



from the remarks men and women made about reproduction on those occasions when I was *not* enquiring about the issue.<sup>1</sup> There is universal agreement that sexual intercourse with a man is required for conception to occur, and that a single episode is adequate. Both women and men must be fertile and women must “be at the appropriate time” in order to conceive. The embryo is generated by the male: thus, I received innumerable accounts of ewes bearing human infants, hens having hatched ducklings and questions about whether male homosexuals in Australia conceive infants. While people formally accept the European model, they operate on the basis of alternate understandings of reproductive biology. Most people absorb these notions through general discussion and independent observation.

The uterus is conceptualized as a kind of open space within the abdominal cavity. The foetus grows here, fastened by the placenta which prevents it falling out or continuing to rise within the woman’s abdomen. Anything, other than penes, secured to men’s bodies, and embryos, should not be placed within it, lest they “go on rising and get lost”—tampons, IUCDs, diaphragms, topical abortifacients are all regarded doubtfully, doubts reinforced by numerous accounts of IUCDs causing surgical crises (Dureau, n.d.b.).<sup>2</sup> Both this uterine space and the placenta are known as the *lovu koburu* (lit. “mat [of the] child”).

The child is ideally conceived within the house by a sexually faithful married couple. There are serious consequences for the child of married parents if these norms are violated—unconfessed adultery by either party can cause either death or disability to the child (unadmitted female adultery can also cause a woman’s death in childbirth) and conception of such children in the gardens is said to cause congenital mental retardation (below). Many children, however, are conceived and/or born out of marriage. The consequences of adultery and intercourse in the gardens do not apply to those who are pregnant before marriage. Although pre-marital pregnancy is regarded as improper, liaisons are commonplace and various conventions therefore attend their practice (Nash, 1981)—such encounters belong in the bush or the gardens (Hocart, n.d.f.: 1-2). It is clearly not copulation on the earth or surreptitious intercourse *per se* that cause congenital problems—those are repercussions only for married people, not for other categories of lover. In the case of adulterous liaisons, confession is the balm to the ills wrought by wrongdoing: as in most things, it is hidden wrongs that do damage. Confession eliminates the wrong which is lodged in the heart. It is, literally, “talking out” the wrong (White, 1991: 252, n.2). Followed by appropriate reparation, it averts supernatural sanctions, although it may precipitate worldly sanctions, such as violent confrontation with the wronged parties, divorce or public shame.

Confession reflects the ways in which pre-Christian practices can facilitate mission objectives. On Simbo, the greatest wrongs relate to sexual transgressions and to “talking down *lotu*”. Hidden wrongdoing has always precipitated supernatural punishment, the consequences falling, not on the culprit, but upon those most loved by, or dependent upon, them: spouses, offspring, and, for women, *luluna*. Confession has always averted those consequences. This coincided with the Methodist Missions encouragement of public confession of transgressions—Thursday is still known by older people as *rane turu taveti* (“day [of] standing activity”), the day for confession and assertions of Christian faith (see also McKinnon, 1971: 135). The objective differed from the indigenous goal of averting ancestral wrath: missionaries sought confession, not only of specific wrongs, but of the “dark ways” (*hahanana rodomo*) of customary practices, and testament to the difference that Tamasa had brought to their lives. The missionaries’ objective, then, was to stimulate a change of individual consciousness. However, the indigenous idea of revelation being essential to the prevention of consequences persists. Although *rane turu taveti* is no longer practised, Sunday evening church activities are often structured around *pito* (“tell”) sessions, in which people publicly attest to the personal significance of *lotu*. Such *pipito* focus on biographical issues, such as retrospective accounts of how *lotu* or Tamasa sustained them when they had sinned or been wronged. While confession of misdeeds is no longer public, individuals frequently seek out the minister to admit their transgressions, immediately before or after confessing to those they have wronged. In both *lotu* and indigenous ideation, bringing things out in the open is individually cathartic and resolves social problems. A parent’s confession of sexual misbehaviour, then, could—and can—avert sanctions against the infant *in utero*, at birth, or afterwards.

Pregnant women today undertake no taboos or ritual roles, and Hocart did not note any previously, but there are some conditions which are retrospectively explained as being due to the mother’s actions during pregnancy or at conception—a woman who unsuccessfully drank the juice of forty limes in an effort to induce an abortion, for example, blames her child’s congenital developmental delay on her action; another attributed the spiral pattern on the down of her infant’s sacrum to her consumption of a sea snail; another who bore two simple-minded children was said to have conceived them through intercourse in the gardens, where *tomate* had entered her and afflicted them;<sup>3</sup> another man’s son was said to have been born mute because the father had failed to confess to an adulterous affair while his wife was pregnant; still another child was said to have defects to two of his fingers because his

mother's house was sprayed with anti-anopheles insecticide while she was pregnant. With the exception of the man who failed to confess his adultery and the woman who had sex in the gardens, however, these are all *post hoc* explanations, rather than moral adjudications of taboo violations.

### **Popodo—Birth**

The changes associated with birth have been phenomenal. Two births, eighty years apart, graphically reflect this.

"I was born in the forest before the Light and Cleanliness": Neli's (Fig 5.1) mother sat on a boulder, banana leaves on the ground at her feet, her mother's female cognatic kin encircling her. When she was born, her mother cut the umbilical cord with bamboo, bound herself in her old *tapa* loincloth and then followed the women into the trees where she buried the placenta so the *tomate* would not smell it. Then Neli and her mother went to the *savo* (postnatal hut) built by her father and for several months were cared for by Neli's female cognatic kin before returning to the village.

Mari (Fig 5.1) was born in 1989 in the clinic, where her mother lay prone on a delivery table while two other women held her and the Registered Nurse manipulated her labia to prevent tearing, delivered the baby, clamped and cut the cord with sterilized stainless steel instruments and checked the placenta before discarding it with other clinic waste. Next day she was inoculated for TB. After three days, a rush of dysentery cases were admitted to the clinic, so she was sent home with her mother where her MZD, her own sister, came to stay and see to household tasks. Mari and her mother were visited by large numbers of women, who brought small gifts of food or laundry soap. Six weeks later, her mother returned to work as a schoolteacher, leaving the same MZD to care for Mari during the day.

After pre-Christian women gave birth in the forest (Chapter Seven), they and the infant went to the *savo* (postnatal hut) with women of the child's matri- and patrilineal kin to care for them for ten days, bring them food and keep them company. The "smell" of birth was a powerful lure to voracious carnivorous *tomate*. In other circumstances, one might have the misfortune to come upon a *tomate*. Birth, and its sequelae, however, *enticed* them and thus endangered everyone in their proximity. Moving birth from village to a hidden place in the forest, then, protected the community, but neither mother nor infant. That was striven for in the forest itself where the woman and her infant lay in the far corner of the *savo*, a fire between them and the doorway. Particular words, held to attract *tomate* were taboo. After ten days the *savo* was obliterated and the mother, infant and their retinue moved to another, elsewhere in the forest. This sequence was repeated for several months before mother and child ritually bathed in the sea, dressed in new clothing, singed off the infant's hair, limed the mother's and returned to the village. This was the first time the infant was seen in the village, although its birth and sex had been announced earlier.

All births now occur in the local clinic where the Registered Nurse (RN) is able to call, by radio telephone, upon the resources of Gizo Hospital, the major medical centre for the

Province. Ideally, all first births, complicated deliveries and women wanting tubal ligations are referred to Gizo. In practice, most primiparous women remain on the island and only those known to be at risk of severe complications go there, along with those wanting ligations and women for whom it is inappropriate to be attended by the resident nurse (particularly those in the category *luluna* to male RNs, also possibly those who are SW to female RNs). The infant remains in the clinic for several days. In this time, other women visit constantly, bearing gifts of food.

The shift from birth in the forest to routine birth in the clinic has been staggered. Birth and prolonged isolation in the forest were initially followed by a diminished period of isolation of about one month. This was later reduced to about ten days, or the building and destruction of a single *savo*, and women remained in their own houses for between three and six months before resuming normal activities. Sometime thereafter, birth shifted to the outskirts of villages in more permanent huts (also *savo*) used by all village women. At this point, as birth moved indoors, women began being attended by missionary wives or local medical personnel trained by the Methodist Mission. Finally, sometime in the 1960s, birth shifted to the clinic where it was officially controlled by the RN. By this time, too, it had become more acceptable to resume normal activities after about a month. (See Fig 6.1).

From the beginning, both the Methodist Mission and the SDA Mission were associated with interventions in health, a role that has only recently shifted to the government. By 1920, the Methodists had two hospitals in the West and were enrolling local trainees. Those Tinoni Simbo sent as missionaries to Bougainville were also trained as "dressers". By the 1930s, students the mission was sending to Fiji for medical training (Tuza, 1977: 118). Under steady pressure from missionaries, birth became medicalized, shifting from a female kinship arena in the forest to an event controlled by experts in the clinic.

For both missionaries and Tinoni Simbo, healing was an arena for the display of metaphysical powers. The ancestral *kezo* (and *banara*'s authority) of earlier times had been firmly tied to both aetiology and therapy, as Rivers (1927: 32, 36-37; 1924: 148; see also Hocart, n.d.e.: 6) observed:

The close relation between the practice of medicine and the cult of the dead ancestors exists all through Melanesia, but probably the combined rites have nowhere reached a greater pitch of elaboration than in the western islands of the British Solomons . . .

In the little island of Mandegusu or Eddystone . . . we found between the treatment of disease and certain religious practices [*kezo*] . . . a connexion so intimate that the account of medical practice is at the same time an account of taboo.

rates, but the *loru* itself would be sufficient to . . .

Missionary reforming discourses were linked to illness and healing. In turn, their medical treatments, derived from contemporary physical sciences, were hitched to Christian metaphysics. Where *banara* had invoked ancestors as they worked their cures and afflictions and imposed disciplinary regimes, missionaries invoked Tamasa in a corresponding process (see also White, 1991: 252, n. 3). Their health and hygiene interventions were directed against diseases, such as TB, introduced by Europeans, as much as at indigenous conditions, such as yaws. They were, furthermore, concerned with control and legitimacy as much as with efficacy and compassion (Fabian, 1986: 82; N. Thomas, 1990: 159-160), as Steley's (1983: *passim*) competitive jibes about the relative cleanliness of SDA and Methodist villages suggests. Childbirth was an early field of symbolic intervention, as the Methodist Mission historian, Luxton (1955: 37), recalled. In about 1910

[a] crisis was precipitated when one of the Fijian women gave birth on the [Munda, Roviana] station. The heathern custom demanded that the expectant mother, with women helpers, erect a leaf lean-to hut in the bush, and there in the damp and dirt, in the house untouched by man's hands, the babe would be born.

...  
Miriami, the wife of the leading Fijian teacher, did not observe any of these customs, and Mrs Goldie herself carried the new-born babe into a building where a number of natives were at work. On hearing the babe's cry the natives all fled in great fear . . . The chiefs were irate at the breaking of ancient custom, the old women screamed their curses, and none would venture near the station for several days.

Some interventions had equivocal or detrimental effects on health. Separating cooking from sleeping quarters, for instance, eliminated the smoke which had acted as a mosquito deterrent in malarial areas. But, (and irrespective of motivation), missionary health interventions were, overall, associated with lower morbidity. It is impossible to differentiate the impacts of altered epidemiology, sexual and contraceptive behaviours and obstetric techniques over the last ninety years. Medicalization of pregnancy and childbirth has almost certainly lowered infant mortality, however. Quite apart from the fact that removal of birth from forest to clinic facilitated the supervision which prevents infanticide, measures such as prophylactic chloroquine throughout pregnancy, sterilization of instruments, surgical intervention in complicated labour and treatment of maternal toxæmia and hypertension cannot but improve the probability of infant survival. (I deal with their significance for mothers in Chapter Seven.) Their efficacy contributed to the success of proselytizing (see also Douglas, 1989: 19-20), but it is the perceived connexion between survival and *lotu*, rather than medicine, that is paramount. Women today point to the high maternal-infant death rates before "*lotu* came and made the *tomate* weak". It is not medical services that are seen to have reduced these death rates, but the *lotu* itself which has supplanted the spirits. Birth in the villages, then, is to be

must shake hands. Usually both are regarded as irrelevant. The *ranepodo* is a celebration of childhood death, a celebration that this has always been anticipated, virtually.

Such people designated in registered, they are misperceived, awkward families to see them all over the entire sibling one of malari.

The very concept of reproduction is

People:

entire sibling

one of malari.

The very concept of reproduction is

reproduction is

People:

entire sibling

one of malari.

The very concept of reproduction is

reproduction is

People:

entire sibling

one of malari.

The very concept of reproduction is

reproduction is

People:

entire sibling

one of malari.

The very concept of reproduction is

reproduction is

People:

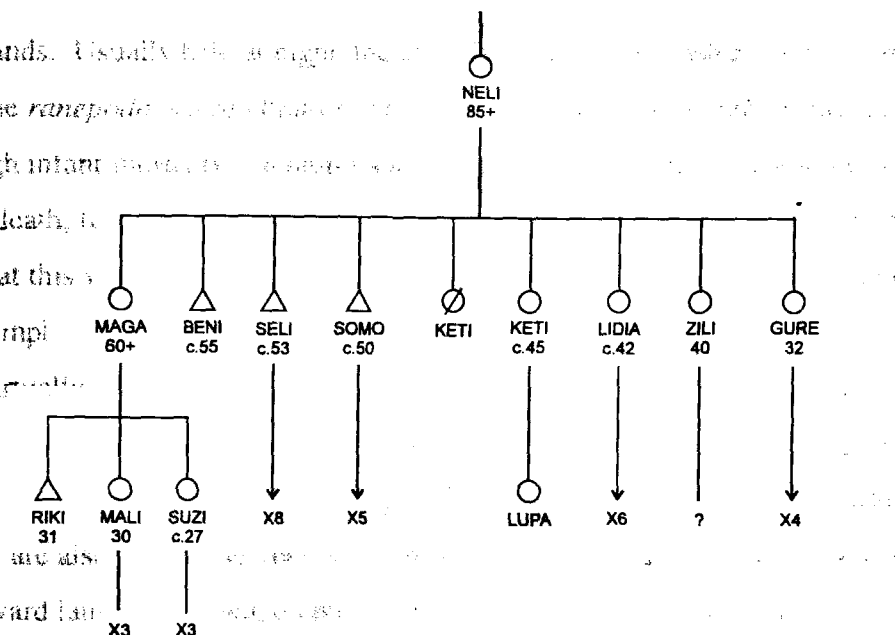
entire sibling

one of malari.

The very concept of reproduction is

reproduction is

People:



Neli:	Born in forest c. 1905 prolonged isolation in forest
Maga:	Born in forest c. 1930 10 days isolation in forest, prolonged confinement in house
Beni:	As Maga
Seli:	" "
Somo:	" "
Keti (1):	" "
Keti (2):	Born in savo near village c. 1945, 10 days isolation in forest, prolonged confinement in house
Lidia:	As Keti
Zili:	" "
Gure:	" "
Riki:	" "
Mali:	" "
Suzi:	Born in clinic c. 1963, 10 day admission
Lupa:	Born in clinic c. 1967, 10 day admission
	All subsequent births as Lupa.

FIG 6.1: Movement of Birth From Forest to Clinic

The local clinic is readily accessible to this family. Women further away may have shifted more slowly from savo to clinic.

seen as a statement of faith in the efficacy of *lotu* as much as a movement in search of modern medical treatment. As a Kwaio woman told Keesing (1989b: 206)

And the Master saved her life. So I believed them and I stayed there. Six of my children had died, and I took another to the mission and she lived. That's why I believed the Christian way.

more tangible in the present. And the Master saved her life. So I believed them and I stayed there. Six of my children had died, and I took another to the mission and she lived. That's why I believed the Christian way.

### Melalu—Neonate

On a child's first birthday, the parents celebrate (*ranepodo*, lit, "day [of] birth") by feasting

their local cognatic kin and inviting the minister or pastor to bless the child. The scale of the celebration is small, as befits a private undertaking, and involves consumption of fish, tubers, boiled rice, noodles and tinned fish, ideally followed by tea and navy (hardtack) biscuits.

Occasionally someone kills a pig, but most people have insufficient cash.<sup>5</sup> The theme of *ranepodo* is one of thanks to Tamasa and congratulations to the parents with whom everyone

must shake hands. Usually held at night, the child is typically long asleep and its absence is irrelevant. The *ranepodo* is a celebration, not for the individual child, but of infant survival.

Although infant mortality has plummeted, people remain intensely conscious of the risk of childhood death, from malaria, measles, or acute bacterial infections. *Ranepodo*, then, is a celebration that this vulnerable period is concluded (see also, Nason, 1981). Children have always been emphatically desired, but this is perhaps the first time that they have been anticipated, virtually every household having accounts of recent ancestors who died childless. Such people are designated according to one of two categories: *egoro* or *lumu*. *Egoro*, those designated infertile, have never had offspring.<sup>6</sup> They are ambiguous figures—sympathetically regarded, they are also, in a sense, ineffectual persons. Like all such figures, they also provoke awkward laughter. *Lumu*, on the other hand, are those who have had children, only to see them all pre-decease them without first reproducing. This is the stuff of tragedy—an entire sibling group lost at sea or wiped out in a measles or polio epidemic or dying one by one of malaria or frailty, the mother and/or father left without any of their beloved children. The very conceptualization of such a social category reflects the precariousness of reproduction in the past.

People today disagree as to whether or not there was a pre-Christian feast equivalent to *ranepodo*, but it does seem likely. If *ranepodo* today is a celebration of the survival of a child at a time when infant mortality is lower than ever before, comparable milestones were probably also marked in the past. A number of features suggest that *ranepodo* derives from earlier ceremonies. The pre-Christian bathing of mother and infant, their assumption of new clothes and the liming of the mother's and the cutting of the child's hair<sup>7</sup> before returning to the village were clearly life crisis signifiers. Such occasions were marked with feasting, which was previously far more elaborate (cf. Hocart, 1922; n.d.a.). The contemporary theme of gratitude for the life of the infant is evocative of those concerns for survival, mentioned above, which were far more tangible in the past. Numbered days after birth were certainly significant, as the calendrical shifting from *savo* to *savo* indicates. Although I cannot categorically know, then, that the child's entry into the village was marked with a celebratory feast I consider it extremely unlikely that it was *not*.

It was to the ancestors, rather than the distant *tamasa*, that thanksgiving was directed. Such events typically took the form of cooking food for consumption by both living and dead lineage members. While people ate food at their gatherings, ancestors simultaneously consumed that left at their shrines and accepted the acknowledgement carried to them in the



smoke of cooking fires. The ancestors, having been thanked for their care of the child and having engaged in the celebratory feasting, the child now truly belonged to the lineage/s. The recognition of the child's lineage membership was reflected in the placement of its skull, should it die, in a female ancestral shrine rather than casting it into the forest or the sea if it had died earlier.<sup>8</sup> The dangers of birth were past for village, mother, child, and their attendants.

The times of great epidemics have passed quite recently. The last polio outbreak, for example, was about 45 years ago and the effects remain visible in the numbers of disabled or partially disabled adult survivors and are easily recalled by those who survived but lost many siblings. Pita Noso, (c. sixty), for example, saw most of his siblings disabled or die in childhood: lost entirely with us mother.

the very beginning, it is handled in a more

period of postnatal re

resumes her garden w

husband is not absent

time since she did any gardening

cleaning up. Other p

to eight year-old girls

absent for any length

occasion

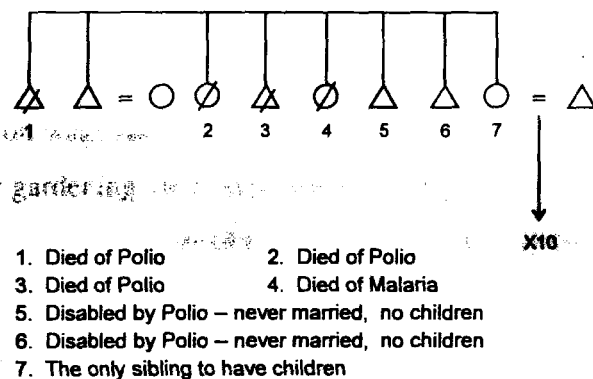


FIG 6.2: Childhood Morbidity Approx. 1940's.

Potential dangers to children remain. Deaths due to measles or malaria are not extraordinary, and are reminders of vulnerability; canoe fatalities are frequent enough to make most parents wary of taking small children on unreliable seas; and the vagaries of clinic supplies reinforce perceptions of infantile susceptibility to disease. Most women are scrupulous in taking small children to the clinic for inoculations and weigh days. If the child is ill, they or their husbands demand injections and express the opinion, when the clinic runs out of medicines, that the nurses are privately retaining supplies to the detriment of their needy children. The almost constant anxiety about the health of infants is in contrast to a more stoic attitude towards the ills of older children and adults.<sup>9</sup> This difference arises not only from an awareness of the greater risks in the first year, but from memories of extremely high rates of infant mortality and disability. *Ranepodo*, then, is a celebration, focused on the parents, of the approximate end of this period.

It is significant, firstly, as the only birthday kept<sup>10</sup> and, secondly, as one of only four ceremonies attached to individuals, the others being baptism (at a few weeks of age),<sup>11</sup> the various marriage ceremonies, and death and mortuary ceremonies. A number of developments occur in infants' lives around the time of *ranepodo*: they begin to walk, are weaned, begin spending more time in the care of siblings, gradually receive less immediate gratification and lose the appellation *melalu*. In talking about *melalu*, then, I am talking about life up to *about* the end of the first year, a period during which all children are suckled, maintained in virtually constant tactile communication with others and are regarded as particularly vulnerable and unknowing.

At the end of seclusion, the infant gradually begins to move about in the community, initially almost entirely with its mother, but more and more in the company of others. From the very beginning, it is handled by many people. In part this depends upon the mother's period of postnatal recuperation and her range of commitments. When the child's mother first resumes her garden work (Chapter Seven), she leaves it with other kin for short periods. If her husband is not absent on wage labour, he may care for their small children, but if it is some time since she did any gardening, he is more likely to accompany her to help with digging and cleaning up. Other possible carers are older siblings, especially sisters, MZ, MM or FM. Six to eight year-old girls take brief responsibility for younger siblings, but if the mother is to be absent for any length of time an older person is sought. This is someone aged over twelve to fifteen years, occasionally a grandfather who no longer has heavy extra-hamlet responsibilities. When the child is several months old, it usually goes to the gardens about once a week with both mother and father, together with an older sibling to "keep it" while the parents work.

This intervention of others to care for neonates represents the beginning of lifelong relations of dependence and reciprocity with kin. Mothers prefer someone who falls into the category *tina* (mother) or *tasi rereko* (female sibling) to care for a child. *Tama* (father) are also highly desirable, but less frequently undertake those responsibilities. Rivers (1914a: 253) argues that the range of people to whom *tina* (M, MM, MZ, FM, FZ, MMZ, MFZ, FMZ, FFZ) and *tama* (F, MB, MF, FB, FF, MMB, MFB, FMB, FFB) apply (Fig. 6.3) is indicative of the "poverty of its nomenclature". It is perhaps better seen as indicative of the richness of choice of persons to whom the small child can turn for nurturance and affectionate care (a support network that continues for as long as those of the two generations included here survive).

Ego speaks formally of these mothers as *tinaqu* ("my mother/s"), affectionately addressing them as *Mama*,<sup>12</sup> *Mama Qoele* ("old mother") or, increasingly, *Aunty*. All are neologisms in lieu of the pre-Christian *Nana*. This novel distinction between categories of kin—partially paralleled by substituting *Papa* and *Papa Barogoso* ("old father") or *Papa Keo* ("white-haired grandfather") for pre-Christian *Mama*—is consistent with the increased stress

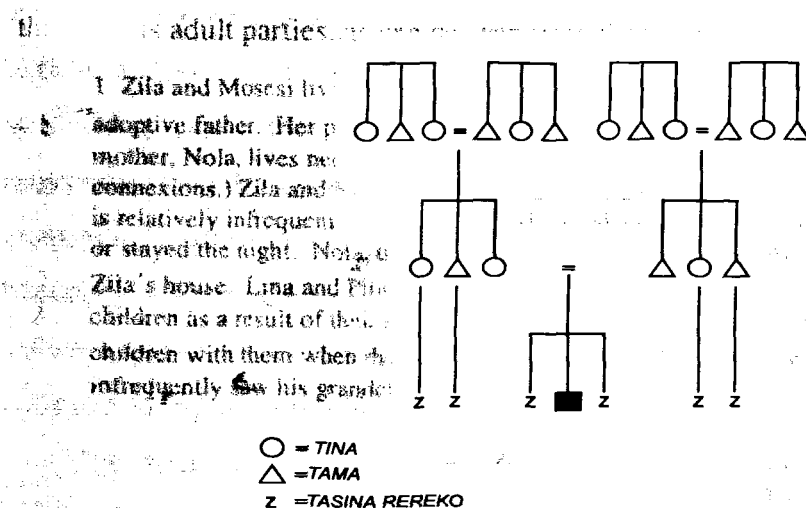


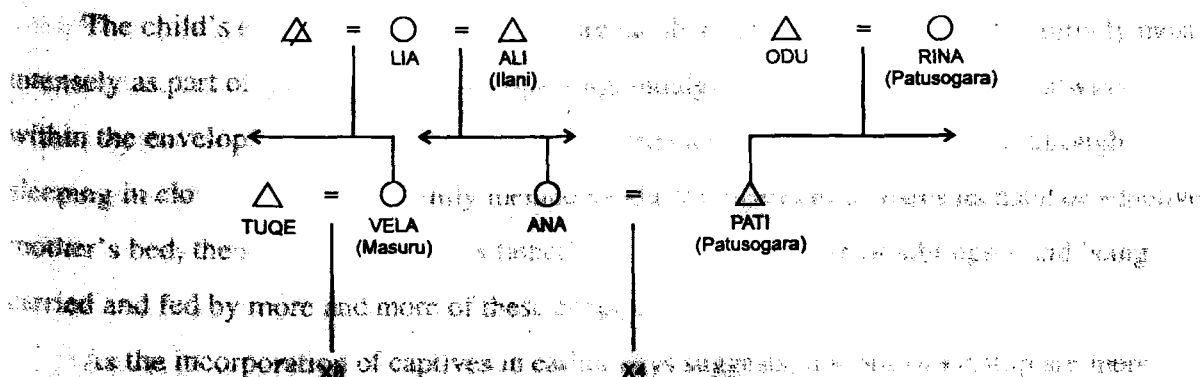
FIG 6.3: *Tina, Tama, Tasina Kinship Categories*

on nuclear family relationships under the dual pressures of Christianity and the money economy. The reciprocal of *tina* or *tama* is *tuqu* ("my offspring"), both formally and affectionately. It is significant that *tina* and *tama* are applied to both the parental and grandparental generations, and that *tuna*<sup>13</sup> is applied to both reciprocal generations. Grandparents spend much time nurturing their children's children. While they often lament this (Dureau, 1993), it results in close ties between generations. The identification of MM and M is also reflected in the fact that fostering tends to be more frequent on the part of grandparents (Chapter Five).

The child's bond to those in the category *tina*, *tama* and *tasi* is close and affectionate, although there are variations in the strength and nature of this tie. Residential proximity affects, but does not determine, the degree of closeness to paternal or maternal kin. Although postmarital residence is ideally virilocal, at any given time slightly more than half of all couples are residing uxorilocally. Women usually look first to their own mothers for help with domestic responsibilities, and there is a tendency to move from uxorilocal residence during the early years of marriage to virilocal residence later. However, unless kin live on distant islands, contact with bilateral kin tends to be frequent, irrespective of residence. While

Scheffler (1962) argued that residence with only one set of lineal kin tended to result in the atrophying of ties to the other side, this propensity is offset, at least over a single generation, by the shifting residence of married couples, the primacy of sibling solidarity, irrespective of long term separate residence (which is not uncommon), and the frequency of adoption of children. Frequency of contact may also be offset by personality and relationships between the various adult parties, as can be seen from the following examples.

1. Zila and Mosesi live uxori locally on land entrusted to her by her mother's, and later her own, adoptive father. Her parents, Lina and Pita, live virilocally on Kolombangara, while Mosesi's mother, Nola, lives neolocally in a village at the other end of Simbo. (See Fig 5.2 for kinship connexions.) Zila and Nola had a very strained relationship, so visiting between the two households is relatively infrequent. Although Mosesi visited his mother regularly, he rarely took his children or stayed the night. Nola, troubled by myalgia and arthralgia, only sporadically visited Mosesi and Zila's house. Lina and Pita, despite living on Kolombangara, were very close to Zila and Mosesi's children as a result of their regular visits of several weeks and their habit of taking one of the children with them when they returned home. Sake, Mosesi's father who lives in Honiara, only infrequently saw his grandchildren.



2. Ana and Pati live virilocally in his mother's hamlet and her parents live virilocally about fifteen minutes away. Ana and Rina have always had a troubled relationship (Ana frequently threatens to return to the uxori local residence of her early marriage) and Ana and her children spend part of each day at the village of her uxori locally resident sister, also only about fifteen minutes distant from both Ana's and Lia's villages. Her children, then, spend at least as much time with her own mother as with her HM and show no marked preference for either one.

3. Lena and Davi (See Fig. 5.1 for kinship connexions) live virilocally at Nusa Simbo following a still unresolved estrangement between Lena and her mother, Ketu, when the former eloped some years ago. Although Atu, Lena's father, goes semi-regularly to Nusa Simbo, Zoi, Lena and Davi's daughter, has little familiarity with him and has virtually never seen her MM. Her ties to kin are almost exclusively patrilineal.

4. Finally, Lidia and Robi live neolocally wherever Lidia teaches. For some years that was at Lengana, about half an hour distant from her mother's hamlet. In that time Mari, Lidia and Robi's daughter, visited her MM at least weekly. However, the family spends one to two months annually on Ranongga with Robi's kin. Since Lidia was transferred to Ranongga two years ago, Mari has spent more time with her father's family than with her mother's. She is, say Lidia and Robi, "strong on both sides". (See Fig. 5.1 for kinship connexions.)

From all of its co-resident *tina*, *tama* and *tasi rereko*, the infant receives semi-constant tactile communication, nurturance from about age four months,<sup>14</sup> rapid gratification of desires and comfort from upsets. In the process, it becomes familiar with its *tavitina*, the core of kin who will ideally provide mutually sustaining social relationships throughout life (Chapter Two). Siblings (*tamatasi*), from the time an older sister cares for a younger child, are most closely concerned with mutual help founded upon notions of equivalence bestowed through birth from "one womb" (*kame tiana*, "one belly") or "one mother" (*kame tinana*). For same-sex siblings there is little to disrupt this equality. The general principle that older siblings (especially the oldest) are to be respected, tends to be attenuated between sisters (less between brothers). Between sister and brother, it is subsidiary to the principle of *luluna* hierarchy). Although an older sister may have some kind of authority or emotional tie based upon a quasi-maternal role, a role increasingly emphasized with progressive age difference, as in the case of Gure and Maga, relationships between sisters usually involve autonomy and interdependence.

The child's earliest experiences, then, are tactile expressions of belonging, initially most intensely as part of the nurturant, encompassing, indulgent biological mother, but always ~~child~~ within the enveloping *tavitina*. It gradually becomes aware of this envelopment through sleeping in close proximity to family members—the youngest child shares its natal or adoptive mother's bed, the second youngest its father's, older children those of siblings—and being carried and fed by more and more of these people. ~~and from then the child should no longer~~

As the incorporation of captives in earlier days suggests, notions of kinship are more ideas of food and nurturance than of biological connexion. The *tavitina* is ideally the group within which food is distributed generously. Children can always find sustenance in the households of their mothers, fathers and older siblings. Sharing establishes belongingness and home. "Share" is, in fact, a cognate of *ia* ("place/home"): *vaiaia* is, literally, "make it home" through distribution. *Ia* is clearly differentiated from places to which one is not attached, ~~open~~ which are *kota* ("place/area"). To share within the hamlet cluster, then, is to reinforce "home". No matter how little is available, the obligations of distribution to kin and love of younger kin is demonstrated daily to children. A two year-old, eating a mandarin when a younger sibling wanders in, has it taken away to be halved and then returned to them both. By age three, children no longer object to this. Older siblings, aged six or more, simply pass over anything they are eating or using to younger. Small children, passing by, may be called to the cookhouse of their MZ, FZS, or whomever, to share a meal. ~~as contracted in accordance with mission-led shifts in emphasis towards the nuclear family.~~

Although giving food is a fundamental act of sociality, bonds of great affective closeness are frequently expressed in terms of carrying young children. "S/he carried me" (*Sa ekaniu, isa*) is a means, not only of establishing relative age, but of sufficient explanation of close connexion of adults. All *melalu* and small children spend much of their life being carried, whether for comfort, transportation, safety or pleasure. "*Mai, ma ekanigo*" ("Come, I will carry you") is an overture of nurturant relationship, as much as a statement of purpose, and small children are continually passed around between kin. Likewise, adults make a point of carrying small kin when they visit after long absences.<sup>15</sup> While these obligations are often seen as onerous, for small children they are unmitigated pleasure, the security of early sociality.

Until the mother decides to end breastfeeding, children are suckled freely. If the child asks for "*susu*", the mother grants it; if it is upset the mother comforts it with the breast; at night it readily finds the breast and many children sleep with their mother's nipple in their mouth. Some grandmothers, too, dry-suckle unweaned children up to about one year if their mother is absent for long periods. Weaning occurs suddenly from the perspective of the child. One day it is taken to the house of one of its *tina* or *tasi*, or that person comes to sleep.<sup>16</sup> When it wants *susu* for whatever reason, its *tina* gives it water to drink; when it cries she carries it; she sleeps with it and comforts it at night. It has "one day for crying, one day for forgetting and one day for coming home". At the end of this time, the child should no longer seek the breast. Alternatively, the mother may rub chloroquine on the nipple and tell the child that the breast is soiled with faeces. These last two are especially likely when the child remains near the mother or is persistent in demanding the breast. The information that the breast is "dirty" (*paze*) is distressing to the child who, even at about one year, is strongly aware that anything *paze* is extremely undesirable. A child, hearing this, pulls away and cries. Likewise when it tastes the bitter breast. At that point, whoever is carrying the child scoops it up and carries it off, rocking it or distracting it and offering it other food.

While the child finds weaning distressing, it derives comfort from those other core kin who have not previously rivalled the mother in solace and nurturance. Thus, the child's inclusion within a network of reliable caring others is reinforced, as it will continue to be when it is replaced by another sibling or fostered. This situation may have involved significant social adjustment over the last nine decades: I would suspect, for example, that the range of people fulfilling the role of the child's comforter has contracted in accordance with mission-led shifts in emphasis towards the nuclear family.

Until the coming of the missionaries, most children were probably suckled for about four years. Weaning at that time, then, may have accompanied the shift from *koburu ite* to *koburu lavata*, rather than that from *melalu* to *koburu ite* as it does now. The 1930 census report (WPHC, 1931) for the BSIP suggests that pre-pacification suckling lasted for only about two years, a figure obtained from responses of District Offices to a questionnaire circulated with the census papers. Although this period was less than thirty years after the arrival of missionaries, the responses of male District Officers, who probably asked local men about the practice, must be set against those of contemporary old women who claim to remember their mothers suckling younger siblings until about age four or at least to recall their mother's reminiscences when they, themselves, had first children. This purported four years suckling period is also remarkably consistent with both Marshall's *et al.* (1985) accounts of infant feeding practices elsewhere in the region and with the local significance of the number four.<sup>17</sup>

What is perhaps most intriguing about the census and oral reports on this subject, is their tacit agreement about the switch from prolonged breastfeeding periods. While the census report does not, like oral accounts, specify an immediate response to advice to reduce breastfeeding, it does implicitly support those arguments with its claim that by 1930 the normal suckling period was one year. Accounts today give some idea of the rationale for accepting such encouragements. I was initially surprised to hear women assert that they were not pressured to make such changes, that they simply obeyed.

Dureau: In the "Time One Day" (*totoso kame rane*) how many years did women suckle their children?

Kali: My mother and my mother's mother, all my mothers fed their children for four years. They had no other children so they gave them the breast for a long time.

Dureau: Why did women here stop suckling for four years? Why do they suckle for only one year?

Kali: The missionaries told us.  
[pause]

Dureau: Why did you listen to them? Why did you obey their words?

Kali: Because they told us to, of course!

Dureau: Were you frightened to disobey them?

Kali: Frightened of a missionary? No!

long before they comprehend

Dureau: Alright, you followed their words because they told you to, but why did they tell you to shorten the time of breastfeeding?

Kali: They said it made women weak to suckle their children for a long time. They said the mother must rest . . . They didn't tell us that having ten children made us old and weak. They said suckling made us weak.

Women may have had their own motivations for discontinuing breastfeeding. While the above passage does not necessarily account for compliance with missionary urgings, it does reveal something of the idiom of missionary persuasions: that it was for their own good, part of the presentation of reformatory goals which accorded so well with local models of benign authority.

The actual age of weaning, then, has apparently been unaltered since a precipitate change sometime before the 1930s. Just as Marshall's contributors argue that extended breastfeeding is strongly condoned, as was probably the case when Simbo women suckled for long periods, so today there are strong notions of the appropriate breastfeeding period. One woman who was still feeding a two year-old child was extremely embarrassed about it, and bewailed the fact that her ZD was unwilling to "carry the child" while it was weaned. These ideas, and the fact that, with many more children to care for, most women find it arduous, makes most unwilling to breastfeed beyond about twelve to fifteen months (Dureau, 1993). There is usually, however, said to be a particular event that precipitates weaning—the child is "too ill" to suckle, the mother is unexpectedly absent or ill, she becomes pregnant with another child, the child spontaneously rejects the breast or the mother reaches the conclusion that the child's demands are unreasonable. Children who are seen to be sickly or too small for their age are also usually weaned earlier, to force them to eat more sweet potato.

There is no doubt that there have been other changes to the lives of *melalu*. Although few distinctions are made between male and female *melalu*, subtle gender differentiation begins at this stage. Hocart (n.d.p.: 2) noted that girls remained well-nigh naked until about age three, and boys for several more years, on Roviana at the turn of the century, and it is likely that the same practice applied on Simbo. This points to a much earlier differentiation between the sexes and female socialization about genital modesty over recent decades. Infant girls today receive messages about hiding their genitals very early. As *melalu*, this consists in keeping them covered. They consistently wear towelling nappies and are quickly and gently discouraged from playing with their genitalia. While mothers may kiss boys' penes momentarily, there is no equivalent gesture for infant girls. Toddler girls are also discouraged from climbing on tables or stepping over the banana leaves laid out for feasts with the words, long before they comprehend them, "You are female, it is taboo to sit on a [food bearing surface]". None of this is spoken with anger or expressions of distaste, rather the child gradually comes to be aware of the requirements of modesty. This early distinction between male and female marks the beginning of a rigidly enforced female modesty which is



ostensibly compatible not only with indigenous concepts of female *luluna* corporeality but with mission and church concerns with chastity.

Children are baptized at some point in their first year, a ceremony regarded as essential but not requiring celebration. The timing of baptism is set by the minister who conducts baptisms from time to time. Like other religious practices, the minister's preferences have an impact on the performance of baptism. Keana performed an elaborate group baptism some months after he arrived, in which infants and their godparents from all over the island were summoned to the main church at Lengana for a Sunday morning service combined with Communion in which members of the congregation were "invited" to renew their own vows. Basi, his successor, tended to more low-key performances. His baptisms were carried out at early morning ceremonies in the villages from time to time. Most people only heard of them afterwards. ~~their parents' marital status, an effort to discourage extra-marital pregnancy and birth.~~ The child has two godparents who are invariably close kin. Unlike European practice, this is usually the parents, who are held responsible for the inculcation of Christian values. It was only late in my last period of fieldwork that I discovered that unmarried women are not permitted to be godparents to their child. Miri's six week-old baby was baptized with a number of other infants at early service one morning, her parents standing as godparents. Miri's sisters and parents said that this was because the church would not allow it. The minister confirmed their explanation. Discussing this later with various people I found myself the bearer of information: nobody had heard of it, although a number of people said that it made sense in light of the church's increasing concern with extra-marital pregnancy and birth. Time was pressing, and I did not ask the minister for further detail. Given the extent of extra-marital childbearing however, my only explanation for people's non-awareness is that it was a new regulation. That then raises the question of whose regulation it is: it is quite in accordance with the UC's previous moves towards discouraging extra-marital maternity (Chapter Seven). On the other hand, the new minister was particularly anxious about the island's reputation for sexual magic, which was seen to have corrupted many missionaries and ministers (most recently his predecessor), and may have been expressing his concerns in this way. ~~church, after the previous minister's death.~~ The minister may also have been reacting to local concerns about such pregnancies. A persistent theme of community comment was that these were unfortunately becoming much more frequent. It is difficult to assess such claims. On the one hand, they are usually made in the context of deploring present behaviour relative to earlier periods. On the other hand, it is

difficult to quantify any changes in its occurrence. While most households with sexually mature females now include at least one single mother, knowledge about the sexual lives of older women is dependent upon either personal confidences or chance mention by others. Single maternity has occurred in several different contexts (Chapter Eight). The church's injunction, in the 1980s, against marrying pregnant women has meant that many who would have married as a result of those pregnancies cannot now do so (except by *kastom*). This purported upsurge is therefore at least partly an artifact of that regulation rather than indicative of changing practices by young people. My impression is that premarital births have increased over the past two decades, but that premarital pregnancy—much more difficult to ascertain—has not necessarily done so.

Refusal to allow parental godparents is, in any case, the only form of discrimination on the basis of their parents' marital status, an official discrimination that has virtually no social significance. From the church perspective, baptism is an indication of denominational affiliation, but this kind of declaration has little local significance. From the establishment of the SDA in 1930, denomination has been both highly politicized and the focus of acrimonious personal disputes (Chapter Four, Seven). Allegiance, however, is demonstrated by participation for all denominations except the SDA. There are thus a considerable number of people baptized in various denominations who participate in UC services. The same applies to the CFC. Only in the SDA church, with its emphasis on conscious baptism by adults and its claim of unique doctrinal validity, is baptism a material factor in denominational affiliation. Far more significant to the infant is immersion in a Christian ethos. While not initially conscious of *lotu* and its daily manifestations, from birth onwards *lotu* frames and intrudes upon most of the child's significant activities. Just as the child absorbs knowledge of belonging to the *tavatina*, so it absorbs the values, ideas, norms of Christianity, all of which ultimately develop into both conscious and semi-conscious awareness of, and commitment to, *lotu*. And in most instances during most of the person's life, it is to the generic *lotu*, rather than the specific denomination that they refer as the foundation and framework of social life.

Children join services with their mothers from about one month. Before the first trip to the church, after the period of isolation, the child must be "blessed" (*vavara*—"prayed over") by the minister or pastor, a requirement that suggests that the child like its mother, "smells" of birth (Chapter Seven). The significance of *vavara* was demonstrated when Pia, a UC Gilbertese woman living on the island, unexpectedly took her eight week-old infant to the church.

She slipped into one of the seats towards the back of the church after service had commenced. There was a murmur of consternation, but no-one ventured to say anything to her. Finally, at an appropriate point in the service, the pastor walked to the front to the obvious surprise of the preacher who had not been aware of the low-key hubbub. He invited anyone who wished it, to bring her child forward for blessing. Pia, unaware that this was directed at her, remained seated. The pastor repeated his invitation several times, before one woman told her, "Take your baby to the front for the blessing". The blessing performed by the pastor, the service continued, but afterwards there was considerable critical discussion of Pia's ignorance.

Children learn to be quiet and respectful in and about *lotu* and are never permitted to disturb services. When restive or crying, they are quickly breastfed or passed to another person who might manage to quiet them, or they are removed from the activity, just so far as necessary. Long before the child can speak, it is hushed with the words "*Noso, noso lotu*" ("Hush, hush, *lotu*"). *Lotu* also permeates daily life. Cooked food must be prayed over, giving thanks to Tamasa, before it can be eaten.<sup>18</sup> Walking around the village, not yet fully aware of what it is hearing, it nonetheless hears individuals praying and sees the reaction of others in the vicinity, hushing their conversation and moving around the praying person so as not to disturb them. When people gather at night to sing, the infant usually hears them singing hymns, the words "Tamasa", "Zisu" and "*tataru lavata*" ("big love") repeated over and over. New houses are blessed with prayer, meetings opened with a prayer, feasts preceded by a prayer. Such practices and constantly reiterated words, unquestioned by anyone, are absorbed by the child long before it is able to verbalize.

Such children are not in terms of the displaced child's behaviour, rather than in terms of its health.

#### **Koburu Ite—Small Child**

This stage has no precise boundaries—just as the *melalu* gradually matures into a *koburu ite*, so a *koburu ite* eventually becomes a *koburu lavata* ("big child"). In general the term is applied to children from the time of their *ranepodo* up to about age six or seven when they need little or no direct supervision and girls, especially, begin to assume responsibility for various household tasks. That is also about the age at which children ideally begin school, although this may be delayed by one or two years due to staff shortages. Today, school age, when children definitively begin reading and writing, provides an apposite analytical conclusion to the period during which they are learning to listen and speak. In the past, different criteria obviously determined the limit of this period. What they were and when the period ended, I do not know. I would suggest that the end of the seclusion in the forest marked the transition from *melalu* to *koburu ite* and that, given the low fertility rates, it may have been with the birth of a sibling, or with delayed weaning, that a child became, relatively, a *koburu lavata* ("big child").<sup>19</sup> Today, the approximate beginning of this period may be

marked by any of a number of events, most frequently, weaning, fostering and displacement by subsequent siblings. Although not inevitably intertwined, each may be precipitated by one or both of the other events. Fosterage requires weaning which may be quickly followed by the mother's subsequent pregnancy (Simpson-Herbert & Huffman, 1981). Pregnancy, on the other hand, may precipitate both weaning and fostering.

For the *melalu*, being carried and being fed are interrelated—those who carry one the most are those who feed one the most. It is those individuals, too, who have most to do with socializing the child about gender relations, obligations towards kin and *lotu*, all of which are recurrent themes during this stage. For those who continue to suckle, the mother is both their primary carrier and their primary carer. As they become *koburu ite*, however, their carers diversify and the nurturant, custodial and instructional roles may be dispersed. Mothers, for example, continue to be primarily responsible for feeding a child, although it is increasingly in the care of its sisters. The continuation of this movement away from the mother as primary caretaker and the reliability of the network of other kin may be emphasized by weaning, displacement by another sibling and/or fostering by other kin.

The same pattern of comfort is evident in responses to *varitako* children. For many children, their next sibling is born before their second year, although this is regarded as highly undesirable, both by their mothers and by others who invariably see it as bad for the child. This is expressed in terms of the displaced child's behaviour rather than in terms of its health (cf., Marshall, *et al.*, 1985). Such children (*varitako*) display behaviours known as *vasosoro* ("inappropriate infantile behaviour")—clinging to their mothers or other carers, whinging, crying and throwing tantrums, refusing to go to other people, insisting on being carried, and so on. These behaviours are seen as expressing the disruption of the child's proper relationship with its mother, a reference both to her pragmatic concerns and to an immaterial bond between woman and child. Thus, when the three year-old child of a woman who had left Simbo to marry onto another island and who had not seen her mother for two years, insisted on being carried everywhere, refused to let her father out of her sight and generally behaved in an immature manner, this was linked to rumours that her mother had borne another child. In fact, a number of people disputed that that was the cause of her behaviour, pointing out that the category *varitako* was not applicable in her particular case because she was too old. She was simply a "bad child", they argued.<sup>20</sup>

The child who is *varitako* is to be consoled. Others feel love (*tataru*) for it. To have "love" for someone means to sympathize or empathize with or pity them, an element of the love one bears for all blood kin and of the love of Tamasa.<sup>21</sup> Although the *varitako* child's carers may be angered by the situation, they nonetheless carry or humour the child because of their "love" for it. The various sentiments surrounding the *varitako* child are summarized in Fig. 6.4. (Note that the father's relatives do not comment on such situations.)

Around this time of weaning and/or displacement, children may also be fostered by other kin, an event which shifts the child's primary orientation to another household without depriving it abruptly of the familiar network of kin. The very young child who shifts from its parental household to that of the mother's or father's parents or siblings, ordinarily does so over short distances (although greater distances may be involved in fostering of older children or when maternal death is involved). Thus, when Tina's one year-old son was adopted by her mother, he moved to a neighbouring village; Ket'i's infant daughter, Lupa, remained initially in the same village; likewise Neli's one year-old daughter, Lidia. Some indication of the

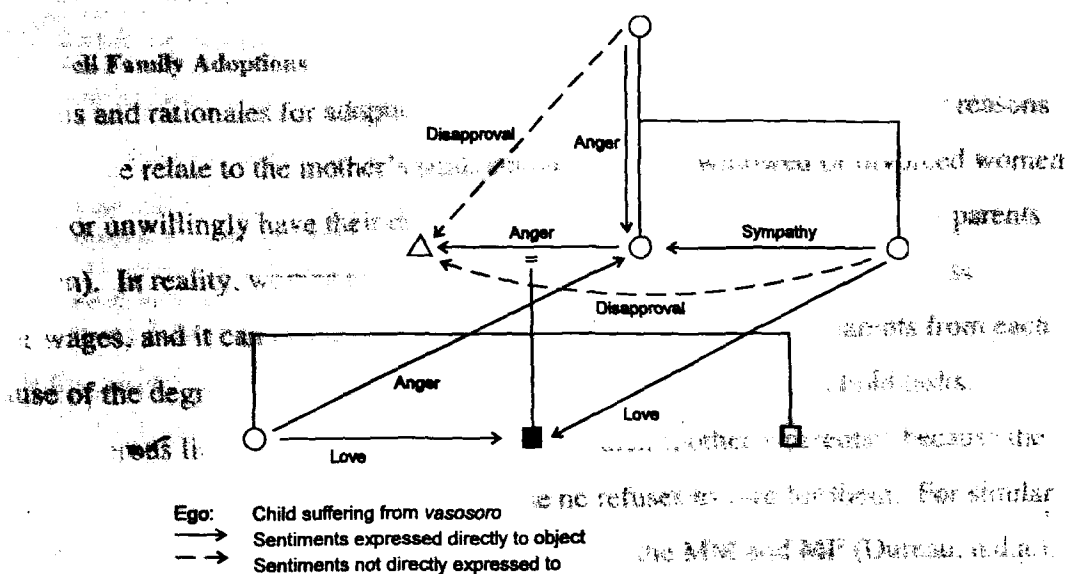


FIG 6.4: Sentiments Regarding Varitako Child.

The sentiments are generally applicable to classificatory kin, except that the anger directed from Ego's sister towards their mother would not apply more widely. Rather, the girl's sisters (FZD, FBD, MZD, MBD) would express sympathy to the girl herself.

degree of fostering of children is indicated by movements within the Neli-Bule family over three generations:

the gender differentiation which commenced when they were children, also continues as children become *tebaru ite*, and by the time they are adults, the girls are

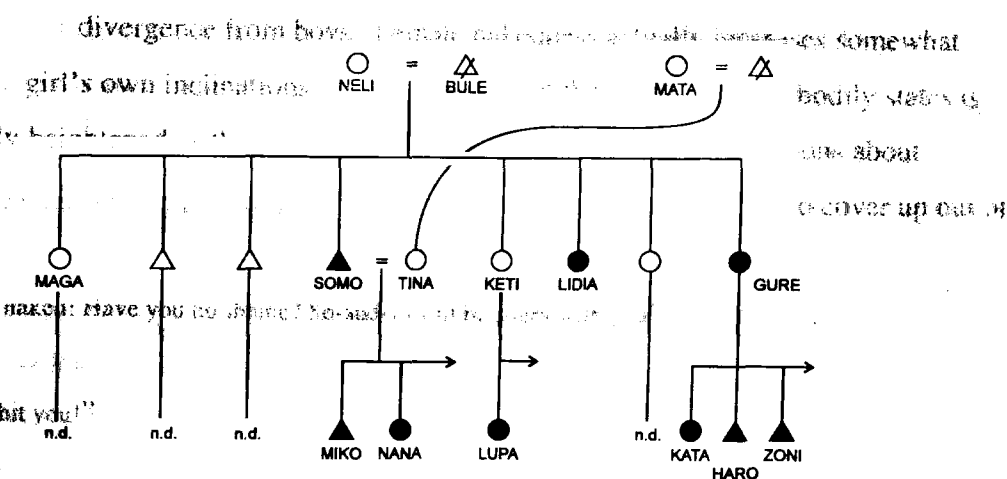


FIG 6.5: Bule-Neli Family Adoptions

Similar patterns and rationales for adoption occur across the island. The other major reasons behind this practice relate to the mother's situation—unmarried, widowed or divorced women may willingly or unwillingly have their children adopted by their own or the father's parents (Chapter Seven). In reality, women usually live in, or near their parents' house, unless working for wages, and it can be difficult to differentiate the child's social parents from each other because of the degree of co-operation in fulfilling childcare and household tasks.

Children of adulterous liaisons may also be cared for by their mother's parents<sup>22</sup> because the MH is felt not to be an appropriate parent or because he refuses to care for them. For similar reasons, children of previous marriages may be adopted by the MM and MF (Dureau, n.d.a.).

These adoptions reinforce the *tavitina* relations discussed earlier. For larger children, their *tavitina* continue to provide them with the framework of socialization, and their own *tamatasi* come to be their first friends and supporters. By the time girls reach the end of childhood, they are enmeshed in the webs of *tavitina* sociality and reciprocity, both giving and receiving support in a pattern that persists until the cementing of their graves and, previously, until their ancestral identity faded from memory.

The subtle gender differentiation which commenced when they were *melalu*, also continues as children become *koburu ite*, and by the conclusion of this stage, little girls are

well aware of their divergence from boys. Female nakedness actually increases somewhat initially, as the girl's own inclinations come into play, but their awareness of bodily states is simultaneously heightened as they come to understand older people's injunctions about covering up. Thus, if an important person is nearby, people exhort the child to cover up out of respect:

“You are naked! Have you no shame? So-and-so will be angry with you”

or child In the darkness, the a row of lighted candles

“... will hit you!”

or

“Look at that naked child! There is the *banara* [or whoever]”

At other times, such as during or after bathing, small girls freely walk around naked. Until about age four, they are also relatively free to urinate on the grass around the village. At such times, when the situation does not demand prompt covering, people chide or tease the child, “Look at the pudenda! [*kilo*, a euphemism reserved for immature female genitals]”, pointing at the particular child who immediately covers herself with both hands and giggles, before pulling on her panties or ignoring them. Despite the good humour, teaching girls to clothe themselves is regarded seriously. This was made clear when Ana subtly encouraged me to curb Astrid's enthusiasm for nakedness:

Chris, look at my naked son! He's four years-old and he's always running around naked. When I see that I'm shamed, even though he is a boy. I try to make even my sons wear clothing. I'm glad my daughter (six months) is too young to run naked because people don't like to see girls naked. Naked girls are so ugly, you know. Not like boys, that's all right, but not girls. I think the ways of you Europeans are different.

If girls are gently pushed into developing a sense of modesty about their bodies, they also learn that their genitalia should not come into contact with food in any direct or indirect way—through sitting or climbing on tables, stepping over food utensils or eating surfaces, sitting on buckets, and so on. Although there are no negative sanctions imposed for violation of these norms, girls by the age of about six are well aware of these norms of female behaviour and conform to them.

As the child progresses from *melalu* to *koburu* it also becomes increasingly aware of the significance of *lotu*. Three and four year-old children check that food has been prayed over before eating, they speak of “Tamasa” and “Zisu”. It is about this time, too, that they begin to sit apart from their parents in church. The area at the front of the women's side is reserved for children, who usually continue to sit there until about the time they leave school. At about the time that they sit separately, many children begin to go to Sunday School classes run by older

*koburu lavata*, the minister and *maramar* and sometimes by schoolteachers. Although there is some teaching of biblical stories, most of this time is devoted to learning hymns, and most religious learning occurs in the household where children listen to adults and adolescents discussing various problems and issues in the context of biblical examples. When children go to school, the day starts with official prayer. Even before commencing school, however, days sometimes conclude with family prayer or a Bible reading or discussion by a parent or older child. In the darkness, the kerosene light held close to the book of the person reading, those not visiting other houses sit close together, quietly listening to the reader or prayer leader. Younger children, embraced by their mother or older sister and drifting off to sleep, listen to the older group members discussing passages or questions. If not, they may listen to assessments of the minister's or pastor's performance, plans for women's or men's or youth fellowship meetings or events, or sing hymns. While still quite young, children begin to participate in the religious instruction of other children. Thus, Hilida (c. five), Astrid's dearest companion, chastised her for playing at weeding on a Sunday morning: "Astrid, that's taboo—today is Sunday". Likewise, Maki (six) chided her FBD, Talie (two), for not waiting for prayer before she ate her food.

As children grow, they gradually merge into the world of other children. Three year-old children, able to articulate their needs, who run around with other children and deal confidently with their environment—including open fires, knives and the shoreline—need little direct supervision or personal attention from their mothers unless they are ill. Older siblings and cousins watch them, sharing the food they gather (nuts and fruits mainly) and carry them when they become tired. They begin to join in games, and learn to share their food with, and take responsibility for, even younger children. Their mother may leave them for a full day while she goes to the garden or to Gizo for marketing or buying. By the time she is five or six, a girl finds herself minding younger siblings if her older sisters are at school or busy elsewhere. She also has minor tasks to fulfil: carrying messages between households, keeping herself clean and clothed, fetching and carrying cooking utensils, carrying water from the pipe and so on. An eight or ten year-old girl is old enough to boil some sweet potato for her younger siblings, take responsibility for bathing them and laundering their clothes and go fishing or foraging by the shore for crustaceans, sea snails and the like. Her play reflects these growing and future responsibilities—she gathers food and makes miniature stone ovens or plays *koboburu*, which consists of wrapping discarded glass bottles in scraps of cloth and carrying them like infants. At this point, girls' activities diverge markedly from those of boys



who continue to roam freely or apply themselves to academic study unless they have no sisters to help their mothers.

### ***Koburu Lavata*—Big Child**

This term covers an extended period from about school age to marriage, encompassing considerable changes in a girl's life. The *koburu lavata* is a person who assumes some of the tasks associated with every family, does not need to be "minded", and comprehends the socially appropriate behaviour dictated by particular circumstances. From about this point, too, people begin to refer more frequently to *koburu rereko* or "female child" (for boys *koburu marane*) with, as I argued in the previous chapter, the meanings of the words shifting over time so that by about sixteen, *koburu rereko* indicates unmarried female rather than female child. Around this time, many girls have their first child, but are still regarded as *koburu* because of their unmarried status (Chapter Seven). *Koburu lavata* assume many responsibilities associated, initially, with the domestic unit—care of their youngest siblings, cooking when their mother is occupied (although usually only sweet potato or cassava and only for domestic consumption), laundry, scouring of dishes and pots, sweeping and weeding around the house and, often, aiding elderly grandparents or adoptive parents. Many also have responsibility for their own gardens.

This is a contrast to the responsibilities of boys. Although they may also take care of younger siblings, this is a regular responsibility only when boys have no sisters of an appropriate age. Vali, son of Lidia, for example, was responsible out of school hours for the care of his sister Mari because his older sister was away at secondary school. For most boys, this is a sporadic responsibility and they are rarely to be found around their households during the day. Their other productive work is intermittent: they sometimes help their fathers to gather firewood or go fishing, convey messages for their parents and so on. Some boys begin to make gardens as they mature. From occasionally helping their parents, they may progress to clearing their own land. Such boys are favourably regarded as potential marriage partners by girls' parents. The activity, however, is optional. Many do no gardening until after marriage. As they age, their absences become more prolonged, as they autonomously stay with brothers in other households for uncertain periods. For a sixteen year-old girl to remain away unannounced for a night is cataclysmic. For a boy to do so is unremarkable. From about eighteen, some boys pursue wage-migration. Some do so until marriage or beyond, ultimately working for several years. Others do so for only a few months or not at all. The

Pidgin word, *liu* ("layabout") is applied to the latter, half seriously and half in jest. For boys, this period before marriage is one of freedom from obligation and direction, provided there are others to undertake the responsibilities of provisioning and maintaining the household. Other than schooling, they come and go autonomously (see also Hocart, n.d.b.: 3). Girls, however, are bound ever more firmly to household responsibilities.

Schooling, five mornings a week, also consumes much time from about age seven to the end of primary school, six years later. From the commencement of school, the week takes on a routine form of school every morning, household chores in the afternoons and evenings and homework at night for five days. On Saturday, girls either go to the garden with their parents and siblings, or remain at home to carry the smallest children while the others go up to the gardens. Sundays are taken up with helping their mothers prepare food in a stone oven (*motu*), attending services and Sunday School and wandering around with girls from the same village, often carrying siblings. Older children begin to participate in the occasional evenings of singing hymns, which are arranged spontaneously or to celebrate a marriage. By the time they are thirteen or fourteen they may be major participants in these performances. Most musical instruments are played by boys, but there are few other observable gender differences in participation. Both sexes sing robustly, make suggestions for particular hymns and attend in about equivalent numbers. For those girls old enough to have assignations with boys, these events provide ideal cover for making arrangements or slipping off in the darkness. The United Church Youth Fellowship also enables the subtle development of relationships by bringing both sexes together without adult supervision.

There are considerable variations in the degree of overt devotion to *lotu*. Not all families have joint prayer. Likewise, many eligible girls do not participate in Youth Fellowship, while others join both Youth and Women's Fellowship (the latter when they reach about twenty). The more devout sometimes organize younger village members into choir groups for Sunday *lotu*. The framing of most events in terms of *lotu* may give the impression of greater concern with Christian expression than is actually the case. Thus, the nocturnal hymn sessions are, first and foremost, *fun* rather than devotional. Songs on contemporary Simbo simply happen to be more often hymns. Likewise, the Fellowships provide one of the most common frameworks for recreational activities, whether embroidery by SDA Dorcas (Women's Group) members, or *kastom* dancing by UC women to welcome visiting Women's Fellowship members from neighbouring Ranongga, or competitive sports for Youth Fellowship members. This is not redolent of insincerity of worship. Rather it is

indicative of the efficacy of early missionaries in eradicating most indigenous forms of dancing and singing and insisting that Christianity must provide the framework for *all* sociality. This was not a new message on Simbo where, as I argued in Chapter Two, there was no separable religious sphere. Missionary message and local understanding coincided here. They also diverged, however, in that missionaries were overwhelmingly concerned with sexual morality. Thus, as late as the 1960s, shortly before the Methodist Mission became the independent United Church, a popular youth dance, previously conducted under Mission auspices, was banned because it was thought to encourage intimacy between boys and girls, the same rationale which Tuza (1977) attributes to Goldie's suppression of indigenous dance shortly after the arrival of the Mission. Intensity of concern with *lotu* thus varies according to both context and individual commitment. Despite this, however, the validity of the framework or idiom is never questioned. Particular children may be more concerned with prayer or theology than others, but all *know* that the world is governed by Tamasa.

### **Koburu Rereko Lavata—Big Girls**

I have little data on the lives of unmarried girls in the past. Given that family sizes were significantly smaller than currently, family configurations were undoubtedly very different. The higher death rates in the past also suggest that the substitutability of kin implied by the equivalence of the various *tasi* (sibling/s) and *tina* (mother/s) was even more pertinent than today. It is probable, then, that girls may have often found themselves fulfilling the same roles as *tina* for younger natal or classificatory siblings or older sisters' children. Then, as now, according to oral accounts, girls helped their mothers with their responsibilities in the gardens, childcare, food management, weaving and the manufacture of clothing.

Two scant pieces of evidence also suggest that from about adolescence they may have been seen as ready to assume some aspects of adult status. Firstly, Hocart (n.d.b.) noted the extent to which boys of about this age were integrated into adult activities and conversations, their opinions being given the same credence as those of adults. While he specifically mentions boys, he does not suggest or imply that the situation with girls was any different in contexts of female expertise or responsibility. Secondly, my oral accounts suggest that this was the age at which people began to discriminate between categories of enemies: children up to about age twelve or fourteen were captured and brought back to the island as captives. From this age onwards, however, enemies were killed or were kept as adult sacrifices (*veala*) before future expeditions or on the death of *banara*. The distinction, manifested in the

Some months earlier I was staying in a village and was told that a girl of about twelve was staying with me. She said that she was being held as a sacrifice.

keeping of captives' skulls in ancestral shrines in contrast to the trophy-like display of beheaded enemy skulls in canoe houses, appears to revolve around ideas of the affiliability of younger people: those young enough to be nurtured as dependents could be assimilated as kin, others were enemies. That those less than about age fourteen could grow up "truly people of this place" in contrast to older children, implies some kind of differential assessment of the personhood of pubescent and pre-pubescent children, that the former were seen to approximate full adults. The ambiguity about the degree to which mature girls approximate adulthood also inflects the lives of "girls" aged between about sixteen and twenty today.

Many girls spend some time after the completion of school either in wage labour or working as a *haos gel* (Pijin: "house girl") for relatives in urban centres. Those who have achieved some degree of secondary schooling may be trained as either school teachers or Registered Nurses, or be employed as public servants. Those without benefit of secondary education are more likely to work at the fish cannery at Noro. The earnings of such labour can be the source of considerable conflict as the wage earner and her family negotiate obligations versus rights to property, a situation that continues in different form when girls marry and have to balance cognatic, affinal and nuclear family obligations.

It is within this period, too, that girls and boys learn to enact the power relations of *luluna* relationships. As *koburu lavata*, girls are expected to be well aware of the obligations of bodily containment. They may continue to wear only cotton panties with elasticized waists and legs for some time, but from about twelve or fourteen years, they begin to wear skirts and tops as well, the former being most essential. This relates to the expected restraint between *luluna* (Chapter Two). As *koburu lavata*, this restraint is expressed through modesty of attire, verbal restraint and utmost discretion in the conduct of love affairs. Girls, discussing their concerns or gossiping about other girls, constantly check over their shoulders to ensure that nobodies' *luluna* are nearby, and they share their secrets only with best friends, other sisters, classificatory mothers and sometimes their natal mothers. *Luluna* relationships pervade unmarried girls' lives, as seen in the following illustrations:

Rina (18), her face still swollen from her *luluna*'s reaction to a failed elopement the week before (Chapter Eight), returned to her hamlet, hot and sweaty after working in the gardens. Wearing her soiled clothes, she bathed under the tap, then moved over to speak to her mother and myself while she pulled a clean skirt on underneath the soiled one before removing the latter. In doing so, the skirts were momentarily pulled up, exposing her upper thigh. Her mother immediately chided her in an undertone before quietly remarking to me that "This girl is crazy to be so careless in front of her *luluna* [whom I had not noticed sitting on the verandah of one of the houses]. When will she know what can befall her? She wants to die!"

Some months earlier I was staying as a guest in another village. Iqu, an unmarried girl of about twenty was staying with me. One evening, we were sitting and exchanging stories with

several other girls and young women. Suddenly, a young boy of about fourteen stormed up to the house, shouting abuse, kicked a metal bucket and disappeared into the darkness. Iqu leapt to her feet and also disappeared. I alone was surprised. The others joked about the youth of the boy, who had not really known how to be enraged, before explaining that Iqu was pregnant and the news had only now reached her *luluna*. She had been frightened to tell her parents, who could have arranged "compensation" and averted their wrath, both because her mother had consistently opposed all her former relationships and because they would be particularly angry about her situation—she was pregnant to one of her *tavitina*, a category proscribed for marriage.<sup>23</sup> Word sped around the village and the night was soon disturbed by the loud wailing of her lover's older brother, distraught that, for the first time, the "line is broken". A little later, one of Iqu's MZ walked around the village with a collection of 20c pieces, cajoling Iqu's *luluna* into accepting them and then stating firmly, "That is Iqu's compensation". Still nobody knew where Iqu was, but after the village had gone to sleep, her FF walked to the edge of the bush, calling her softly and led her back to his house where she hid until she was willing to be seen again in public.

As girls become increasingly constrained in their dealings with *luluna*, they become more involved with lovers. While many people argue that this is a new practice, the evidence suggests that in pre-Christian society premarital sexuality was the norm. There does appear to have been a brief period of premarital abstinence in Christian times, sometime around the 1930s or 1940s. A number of people who married at that time asserted that they had had no sexual relationships before their church marriages, even when they eloped. This brief period of apparent concordance with missionary ideals is probably the *kastom*-ary sexual restraint referred to today. Hocart (n.d.f.: 1-2), writing about Roviana, noted that girls were treated contraceptively (*tige*) and that premarital births were both uncommon (he knew of only one) and disapproved. He also notes that sexuality was seen as natural and inevitable. As his Roviana informants told him, it was no use trying to prevent girls having lovers, because they wanted to (n.d.h.: 3). Further:

Riambule was of the opinion that the Roman Catholic missionaries are wrong in saying that sexual intercourse is bad for it is good. Men [generic] are not born from wood or stone, but from a woman's womb. Every nation has coitus.<sup>24</sup>

He notes, finally, that suitors could present gifts to a girl's father if they wanted a sexual relationship with her. As I noted in Chapter Two, Hocart regarded this as evidence that parents used their daughters as "prostitutes", a particularly ethnocentric interpretation of the connexion between sexuality and gift presentations. I continue consideration of the sexuality of *koburu* in Chapter Seven. There was, however, a further sexual status associated with girls in pre-Christian times and Hocart again describes this in terms of prostitution for parental gain. Infrequent and resulted in the woman's death or serving sexual service, women must

Consenting girls, known as *tugele*, were engaged in the "sale of sexual services" (Ralston, 1989: 57) under the sponsorship of *banara*. *Tugele* engaged in sexual intercourse in exchange for clamshell valuables which were directed towards *banara*'s sponsorship of expeditions. *Tugele* were exclusively available to the *banara*'s male followers. As N.Thomas

(1991: 49) argues, there is no evidence that the girl's sexuality was inalienable at such times. Ralston, however, cautions against the use of culturally loaded European terms to describe such practices. Thus, the term "prostitute" with its negative cultural connotations of "degradation and debasement of virtue or honour" is better substituted by "sale of sexual services" (1988: 76-78; 1989: 55-60; N.Thomas, 1991: 91-92). It is difficult now to assess the practice and status of *tugele*. Contemporary local usage associates *tugele* with *duri* (Pidgin: "prostitute/s"), who are widely despised. This, however, is to be interpreted in the context of local acceptance of outsiders' sustained critical interpretations of pre-Christian sexual practices. Goldie's (1909: 28) sarcastic statement that "female chastity is not a very common virtue among the unmarried women and girls" is typical. Missionaries' opinions had the most direct impact, through sermonizing and attempted direct reformations of social life, but the view was widespread among Europeans. Hocart (n.d.k.: 1; see also Thurnwald, 1934-35: 155-156), for example, referred to Tinoni Simbo's "dissolute habits" and misinterprets local sexuality on a number of occasions. Bennett's (1987: 11-12; see also Elton, 1888: 93) suggestion that "prostitution" was a low status occupation of slave women is belied by Hocart's (1931: 318) account, by my genealogical data which indicate that any girl could be *tugele* and by old women's assertions that *tugele* were excused from all physical labour, waited upon by slaves and frequently rewarded with canarium trees and shell rings.<sup>25</sup>

Missionaries successfully suppressed *tugele* and payments from girls' lovers to parents. This, however, had the effect of disconnecting premarital sexuality from the local polity and from incipient lineage affinal relationships, and making it a more personal or individual field of activity. It did not, however, sever the linkage between culturally constructed childhood and sexuality. Rather, the removal of the right of execution by a girl's *luluna*, together with successful missionary endeavours to make women abandon their indigenous contraceptive, abortion and infanticidal practices, has resulted in a surge of premarital pregnancies and births. Wood (1990: 212) chides anthropologists for uncritically accepting the efficacy of indigenous fertility control practices. Clearly, however, in an environment in which premarital sexuality was expected (although necessarily discrete) but premarital pregnancy was both infrequent and resulted in the woman's death or strong social censure, women must have been able to control their fecundity in some way. It is now impossible to assess the efficacy of the various local fertility control practices. I have one doubtful claim by a then-unmarried girl that she had successfully induced an abortion by drinking a tea made of a local leaf. However, most people claim that these past recipes have been forgotten. Given the

failed attempted abortion using lime juice, mentioned earlier, and that I was several times approached by the mothers of pregnant girls requesting some kind of abortifacient, this assertion seems to be true.

There are several fertility control measures available through the local clinic (detailed in Dureau, n.d.b.). However, the shift from the discrete use of local remedies to the official and public provisioning through the local clinic has effected a transference of availability and consumption from unmarried to married women, a shift congruent with mission and church emphases on conjugal sexuality. Girls cannot solicit contraceptives: to do so would be to negate the secrecy which protects them from *luluna* outrage. They would, in any case, be refused.

That *luluna* outrage, dissipated with the acceptance of "compensation", can be manipulated by a girl's parents in their attempts at control:

Thus, when Miri, a local girl working as a teacher on Simbo, established a relationship with Timote, who had never worked or made a garden, her parents opposed the relationship (see Fig. 5.2). Miri, determined, began having him stay the night at her house at Lengana and eventually allowed him to leave in the daylight, thereby openly declaring herself married to him. Her parents, hearing of this, did not arrange compensation for her *luluna*. A number of her *luluna* assaulted her. Several weeks later, Miri defiantly took one of her brother's shirts and ran off to the bush with Timote, where her *luluna* unsuccessfully pursued her. After a few days, she took refuge in the minister's house. Aneta, her mother, began spreading stories that the minister, who was officially trying to negotiate a family peace, was facilitating contact between Timote and Miri. One of Miri's natal brothers, again incensed, attacked her while she was teaching school. Her mother, implacably opposed to the relationship, ordered Miri's *luluna* not to accept "compensation", which some of Miri's FZs were intending to arrange. The stand-off persisted for months and most of Miri's *luluna* lost interest, although she continued to risk assault with each fresh new round of gossip. Finally, she became pregnant, but her mother refused to allow a marriage. Two days before she gave birth, her parents were still haranguing her in an outburst that could be heard throughout the village and her natal brothers were reputed to have struck her again. It was only when Aneta was discovered in an adulterous liaison about three months later (Chapter Ten), that her father reactively declared that he was going to allow Timote and Miri to be "straightened" (*vatozomo*) and allowed "compensation" to her *luluna*.

This case was extreme, but not unique.<sup>26</sup> Most women arrange "compensation" immediately upon hearing of their real and classificatory daughters' scandals. This does not, however, preclude a girl's natal mother, in particular, from threatening her with the anticipated anger of her *luluna*, should they hear of an involvement of which they disapprove. Parents, however, disapprove of *particular relationships*—Iqu's mother, who had sabotaged all of her prior relationships was widely regarded as highly unreasonable—whereas *luluna* react to *any revelation* of a girl's corporeal existence. Thus, a woman who approves of her daughter's relationship with a boy (*babaere*) will help them to avoid discovery. Most intrigues, however, are mutually facilitated by sisters or girlfriends who each carry notes for the other, arrange





## NOTES

Somo's vindictive home as if to stress the enormity of the pig's loss to both places. The pig's importance was  
emphasized at the time of the funeral ceremony.

- 1: They arose most commonly in responses to my answers when I was questioned about European sexual and reproductive mores and practices.
- 2: This is not consistent—a number of women who spoke of diaphragms or IUCDs “getting lost”, for example, eagerly asked me to get them tampons; similarly some women who feared tampons, urged me to secretly bring boxes of diaphragms on my next visit. One's circumstances contain the interpretations one makes and the understandings informing those interpretations.
- 3: Depending upon who was recounting this tale, it was either angry spirits punishing her or crazy spirits taking over the homunculus.
- 4: In all honesty, it must be pointed out that she later returned to pagan practice.
- 5: Pigs currently cost about \$200 SBD, a significant sum for one person to accumulate. At the time of Hocart's and Rivers' visit in 1908, they were still plentiful enough for hunting and export to other islands (Hocart, n.d.m.: 1-2). Up to twenty were killed for the “night feasts” associated with the death rituals of *banara*. With the growth of population, however, there is insufficient land to support feral pigs and all swine are domesticated. In recent years a butchery in Gizo has been paying \$200 for young pigs, a development which I presume has contributed to their price on Simbo. The scale of pig husbandry is small, many households raising none, many one at a time and a few two. At weddings, the biggest feasts now held, it is common to see a total of only three pigs killed and distributed. A wedding involving the death of five pigs was widely discussed for several days. Couples whose wedding feasts involve that many pigs brag about it years later.
- 6: In general, given both the frequency of premarital pregnancy and of divorce and re-marriage, it is obvious which partner of an unproductive union is infertile. Only that person is *egoro*. Where it is not apparent, speculation is rife, but both receive the appellation *egoro*. Where husband and wife do not seek medical aid for infertility, the woman is generally criticized.
- 7: The latter also occurred, until about 1950, when a woman married, and still occurs at the end of mourning for all chief mourners. Newly married couples, who have gone through all stages of marriage ceremonial are also dunked in the sea by their respective affines, as are any members of their lineages who can be caught. Nowadays, unmarried men and women also chase members of affinal lineages to throw buckets of water over them. Principle mourners also mark the end of their first period of mourning by bathing in the sea.
- 8: Children's skulls were kept in the shrine of one of their mother's ancestors if they died before about age twelve. Thereafter, they would be kept in mother's or father's ancestral shrines, according to their residence.
- 9: I do not mean, by this, indifference, but except in cases of severe pain, people accept that conditions may require considerable time to heal and do not dispute nurses' claims of inadequate supplies.
- 10: I know of three *ranepodo* which were not celebrated on first birthdays, although there were undoubtedly others. The first was held by a wealthy man for his three year-old daughter, a man who had also killed and distributed a pig on her first birthday. The celebration was regarded as inappropriate by his siblings who described him as squandering his money on a group of tea and biscuit seeking spongers and as elevating his child to an excessive status. The second was possibly celebrated as a resolution of family tensions: Tina and Somo (Fig 5.1) held it on the twelfth birthday of one of their children who had been adopted by Tina's mother when he was about one year. Significantly, the usual themes of gratitude for his life were absent, and formal prayer brief (it stressed the value of family, love and community). Informal discussion by Tina and her mother emphasized both the sorrow of the woman who gave him up, the rightness of her mother who had taken him and the foresight of her late father, who had forced her into the marriage which produced the child. The feast was held in Tina and

Somo's virilocal home as if to stress the continuity of the boy's links with both places. The third *ranepodo* was because the child's mother had been seriously ill at the time of the first birthday.

11: Except for SDAs who are publicly baptized in the sea as adolescents.

12: In a bizarre twist, the pre-Christian term *Mama*—an affective term of address for one's father—has been transferred to the mother, a shift in keeping with the revolutionary reconfigurations experienced by Tinoni Simbo.

13: Following Simbo usage, I translate *tulna* as "offspring" throughout. "Child/ren" is reserved for the word *koburu*.

14: In keeping with clinic advice, most parents do not supplement breastfeeding until about four months. This is unusual for the Pacific where infants often receive their first supplementary feed almost immediately after birth (Akin, 1985: 68). In the past, children were fed premasticated yam or scrapings from green coconuts from birth onwards. The degree of compliance with clinic directives on childcare also seems uncommon (cf., Marshall, *et al*, 1985).

15: When the people of the household where Astrid spent most of her time sought to adopt her before my return to Australia, they also phrased it in terms of carrying her: "We here, our family, we cared for her, we carried her—we love her as our own child".

16: If there is no suitable *tina* available, or if he wishes to, the father may care for it at this time. Occasionally, a woman with a large number of children handles the situation herself with the help of an older daughter.

17: Although I was also aware that the prominence of this number made it a reflexive response for those unwilling or unable to give precise or accurate answers to queries.

18: It is food that is blessed, rather than the act of eating. Thus those who come late are told that the food is *tori lotu tu*—"already prayed over"—or they presume as much.

19: Even after missionaries arrived and established schools, formal education was not regarded as definitive of childhood. Missionaries were eager to make adults literate in order that they might better convey their gospel messages and local people, convinced of the strength of *lotu* were willing students. Education of children began following the successful education of adults, who, in turn, became schoolteachers.

20: *Varitako* is emphatically not to be attributed to jealousy of a subsequent sibling. For those born of one mother (*kame tinana*) or "one mother and one father" (*kame tinana, kame tamana*), such emotions are entirely inappropriate. I never heard jealousy or envy ascribed to sibling relationships, including those marred by long term disputes or in which individuals were privately critical of each other. Jealousy is usually attributed to other lineages or to kin with whom one does not have close co-operative ties. It should not occur between *tavitina*, most emphatically not between natal siblings.

21: Romantic attraction, parental affection and deep sympathy are all "*tataru*" (cf. Toren's [n.d.] discussion of Fijian distinctions between passion and familial compassion). Other, related aspects of love are covered by *hiva* ("want", "desire", "need"). A child "wants" and "needs" its mother, lovers similarly "want" their mates (desire = *nagani*)—both are *hiniva*. The differential emphasis on needing—self oriented—and loving—other oriented—tend to shift through life. Thus, while a mother of a young child expresses "love" for it, and the child "wants" its mother, an old woman "wants" and "needs" her children who should care for her out of "love", and in response to the "love" she had for them.

22: I knew of one unmarried man who had taken the adulterously conceived child of his lover, who had returned to her husband. The child lived with him in his parents' house. One of my oral accounts suggests that in the past, women could fully adopt unwanted infants whose mothers were intent on infanticide. Lila Qoele says that

her father's birth mother, troubled by too many children, intended killing him. His infertile adoptive mother, hearing of this, crossed the island to fight the birth mother, forcibly took the child and nurtured him on ripe bananas. From that time on, he was regarded as having no connexion with his birth mother and being entirely the offspring of his adoptive mother, an outcome similar to that of women who rescued captured infants destined for sacrifice (see also Macintyre, 1987: 220).

23: Rivers (cited in Scheffler, 1962) argued that all *tavitina* are proscribed absolutely. Scheffler argues, *contra* Rivers, that it is only first cousins who are forbidden. In fact, at this time both first and second cousins are prohibited and sexual relations between them are categorized as incest (*kakabe*). Relationships between wider degrees of cousins are, however, regarded as inappropriate (*sake tozomo*, lit. "not straight"). Relationships between all degrees except true siblings can be "straightened" (*vatozomo*), those classified as *kakabe* at the cost, to the man, of his rights in the lineage he shares with the woman.

24: This comparison with Roman Catholics, who are not numerous in Western Province, was still common when I worked on Simbo. A number of people told me that they didn't believe that the purported celibacy of Catholic nuns and priests was genuine, for it was not possible, or too hard to achieve. Others asked me, known to be an ex-Catholic, to confirm that nuns and priests acted as spouses to each other. The stereotype of excessive Catholic fecundity was also used by Family Planning personnel to discourage use of the rhythm method.

25: It is also claimed that *tugele* drank a potion which rendered them both infertile for the duration of their role, and unaware of the identity of their "clients". Many issues remain unresolved. How, for example, were men kept unaware that their *luluna* were *tugele* (I knew one old man, for example, who had never heard that his natal sister was the last *tugele* on Simbo.) How, if girls were unaware of the identity of their clients, did they benefit from gifts of nut trees? Most significantly, what were the permutations of the linkages between *banara*, *tugele* and the *banara*'s male followers and the associated flow of shell valuables between the three parties?

26: Lena had a similar story to tell. One of her classificatory mothers, however, surreptitiously arranged compensation after some time, when Ket, Lena's mother, remained intransigent.

Plate IV: Van, with child, performing dance,  
ICWP activities with a group.



Plate IV: Vai, with third child, discussing upcoming UCWF activities with neighbours.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

## TINANA

## MOTHER

Let the fool  
Continue to deceive himself!  
Who has ever prevented  
The cattle from the salt lick?  
...  
The milk in your breast  
Boils painfully.  
Your breasts must be touched

Piso...  
The heads of the young men  
Reject the pillows  
And prefer  
The arms of their lovers.

Okot p'Bitek, *Song of Lawino*

From a liberal individualist perspective, many choice-enhancing developments such as the creation, distribution, and accessibility of relatively reliable, safe and inexpensive forms of birth control, abortion and obstetric care have occurred. At the same time, these technologies are accompanied by and enable increasingly effective methods of social surveillance and regulation of reproductive practices.

Ginsburg & Rapp, 1991: 314-315.

Church norms dictate that sexuality and birth should be confined to marriage, thus conflating sexuality, parenthood and marriage as indicators of adult status. In fact, just as sexuality and fecundity have been unconnected concepts (Chapter Six), so also sexuality has always been distinct from marriage. Today, parenthood is increasingly separable from marriage and adult status. As I noted in Chapter Six, premarital sex was formerly common, but premarital birth uncommon. In Chapter Two, I linked the legitimization of pre-Christian sexuality to marriage payments. Those payments associated with female sexuality were primarily responsive to *luluna* relations. However, the sexual relationships, facilitated by the payments I described, also prefigured possible marriages.

Both birth—the act and the social construct—and marriage have been radically restructured over the last century. Consequently, their inter-relationship has changed perceptibly. In particular, for present purposes, the sequencing of the two events has been contraceptives or abortifacients. Foreign birth control technologies have also been introduced.

subverted. Today, someone defined as a "girl" because she is unmarried may be a "mother", a status which previously was entirely restricted to married women—that is, to social adults. This development problematizes my lifecycle structure: if I follow pre-Christian patterns, birth belongs in a chapter on marriage and adulthood. However, modern trends mean that birth is frequent among those who are categorized as *koburu* or "children". A chapter on childhood therefore equally demands material on youthful maternity. I compromise by following neither the pre-Christian paradigm, nor the anthropological convention of subsuming maternity in a chapter on marriage. However, I acknowledge the frequency of premarital birth by dealing with motherhood before marriage. Although I dealt at some length with birth in the previous chapter, I want to look at it again, this time from the perspective of the mother.

### **Pinodo—Birth**

Earlier, I pointed to the importance of medical interventions for missionary success and intimated that these interventions were as much concerned with challenging indigenous metaphysics as with expressing Christian compassion. Such interventions were also directed by the perceived need to redirect maternal behaviours. To a large extent, missionaries and administrators blamed mothers for prevailing infant and child mortality rates, suggesting that Pacific women's reputed sexual licentiousness or weak maternal instincts were somehow responsible (Jolly, n.d.: 29). In New Georgia, Goldie attributed infant mortality rates to the "result of carelessness" (1909: 28). Interventions were thus explicitly directed, not only at assuaging the ills of local people, but at reforming the social practices of maternity, sexuality and conjugality.

Birth is now a controlled event. So, to an extent, is pregnancy, but there remains the possibility of surreptitious termination by those few who have knowledge of indigenous abortifacients.<sup>1</sup> No such autonomy attends childbirth, which is conducted by trained personnel in a manner designed to privilege infant survivability. Interventions have the advantage of saving neonates who might otherwise have died due to medical crises or weakness. The survival of mothers has similarly increased dramatically. However, mediation by professional staff also constrains female autonomy, in particular by making infanticide impossible (see also Jolly, n.d.: 29; Sargent, 1982). While I know of no contemporary woman who would wish to perform infanticide, prior to the acceptance of Christian values it provided a resolution to unwanted pregnancies which had progressed because of the failure of contraceptives or abortifacients. Foreign birthing technologies have also overwhelmed local

forms of knowledge (Ginsburg & Rapp, 1991: 314-315; 318-319). Indigenous birthing was not regarded with equanimity, as we shall see. Neither is contemporary birth.

Today a woman delivers in the prone position with a single pillow under her head and one or two women holding her thighs while the nurse attends her.<sup>2</sup> This experience is described with distaste and women cite pain, shame and fear in their comments. Giving birth in the public building that is the clinic, being urged to muffle their complaints lest those who have business there should hear them,<sup>3</sup> and enduring the pains of birth in a position hardly conducive to easy delivery, is distressing. Although pain diminishes with subsequent births, women find these no less humiliating, nor do the memories of previous experiences lessen. So negatively is birth perceived that women avoid involvement in other women's labours. Most will, however, willingly attend their natal or classificatory daughters, who have a strong preference for their mothers' care and usually return home to ensure just that. There are two reasons for this: the first is the "love" (*tataru*) of a mother for her daughter, and the derivative "want" or "need" (*hiniva*) of a daughter for her mother. "A mother loves her child, a woman wants her mother". The second reason is that a woman is no more shamed to see her daughter's genitalia than she is to have her own mother see hers. In mirror replies, given on different occasions when I asked about the connexion between female attendants and genital exposure, I was told:

She's my daughter, she came from my belly. Why should I be disinclined?

and She's my mother. I came from her belly. Therefore I ask her to help with my delivery. There is, they both added, no shame between mothers and daughters (an acknowledgement writ large in maternal involvement in a girl's premarital intrigues).

A conversation, initiated by a woman who had borne eight children, was revealing of the intensity of negative feeling attached to parturient women who are not close kin:

Salome: One night I was coming home from [her natal village]. I saw a woman on the path going to the clinic and she cried out to me to come help. She was bent over and crying, "Help me, Help me!" she called. I went. She was going to give birth. I was so frightened I ran away, I fled.

Dureau: You didn't help her?

Salome: No! I was frightened. I ran to fetch [the nurse].

Dureau: Did you help her to the clinic first?

Salome: No, no. I'm frightened of birth. I was frightened she would have it there and I would have to deliver her. I ran faster than any time in my life. [The nurse] went and delivered her.

Dureau: I'm surprised.<sup>4</sup> You've had eight children. You know all about birth, so why were you frightened? Why did you flee? Haven't you seen other births or helped other women?

Salome: No . . . I'm frightened. I don't want to see genitals. They're ugly and I'm frightened.<sup>5</sup>

It is in the context of Salome's expressed revulsion that I interpret pre-Christian birth practices. I have noted that women birthed alone in the forest. When a woman sat on a rock in the clearing in the forest to deliver, with her kin encircling her, all remained there in fear and trembling. Birth was dangerous: the rampant *tomate* were highly attracted by it and would willingly consume both the mother and her child. Only the encircling women prevented this eventuality. But the mother herself represented danger to her surrounding kin. If she died and became a *tomate kikerena*, they could be consumed by her. Their presence there, then, was intensely problematic and only their "love" for the mother—and her reciprocal guardianship of them in turn—sustained their courage. Women who died were cast away by their attendants, although when that happened, many of them were so terrified of the *tomate* she would become that they fled to their hamlets rather than attend the corpse. This fear was also reflected in the mother's self-delivery:

Dureau: Why didn't the other women help the mother with her birth?

Kali: They were all afraid.

Dureau: So she delivered by herself?

Kali: By herself!

Dureau: Sometimes birth is hard; sometimes the woman is weak or a problem arises. What about those times? Didn't they help?

Kali: They helped or they didn't help, because they were afraid. [They] could help her but they were afraid. Sometimes a mother helped her because she loved her child. You could help because you loved the labouring woman, but many didn't because they feared the birth.

There are Many fled.

Despite the radically different setting and process of birth, and the safety net purportedly offered by Tamasa, parturient women continue to be seen as potentially dangerous. Nowhere is the continuity of *tomate* more strongly asserted and the strength of Christianity more implicitly contested than in birth. This is illustrated by the social responses to the death of a young woman.

I had been on Simbo about two weeks when my host told me that there was to be a funeral at the other end of the island: a young woman had died in Honiara and her body had been flown back for burial. I said I wanted to go and he arranged for me to join a party of women who were taking a canoe there and returning the same day. Although I did not understand much of what happened, this was ultimately to be the most significant funeral I attended. Why should the death of an insignificant young woman be momentous? It was because she had arguably died due to childbirth.

Seda was in her twenties. She had been married and divorced after the birth of two children. One of these children had been adopted by her mother, the other by her HM, and Seda had lived with her sister, a *maramar*, in Honiara. While there she became pregnant to an unknown man. In late pregnancy she collapsed and was rushed to hospital where labour was induced and she delivered a healthy child. Some 24 hours later, she died of cardiac failure. Her body was flown to



not Simbo in the company of her sister and a number of other people while the child, initially kept at the hospital, was ultimately adopted by a childless brother and his wife.

prea I will not describe Seda's funeral. Here I focus on the few speeches made at the funeral and the actions of the mourners at its conclusion.

In the course of the funeral gathering, Seda's father thanked everyone for coming. He then with described her death, saying she had died of cardiac failure after a prolonged illness. The doct. sister/maramar then gave a more detailed account of Seda's death, supporting her account by even reference to the doctor's explanations. She stressed that Seda had an unsuspected congenital heart to m. condition that had been aggravated by all three of her pregnancies. She had been ill throughout the pregnancy, she said, not just at the end. Finally, she reiterated several times that Seda had lived a full day after the birth and that she had died of heart failure, not of parturition.

then Little more untoward happened until after the resident minister had conducted the funeral ceremony according to the rites of the church in the late afternoon. At that point, preparations were being made to place the coffin in the canoe for transportation to her burial site and I prepared to couk follow. Pula, who had undertaken to look after me that day came up and told me that our canoe me ti was leaving: we must hurry. No novice anthropologist was going to pass up a burial ceremony. I told her I was going to follow the small cortege. No, she told me, we must go now and she pointed hile to the women congregating on the shore. It's alright, I told her, I'll come afterwards with the minister or take another canoe tomorrow. She insisted: the grave site was up a steep, slippery when slope; the cortege canoe was full; nothing happens, they just bury her, nothing else; there was no one who could accommodate me; what about my child? All this time she was holding my arm and three guiding me to the canoe as the boarding women urged me to hurry.

the b Reluctantly, I went, demanding to know why they hadn't remained for the burial. It wasn't are ti important, they said, and they had to return to prepare the evening meal. The sun clipped the horizon and, as they urged the driver to hurry, he opened the throttle. A few minutes later we conti landed at Lengana, the sky ablaze as the sun disappeared. I looked around to give my goodbyes and saw women trotting off in all directions. Only Pula remained to say she had to go quickly to prepare the evening meal, then she too ran<sup>6</sup> off, leaving me to walk up the path alone to my place. Perplexed, I wandered home as the light faded.

There are no surprises here. Only my recent arrival and overwhelming impressions of an immaculate local Christianity prevented my understanding. This echoes the pastor's group's encounter with the *rerege*, recounted in Chapter Four. The themes are similar:

ce 1: The retrospective denial by participants that *they* had been acting on the basis of anxiety about *tomate* in a *lotu* environment and the insistence by others that they had been.

On reaching home, I described the preceding events and asked for clarification. I was told that some people still believed in *tomate*, even though *lotu* was strong. Their faith wasn't strong enough, said one: *lotu* has weakened the *tomate*. They were fools, said another: there are no *tomate*. It was particularly because of the way Seda died: women dying in parturition become *tomate kikerena* which were particularly malicious spirits, and everyone wanted to be home before dark, said another. When I asked women who had been on the canoe with me about it, they all denied that fear of *tomate* had motivated them. Likewise, the pastor, who had stumbled into the village talking about *rerege*, later assured me that they had simply been bespattered with mud from the sodden paths.

2. Both events, paradoxically, elicited other people's assertions of belief in *tomate*.

Iqu's gleeful account of the return of devout men, covered in mud and shaking with fear, was

not directed at a failure of faith on their part, but at the exposure of hypocrisy of those who preached against the existence of *tomate* which everyone knew to exist. The assuredness of *tomate* was reinforced when I sought a UCWF president's opinion on *rerege*. In response to her acknowledgement that she believed in *rerege*, I asked whether that was not inconsistent with her church position. Echoing the responses of others (Chapter Four), she replied that doctrine was irrelevant: *rerege* existed, she had heard them, and even the minister, possibly even the bishop himself, couldn't stand in their path. Similar assumptions underlay responses to my decision to walk back to Seda's parents' village to attend her *vamade* (fourth day memorial). On that day I asked a girl for the road to Seda's village. She was aghast: I couldn't go because I didn't know the way. The boy, whom I assured her would take me, told me the roads were too slippery and muddy. I assured them I didn't mind. At that point they hailed a passing man and introduced him as a *banara*. We talked a little and when he asked where I was going and I told him, he also discouraged me. In the face of my persistence, the three had a discussion in the vernacular before the girl, responding to some injunction from the *banara*, told me it was a bad day to go to the village because, on the fourth day, the roads are full of meandering *tomate*. Therefore no living person will go on the roads. She continued:

28). Perhaps you don't know of these things because you're a European, but these things happen on Simbo. You don't have them in Australia because that's the real place of *lotu*, but this isn't the trans place of *lotu*. It's new here and it hasn't finished the old ways yet.

(Finally, in face of my intransigence, I was paddled up by canoe.)

3. Finally, this shows the prominent place of church officers in *de facto* attesting to the continuity of untamed *tomate*. The pastor had fled to the village, in the face of the *rerege*; the *maramar* had been at pains to demonstrate that her sister had not died in childbirth.

Similar themes recurred. When one woman was telling me about the near childbirth death of a particular woman as a punishment for her known adultery, I challenged her with the deaths of a number of other women, known as good Christians, who had died during birth. She assured me that all such deaths stemmed from the woman's adultery. I cited some names: they had all been adulterers, she insisted, and her mother, sister and neighbouring women agreed. The kin of such women also didn't dispute the category of *tomate kikerena*: their emphasis was largely on demonstrating that their kinswoman did not technically die in childbirth. As one woman said of her sister, who died with her foetus, in advanced pregnancy: "Of course she didn't die in birth. She was a good woman, a person of *lotu*."

Others discount such semantic manoeuvring. According to Seda's estranged husband, whom I met by chance some days after her funeral, they had discussed a reconciliation. He

therefore argued that her pregnancy was adulterous and her death an outcome of it. Likewise, non-kin of the woman who died in pregnancy cited the name of her alleged partner in adultery. Although some people consistently denied the existence of *tomate* and, to all appearances, lived as if they believed it, I was repeatedly assured of their persistence.<sup>7</sup> One night, more than a year after Seda's death, I asked some women about some noises I heard on the shore of her village. One girl fled at my description, and I was interrogated by the others, and by a number of other women who then came up to the house, for over an hour, before being cautioned that it was the spirit of Seda waiting for her child.

*Lotu*, however, has power over the punishing forces:

Nenisi, a woman of about twenty, was married in church. Some months after the wedding she ran away with another man, claiming her husband had mistreated her. Her parents refused to return the gifts they had received, which would have effected a customary divorce, claiming they were fearful of violating a Christian marriage. She eventually returned, pregnant, to Simbo, suffered a prolonged labour and was reportedly close to death. Her mother, attending her with the Registered Nurse, sent desperately for the minister who came and chastised her for adultery. He then stroked her and prayed for her, whereupon the birth was quickly effected and the woman and her baby completely recovered. This case was held as irrefutable evidence that Nenisi's adultery was being punished, as it always had been, with the death of the woman, and that only the greater power of Tamasa had been sufficient to defeat that mystical force. (Note that stroking and praying over invalids was a traditional healing technique, e.g. Hocart, 1925: *passim*.)

There is considerable ambiguity about the relationship between traditional supernatural forces and Tamasa, and about the place of *tomate* in contemporary cosmology (see also White, 1991: 28). Missionaries in the Solomons, realizing the centrality of ancestors, were motivated to translate them into devils (White, 1991: 103). On Simbo, they instructed people that the ancestors they venerated were devils of the same ilk as those *tomate* of the forest which they abhorred (see also Brown, 1970: 32; Macintyre, 1989). However, while pre-Christian Tinoni Simbo were able to perceive shrine and forest spirits as alternative manifestations of ancestral *tomate*, Christians remain unable or unwilling to depict both as indigenous manifestations of Satan (Setani), whom they concur with missionaries in depicting as an afflicting evil. The ancestors, as I noted, were "good sinners" who, despite their ways being characterized as sinful, cannot be readily assimilated to satanic forces. However, it is the connexion between forest *tomate*, Satan and sin that I want to consider here. People are comfortable with the idea that forest *tomate* are devils. Their association with wrongful death makes it easy to equate them in some ways with sinners, although there have been subtle changes in their depiction.

Zila, a 36 year-old office-bearer in the UCWF, told me that

They are the spirits of all the sinful people. They must wander on the earth and wait for the last day. That's the time Tamasa will come and punish them in Hell.

The consequences of adultery by married women, with which we have been dealing, exemplifies this. Today, as I pointed out above, Simbo women are almost invariably said to

have been adulterers if they die in childbirth, yet Hocart nowhere mentions this. Nor does he mention that adultery causes the death or illness of children or other family members. He does, however, report that adultery resulted in the death of the *banara*, a consequence dreaded by all (Hocart, n.d.a.; n.d.h.: 9). There are at least two forces at work here. The first is the decline of the *banara*-ship since the end of competitive feasting. If the consequences of misdeeds are to bring disaster upon an increasingly inconsequential figure, they can hardly be counted as a forceful edict against transgressions. Yet adultery, in both traditional and Christian values, is much denigrated (Goldie, 1909: 28; Rivers, 1924: 115-116). It seems that ideas of the consequential impact upon close kin have expanded to fill the gap left by the *banara*'s decline. The salience of close kin as victims is reinforced by the particular stress laid upon natal relationships by Christian ideology.

The second factor is the inconsistency, within Christian views, of innocent persons being condemned, not only to generations of exile in a kind of limbo, but to eventual damnation. Formulations such as that by Zila pivot around the issue of fault. In pre-Christian cosmology, a forest *tomate* was one who had suffered an untoward death, irrespective of whose offences precipitated that death. (Such deaths are still, of course, ascribable to the actions of others.) However, the spirits which might result from such deaths are not compatible with the contemporary view of forest *tomate* as evil devils waiting to be cast into perdition. There is a very strong belief that sinners, themselves, will ultimately be punished by *Tamasa*. Thus, when Bili's boat disappeared one day, it was his own defiance of *lotu* which was said to have precipitated his demise. There has been an implicit shift in ascriptions of *tomate* generation, such that all *tomate*/devils are now indicted in their own plight. It is notable that I have no account of anybody in modern times becoming a bush *tomate*—as opposed to dying—as a result of their kins' transgressions. It is possible, then, that the ascription of death in childbirth to maternal adultery is a new phenomenon generated by the Christian view of individual punishment for individual offences and facilitated by the decline of the *banara*. Bili thus brought his own fate upon his head. So, too, did Seda and all those other women who died in childbirth. Adultery may also culminate in emotional punishment to oneself:

When Neli committed adultery around 1940, her youngest daughter immediately died of malaria.

When Ata failed to confess his adulterous liaison, his son was born mute.

When Zosi and her baby were stricken by a debilitating illness, it was only after she harangued her husband into confessing adultery that they recovered.

Likewise when Adi confessed his adultery everyone said that the hidden wrong explained his small children's chronic sickness.

as in human behaviour but in ascriptions of responsibility

Here we see the theme of confession raised in the previous chapter, where I argued that missionary insistence on confession dovetailed with indigenous valuation of bringing things out in the open. It is non-confession that makes retribution inevitable, not wrongdoing *per se*. Thus, one of the accusations most vehemently circulated about *maramar* Zulian (Chapter Four) was that her refusal to confess her reputed adultery with one of her affines had led to the death *in utero* of her last child, and “until today she has not confessed”.

### ***Na tomate kikerena tadi Zuaparane—SDAs and Evil Spirits***

White (1991) makes the point that church officers on Santa Isabel, in displacing chiefs, have assumed many of their characteristics. The same may be said of Simbo, to an extent, where ministers are the most authoritative figures on the island and are recognized as having closer contact with Tamasa. This might suggest that the hazards of wrongdoing to *banara* could have been transferred to ministers. There is a significant difference, however. Ministers are foreigners, either to everyone if they are outsiders, or to those who are not kin, if they are Tinoni Simbo.<sup>8</sup> *Banara*, in contrast, derived their authority from their position as leading kin and if they were supernaturally afflicted as *banara*, they were simultaneously the kin of those over whom they ruled, tied by bonds of affection as well as by those of polity. There is a further difference from ministers here: the authority vested in Methodist missionaries was derived from their place within the mission organization. As far as local people were concerned, then, that authority was not fully subject to local adjudications about the worth of missionaries, nor was it dependent upon the kind of nurturant duties expected of *banara*.

If missionaries ruled without dependence upon followers, their welfare was also of no concern to adherents who were, in turn, independent of them. The unseating of Keana (Chapter Four) manifested the further development of that separation. Indeed, ministers quite openly adopt postures of authoritative separation from their congregations. If Tamasa is sometimes “Papa God”, they are certainly not “Brother Ministers”. Thus, one minister, on a number of occasions, castigated the congregation for “their” continuing adherence to the love magic that had precipitated the decline of his predecessor: “You are people of sin!” His predecessor, too, had talked about ‘Simbo people’ rather than including himself in any collective ascription. Hocart (1922) notes the existence of *tomate kikerena* and the great dread with which they were regarded, but makes no special comment on their generation. If they were not generated by the culpability of their living persona, it is useless to speculate as to the cause of their death at that time. It is clear from the accounts in Chapter Three that untoward deaths had their origins in human behaviour, but the arbitrariness of ancestral

vengeance—in all except *luluna* relationships—casts doubt on the idea that this particular *tomate* has always been caused by female adultery. To Carrier's insight, that observers may be misled by the exotic form of an institution into seeing it as a continuation of the past, I would add the vital point that change may also appear as continuity to internal observers or practitioners, especially when there are clear motifs linking it to the past. Seda's fate—and that of others like her—may always have spawned a *tomate kikerena* but the idea that it is a consequence of their personal wrongdoing is probably a Christian innovation. In this context, the minister's chastisement of the moribund Nenisi may be seen, not just as an assertion of the power of Tamasa over the old forces, but of his usurpation of them.

It is here that we see one of the greatest differences between the UCs and SDAs. The latter claim to have transcended pre-Christian pagan forces, and depict the UC as both weaker and complicit with those forces. This is graphically demonstrated every day by the mere act of living in the SDA village, Tuku. I mentioned the semantic significance of Tuku ("closed") in Chapter Four. Here I consider the origins of the name and its symbolic significance for both denominations. The account simultaneously evokes sentiments attached to birthing "beginning long ago and arriving in the present".

Unlike other hamlets and villages on Simbo, Tuku is set out in straight lines, the row of residences all facing the open grassy area across which sits the church, pastor's house and public eating house (for visitors and festive occasions). This orderliness is in contrast to both denominations' images of the place in the 1930s. The name precedes the village, for Tuku was a place shunned as the repository of the discarded bodies of women and infants who died in childbirth. The corpses of women from that part of the island were dragged here and flung into the bush without further ceremony before their female kin fled to the safety of their villages. People of both denominations recount the way the neophyte SDAs continually happened upon skeletal remains as they cleared the land for their village. For UCs this symbolises the insanity of SDAs, for the latter it symbolises the end of the old order.

The SDAs were undoubtedly driven to Tuku. But if their establishment there was founded on the pragmatic fact that no-one would follow to harass them—and they didn't—it was also the opportunity for a spectacular symbolic statement of the comparative strength of their *lotu*. Whether that statement was directed at themselves or at their antagonists, it undoubtedly was a test of their own allegiance to the SDA denomination, as a small, beleaguered group of siblings plunged into an area they *knew* to be infested with malicious forces, and lived there. The significant difference between SDA and UC does not lie in their differential accreditation of *tomate*, but in their view of their relative powers *vis-a-vis*

Christianity. However, if they have attempted a symbolic coup through their temerity in living in a place that they also acknowledge to be infested with harmful forces, the moral significance of their action remains contested. For SDAs, their residence verifies that they have successfully transcended satanic forces.

UCs, however, argue that the consequences of flouting those powers are readily apparent. In particular they point to what is perceived as an unduly high death rate of women in their early reproductive years. They see the spirits of earlier childbearing women afflicting present childbearing women. While this point is not explicitly made, the parallel between *tomate kikerena* striking the surrounding women at traditional births in the past and the same spirits striking women who occupy the same space decades later, is readily apparent. There have been a number of Tuku women who died young, but this is not unusual. The point is that all deaths of Tuku women are attributed to that malign force, whereas other causal factors are linked to the deaths of UC women. Thus, if she had been SDA, the woman who died in advanced pregnancy might have been interpreted as dying of Tuku's malevolent forces, rather than of the consequences of adultery. Likewise, Seda's family's attempts to depict her as dying postnatally might have been more successful under the same circumstances. It is typically women who have married into Tuku, and thus into the SDA church, who are said to suffer this consequence. UC people cite a number of women who have died after changing to their husbands' denomination. This implies that Tuku people are somehow immune to those forces, that the place is particularly bad for UC women who have changed their affiliation. SDAs refute these charges. They argue, first, that the death rates in Tuku are the same as elsewhere. Their pastors argued, secondly, that any SDA converts who died early were suffering the consequences of their pre-conversion lifestyle.

The irreconcilability of these views is reflected in the comments of two old people, implacably committed to their own *lotu*. Kali was a former doyen of the UCWF, and widely regarded as knowledgeable in the ways of *tomate*:

They are all mad. The young people all forget; they don't know the strength of the *tomate kame rane*. But I tell you, they are extremely potent, all the *tomate kikerena*, and they remain. "*Lotu* is stronger, so the *tomate* are weak now", they say. "*The tomate* are the children of Satan", they all say. They are right, but I ask you: what about you? Does a *lotu* person want to enter the place of Satan? You want to walk around in Hell or not? So why do all those of Tuku want to sleep in the place of all the wicked *tomate*? They are mad, every one! Truly mad!

Zebedi followed his mother's kin in converting to SDA after the death of his father, a former UC missionary. He argues of UCs that:

They don't believe properly in Tamasa. They remain fearful of *tomate* like the People of Darkness. They follow the sins of the *tinoni rodomo* because they worship Satan. If you believe Satan is stronger than Tamasa, like Tamasa cannot evict the *tomate*, so you worship Satan. The



devils remain because [the people] stop Tamasa evicting them. There are none of the old devils here at Tuku because Tamasa is strong in our hearts.

### **Mumudi Popodo—Postnatal Activity**

If UC and SDA adherents offer differing responses to the same supernatural forces, parturient women, who are the major focus of those responses, undergo the same experiences of birth and postnatal recuperation. All women rest a minimum of one month. That rest is largely defined in terms of not going up to the gardens: "I only rested one month with all of my babies and then I went up to the gardens".<sup>9</sup> Thus women may resume many of their other activities as soon, or as late, as their load of obligations and their own inclinations dictate. The length of this period of rest varied considerably. A friend of mine rested only one month after the birth of all four of her babies; I know of another woman who did so for ten months after the birth of her third child. Both of these were somewhat unusual, especially the latter.

When a woman does resume gardening, she leaves her small infant behind and, the younger the infant, the shorter the time she can remain away. If the child is less than about three months, she remains only long enough to dig sweet potato or cassava, unless her circumstances are desperate. I knew only one woman in such straits: a woman whose husband had suffered progressive neurological deterioration since shortly before her third pregnancy. Neither of their families helped. She said this was because her family were still angry at her marital conversion to SDA and his family were "hard" (Pidgin). According to others, one of those reasons applied or it was because she and her husband had been selfish (*ruruti*) during their good times. This woman was still digging her garden two days before giving birth, and resumed immediately her month's rest was concluded. Sera (Chapter Five) was faced with this prospect, but left to temporarily live with her sister in Gizo. Ironically, the woman who achieved the pre-Christian ideal of extended rest was able to do so because her husband undertook that archetypal modern activity, wage labour. Although he returned for the duration of her rest and went to the gardens to fetch food for the family, he also remitted regular funds after he left, allowing her to buy food until the gardens she planted on his departure began producing. Most women simply are not in a position to rest for such periods.

Remaining quiet postnatally, although it is now usually expressed as "resting", also serves to separate the still ambiguous birth from the community. After discharge, the mother keeps the child close to home. In particular, she must not go near the household of the *banara*. The end of this stage is not dependent upon the infant's achievement of any milestone, but upon the woman's bodily state: for as long as postnatal bleeding continues, she



and the child are said to *umana mamadara* ("smell [like] blood"). *Banara* were previously embodiments of communal well-being. It seems that the restriction on approaching a *banara*'s house is an attenuation of the prior practice of prolonged absence from the entire village following birth, a modification correlated with reformulated social permutations. It is the smell of birth (now associated with blood, although, I am convinced that it has not always been so) that always made it a dangerous state. I would argue that birthing and the subsequent seclusion in the forest represented an act designed to protect others from the manifest dangers of supernatural disaster attached to birth. The women remained endangered. Their transference, in fear and trembling, to the forest, the very place of those *tomate*, drew danger away from the community. Seen thus, woman and child in the forest were involved in an act of social responsibility (see also Faithorn, 1975; Keesing, 1987; Kerns, 1984:87), rather than of exclusion, subordination or victimization. This is not because birth was polluting, an analytical concept which is increasingly under challenge (Buckley & Gottlieb, 1988: 25-34; Gottlieb, 1988: 73; Hanson, 1982, cited in Ralston, 1992: 173; Keesing, 1990: 45-46; cf. Burt, 1988: 85-87), but because of its attraction to *tomate*.<sup>10</sup> Previously, on returning to the village after several months in the forest, there were no further restrictions: they could go to the *banara*'s house, undertake any activities normally pursued by women and infants. If, indeed, the restriction on approaching the *banara* (once the embodiment of the community/lineage) is a reconfiguration of the withdrawal to the forest, the form and significance are now much different.

Hocart, as I have noted, makes it clear that a metaphysical bond united the welfare of both *banara* and followers. This, despite his being told, even then, of the significance of *banara*, that "now it is all over" (Hocart, n.d.a; see also Burman, 1981). Women's and infants' contemporary distancing from *banara* is explained in terms of "respect" (*pamana*), although *banara* are no longer perceived as embodiment, or even representative, of community well-being. A number of local commentaries on postnatal distancing from the *banara* demonstrate this. I was inadvertently involved in the first incident, and it was my identity as an ethnographer that provoked at least one of the other episodes.

For a short time, I lived in a house owned by Ata, the son of an elderly *banara*, and a man generally thought destined to inherit the office. He and his family were not living in the house, although his daughter had been assigned to sleep with me. Esi Paola, a neighbour, often came over to bring cooked food or request some form of store food. One night, about two weeks after the birth of a child, she dashed over to borrow some cooking oil, stayed momentarily, and then left. The next day, she and Paola (her husband) refused to come to the house. Finally, reluctantly, she told me that Ata had demanded a \$2 fine because she still "smelled blood".<sup>11</sup> The incident was received by many with outrage, both because it was seen as affronting a visitor and because it reinforced Ata's reputation for avarice. Esi and Paola's immediate family (they were living virilocally) were furious because Ata was not resident in the house.<sup>12</sup> Perhaps, I ventured, Ata might be worried that Esi's visit might cause some harm to him when he returned?

No! That's not the thought of someone who understands. He wants us to "respect" him, he says, and he's not even here. He's a greedy person, a bad person.

In the second case, I was visiting the hamlet of the son and two daughters of a dead *banara* who had been succeeded by his BS, a succession disputed by this sibling group. The three of them went into considerable detail as to why the succession was invalid. Finally, the brother left and the youngest sister, who had recently borne a child, sought to emphasize her dissent by declaring:

I have no respect for him. He is no *banara*. I would even go to his house [postnatally] without ~~were~~ paying compensation to him. He does not earn my respect.

The third case is more definite in its implication that there is no danger inferred in the ban on approaching *banara*: the youngest daughter of an elderly *banara* at the other end of the island was telling me one day of the virtues of her father compared to another *banara* who, she claimed, was just interested in money and had no "love" for the people:

Even women who have just birthed come to the house. When [another BW] returned with her week-old infant, she brought it past the house of my father. He didn't quickly demand compensation. Not like those other greedy men.

In none of these instances is the ban on approaching the *banara* or his compound phrased in terms of safety or contagion. Nor did I learn of any other instance of *banara* being seen to be mystically imperiled by the actions of others today. If the current restrictions on approaching the *banara* or their houses are indeed an abbreviation of the previous absencing of neonates and their mothers from the village, it simultaneously reflects fundamental transformations in perceptions of the nature of both the mother-infant dyad, now predicated not only on the changed perceptions of *banara*, described earlier, but on novel interpretations of bleeding women as being somehow offensive.

I would hazard that the ban on approaching the *banara* soon after birth was a kind of compromise reached when the period of isolation was reduced under missionary pressure, when *banara* were still seen to be both more vulnerable than others to supernatural harm and to embody communal well-being. If some *banara* now attempt to exert power by exacting tokens of "respect", this has no grounding in notions of identity between *banara* and community (although *banara* are ideally peacemakers and people of compassion, a commonly bemoaned failure). Payment of compensation for offences against the *banara* are, then, categorically dissimilar. In 1908, a *banara* who did not receive payment of a token clamshell ring in compensation for wrongdoing, was assured of death (Hocart, n.d.h: 8-9), whether or not aware of the infraction—in 1991, a *banara*-elect claimed compensation on the grounds of a disputed affront against his dignity.

~~done at least weekly, where the distribution of labour is~~  
a matter of preference. Some men weed and harvest, others clear and burn debris and

It is not merely a shift in *banara* powers that is relevant here. There is no suggestion that parturient women were regarded as polluting. Indeed, their isolation continued long beyond the cessation of bleeding. Nor, given that they now give birth in one of the island's most public buildings, can they be interpreted in those terms today. Now, while people do not express notions of pollution, in the sense of intangible contagion, there is, with the notion of women who "smell of blood", an incipient idea of inherent female offensiveness which is accentuated by birth.<sup>13</sup> This is, a substantial contrast to the logics of birth isolation which were predicted on women's role in protecting the community from metaphysical harm.

They become a part of the family estate, although they are obliged to perform some of the stage of the lifecycle covered by this chapter.

### **Tinaviti Rereko—Women's Work**

A woman's maternal practices and responsibilities shift as she moves through the lifecycle. A young unmarried mother of one small child has little in common with a mature married mother of five or six big children. Here, I briefly demarcate married women's shifting responsibilities before specifically considering maternity on Simbo—statistics, marital status and relationships and church attempts at control. Women are responsible for the family gardens, distribution of household food resources, provisioning the household, food preparation and allocation, childcare, all domestic tasks such as laundry, compound maintenance, housework and supplying household textile products such as mats, clothing and baskets. Outside the household, they cooperate with other women to provide hospitality to visitors to the community, oversee the welfare of parturient women and unwell people, support the school financially and contribute to major lineage decisions concerning landholding, discipline of unruly members and marriages. The degree of responsibility for, and engagement in, household occupations varies according to the woman's marital status, number of children, personal and co-operative relationships and specialization. Thus, Sera undertook sole responsibility for all of these tasks (and found it difficult to manage them all satisfactorily). Her chances of becoming a "significant woman" (Chapter Nine) are remote. Unmarried mothers, who usually live with their parents, co-operate with their mothers and sisters to achieve them. Women with daughters living at home are able to allocate work to them, those with many small children must persuade others in the family to help care for them, solicit their husband's assistance or struggle to fulfil them independently.

Most of these responsibilities are met in co-operation with other people. If women are responsible for their gardens, their husbands usually do the work of clearing and helping with digging. The two usually go to the gardens at least weekly, where the distribution of labour is a matter of preference. Some men weed and harvest, others clear and burn debris and

concentrate on further hoeing while women harvest or weed independently. Food is virtually always carried back by women. The contribution of older children varies. I knew of only four women and one man who took sole responsibility for gardens.<sup>14</sup>

Other tasks are also distributed. Daughters, for example, are typically assigned laundry, dishwashing and care of younger siblings. Cognatically or affinally related women co-operate in weaving mats, gathering megapode eggs, foraging for nuts and crustaceans, etc. It is, then, responsibility rather than labour, that is individual. As they age, women shift from concentration on tasks to the management of tasks through allocation to offspring and *tavitina*. They become managers of the family estate, although they continue to perform some jobs into senescence (Chapter Nine). At the stage of the lifecycle covered by this chapter, women are more concerned with task performance than with allocation of tasks. Unmarried mothers, other than the few in Sera's straits, help their mothers, much as they did before the birth of their child. A young married woman, with or without children, must request the aid of others, which may be refused: she asks her mothers or sisters, mothers-in-law or sisters-in-law to mind her children while she goes to the garden; she asks her younger sisters or sisters-in-law to do laundry or look after her children while she is occupied; she negotiates with her husband when she wants him to go fishing or clear a new garden or let her go to UCWF or lineage meetings.

### ***Hahanana Garuba*—New Practices**

During this century, there have been two notable developments in female fertility due to epidemiological and social changes. First, reproduction, as a domain of female control, has been increasingly contested (Chapter Eight). Secondly, fertility rates initially exploded, and later subsided, moving from an average of about two able-bodied offspring/woman until c.1930 to seven or eight births/woman till c.1960 before falling again to between five and six births/woman at the present. The actual numbers, especially those of long ago, cannot be verified. Stillbirths, infanticides and childhood deaths early in the century are frequently forgotten by old women, unknown by their children and grandchildren and unrecorded in local genealogies. Further, two is reported as the ideal number of children, but childhood disability due to yaws and polio were common and it is probable that such deformed children were not included in the ideal. Pregnancy and birth in the pre-Christian era, then, were probably higher than the ideal fertility rate of two children/woman.

There is less doubt about the increase in fertility from the 1930s, although the causes are more complex. By that time, missionary supervision of reproductivity was increasing.

Contraception, abortion and infanticide were suppressed and death and disability rates were falling. If fertility rates were rising, missionaries did not provide any substitute means of fertility control. Indeed, they gave birth rates impetus by their sustained stress on conjugal and nuclear family relations and were supported in this by government sanctions (Laracy & Laracy, 1980-81). They did this directly, through an emphasis on cohabitation, and indirectly, in insisting that men supervise their spouses and households. The end of warfare and the decline of the *banara* weakened rationales for communal houses in which men had previously slept celibate for varying periods. But the increasingly dominant missionaries further marginalized the *banara*, who had maintained communal houses, and simultaneously used their authority to overtly encourage abandonment of them.

Missionary interference was pervasive and the effects of one intervention cannot be isolated. Thus, while missionaries were suppressing local fertility control technologies, propelling people towards co-residence and espousing male authority, they were encouraging women to abbreviate their suckling of infants. The resulting reduction in breastfeeding periods should not be over-emphasized. For the majority of women, the contraceptive effect of breastfeeding diminishes significantly by the end of the first postnatal year (Harrell, 1981; Simpson-Herbert & Huffman, 1981). However, at a population level, sustained nursing will have an incremental effect which may be augmented by the cultural practices of sexual abstinence or separate conjugal residence with which it is often associated (Marshall, *et al.*, 1985). It is not merely the abbreviation of suckling, but its coincidence with those other measures I mentioned that contributed to the upsurge in Simbo's population. It is hardly appropriate, then, to characterize Simbo women as burdened by the consequences of curtailed breastfeeding *per se*. Its consequence lies in the cumulative population with which people now collectively struggle, rather than the surfeit fecundity which individuals now deplore. Kali's and my conversation about the abbreviation of breastfeeding (Chapter Six) revolved around missionaries instructing women that it was good for their health and its consequences in terms of unsought fecundity. Missionaries had not also argued that many births were debilitating (Chapter Six) but this was probably because they would have seen such persuasion as superfluous in an area with perceived under-population due to low reproductivity (e.g. Rivers, 1922; Danks, 1901:7). As our conversation continued, the theme of unwanted pregnancies became prominent.

Dureau: Is that true [that breastfeeding weakens women]?

Kali: Perhaps or perhaps not . . .

Dureau: What do you think?

Kali: True, perhaps . . . But I tell you Christina, none of the missionaries told us that many births weaken women. All the old women of my generation birthed excessively, birthed ten or twelve times. That weakens women. You look, there are not many women like me. They bore many children and they quickly became decrepit. They all died.

Zosi: You speak true, Mama. This old woman had twelve children and she remains strong. Neli Qoele is the same. But most died early.<sup>15</sup> Having many children is rotten. The woman is too quickly an old woman. I am tired of it. Going up to the garden all the time, much laundry, working and working. I am going to be dead too quickly. This old woman is strong, but there are not many the same.

Zosi clearly belongs to the last cohort of women. A 35 year-old mother of four (now five), she complained frequently that children lead to physical deterioration (she already suffered from chronic back pain, fatigue and hypertension). There is a further distinction to be made between these two groups of women in that Zosi's generation are apparently the first since pacification to visualize the possibility of fertility control, an intuition that lends cogency to contemporary disputation about conjugal corporeality. When I asked an older woman, who had borne eight offspring, how many children she had wanted in her marriage, she laughed:

The women of my generation did not think about how many children we wanted. What could we do? The old women didn't teach us the traditional medicines (*meresana kastom*). We did not think about how many children [we wanted]. You don't know, you young women. Tamasa gave me rny children, Christina. It was Tamasa's will how many children I had. Don't ask aimless questions, alright? [patting my arm and chuckling].

Neli, more irritably, made a similar response. Hard of hearing, she verified my question with Lidia: What does she want to know? How many children I wanted? An aimless question! I married, so I birthed on and on! Finish.

Finally, Neli's daughter Maga: I didn't want to, but what could I do, Christina? Understand?

I return to the question of women's contemporary attempts to realize fertility control later, but now I turn to the novel phenomenon of unmarried maternity which arises from both the epidemiological changes with which we have been dealing and the shifts in control of reproductivity mentioned in Chapter Five.

### **Koburu Tinana—Childhood Maternity**

Before pacification, as I have noted, despite expectations of premarital sexual activity, childbearing was almost entirely confined to marriage, a pattern sustained by combined threat of annihilation by *luluna* and utilization of local fertility control technologies. This pattern was sundered by the suppression of indigenous fertility control technologies. With the eventual adoption of Western contraceptives some decades later, in the third period outlined above, came a significant parallel shift in their availability. Sharma and Vanjani (1993: 27; see also Ginsburg & Rapp, 1991: 314) have pointed to the centrality of women's status, and views about women, in determining the ways "in which they are integrated into the reproductive politics of the state". In the western Solomons, it was the proper status of

women, in the eyes of influential churchmen that was decisive. The surveillance facilitated by missionary, and later government, health services was directed at reinforcing messages about the inseparability of sexuality and marriage and of the authority of husbands. When contraceptives did become available through the health services they were exclusively for married women and then only with their husband's permission. Although the Methodist Mission was succeeded by the independent UC in 1968, this body continued to have major influence over such matters locally (through proselytizing), regionally (through medical services and training) and nationally (through input into family planning policies, see O'Collins, 1978, 1979).

Missionaries were absolutely convinced that ready availability of contraceptives encouraged promiscuity, a view now also expressed by Simbo husbands (Chapter Eight). However, as I have noted, their restriction to married couples has not led to a decline in premarital intercourse but to a surge in premarital births. If other factors had remained unchanged, their goal of premarital celibacy might have been more nearly achieved. The loss of fertility control, which had reconciled the otherwise incompatible practices of premarital sexuality and postmarital childbearing, would otherwise have seen numerous girls dispatched by their *luluna*. Simultaneously, however, missionaries were meddling in family authority structures, promoting the dominance of husbands and fathers over women and girls. Brothers had a significantly lesser place in the projected family constellation. This change, coinciding as it did with pacification and the suppression of executions, considerably diminished the negative sanctions attendant upon a girl's premarital pregnancy.

The implicit assumption, in linking fertility control and promiscuity, is that reduced fertility control will, or would, culminate in sexual restraint. Local Christian messages have encouraged such restraint, reinforcing the postulated outcome of removing contraceptives from the grasp of unmarried people, with decades of diatribes against the fabled Simbo sexual licence. This is a recurrent image of the island. Tinoni Simbo, with various sentiments, acknowledge that they are known as people who *tekua kame loia kame* ("take one, discard one"). They regard this ambivalently, moving from humorous acknowledgement of the distinction, to indignation, to anger at those whose behaviour apparently verifies the characterization. The church and mission, however, have continually treated it as proof of the continuing failings of Tinoni Simbo. For decades, congregations have been harangued in sermons which consistently conflated premarital sexuality and adultery, for failure to overcome their sinful "love magic".

Despite the diatribes, the continuing sanction of *luluna* assaults and the ubiquitous threat of undesired pregnancy, youthful intrigues prosper (see also Ralston, 1989: 61). Inevitably, so do premarital pregnancies and births. Even defining marriage in the simplest local terms of cohabitation (Chapter Eight), premarital birth is an observable feature of Simbo life. The Neli-Bule offspring illustrate the rates of premarital pregnancy and birth over a thirty year period:

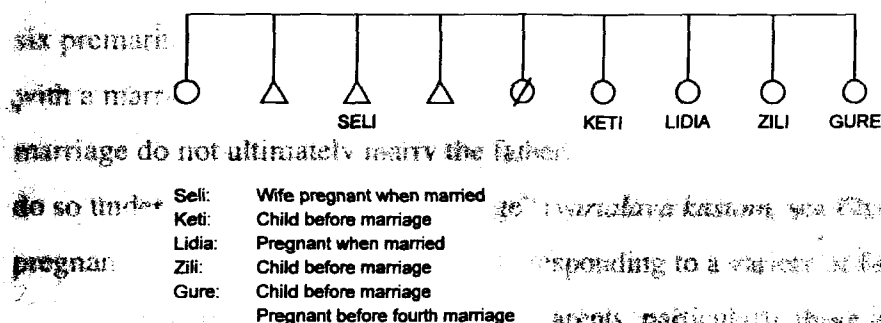


FIG 7.1: Premarital Pregnancy Neil-Bule Offspring

Other genealogies display similar patterns. Thus, at least three of Aivi's (Fig 5.2) children had children or were pregnant before marriage. Taking others randomly, at least one sibling of Zili's husband had a child before marriage. The same may be said of Gure's fourth husband.

At times in the past twenty years, the UC has changed its policy on the marriage of pregnant women. Initially, girls were encouraged to marry before the birth in order that the child would be part of the idealized Christian nuclear family. Thus, some women tell of the size of their bellies around the time of the marriage service. This applied up until about eighteen years ago. For some time after this, couples would be married provided the woman was not visibly gravid. Finally, women could be married in church only if not pregnant: others must wait until the child was at least a year old. No-one, including the ministers, is exactly sure when this occurred, but all agree that it was in response to the fact that young people were continuing to copulate and, in the absence of contraception, to procreate. Clearly, the policy of suppressing fertility control was not effective in suppressing sexual intrigue.<sup>16</sup>

Church concern about the issue is not expressed in these terms. Rather, it implicates the nature of Simbo sociality, being phrased either as innate Simbo proclivities or, as in the case of the minister who feared local love magic, of continuing submission to satanic forces. The concern to see all children born within Christian marriage has been supplanted somewhat by a concern to see them conceived within marriage. As one minister told me, it is felt that in allowing pregnant couples to marry, the church validated premarital sexuality. Refusal to



sanctify a relationship, then, is a further strategy directed at curbing local "wantonness" which has consistently eluded control. In fact, family practices have largely evaded control.

Christian influence has been associated with wide-ranging changes, but these have not necessarily taken the form promulgated by missionaries and ministers. Church judgement on unwed pregnancy, then, is not solely responsible for the rise in single motherhood. As Fig 7.1 indicates, even when the church was still allowing marriage of pregnant women, three of the six premarital pregnancies culminated in premarital birth. One of these was due to adultery with a married man, but the pattern is broader. Most women who have a child before marriage do not ultimately marry the father. This is partly because many of those who wish to do so undergo a valid "custom marriage" (*varialava kastom*, see Chapter Eight) in early pregnancy. Those who do not do so are responding to a variety of factors.

First, as in the account of Miri, the parents, particularly those of the girl, may be opposed to the marriage. They may have various rationales: Miri's family were opposed because they saw her *baere*, Timote, as potentially appropriating the money Miri would continue to earn as a schoolteacher. Lora was a youngest daughter who had undertaken to remain and care for her ailing parents. Iqu's mother argued that she disapproved of the man who impregnated her. Quite often, too, parental opposition is the explanation proffered when the girl is unable to marry for less palatable reasons. Miri's sister, Lili, for example, always claimed she had not married her first child's father because her parents—who constantly complained about the burden of unmarried daughters and their offspring—had prevented it. Beyond her hearing, however, her sisters and others spoke of the refusal of the child's father to marry her. This is perhaps the major reason for pregnant girls becoming unmarried mothers. Other than men who cannot marry because they already are, others refuse for credible or incredible reasons, depending upon perspective. Thus, Tomi, who sired Iqu's child, preferred to marry another girl who was pregnant to him at the same time. The lover of another girl, Elisa, refused to marry her because of the brevity of their relationship. When Nobe became pregnant with her second extramarital child, the father refused to marry her because he expressed doubts about the character of a woman who was so readily pregnant before marriage. Gure and Zili's respective lovers were simply obdurate in refusing to marry. Finally, Lora, despite the idiom of intending to care for her parents, was also in a situation in which the child's father, from another island, had left Simbo.

There is seldom any great pressure placed upon recalcitrant men to marry their pregnant lovers. In part this is because there are no problems with the offspring of such unions. Although the odd person may remark disapprovingly, behind the back of a departing person,

that "That [person] has no father", such remarks are notably made by people who deprecate contemporary sexual morality. Children without a natal father do, of course, have fathers within the *tavitina* and they inevitably regard their mother's father as equivalent to a natal father. In this, they are no different to the children of divorced or widowed parents who, irrespective of ability to move between mother's and father's kin, grow up with primary affective orientation to one household. It might be argued that the child of unmarried parents would be disadvantaged by the loss of rights to land and inheritance through the paternal line. However, children of unmarried mothers inherit identical rights to those of their mothers. The system of cognatic descent ensures that such disadvantage is theoretical rather than real—on their mother's side alone, children are able to trace rights in several directions. This surfeit of inheritance routes sees many lineal possibilities ignored as people concentrate their energies on particular sets of kin and areas of land. This multiplicity of descent-generated rights may be one of the reasons why Simbo women do not pursue child maintenance payments from the children's fathers, despite their legal availability.

Very few single women establish their own households. Those who do are invariably older women with more than one child, often because their own parents are dead or too old to be responsible for them. Thus, Sera's mother was dead, her siblings widely dispersed and she had no paternal kin. Nobe was about thirty and had her own household close to that of her older brother and his wife, her mother having gone to live with kin in Vella Lavella. Finally, Diana (about forty) had six dependent children and lived a frugal existence in an old house of her own, largely because her kin had gradually withdrawn support as she continued to bear children by different men.<sup>17</sup> Such women are a rarity, however, both because of their ages and their number of children. To have a child "on the road" after the early twenties (most of which are adulterously conceived) is rather ludicrous. To continue doing so is frankly disapproved. A term "Aunty" for all but mother and

The children of unmarried mothers almost invariably spend their early years in the mother's natal parents' household. Their mother usually remains there, too, in which case there is a great deal of overlap between a single mother caring for her child and an older sister caring for her younger sibling. Both young mother and older sister are under the authority of their mother and fulfil the same kinds of allocated tasks. The child is alternately carried by its grand/parents and mother/sister. Although the parents are distinguished in address as "Mama Qoele" or "Mama", both, as I noted in Chapter Six, are categorized as *tinana*. Indeed, it is not altogether clear that the infants and small children themselves discriminate between these categories of nurturers who provide similar care and, importantly, "carry" them. Certainly,

Astrid had no difficulty with the concept of multiple parents and was quickly convinced of the equivalence of myself and Laena, in whose house she often stayed and that Zeqili, Laena's husband, was her father. We all carried, fed, soothed, disciplined and slept with her, depending on where she was on any occasion. She intractably regarded Laena's children as her siblings and overtly pined for Una, Laena's (daughter's) adopted child of the same age, when Una went to Fiji shortly before we left Simbo, and for some time after our return. Similarly, when Lili left her three year-old son with her mother and father, he fretted for her. When, however, she returned to take him back with her, he continued mourning for her parents. The mother and mother's parents do not make the distinction rigidly. The child's MM often claims that she will "take" (*tekua*) the child when it is weaned.<sup>18</sup> Where the child's mother opposes this, the domestic peace can be maintained by allowing the ambiguity of dual "Mamas" to continue. I knew of one case in which the birth mother strategically continued breastfeeding for two years, in order to circumvent her MZ's intention to foster the child. Ordinarily, however, the issue does not become manifest until the child's mother eventually marries (Chapter Eight). The irony, that Christian attempts to delimit sexuality and fertility has culminated in the quintessentially un-Christian pattern of extramarital births, is compounded by the fact that this neoteric practice sustains, or rather re-establishes, the pre-Christian conjoining of parents and grandparents under the single terms of *tinana* or *tamana*.

However, the early Christian model of the nuclear family of father, mother and children as the essential core of kin is accepted as the model family, notwithstanding households vary considerably from that pattern. Just as sole parenthood is regarded as improper (and even women who occupied the status disapprove of their daughters doing so), so the dual ascription of "Mama" is seen as an inaccurate conflation. As I mentioned in Chapter Six, the classificatory term, *tinana*, continues in use, but the affective term, "Mama" is now replaced by the English term "Aunty" for all but mother and parents' mother. In the passages above, I dealt with the situation of mothers and children living in the maternal home until the mother married. However, considerable numbers of infants were adopted. In rare cases, children grew up unaware of their biological relationships. The distinction between "true" and "not true" parents is reflected in the comments of such people. Lupa, Ketu's 23 year-old daughter, had been adopted first by her MZ and later by her MM and MF (Fig 6.5). When she was about fifteen, she was told that Ketu was her real mother:

It still does not seem straight to me. She's my real mother (*tinana sosoto*). The old woman is not my mother, but I continued thinking she was my mother when I was a child. When they told me, I did not believe them. I cried . . . I cried . . . but they told the truth. Now I say "Mama" to Ketu and "Qoele" to Neli Qoele but it's a little hard. But true, Ketu is my true mother.



## NOTES

- 1: Chloroquine is also said to induce abortion if taken in sufficient quantities.
- 2: I did not witness any births. A number of friends told me that I might do so if I were determined, but that they would be extremely shamed if I were present.
- 3: Not only other patients: the clinic houses the radio telephone, across the corridor from the labour room, and a considerable number of people congregate there, especially during the morning. In this easy proximity of men to birthing women, I am constantly struck by the contrast to Kwaio resistance to Christian living. See, for example, Keesing's (1992a: 138-141) description of Kwaio pagans' continuing outrage regarding the SDA hospital there.
- 4: I used the word "*purana*", not realizing at the time that it implies shock, disappointment or disapproval. The choice of word may have had some influence on the reply, although I spent much time with this woman and she was aware of my limitations.
- 5: Retrospectively, I'm not sure that this account is not apocryphal. Salome's solo trek at night, although short, was unusual. The isolated woman giving birth on a path in the dark is astounding. The fact that Salome did not name her is also uncommon. These characteristics of the woman are reminiscent of a *tomate kikerena*, the spirits of women who died in childbirth, after committing adultery. Whether or not the tale is factual, it conveys the very negative attitudes attached to birth.
- 6: This is the only occasion, other than in foot races on which I recall seeing an adult woman running.
- 7: It is notable that such people argued that *tomate* did not exist—not that they had been enfeebled by *lotu*. I was also assured that these people were "lying".
- 8: The latter also affects pastors who are always local people. Thus, Tapurai was notorious for its inability to retain a pastor because of the genealogical entanglements and constant land disputes of its people. Most pastors resigned because of the number of people unwilling to co-operate with them. They phrased this in terms of people being disobedient to them. Most people objected to them on the grounds of their being autocratic. There were other issues, however, as people were usually willing to collaborate with their own near-kin. On one occasion the pastor was discharged because his father was involved in a court case and it was thought this would result in some kind of unspecified bias towards the opposing side. No-one could specify the nature of what he would do, but most were in agreement that he should be removed from office, and he himself assented to their concern.
- 9: There was never any suggestion that bleeding women have any effect on crop fertility. Menstruation did not prevent them performing any of their normal activities, except insofar as inconvenience, discomfort or disinclination constrained them. There is no reason to assume that postpartum women are prevented by such ideas either.
- 10: Kerns (1984: 94) makes a similar point about the menstrual isolation of Black Carib women.
- 11: \$2 is not an extremely large fine or compensation payment (*ira*), but it is significant. Some comparisons: male *luluna* may receive as little as 2c for their female *luluna*'s infractions of sexual mores, a woman who committed incest paid the lineage heads of her area \$20, a man who swore at the Council of Chiefs was fined \$25 by them (but claimed he would not pay it); a woman who quarrels with her HM pays about 40c. \$2 will buy one kilo of rice, which most families would try to consume at least weekly, ten betelnut, three or four megapode eggs, a small bonito or a large lump of laundry soap.
- 12: He and Esi were already irritated because the road from the clinic to their house passed the house of Ata's father, and they had paid \$2 for walking past the house.
- 13: It is tempting to see such ideas as arising out of greater interaction with other cultural views. Did Tinoni Simbo, for example, construct their own versions of female corporeality out of an amalgam of local understandings with the synthesis of Methodist and traditional views of women carried by South Sea Island missionaries from about 1903? Did men adopt such notions from their increased interactions with Solomon

Islanders from other areas in the course of labour migrations over the last fifty-odd years? Have the messages about hygiene from various medical services contributed to views of women as offensive?

14: One of these was Sera. Another woman, mentioned earlier, had a sick husband and unhelpful cognatic and affinal *tavitina*. I also mentioned the women whose husband, on extended labour migration, did not clear new gardens for her after the birth of her child. One woman complained bitterly that her husband and grown children never did anything at all in the gardens. The man who did all of the gardening undertook that responsibility (and the maintenance of a "store") because his wife worked as a schoolteacher.

15: *Kekedaka* from *kedaka*—"immature", "unripe".

16: It was, however, successful in making them problematic. Young and old women speak of the fear of pregnancy, and thus *luluna* violence, which pervades *babaere*.

17: It is interesting that her *luluna* had ceased reacting to her repeated infractions of rules of sexual discretion. Her last two pregnancies had drawn no response from her *luluna* who were "tired of beating her". This woman, like a chronic adulterer, drew the consequences of tangible community disapproval. Nobody offered assistance, other people remained polite but reserved with her. Quite often when she left a cookhouse after a visit, one of the women would give a squirt of beteljuice an extra impetus before spitting out the Pidgin word, "*Duri!*" ("prostitute"), to which others would nod and murmur, "You [speak] truly".

18: As opposed to "keeping" or "sustaining" it (*kopunia*), which she already does.

Plate V: *Qwela*, wearing traditional dress, in the foreground, kneeling beside and holding a large, dark, cylindrical object, possibly a drum or a large pot, which she is using to beat or pound. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

## VIMARILATA



Plate V: Qoele, bearing clamshell money in bag on head, kneels before bride and her senior female kin at tari binola.