shifted authority from *luluna* to spouses. Violence by male *luluna* has been ameliorated, although certainly not eliminated. The linkage between the corporeal containment of female *luluna* and male *luluna* corporeal safety is persistent, although ever more tenuously. In particular, the ideal of sibling (*tasina*) mutuality, that underlay the protection and mutual help previously characteristic of sibling groups (in which men were simultaneously brothers and *luluna* to their sisters/*luluna*), has been radically undermined. Such assistance persists between classificatory sisters, but is now virtually non-existent between classificatory opposite-sex siblings. This uneven decline in *luluna* relations, which favours male violence, underlies much of the animosity towards *luluna* which women reveal in daily discourse.

The relationship continues to evolve. Once again I turn to the Neli-Bule family (Fig 5.1) to illustrate the ways in which apparently new situations or opportunities are shaped by novel deployments of "traditional" relationships. Here, what might have been a modern variation on an old Simbo practice—female political activity—was forestalled by novel claims made on *luluna* traditions.

Gure had graduated from Form Five in secondary school, the highest level for non-university entrants. This was the highest level of education ever achieved by a Simbo woman. After being widowed she returned to Simbo with her three children. There she constantly heard that she was wasting her skills, a sentiment with which she agreed. Finally, she decided to stand in the next government election. Her intention, she said was to stand as a candidate on women's issues. She thus hoped to crosscut the lineage cleavages which usually determine voting patterns. She sounded out her natal siblings, all of whom were enthusiastic and promised to deliver their votes and those of their spouses. A number of women were also quietly encouraging and she was becoming optimistic about her chances.

I left for Australia and, returning, my first question to her was about the election.

Gure: I didn't stand. I withdrew.

Dureau: How/why? Didn't you have enough money for the fee?

Gure: No. Wait, I'll tell you.

Alright, all my siblings were happy about what I wanted to do. The *qoele* [her mother] too. Remember, Chirstina, remember how Nelo was cross because I wanted to participate in the election and he was running? Well, when I announced my intention and everyone heard, he was really angry. He told me to stand down because he's my *luluna* and it meant I was not being respectful/shamed towards him. I was angry in return.

"It's *kastom* here" he said.

"It's not *kastom*" I said. "The new *kastom*?" I asked. But he continued telling me to stand down. But it's not *kastom*. I tell you truly. This is the place of the *banara maqota*. What about them?" I said. "Did they all have no *luluna*?" I refused to stand down.

Alright, Nelo went to see Beni and he complained about me. "It's inappropriate in *kastom*. Gure has no respect/shame for me", he said. So Beni called me to go and talk with him and he told me I could not stand. He was going to give his support to Nelo, he said. "It's not *kastom* to stand against your *luluna*", he said.

I was angry. Until today I remain upset. "This is not *kastom*", I said. "This is inappropriate, it is invalid (*koha*, lit. 'lie') *kastom*" I said.

Dureau: True.

Gure: But Beni was intractable. He blocked me. He would give me no support, he said. I was upset. I begged. I cried. I was angry but he refused to change so I couldn't do anything. It's truly dreadful and unjust. After that I went crazy and I think that's why you see me as I am now.<sup>13</sup> Up until this very day I remain disquieted. This is truly a dreadful story. I know more than anyone about the government and the needs here. I am well educated, better than nearly every other person on Simbo. It's not *kastom*, it's not straight, it's dreadful behaviour. There you have my sad story, Christina. Finish.

## v. Leadership

A final theme that recurs in Chapters Six-Ten is that of the decline of *banara* and the ascendancy of Ministers. The military defeat of Simbo did not merely end warfare and institute a new temporal authority. It undermined all the bases of *banara* authority. Even those who had not been directly involved in warfare, either as sponsors or participants, were affected. Trading relations with allies would have been as disrupted as warfare was by the destruction of canoes. So, too, were relations with ancestors, on whom the *banara*'s powers depended. The ancestors were made to appear inadequate in and of themselves, not merely in regard to warfare. *Kezo*, which had ensured the accumulation which facilitated the feasting that sustained patron-client relations, were undermined. So, necessarily, were the curative powers of *banara* which had been a source of goodwill, enrichment and admiration.

This was reinforced not only by the new missionaries' arguments about the invalidity of ancestor veneration, but by their own interventions in areas previously reflective of ancestral agency. Their ability to heal ailments may have been an expression of Christian compassion. Whether or not the missionaries were aware of it, it was also a revelation, in indigenous terms,

of supernatural control which reinforced the military demonstration of European superiority (see Chapter Six). It is not surprising, then, that the most influential people today are the minister and *maramar* (see Chapter Four).

*Banara* today bear little resemblance to their predecessors. This is not so much a reflection of their political demise as of their transfigured significance. *Banara* now have virtually no role in patronage or politics. Nor are they wealthy relative to others. They certainly do not embody community morality. Where they are particularly relevant is in regard to the distribution of land. Scheffler (1962: 145-146), in describing them as land managers, thus reflects a relatively new situation. The claim of *banara* status gives some legitimation to land claims, particularly in courtcases. Opponents in a recent major case spent as much time disputing the validity of claims of legitimate accession as contesting land boundaries or genealogical relationships. The formal succession is now more hotly contested than probably ever before, when achievement, competence and patronage made formal appointment less decisive in establishing status. Thus, a sibling group hotly disputed their FBS status as *banara*, but made no attempts to develop their own claims by becoming "big". Their sole tactic was to claim that their father had not nominated his BS before he died. At stake, as never before, the rights to distribution of a large tract of good land on a newly overpopulated island.

#### vi. Education, Migration, Wealth

There are also new dimensions to the lifecycle resulting especially from formal education and wage labour. A virtually universal primary education for Tinoni Simbo has pertained for about sixty years, first through Mission schools and later through the state primary school. A number of people have gone to secondary school, some reaching Form Six and a few graduating from universities or colleges in PNG or Australia. Most of those who progress to secondary school are boys, although there have been a number of girls. However, virtually all of the upper secondary, and all of the university graduates, are male. To my knowledge, only Gure has, thus far, successfully completed secondary school. There are a number of contributing factors here. School-age girls have major household and childminding responsibilities in contrast to boys. Boys are more likely to be groomed for an education than are girls—by being sent to stay with relatives in Honiara where primary schools are better staffed and equipped, for example. Girls also have a higher rate of expulsion from all levels of school for pregnancy or engaging in "special relationships" with boys. (Although this is banned for both sexes, it invariably results in the expulsion of the girl only.) Also relatively

new is wage labour. Although other parts of the Solomons, such as Malaita, have long had traditions of indentured male labour migration to plantations, New Georgians strongly resisted such labour (Corris, 1973; Jackson, 1972). However, since WWII, Tinoni Simbo have increasingly migrated either permanently or temporarily to towns and primary industry centres for wage labour. Many unmarried young men and women do this, although after marriage it is usually only men who work for wages.

Both of these new developments have had strong impacts on Simbo social life. While Harwood (1971: 126) traces the changes to shortly after WWII, when the variety of highly priced consumer items increased dramatically, the transformations have more to do with alterations of the system of redistribution. As the goods available in 1908 (Chapter One) attests, the variety of consumer goods has long been high—so was their value, as Hocart's (n.d.h.: 11) report of increasing purchase of whale boats indicates. A number of men and a smaller number of women with good educational qualifications have had very successful urban careers in government, media, politics and health. These might be seen as forming a new elite. However, by and large, such people tend to remain away from the island for extended periods. It is those who intermittently leave for wage labour and return to the island, or whose urban-living offspring remit cash or goods, who have had the greatest impact on daily life. Education, resulting in secure employment, and temporary wage migration by less well-educated people, culminates in differential access to cash and, combined with the diminution of wealth redistribution, has resulted in the emergence of discernible economic inequities for the first time. There have always been both relatively wealthy and impoverished people (Hocart, n.d.a.), but previously such disparities were "ideological and mystical rather than material" (Hau'ofa, 1981: 298) and resulted in unequal access to power, rather than in tangible inequalities in living conditions. Leaders were precisely those who had adequate funds for distribution to followers. Today, although those with political aspirations must still purchase the loyalty of their followers, increased wealth is expended largely on consumption within the income-earning family. Differences in the frequency of consumption of valued rice and tinned fish, the erection of "iron houses", possession of outboard motors, diving torches, radios, etc., attest to the extent of such incipient inequalities (*cf.* Barker, 1985: 284-285; Otto, 1992: 279; Rodman, 1984).

There are households in which rice is eaten every day and others in which it is never purchased. These extremes are illustrated by the respective situations of two neighbouring households at Nusa Simbo. Zimi and Vini are a couple who have spent their entire lives on the island. However, a number of their adult children have worked from time to time, sending

money back to their parents in a manner envied by many others, whose children "forget" them. Zimi had the first local store about a decade ago and made large profits by inflating prices. Although he has been forced to reduce prices in the face of local competition, he continues to maintain his store. He also has a large canoe and outboard motor, bought by his children, in which he takes paying passengers to Gizo every week. So successful have their enterprises been that they have been able to build a large iron house. Unlike other such houses, this one has Western furniture, curtains at all windows and linoleum in all rooms. The household consumes store food every day. They are also conspicuous in their consumption of kerosene, an item now regarded as essential, but which other people still struggle to purchase, lighting two pressure lamps every night. Directly opposite, lived Sera, a young woman who was pregnant during my first period of field research, with one child of her own and a ZD. Divorced, and the daughter of a disabled woman who never married, she must rely on herself for all her necessities. She had no cash income. Her small shack was hastily built to accommodate her mother during her terminal illness. Unlike virtually all Simbo houses, this one had no cooking house; she simply made a small fire on the ground in the front of the house for her cooking. The household diet consisted entirely of sweet potato and whatever small fish she was able to catch in the lagoon at the base of the village. At night her silent unlit shack provided a notable contrast to the big, brightly lit house across the way.

These two households represent the extremes of Simbo wealth and both are somewhat atypical. Within this spectrum, however, there is a definite division between those who can consume store food regularly and those who can do so only rarely. Although rice has become a staple, it remains highly valued (as well as providing some respite from garden duties) and people are acutely conscious of the quantities of rice and "store foods" consumed in other households and its connexion to financial liquidity. This is a source of gossip and some resentment. But it is not simply a matter of differential access to prestige goods. As the above example shows, people are for the first time experiencing considerable differences in standards of living. There have been times of hunger in the past, when crops failed—in which case the entire community participated in rituals such as *votu tamasa*, designed to alleviate the *tamasa's* afflictions—or when waiting for them to mature. But these were shared privations: this is apparently the first time that one family has been hungry while those alongside have had an excess to give to the pigs on the following day.

... or in the indigenous stone oven, and with her friends in a new ...  
... and coconut shell ...

By way of contrast with the male, the female

### *Na binei tana tinoa rereko*—Women's transformed lives

It is also true that the female

One hundred years ago, the average female (who survived childhood) remained within New Georgia all her life. She may have married into another island and lived there or gone on trading expeditions elsewhere in the Group. Alternatively, she may never have left Simbo. She was illiterate and her life was dominated by the *Weltanschauung* described in Chapter Two—aware of the dangers of raids, constrained by notions that her corporeality could compromise her *luluna*'s safety in headhunting, her spiritual life focused around potent ancestral shrines and counting the days of the dead (*lodu*). She first married when she was young, to someone condoned by her parents, after engaging in discrete sexual relations in the bush, and had about two surviving children. Typically, she died around the time her offspring married or when her grandchildren were young. Either because of widowhood or divorce she probably married a number of times and lived both uxorilocally and virilocally for varying periods. Her husband/s were sometimes absent for extended periods preparing for, or engaging in, headhunting, *bonito* fishing or trading expeditions. Although she was “respectfully/shamefully afraid” of her *luluna*, she could rely on their support in the event of marital discord. She was in awe of the *banara*, according him or her the same respect terminology and avoidance behaviour which she gave to her *luluna*.

Her interaction with the European world consisted of purchases from the trader living on the island, carrying copra for sale to local traders, and fleeing into the bush at the sight of British Royal Navy warships. Her economic activities were still dominated by production for use—gardening; gathering nuts in the bush and shellfish on the shore; production of bark cloth; weaving of coconut fibre for mats and housing; manufacture of coconut-shell water containers. She smoked a tobacco pipe, consumed betelnut, bleached her hair with lime and dressed in a loincloth made of barkcloth or calico. Her ornamentation consisted of clamshell arm-bands, ear-rings and pendants. Her technology was simple—metal agricultural tools, sail or paddle-based transportation, purchased or endowed incantations of metaphysical forces, and fish hooks and lines purchased from the traders. Her diet consisted largely of various root vegetables, fresh and dried seafood, local greens, fruit, nuts and megapode eggs. From time to time she also consumed pork, rice, tinned beef, tea and sugar, possum, turtle, chicken, crustaceans and flying fox. Like her descendants, she cooked with metal saucepans and kettles, or in the indigenous stone oven, and ate, with her fingers or a spoon, from banana leaves and coconut shells or from enamel bowls.



By way of contrast and similarity, her Simbo successor is much less likely to die in childhood. Like her predecessor, she may spend her entire life on the island, but the possibility also exists that she may at some time live anywhere in the world. She attended the local primary school to Standard Six (or beyond) before remaining to help her mother or going away to earn money in the fish cannery at Noro or working as *haosgel* or government clerical employee in any of a number of places, depending on her educational qualifications. She married quite young, probably against her parents' will, after a number of covert sexual relationships, and will probably marry at least twice. After marriage she quickly began to bear children, probably between five and six live offspring. Her husband disciplines her physically and her *luluna*, citing anxiety about the police in nearby Gizo, do not intervene. Her husband may or may not have spent time in wage-labour migration. She dies as a grandmother of perhaps forty grandchildren, some of whom have already given her great-grandchildren. Her worldview is dominated by Simbo understandings of indigenous Methodist Christianity, pressures to obtain cash and traditions of respect for *luluna* and affines. Her morality is shaped by indigenous and Methodist notions of sexuality, sociality and acceptable female activity. She knows the location of some, but little about, ancestral shrines. She is not anxious about the *banara*, although she still takes care not to go near his house for about six weeks after giving birth.

Her economic activity reflects Simbo's continuing incorporation in the world economy. If she or her spouse do not work for money, they make copra, as in the past. She sees Europeans in Gizo, where she goes to market, and those who come to Simbo as tourists, but she is "shamed" (*pamana*) to speak to them. Her economic activities are still dominated by garden production but she also needs a constant supply of cash for buying "store" (*sitoe*) food, clothing, household items and for paying head-tax and school fees. She weaves mats, some of them for sale in urban centres, but these are now of pandanus and in the "Samoan style" introduced by the missionaries. Her house, too, although still made of sago palm, is in the style introduced by the missionaries. She is unlikely to smoke and is constantly hungry for betelnut which is in chronically short supply and expensive. She wears her hair "big" and constrained by rubber bands, having relinquished most of her brightly coloured clips, slides and pins when she married. She dresses in second-hand clothing from Honiara or in clothes she sewed on a manual Singer with fabric purchased in Gizo. Her technology is similar, but not identical, to that of her ancestor—metal gardening tools and cooking utensils, fire, running water at the village tap, motorized or paddle water transportation, plaited netbags of nylon fibre for carrying garden produce. Her staple dietary items are sweet potato, cassava, rice,

tinned and fresh fish, tea and sugar and hardtack biscuits. She also eats megapode eggs, nuts and crustaceans in season and, rarely, pork, chicken, possum, tinned roast goose or curried beef. She has never tasted flying fox.

Such contrasted lives are the focus of the forthcoming chapters.

## NOTES

- 1: With the exception of Ranongga, it would have been impossible for Tinoni Simbo to live in any of these places a century ago. ~~not certain any where~~
- 2: I use the term "disabled" in a very broad sense in keeping with Simbo usage. Although there are particular words to describe various kinds of physical affliction, the term *qao*, technically only applicable to those with leg deformities, is used quite loosely to describe all persons with any kind of physical deformity or disability, from those born with mild finger deformities to those crippled in polio epidemics and unable to walk at all.  
~~very handicapped-like behaviour~~
- 3: Even accounts of change imply that stability. Thus, Lodu Qoele's account of the descent of *lotu* (Appendix III) pits the stable past against the momentous newcomer.
- 4: There is no uniform agreement on Melanesian disease aetiology and epidemiology before or after contact with Europeans. Scragg (1969: 73), for example regards smallpox as an indigenous disease, TB and leprosy as introduced.
- 5: I am unaware of any detailed figures for the Solomons. Scragg, who recorded demographic changes in four New Guinea island societies between 1949-1967, notes that average life expectancy for all groups in 1949 was only 34 years, the outcome of natural death rates, rather than warfare (1969: 73). It is not, then, unreasonable to accept Bennett's figure of a life expectancy at birth of only thirty years in areas exposed to similar epidemiology to those of Scragg's populations and subject, further, to endemic warfare.
- 6: It is widely claimed that pre-Christian Tinoni Simbo did not marry until well into their twenties. Given, however, that people did not keep account of ages after first birthdays and that even today Simbo adults frequently miscalculate their ages by as much as five-six years, I am inclined to see these accounts as part of the construction, on the part of Simbo social commentators, of a semi-idyllic, albeit amoral, past in opposition to a degenerate present.
- 7: This is perhaps reflected in the absence of Simbo terms for grandparent or grandchild which I noted in Chapter Two.
- 8: The pyramid shows the population resident on Simbo on census night. It thus does not capture people living in Honiara, development and primary industry centres, such as Noro, or the substantial Simbo settlement of Pailongge on Gizo Island. The census report provides no breakdown by age on Simbo itself. This was calculated using the age proportions for Western Province as a whole. The numbers for those in the age group 15-44 are probably distorted due to wage migration, particularly to Honiara and development areas within Western Province. It is difficult, however, to know in which direction, since Tinoni Simbo work both elsewhere in the Province (whose percentages I have applied) and in Honiara. Western Province age percentages are slightly higher than national percentages between the ages 15-29 years. Figures for Honiara are markedly higher than both national and Western Province between the ages of 15-39 and slightly higher between 40-44 years, after which the Honiara percentages fall markedly compared to both Western Province and national percentages.
- 9: Using the demographers' definition of "adult" as those aged between 15-60 years, the age of greatest productive contribution. This definition may not be applicable to all societies. In those where children make substantial contributions to household labour, for example, or where ritual or arcane knowledge is a resource or obligation of the elderly, productive contribution may be much more prolonged.
- 10: And these were unusual. A problem in comparing early twentieth century data with the present is that Tinoni Simbo can, of course, recall offspring who have died and usually siblings who died before attaining adulthood, but parents' siblings and parents' parents' siblings are rarely recalled if they died in childhood.
- 11: The same may be said of men who accept greater responsibilities for maintenance than previously, especially for the acquisition of money, which remains elusive whilst becoming increasingly necessary.
- 12: Scheffler (1962: 144) maintains that such inheritance was problematic unless adoptees married back into the land-holding group. Land transmission now, as then, is an extremely contentious issue, but there are several ways of obtaining land from non-blood relatives, including a number of kinds of gift in land or trees. The existence of these practices is never disputed, although particular occurrences may be heatedly contested, debate

which is not notably more intense than that about "blood" genealogical ties to the land. In making inquiries about marriage into adoptive groups I received conflicting answers. While many people felt it was acceptable because they were of "different blood", others regarded such permutations as a form of incest (*kakabe*). My genealogical data does not contain any obvious cases of adoptees marrying into adoptive families. It is also notable that opposite-sex classificatory sibling relationships, which involve the greatest degree of avoidance behaviour, are variable in regard to adopted people. Although it is tempting to see these variations in expectations and acceptance of adopted kin as an outcome of ninety years mission and church pressures in favour of nuclear families, there is no proof that similar ambivalence did not occur in the pre-Christian past. The tendency today to adopt infants of kin also obscures the part previously played by adoption of strangers in establishing kinship-like behaviour.

### 13: She had since contracted a disastrous marriage.

Oniwh does not occur through the ...

... of ...

... of ...

I refer to the interaction ...

... with which ...  
... lack of ...  
... removed from one another ...  
... a father ...  
... should ...  
... children to anyone but ...  
... strangers.

A *koburu* is a person not yet ...  
for males those aged up to about ...  
... and occasionally beyond. ...  
life. Those who occupy the ...  
"person" except in the most ...  
to animals and spirits. The ...  
is consistent with a strong ...  
then entirely dependent upon ...  
aged up to about one year ...  
in Chapter Five, emphases vary with age.

### Miholu—Pregnancy

Timoti Simba are now well, ...  
"egg" fuse, a model they ...  
... can prove ...  
... indigenous conception ...

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