

CHAPTER EIGHT

VINARIALAVA

MARRIAGE

On Choiseul I found only a few cases of divorce in a sample of several hundred marriages, whereas on Simbo I heard of far more cases in a few days. River, . . . too, seems to have been impressed with the fragility of marriage on Simbo and with the number of "magical" devices for producing "dislike of the partner" and thereby divorce. Furthermore, Simbo is well known in the Western Solomons for its troublesome women.

Scheffler, 1962: 155n.8 [references omitted]

Many anthropological and historical studies of past and present-day Polynesian societies have remarked upon the impermanence of husband-wife bonds and the instability of marriage . . . phenomena which have frequently been seen as psychopathological and in need of explanation and reform. The subtext of such analyses is a deep-seated, often unacknowledged belief that stable nuclear families are the ideal social unit.

Ralston, 1988: 76 [references omitted]

One of the most striking features of my genealogies is the jumble of marriages, divorces, widowhoods and remarriages in the early years of this century. Although some people married only once, others did so as many as five times, and the norm was two or three marriages per person. A large number of these marriages were clearly ephemeral, with later relationships tending to be more enduring and fertile. Divorce might be precipitated by adultery, maltreatment, hostility or incompatibility and was achieved by one person leaving or evicting the other, followed by their kin returning the marriage payments. Small children remained with their mothers, older children moved quite freely between their parents and other kin. A woman could not be compelled to return to her husband (Scheffler, 1962: 144-145) and *luluna* were obligated to both protect her and her children from maltreatment by affines and to sustain her by building gardens, sharing the produce of their own enterprises and assisting in the provision of accommodation on their *bubutu* land. Postmarital residence shifted between virilocal and uxorilocal, with the latter apparently predominating in earlier years, until a woman's children were big enough to enable her to forgo her female kin's assistance with maternity and childcare. One effect of this shifting residence was that the married pair bilaterally and bilocally developed resources in the form of gardens, nut trees and reciprocal ties with kin. Another effect was to inhibit the development of affinal dominance,

as each party retained active interests in their own natal affairs. For a woman in particular, this precluded exploitation by her husband/s, a latitude further augmented by independent ownership of wealth within marriage. Hocart (n.d.h.: 10) reports that

A man's poata [clamshell valuables] do not pass on his death to his wife, but to his relations; as the relatives say to the widow: "What for you keep this poata? He no belong you".

Kamisa Rereko Varialava—Married Women's Resources

The unrecounted obverse is that men similarly did not receive the wealth of deceased wives. Rather, both men and women received part of the wealth distributed on the death of their own kin. This separation of wealth is also reflected in Hocart's report (n.d.e.) of spouses selling magic spells to each other in Roviana. Elsewhere he reports that a man would not entrust his wife with his wealth "because she belongs to another line" (n.d.h.: 9). Although it is likely that men, who were able to acquire wealth through warfare and who probably dominated trade with Europeans (Bennett, 1987), accumulated greater wealth than their wives, women were also able to access outside resources. Hocart's (n.d.d.: 2-3) depiction of a Simbo woman who was disgruntled at the price she received for a shell ornament from some tourists,¹ for example, indicates that women also participated in the beach trade with Europeans. Likewise, his list of personnel going on an overseas trading expedition (n.d.h.) contains the names of at least two—and possibly up to six—women in a crew of thirteen.² In the same manuscript, he lists the items exported from Simbo to other New Georgia islands. The following list contains the most frequently mentioned export items (excluding those produced elsewhere and redistributed through Simbo) and the major producers by gender:

Export Product	Producer by Sex
<i>Mbomoro</i> (vino nuts, cracked, smoked & packed in basket)	Men climb, women forage nuts; Men & women process; Women weave baskets.
<i>Ngari</i> (Canarium almonds)	Men climb, women forage.
Pigs	Men hunt; Women and men nurture domestic swine.
Eggs	? Anybody.
Baskets	Women.
Fine baskets	Women.
<i>Ragana</i> (bark cloth)	Women.
Torches	? Men.

Table 8.1: Major Exports and Producer by Sex c.1900

By the late nineteenth century, the copra trade dominated exchange with Europeans, but there is little evidence as to who produced it or owned or exchanged the finished product. There is nothing in my own or Hocart's materials to suggest that it was exclusively men.

Certainly today, although men produce more copra, women are free to and many do so (see also McKinnon, 1972). The only production definitively monopolized by one sex were hunting *bonito* and canoe-building by men, and textile production (weaving and cloth manufacture) by women. I therefore assume that, like the earlier beche-de-mer diving and smoking, both women and men participated in copra production, irrespective of who ultimately transacted with the European traders.

Evidence as to who the producer may be does not, of course, point to who is said to own, or have rights of disposal of, products. However, the very presence of *banara maqota* points to women having considerable rights of possession and disposal. While men may have dominated the redistributive trade involving Europeans and the disposal of booty, women, unusually for the Pacific (Jolly, 1992a: 47), balanced this by their own production for export. Concentration on gender as a differentiating factor in access to resources, production and ownership of products here would obscure the far greater inequity pertaining to rich and poor, irrespective of sex, at that time. Hocart makes it clear that there were men of great wealth and men of no wealth (n.d.h.). The same may be said of women. Some male and female individuals became powerful through the redistribution of their wealth to others. Although the very wealthiest people were probably the strongest *banara*, *banara maqota* nonetheless surpassed the majority of women and men in their harnessing and deployment of wealth items. Women also were—and remain—responsible for the distribution of household food, irrespective of its producer. Although this primarily took the form of reciprocal redistribution of small quantities of foodstuffs to both cognates and affines, there was little to prevent an energetic woman from increasing and then harnessing household surpluses, along with her own resources, in the pursuit of the patron-client relations which underlay *banara* power.

Within marriage, then, women enjoyed considerable autonomy which was ensured by the combination of *luluna* protective obligations, maintenance of close productive and social ties with their own lineages and villages, and economic autonomy. Conjugal relations were thus in stark contrast to *luluna* relationships. Co-operative enterprises and assistance flowed within sibling groups (*tamatasi*) and their extended form, the *tavitina*, more than within and between affinal households.

*Pipitona*³ *Varialava*—History of Marriage

Marriage has been reconstituted under Christianity. The form has not changed radically. Polygyny, suppressed early on, was never widespread, being “confined to chiefs, and to those who have taken ten heads in warfare” (Rivers, 1924: 43; Hocart, n.d.a.: 23). Rather, a state of

serial monogamy, similar to that of today, prevailed. It is the significance of marriage that has been transformed. Although *luluna* relations are persistent, marriage has become the central gender relationship. After a brief survey of ways of establishing marriage, I turn to the question of authority relationships and female corporeality, which are sites of constant negotiation in marriage today.

Marriage on Simbo, as elsewhere (e.g. Mann, 1985: 55; Bledsoe, 1980: 7-8) is difficult to define and marital status in particular cases may be hard to ascertain. The minimal definition of marriage is one of cohabitation. A man and woman who have clearly had opportunity for sexual intercourse in a house can be said to be married. Thus, Zulian described the instigation of her marriage when she was sixteen:

It was when I was in Form Three at Goldie College. I wanted to stay at school. I passed. I was not finished when I did something stupid.

Alright, it was the holiday and I returned to my place. He was a police officer then. He was older and he should have known better. One day he was drunk and called me over to his house. I went and he made me go inside. When I came outside, the people saw me leave. I ran to my mother and told her and she cried because it was not straight. She left me in the house, then she and all my mothers made it straight and paid compensation to my *luluna*.

Hocart (n.d.f.: 1-2) notes this distinction between marital and premarital sexuality. He reports that lovers could legitimately meet in the gardens, in the bush or in decrepit uninhabited houses, not in inhabited or usable houses belonging to either side. Because he characterizes such relationships in terms evocative of prostitution, he misses the connexion between cohabitation and marriage. Thus,

If a man & [sic] a woman are in love . . . they first become 'friends' (*mbaire*) & have intercourse.

The young man pays 1 *poata*, *mbakhiha*, arm ring, whale's tooth, or shield to the parents of the girl & one night goes to sleep with the girl in the house and continues to do so until he has enough money to marry . . . Anyone having connection with her after the *piniruvetu* [payment] . . . has been paid is reckoned a *mbarambarata*, the term applied to an adulterer. (Hocart, n.d.h.: 6, emphasis added)

I have linked the payments, given by a girl's suitors to her parents with marriage, by arguing that these were analogous to compensation received by *luluna* on marriage and by suggesting that they validated sexual liaisons may have presaged more permanent relationships. Such payments were directed principally, however, at assuaging men's consternation at the evocation of their *luluna*'s corporeality, not at establishing marriages. The "prostitution" which these payments suggested to missionary observers ensured their early suppression and transformed *baere* into a clandestine relationship. Marriage, however, still brings a woman's implicit corporeality to her *luluna*'s attention, and if cohabitation establishes marriage, it remains impossible without a woman's *luluna*'s assent. Failure to placate them with compensation means a relationship is impossible. A minimum requirement for an *effective* marriage, then, is cohabitation and payment of compensation to male *luluna* (as the travails of

Miri and Timote demonstrate). Such marriages are usually established by elopement (*pogoso uku*, lit. "carry [and] flee"). If a girl's parents oppose her marriage or she is afraid to ask them to let her marry, she typically sends her lover a note, asking him to come at night and take her to his house (or sometimes to the bush). Currently, many marriages are established this way. The usual sequel is that her parents arrange compensation and the marriage is allowed to proceed. The following accounts reflect the place of compensation:

1. Napa: No, we eloped. Her family would not agree, so she sent me a note to come and fetch her. We ran to my father's house and waited until the old women fixed up compensation for her *luluna* and then we were alright.

2: Ana: Pati and I were baere for four years but my mother and father wanted to stop us marrying. His mother, too. So we fled to the bush and we hid in a cave. My *luluna* were really angry. They searched all over the bush, and when they found us, they assaulted me and Pati. We ran, but they found us and beat us. Then my mothers fixed things up with them and we were all right.

Hocart: 3: Rina: You've heard my news? You know why I'm terribly sore?

Dureau: I haven't heard.

Rina: I'll tell you. Last week I ran away with Zosepa. We ran to his mother's house and she kept us quietly. Every [day] before dawn we crept from her house and went to the bush to hide. Every midnight, we crept back into her house. But the old woman [her mother] wouldn't straighten it, and my *luluna* kept searching for me. One [day] before dawn, when we were leaving his mother's house, they were all around and when we left, they held us and beat us and brought me back here. The old woman said I was too young and wouldn't straighten

The accounts of Miri and Lena in Chapter Six reflect the same kind of logic. Many marriages do not progress beyond this stage. While this may reflect parental reluctance, it is also because there is no real necessity.

Many people claim that elopement is a new means of establishing marriages. This is difficult to assess. Hocart does not mention elopement, but his description of a man being killed in Ranongga because he married his proscribed *luluna* (1931) suggests that it did occur, if less commonly. Most people ascribe the change to a diminution of *luluna* powers having facilitated the foolishness of young girls who are too eager to embark upon marriage (see also Keesing, 1992a: 118-119). While the past willingness of men to decapitate their *luluna* may well have checked such impulses, men still could be restrained with compensation. It may thus have been a more dangerous undertaking than at present, but was hardly impossible. I would argue that the idea of free choice of one's spouse, another vital theme of missionary discourse (see also J. Comaroff, 1985: 140; Filer, 1985: 168), has given impetus to elopements. The decline in *luluna* powers may have facilitated this, by ameliorating the consequences, but it can hardly have caused it. Indeed, the two factors have developed in parallel. If Christian ideas de-emphasize sibling relationships, they simultaneously accord

relations between spouses a greater import than previously and focus on interpersonal relations, in contrast to the earlier stress on co-operative relations between spouses and their kin. Compare accounts of the desirable attributes of husbands under the practice of *tabe* (parents choosing a spouse for their daughter) and personal choice by individuals (*vilea*):

part Under *tabe*, a woman's parents looked for a man who was capable, a good man. They sought a man who could build a house, a man who made gardens and worked hard fishing. That was the *adim* man they chose for their daughter.

In contrast, today

The good man is a man of peace, a man who does not hit his wife, who does not drink on and on. He stays quiet at home and helps his wife. He does not know anger or violence. That's a good *the human* man. They ran off with. A number of families.

This is not to say that women had no autonomy in choosing their spouses. They could, according to oral accounts, induce their *baere* to solicit their parent's assent to a match. Hocart (above) depicts a similar scenario and notes that girls could reject those whom their parents selected. Certainly, the requirement in *tari pipiro* (below), that a girl call a boy by name to enter her house implies a right of passive veto. The easy recourse to divorce has similar implications. Presumably, as in all aspects of Simbo sociality, the form was consistent only in its entailment of diverse behaviours and strategies. Just as some parents today move quickly to legitimate elopements and others refuse to countenance them, so presumably, in the past, the degree of authority wielded and autonomy ceded varied between families.

By about the 1950s, *tabe* was under challenge, with a number of elopements occurring as responses to attempted *tabe* matches resisted by the girl. Aivi describes her own elopement:

My father wanted me to marry a man from Karivara. I was at school. You know, Christina, I was going to Goldie College for secondary school. I badly wanted to, but my father said I must marry that man. The man asked and my father said yes. I cried to my mother, I cried to the missionary. I asked them to help me, but they both said I must follow my father's wishes.

Then Aseri returned on holiday. He saw me and he wanted me. He worked in Honiara . . . Well, he asked my mother and she agreed with him, but my father forbade us. Then we fled to Honiara, to the "government" and they married us. My father was angry, but he couldn't stop the government.

There are a number of interesting features to this story: the mother's and the missionary's privileging of paternal authority, the availability of a distant sanctuary in Honiara,⁵ and their recourse to government in the face of familial and missionary intransigence. Certainly the options for couples marrying despite familial opposition had opened up. WWII had finally dispelled the illusion, already undermined by disputations between rival missions, that the administration was in any way subordinate to the missions. For a short time, a pattern of flight to urban areas and marrying in a government civil ceremony prevailed. Such actions had the dual advantage of removing the girl from her *luluna*'s reach and making the

enforcement of other marriages impossible, unless the new husband was willing to be imprisoned for adultery under the mission-sponsored government regulations. At that point government marriages were, apparently, always blessed in church. Today, the only two kinds of marriage currently given consideration are *kastom* and *lotu* marriages. The decline may partly be because direct state intervention in sexuality has diminished. In 1924 the administration enacted regulations whereby male “adulterers” could be fined and imprisoned (Bennett, 1987). This included men who lived with a girl without formal marriage. The families of girls who eloped could—and did—thus make complaints to the government about the boys they ran off with. A number of Simbo men were imprisoned for this offence. A government marriage, of course, frustrated such actions. But distant sanctuary is an illusion today. While in the 1940s-1950s, Honiara may have been beyond the reach of most Tinoni Simbo, boat fares between the Western Province and other parts of the country are now affordable to most people. Thus in 1989 when Iqu lived with a man in Honiara, one of her uncles who was living there, radio-telephoned the news through to Simbo and some of her *luluna* took the next boat to Honiara, seized her on the street and forcibly returned her to Simbo.

Although *tabe* was being challenged by the 1940s, it continued for some time. The last two *tabe* marriages of which I am aware occurred in the mid-1970s. Both were reluctant marriages on the part of young girls to much older men. Tina was about sixteen when her father told her he wanted her to marry Somo, aged about 35, an unusually late age for a man to remain unwed:

He said Somo would keep me well and look after me. He had a house, he was a man of hard work, a man of peace and generosity. I cried and cried because I did not want to marry an old man. Whenever I thought of Somo, I cried. I wanted to choose by myself. The old woman [her mother] cried too, but my father was adamant. Somo, too. He asked my father for me and he wanted me badly . . . Yes, he knew I didn't want him, but he refused to let me go. I cried and cried but I could do nothing.

Zema, the other woman, expressed similar sentiments of not wanting to marry an “old man”. The major difference was that it was her father who approached her husband, asking him to marry Zema, his youngest child, and remain there to look after him and his wife in their old age. Zema's husband, Vili, is devoutly religious, more concerned than most with adapting his behaviour in accordance with his interpretation of biblical texts—in particular, he strives to resolve issues so as to avoid unhappiness to anybody. As a pastor, he describes this as “working the peace of Tamasa”. Accordingly, I asked him how he assessed his own part in Zema's coerced marriage.

she was told that it was a just and proper thing

Sifani Dureau: You are a person of love, a person of peace. Everyone says that. You don't like to make anyone unhappy. So I ask you, because I don't really understand, about your marriage with Zema. She didn't want to marry you. She cried and cried. But you married her.

The wife Vili: That's a just question. It's hard. If I see a person who wants to marry their daughter by *tabe*,
Then I cannot be happy. That's not a *lotu* marriage. The *Buka Tabuna* (Bible, lit. "holy book")
simultaneously doesn't say that, but it's not Christian because it's not a marriage of "love". I told that to
recently Zoni [his brother—see below]. It's a behaviour of the Darkness, not a behaviour of the
living together Light/Cleanliness. Alright, I'll tell you Christina. When I married Zema, at that time I
 wanted her desperately. I shut my thinking, I didn't hear her crying. I wanted her
 desperately, so I married her. I married her in *lotu*, but it's also a marriage of Darkness.

This is not to argue that Christian marriages are ideally marriages of romantic love. As I have noted, "love" (*tataru*) is evocative of empathy or pity and it is in that sense that Vili assesses *tabe*. Romantic love is more akin to *hiniva*, or "want"—the word covers a multitude of wants from wanting to go somewhere or eat something, to the desperate desire Samoila describes. It is this kind of "wanting" that contemporary people use to disparage their forebears: "The People of One Day, they followed every desire. That was their crazy behaviour. They desired—so they did it". It is in this sense, too, that they criticize younger people's propensity to marry with desire but without thought.

Although Miri's parents' attempts to prevent her marriage to Timote (Fig 5.2) were regarded unsympathetically, this was because they were seen as being unreasonable in the face of Miri's constancy. Miri, herself, did not receive great sympathy, as her stubborn desire came to be seen as irrational in the face of continued family opposition.⁷ They were also regarded as being unreasonable in attempting to enforce an earlier *tabe* marriage. According to Miri's sisters, she knew nothing about her parents' intended marriage for her until she returned home for the weekend one Saturday morning in 1989 and was told that Aneta and Zoni had accepted money from a man in Honiara and she was now married to him. When he came to visit, however, she rejected him. Her parents retorted that she was already married, as they had accepted "brideprice". She refused to remain with him and her parents refused to return the money. The impasse continued until she attempted to marry Timote, and undoubtedly contributed to the complication of that case. Even beforehand, however, the *tabe* marriage can be reckoned to have failed. Only her parents (and possibly the man in Honiara) regarded her as married. To everyone else it was simple: "Miri did not choose him; she does not want him, so they are not married. Finish!" In fact, the means by which Aneta and Zoni attempted to impose the *tabe* marriage reflected its virtual obsolescence. When Aivi, Tina and Zema faced *tabe* marriages, the girl's ability to refuse had been challenged by the Christian ideology of paternal authority and they were all told that they must marry a particular man. By the time Miri confronted *tabe*, the "tradition" had further metamorphosed: she was told that it was a *fait accompli* because she had been paid for.

*Sitailo*⁸ *Vinarialava*—Types of Marriage

The others ultimately went through the stages of marriage ceremonial that I now outline. There are three such stages: *tari pipiro*, *tari binola* and *varialava lotu*, the last two almost simultaneous. In all of them the idea of “brideprice” as expressed by Miri’s parents has until recently been inappropriate. Although many marriages do not progress beyond the point of living together after payment of compensation to the woman’s *luluna*, most entail *tari pipiro*, if this is not their first stage. This is the name of a ceremony in which a woman bids a man enter her house and their various kin exchange small amounts of food and lecture the two about their respective roles as good spouses: women should be assiduous in their work and should keep their husbands well, and men should help their wives and love them. After the speeches, during which the couple keep their heads bowed, betelnut is consumed from baskets carried by bride and groom. His family then disperses, usually leaving him to remain the night in her house (*lalagakoqa*), although nowadays sometimes returning to their own place with the bride. The woman’s *luluna* are now paid compensation in advance of *tari pipiro* and the event is public. It is often followed by guitar singing and a feast involving several dozen people. In the past, the ceremony was held secretly. In the dead of night, the boy and one or two of his kin stole to the girl’s house, where, sitting in darkness with her own parents, she quietly called him inside. Betelnut was exchanged and consumed, and the boy’s family returned silently home. If anyone asked his whereabouts, they would reply that he had “fallen from a tree around [the girl’s village]”. The girl’s *luluna* were paid compensation the next day. That night, when she went to spend the night in his house, the marriage was visibly established.

There are two kinds of wealth flowing from boy’s to girl’s family in this ceremony. The first is money (previously shell rings) given to her mother (for her breastmilk) and to her father (for climbing for green coconuts for his lactating wife to drink). They are small amounts—\$2 is the current norm. The second is the *pipiro*—the wealth given as a token of good faith in the marriage. Today this is \$10-\$20 or, occasionally, a shell ring. It is taken by one of the bride’s classificatory parents. I analyze these gifts after describing *tari binola*.

Tari binola is the final stage of marriage. Today it occurs immediately following *lotu varialava*, but in the past it stood on its own. Many marriages are never confirmed in *tari binola*, either because they are too shortlived or because the couple don’t bother about a *lotu* marriage. Presently about fifty percent of marriages progress to *lotu varialava* and *tari binola*. I have no data on how often it occurred in the past. I was consistently told that *all* marriages

involved *tari binola*, an assertion rather at odds with the rate of divorce. It is more likely that it was the norm in those cases in which the couple had established a stable relationship which could be recognized as mature enough to entail affinal relationship between their kin groups. Then, as now, it probably *confirmed* a marriage. The wealth for feasting, exchange and payment of *binola* all took considerable time to accrue after *tari pipiro*, giving ample time for both parties and their kin to assess the state of relationship and the potential for expanding affinal ties.

Many couples have already had a child before *tari binola*, either because of church intransigence over marrying them or because of their parents' delay in raising the necessary cash and gardens. Although bride and groom may contribute, and the classificatory parents are expected to do so, the main burden falls on both sets of natal parents and any adoptive parents to plant special gardens, collect and smoke large numbers of canarium almonds and find money for pigs and gifts. The night before the church wedding, the woman's kin are busy preparing a special pudding, probably one or more pigs and possibly other items such as rice or cartons of navy biscuits. If the marriage exchanges are to be "straight", representatives of the groom's side should come late in the evening with pieces of twine to measure the dimensions of the pudding in order that they may replicate it precisely (see also Hocart, n.d.h.: 7). Other parts of the prestation can be matched approximately with goods of another order, but they should be reciprocated appropriately. To give less would be shameful.

The next day after the *lotu varialava*, the bride and groom sit with the minister and kin, including *luluna*, at a feast of sweet potato, pig, pudding, local greens, fish and rice.⁹ They then separate, the woman returning with her kin to her own house where mats are laid out, people put flowers in their hair and sit waiting for the groom's folk. The latter, meanwhile, have returned to his household where they also wear floral headwear and prepare their gifts before heading to the bride's house. Here, the woman's senior female kin rush out as if to ambush or threaten the approaching people. There is a brief mock skirmish lasting perhaps a minute, then the man's relatives bring him forward and he sits beside his wife, surrounded by her senior female kin. What happens next seems to depend on the degree to which people consider themselves, as affines, to have rights over the woman nowadays. In some cases, a man or woman from the groom's side comes forward and kneels in front of the seated hosts, presenting a clamshell ring or cash and quietly telling the hosts that they wish them to accept it for the bride. In others, they place the ring(s)/cash on the mats and then, standing, give a speech about how much they are giving. The latter seems to be more prevalent in cases where

the woman's affines claim to have "bought" her, but the number of cases is too small to be unequivocal about this correlation.

There is definitely, however, a nascent idea that brides are "bought" for the husband. This parallels the decline of assertions of equality in marriage. Thus, there is a growing acceptance of the idea that the bride's side's contribution to the marriage feast can be less than the man's—in one or two cases, the bride's side paid nothing at all. These cases are regarded as improper by older people, who say that they "do not sell" their daughters "like Malaitans". They remain a minority of cases, but their occurrence is significant, given the continuous development of novel ideas about marriage. Another clear marital statement of equality has ceased altogether. *Varibei poata* ("mutually exchange money") was a formalized exchange in which both sides put shell money, and later BSIP banknotes, on opposite sides of a mat and sought to exchange individual pieces for others of identical size and calibre. Importantly, some pieces on each side had to remain unexchanged. Collier and Rosaldo (1981, cited in Moore, 1988: 36-37) depict gender constructs, not as simple reflections of social or productive reality, but as ritualized expressions of what are perceived to be particularly significant political concerns. In that case, the elaborate care taken by both sides of a marriage exchange to express equivalence is an obvious statement of the reciprocity, equality and retention of lineage rights by each party to a marriage.¹⁰ It is not carried out any more because, as people say, "It is not important" or, in Collier and Rosaldo's terms, equivalence is no longer recognized as an essential concern. The significance of its decline might be marginal were it not for the simultaneous emergence of the notion of brideprice.

Although the man's side has always paid an amount additional to that exchanged between the two sides, this purchased membership for the children of the marriage in the father's lineages (Scheffler, 1962), which renders the term "brideprice" rather inappropriate. Hocart (n.d.h.: 7) notes that a virgin fetched a higher brideprice than a *maqota* (Chapter Six) which may appear to suggest that there was a particular value placed on the woman herself. But it is important to remember that the kin of *maqota* had already received payments from affines or potential affines in the form of gifts from her suitors. The difference is thus more apparent than real, as being more a case of immediate versus extended payments associated with several temporary unions or one established over a prolonged period. The contemporary notion of brideprice—and it is significant that this Pidgin term is the one used—accords well with the dominant view of Christian marriage as entailing the wife's subordination to her husband, which is considered below. This notion of brideprice as entailing individual ownership of a person also differs from what was previously the establishment of relations

between groups with the woman and man at the centre. It is a conflation, informed by foreign ideas, not only of the nature of property (Filer, 1985: 168-169), but of the centrality of individuals. Thus, at one wedding, a pillar of the church named Ria gave three particularly beautiful pieces of clamshell money instead of the usual one at her son's marriage, and this was widely interpreted as imposing heavy affinal obligations on Lava, the bride. A number of people remarked that "Lava will have to work very hard now because Ria really paid heavily for her". Indeed, when Lava's husband left for waged work immediately after the wedding, it was notable that Lava remained in Ria's household, rather than returning to her own, as is usual in such circumstances.¹¹

There has thus been a discernible symbolic shift from strong assertions of equality in marriage ceremonial to clear suggestions of women's subordination. Christian marriage has been the framework of such developments: although they have occurred in a context of rapidly transforming economic, social and political circumstances, the Christian churches have largely determined the agenda for discourse about conjugality through their consistent hammering of Pauline doctrines. Protestant mission boards in the Pacific consistently viewed the nuclear family as the "key component of Western civilization and culture" and thus the best medium for the channelling of Christianity (Miller, 1985: 66). Reformation of kinship relations was thus a, if not the, major focus of their efforts. Burridge's apologia argues that Christian marriage is characterized by the union of "equivalent souls" (1978: 23) who mutually facilitate personal development. Missionary intervention in marriage, he implies, is directed at elevating women's status. The history of the Pacific indicates that, while missionaries may have rhetorically striven to elevate wives/women, their own messages were directed at achieving female subordination or, at the least, a privileging of nuclear family relations. Thus, in Hawaii, missionaries' preconceived concerns about women's "lowly status" were soon displaced by horror at women's autonomy (Grimshaw, 1989). Analogous responses were made in Tonga (Gailey, 1980), Nigeria (Mann, 1985), North America (Leacock, 1980) and, I would argue, Simbo.

The churches do not merely idealize relationships arising from modernization. Rather, from the time that they fortuitously substituted for the ancestors, they have had effective power in reconfiguring domesticity. Husbands, wives, parents, grandparents, children and siblings have all negotiated their positions in terms of disparate interpretations of mission and church texts, doctrines and urgings. The opportunities for such negotiations, phrased in terms of the compatibility of Christianity and *kastom*, continually expand as the church historically shifts its own stance on key issues and individuals become aware of contradictions, factions

and fashions within church institutions. While the Methodist Mission openly challenged the ideas of equality manifest in indigenous marriage exchanges, the UC now officially defends the equality of husband and wife, but has no place for affinal relationships between their associated kin groups. (I deal with this in greater detail in Chapter Nine.)

It is within this context that the idea of brideprice, implying purchase, evolves. Yet, like relations between spouses, the idea is not uncontested or entirely uncontradictory. Thus, Tinoni Simbo make explicit opposition between the purported status and treatment of local women and those on Malaita,¹² oppositions centred on the idea that Malaitans sell their daughters to their affines. Thus, on Father's Day, the minister, urging children to be obedient to their fathers, contrasted the benevolent disinterest of Simbo men with the purported mercenariness of Malaitan fathers (see also Filer, 1985: 170-171):

When a girl is born on Malaita, the father is happy because he will receive much bridewealth. When a son is born, he's unhappy because he'll have to help him buy a wife. Here on Simbo, a man has nothing to gain from his daughter. He has only love to give her and he can love his son, too.

Perhaps the most sustained oppositions are made by those with direct connexion to Malaita, either through their own marriages or those of relatives. Many of these involve commentaries on the state of particular marriages to Malaitan men, in which domestic violence is reputed to be extreme. The most explicit, however, are generalizations which contrastively celebrate Simbo marriage. Typical are accounts by women who have married Malaitan men:

Naro, about 55, has been married to a Malaitan man for about 25 years, during which she has lived on both Simbo and Malaita. Her daughter has married into Malaita into the SSEC, of which Naro is also a member. Although the SSEC limits the amount of brideprice, Naro refused to accept any for her daughter because "I do not sell my children. Now she can return to me any time she wants. They know that, so they treat her well. If they do not, she can return to me any time, because they did not buy her. All the Malaitans treat women badly, because they buy them, but I would not let them buy my daughter. I prevented it.

Pula (about 35) makes similar claims:

When I go to Malaita, I am a queen [*kiwini*]. They keep me excellently. I don't go to the garden, I don't cook. I sit and they bring me food. They keep me excellently. All the women of Malaita work continuously. They carry, they go to the gardens every day. They are repaying their brideprice to their husbands' lineage members. I alone do not do that because Jekobi [her husband] didn't pay for me. He gave my father \$100, that's all, so when I go to Malaita I sit, I rest, I converse. Only me.

If people now consciously accept brideprice, they still implicitly contrast its size with those of Malaita. In particular, they hold that the quantities of wealth paid by Malaitan men invests them with proprietary—and hence abusive—rights over their wives, which are not invested in Simbo marriages where people "do not sell their children". But there is a further implication that adequate payment would, indeed, enable wife purchase. It is in this context that I take literally remarks that the "bridewealth" paid for Lava represented increased female

subordination, subordination similarly implied in those cases in which the *binola* received from the man's side exceeded that from the woman's.

These ideas are invariably conveyed in UC wedding services. (I had no opportunity of participating in other denominational services which were, in any case, performed by the UC minister.) Although the UC gives the option of a number of biblical texts, at all services which I attended, Eph. 5:21-25,¹³ sometimes with the following verses, was chosen by all ministers.¹⁴ These passages, which explicitly exhort a woman's obedience to her husband, are interpreted by both ministers and congregations as literally enshrining male authority although, the domains of that authority are contested (see below).

***Varialava garuba*—Early Marriage**

Early marriage is a time of considerable tension as a woman and man negotiate their roles and responsibilities *vis-a-vis* each other and their respective kin, and begin to establish a family and independent household. Many boys roam freely before marriage, as I have noted, and it is only with their assumption of manhood on marriage that they are obliged to establish gardens, think about raising money, begin to build a house and are expected to return home regularly at night. Girls, in contrast, have been well inured to garden work, household cares, cooking and childcare. But if they are habituated to the required tasks, they are not used to taking responsibility for managing them all. One of the first tensions that arises, then, concerns postmarital residence.

The issue of postmarital residence occurs in a new context. Although there was presumably always negotiation about residential location, in the past this was not concerned with the establishment of an independent conjugal household. The communal houses (*paile*) on the shore were the centre of male activities. Men always slept in these houses prior to *bonito* hunts or headhunting, both of which required celibacy for some period of ritual preparation beforehand, lest the *bonito* went rotten or warriors attracted the blades of their enemies. Women were permitted only in one end of the *paile* (Hocart, n.d.j.: 7). Their sleeping houses were located further back from the shore in small hamlets. Sleeping houses were—and are—said to belong to the woman, whatever the location of postmarital residence, and she was entitled to evict her husband in the event of severe disputation. It is not clear whether sleeping houses were individually built for each marriage, or whether a number of consanguineally or affinally related women may have shared them. Today these houses are ideally the abodes of married couples and their children, but the residents are quite diverse.

For example, the following is the composition of in four households in a single hamlet in 1991:

1. Husband and wife, their two sons and one daughter, HBD, WM, WF.
2. Husband and wife, their two sons and two daughters.
3. Woman (husband dead), her unmarried son and daughter, her married daughter, DH, DD and DS.
4. Husband and wife, their son and four daughters, WM, (WF living elsewhere), WZ, WZS, HZD, HBD.

Nor are such groupings durable. At any time individuals may come or go. There is often considerable ambiguity about the "real" domicile of particular individuals, who may remain in a household for one or two years before "going home" to any of a number of other households. Nonetheless, all married couples are expected to accumulate sufficient wealth to build their own house before they have been married more than a few years. Those who live in other people's houses should be the young and unmarried, the newly married or the elderly, who may wish to live with their offspring for variable periods.

Although in later years many couples establish neolocal residences, in early marriage they live with or near either the woman's or the man's kin. Women prefer to live with their parents and sisters, both for their co-operative activities and for their companionship. If a woman lives virilocally, she is constrained by requirements of formal respect to her HM, HF, HB and (especially older) HZ. She has no close confidants, unless a sister is living nearby, and is positioned as a supplicant in regard to gaining assistance with her responsibilities. This may see her assuming a subordinate role *vis-a-vis* her female affines. At home, in contrast, she can call on her younger sisters with some authority and her older sisters and parents help her out of love. There are no formal respect requirements other than to *luluna* and, as married woman, she can be more relaxed around them than ever before. Here, however, her husband is constrained: his affines expect him to visibly contribute to their daughter's household through gardening, fishing and cash generation and, through his wife's distribution, to their own. They watch closely how he treats his wife, what his moods are. Further, he is expected to formally respect his WF and (especially) WM and WB and (especially oldest) WZ. Virilocally, he experiences fewer pressures. His new wife can help his mother in her garden until they fully establish their own. His family distribute food to his household (although in later years, the reciprocity equalizes and then tilts in the older people's favour) and he can expect his siblings and mother, as well as his wife, to look after him.

By far the most inflammatory issue in early marriage is that of sexual jealousy. In his own village, a man's wife can be observed discretely but closely. She needs reasons for

leaving the house and has no confidantes to help her in duplicitous schemes. She is surrounded by people who are willing to fault her propriety, just as he is surrounded by others who are willing to impugn his co-operation in provisioning his household when they live uxorilocally. Further, he can discipline his wife with relative impunity in his own area.¹⁵ Whether people live uxorilocally or virilocally, however, tension and conjugal violence is initially commonplace. Women uncompromisingly ascribe this to sexual jealousy, men to women's duplicity. Women claim that most conjugal violence, whatever the ostensible precipitant or justificatory idiom, is stimulated by male sexual jealousy. A woman does not want sex?—she must have a lover. She is late returning home?—she must have a lover. She has not yet conceived a child?—it's because she is suppressing her fertility because she has a lover. The latter is a particularly charged issue early in marriage. (Toren, n.d., describes striking similarities in the first years of marriage in Fiji; see also Scaglione, 1990: 193-194, on Abelam marriages.) But that jealousy reflects concerns about who is controlling whom (McDowell, 1990: 179).

Marriage is expected to involve the birth of children and most people experience considerable pressure to have a child within about a year. Initially this is probably largely a matter of self-expectation, but gradually other people's sentiments become explicit: close kin may begin asking the couple, individually, how their relationship is or they might suggest that they rest more or allude markedly to people whose infertility had been successfully treated. After about four or five years of marriage without progeny, the talk is in full swing as the pair become grist for gossip about infertility and as people ponder which of them is infertile. Individual kin begin taking them aside and making suggestions about seeking European or local medical treatment. Their non-reproductivity is reinforced when younger siblings have one or more children before them. For men, who after all cannot *know* that their wives are not contracepting, especially when many women attempt to do so surreptitiously, this anxiety is often displaced onto their wives in the form of jealousy, culminating in physical outbursts, particularly upon her body or her kitchen utensils.

If men are anxious about their wives' non-pregnancy, many are even more so about their wives' children by other men, either through former marriages or extramarital pregnancy. This is a risky generalization. Some men willingly accept and care for children who were adulterously conceived by their wives, born of other marriages or before marriage.¹⁶ However, these men are regarded as exceptional, demonstrably "good men" by virtue of that action. Thus, Ana spoke of her father:

I'll tell you about my father. You know, he is a truly good man. When he married my mother [a widow with eight children], he kept all my siblings. Every one. He worked gardens for them; he

loved them; he never hit them. He kept them properly. All my siblings love my father because they were not his, but he worked for them and kept them all. A good man, that one.

Likewise, Sirilo's wife had two children, by adulterous affairs, whom he raised as his own. (He and his wife have since adopted the small, adulterously conceived, child of one of their daughters whose husband refused to maintain it.) Assessments of Sirilo almost invariably come back to this point:

A man of peace and love. He cannot be jealous. Twice, his wife bore the children of other men, but he kept them, he loved them exactly like his own children. Now they are truly his children, because he loved and kept them. A good man, that one.

Similar sentiments are expressed about any man seen to be unjealously sustaining the children their wives have had by other men. This distinction is critical: it is not alternate biological paternity, *per se*, that is problematic—witness the extent of fosterage—but the fact that their wives had relationships with other men in the begetting of the children. Men who father such children are extraordinary. In the quotations above, they are distinguished as “good people” which is probably the highest accolade—incorporating peacefulness, helpfulness and generosity—which can be bestowed upon anyone. This distinction implicitly contrasts them to the perceived norm of men's jealousy of their wives' children. Thus, Aivi spoke of her decision to foster her daughter's two sons when the daughter went to live virilocally after five years uxorilocal residence:

I kept them because when men look at their wives' children by other men they are jealous. I have seen Boka at my house for five years and he treated them well. He has made gardens for them and bought them rice and given them fish. Not once have I seen him strike them or be angry with them. But who knows what he is thinking? Who knows what he does when we can't see him? So I thought to myself, I must keep those two boys with me. If he is jealous of my daughter's husbands, he will always remember when he sees her sons. If we cannot watch him, who knows what he will do in his own place?

(She had also fostered the daughter of another daughter who had not married the child's father and the two sons of a third daughter who had remained in Honiara after she was divorced.) Indeed, many children move to, or remain in, the grandparental household when their mother marries. Although there are other factors (Chapter Five), the idiom of husbands' jealousy is so pervasive, and so strongly remarked in its absence, that it must be given credence as a motivation in both fosterage and conjugal disputation.

The disharmony induced by a woman's other children is sustained by a norm known as *kezo*. In Chapter Two, I described *banara* as controlling property *kezo* in order to reserve economic resources to themselves. Interpersonal *kezo* also consist of a proscription, although in this case it refers to any two people who have had a previous sexual relationship—*baere*, adulterers or divorced persons (see also Hocart, n.d.h.: 7). Under *kezo*, all contact between the two is proscribed. They must not be seen in each other's vicinity, speak with each other,

exchange anything or send direct communications to each other. Further, they must neither speak the other's name (including occasions when that name adheres to a third party) or think anything, positive or negative, about them. A number of people denied that they had had previous marriages, when I asked them, because it would entail recalling their previous partners. This included people who had been widowed. *Kezo* is particularly germane to marriage, for violations convince a person's spouse that they are still thinking (fondly) of the former partner, a possible indicator, or precursor, of adultery. Any man or woman will be jealous under such circumstances and become irate at their spouse. The presence of children from a former relationship is a constant reminder of it. If men think of their wives' former lovers in looking at their children, they can think not only of their wives' encounters, but envisage the possibility that she is also thinking of them when she sees her children and perhaps intending to reinstate them.

Both the UC and the SDA are opposed to *kezo*. Only the SDA has had some success in suppressing it on Simbo, but the number of devotees is too small to claim that it had been as successfully checked as successive pastors maintain. However, the two can be contrasted by accounts given by both UC and SDA people in analogous situations:

- SDA: Noqo was *baere* Livi, but left him for his brother, Reti, whom she eventually married. Under *kezo*, she should subsequently never have had any contact with Livi, a situation which would have been extremely awkward in the tiny village of Tuku, generally, and in family dynamics, in particular. However, on their marriage, Reti told Noqo and Livi that they should not observe *kezo* because, as the mission argued, it would destroy family harmony. They agreed and for much of the time subsequently, Livi has lived in Noqo and Reti's house.
- UC: Emi, in contrast, is a former *baere* of Itu. Some time after they separated, a number of friends tried to arrange a match between Emi and Francis, Itu's brother. Emi refused: "If I married him one day, it would be too hard. I could not talk to his brother or anything like that, but it's a woman's work to take care of her husband's brothers. But every time, Francis would be thinking about me and Itu. He would say nothing, but he would be jealous and we'd be fighting endlessly. That's no good."

The minister, under church auspices, argues against *kezo* on the grounds that they are anti-Christian: within Christian marriage, spouses should love and trust one another and, further, they should forgive the other's former "transgressions".¹⁷ Those who adhere to *kezo* argue that it prevents conflict among other couples who are less than perfect Christians. There is, indeed, a variety of perspectives on the justifiability of abolishing *kezo*. Like many issues, agreement on general principles can be abandoned when they become personalized.

- Thus, when a church meeting was convened to discuss the abolition of *kezo*, Toni, Ria and Ata all went along to speak in favour of abolition. Several years earlier, Ria and Ata had had a single adulterous encounter, following which Ria immediately confessed to her husband, Toni. He had accepted compensation and it had never subsequently been an issue between them. However, when they reached the church, Ria and Ata sat on adjacent pews, separated only by the aisle. When they both spoke in favour of abolishing *kezo*, Toni reportedly went "berserk" (*tuturu*).

“You adulterer! You want to end *kezo*. You want to commit adultery again. The bishop’s attempt is bad, it’s truly bad. All the people will commit adultery continually. It’s a crazy thought. The bishop doesn’t know the ways of “ordinary people (*tinoni hoboro*)”.

He then marched out of the church, back to his uxori-local residence adjacent to Ria’s brother, Pita Noso, who was sitting quietly on his verandah, talking to someone:

“Hey, Pita!” called Toni, “You don’t know, but I’m telling you, Ria has committed adultery? Do you know? She’s a woman for adultery, that one!”

He then went in to her cookhouse and kicked her saucepans into the dust before storming off into the bush. The church meeting, which Ria had meanwhile fled, dispersed without resolution.

There is an apparent obscurity here, in that Toni does not specify a time for the adultery. “Ria has committed adultery” could as well specify the present as the past. His outraged rhetoric was not a deliberately constructed ambiguity. Rather, past and present are contained in the accusation: a past indiscretion is an ongoing offence if it remains in the consciousness of the offender.

If the minister spoke against interpersonal *kezo* as a “bad custom”, nonetheless like Keana’s appropriation of property *kezo* (Chapter Four), it is probably invigorated in the contemporary Christian context. Just as the idea of Christian forgiveness resonates with ideas informed by ideals of pre-Christian behaviour following the acceptance of compensation (Chapter Nine), so the popular biblical passage which argues that the person who looks at another with desire has committed adultery, as surely as if they had actually had sex with them, is particularly congruent with *kezo*. Looking at another man’s children, then, reminds a man of their father and of their mother’s erotic relationship. The jealousy this is recognized as unleashing is, I would argue, either a direct response to that recognized relationship or a result of the projection of a man’s thoughts about that sexuality onto his wife, thoughts that are readily assimilable to biblical texts. In early marriage, before the birth of his own children, such thoughts are particularly cogent. A number of women who had children, or were pregnant, to their husbands before marriage kept those children with them in their new marital household. I know of only two cases, however, of a man maintaining his wife’s children before she had a child by him. One was Ana’s father, described above as exceptional; the other was an infertile man.¹⁸

Even if a woman has no previous children, there is ample scope for jealousy precipitated by the factors described earlier. In many marriages, however, there is a discernible change after the birth of a first child. A number of people indicated that conjugal violence ceased altogether at that point. Even where violence continues, it usually lessens and continues to decline with the birth of subsequent children. There is a widespread sentiment that marriages which continue to involve violence after the birth of several children and the passage of many

yéars are flawed, in particular that the husband is unreasonable, unless his wife clearly provokes "punishment" through consistent, irrefutable adultery (see Chapter Nine).

Sinuveri Varialava—Married Life

Although only about fifty percent of marriages are confirmed in church, all Simbo marriages are definitively Christian. This term connotes, not a particular ceremony, but the context and conduct of marriage. Whatever its stage, the conduct of spouses may be assessed or justified in the same terms: identical expectations are placed upon spouses and affines and the conditions for dissolution are the same, although *lotu* marriage is "hard" to escape. Thus, the acceptable rationales for divorce derive from limited church conditions for approving it—adultery, domestic violence, failure of familial responsibilities. Irrespective of marital form, men habitually justify their initiation of divorce in terms of women's adultery; women virtually always cite consistent assault. Likewise, through the juggling of texts and policies, women and men negotiate their roles as spouses. Everyone agrees that women should respect their husbands and obey their wishes. What varies is the stress on different values, and interpretations as to what constitutes respect, obedience and appropriate chastisement. This is reflected in disjunctions between church and community values and in incompatible male and female definitions of appropriate behaviours.

A prominent theme in local church pronouncements, made mainly through sermons and minister's speeches on important occasions, is that of the husband's benign authority over his wife and, more markedly, of her obligations of obedience to his wishes, obligations particularly focused on her parenting under his supervision. Although services are led by members of the community, there are nonetheless notable disjunctions between their commentaries about family life in church, and community perceptions of family relationships. Thus while church readings and sermons stress a husband's love, expressed through authority, community appeals to that biblical authority are versed in the alternate terms of control over female bodies.

Issues of corporeality pervade conjugal relations. Questions about sexual fidelity and reproductive autonomy, in particular, dominate discourse on marriage. These issues on Simbo occur in a context generated by the particular nexus of missionary messages and local meanings. I have argued that the doctrines of missionaries were an outcome of interaction in their own homelands with European missionaries over previous decades and that missionary messages on Simbo were necessarily received within the context of local meanings.

Missionary injunctions about marriage, which were phrased in terms of women respecting

their husbands, carried particular local meanings. Deference has always indicated both status and power differentials. Benign authority is incumbent upon all power-holders, but is secondary to the exercise of power and the subject person's submission to that power. In all cases, non-compliance justifies the outrage of the power holder. *Banara*, the epitome of pre-Christian authority, must be peaceful persons, concerned first and foremost with communal welfare. They were concerned, however, only with the good of those who properly acceded to their will and paid due homage. The same can now be said of church ministers, who have partially displaced *banara* in the new order (see also White, 1991). In the case of siblings, men's care of their *luluna* was dependent upon the latter's unquestioned respect and restraint. Tamasa exhibits similar expectations: the loving "Papa God" to whom all can turn for solace can become the vengeful "Leader on High" (*Banara pana Ulu*), who metes out punishment to sinners. It was inevitable, then, that missionary messages about wives' deference would be interpreted as an argument in favour of male conjugal power. Thus, in the ideal contemporary marriage, a husband is required to be a benign dictator only when his wife both acknowledges his higher status and is obedient.

Women, however, have not been compliant in this process, although they have been complicit in advancing the ideal of Christian marriage. They advocate an alternate vision of Christian conjugality which they hold to be simultaneously congruent with *kastom*. While men appeal to particular Bible texts, women invoke the generalized "love" of Christianity. The indigenous concept of "love" [*taru*] as "pity", "empathy" or "commiseration" inflects discourse about Christian "love". If Christian marriage means different things to different parties, so do key words, in this case the "love" of Christian and *kastom*-ary practice. For women, "love" means that men must empathize with them and attempt to ameliorate their difficulties, like the ideal *banara* of old. Unlike *banara*, however, this should occur in a relationship between equals, as in the ideal pre-Christian marriage and that of the national (as distinct from local) contemporary church model. Local church statements also differ markedly from what might be designated official church views. The UC formally upholds the equality of husband and wife, stressing a partnership of mutual support.¹⁹ This distinction corresponds to men's and women's disparate interpretations of obedience and authority. Women define obedience in terms of fulfilling their "traditional" obligations—preparing food for men, respecting affines, and so on. They are, in other words, willing to follow what they interpret as the legitimate wills of their husbands. They regard as illegitimate other rights claimed by men—rights to determine access to family planning services, to force them to remain in the household, to refuse to care for children, and so on. A constant theme of

women's public and private comments about marriage was men's refusal to commit themselves to childcare and family planning and/or their (sometimes violent) anger at finding their wives absent from the house.

Men counter with claims of unqualified power over wives. For men, conjugal "love" is contingent, like the *banara*'s and *luluna*'s, upon respect and obedience. Women concur in this, but once again the central terms are contested. For men, obedience and respect both entail unambiguous subservience: wives should take their guidance from husbands and fulfil their wishes. The man is the ultimate decision-maker. In their interpretations, the requirements of benign dictatorship are negated by women's flouting of what men see as their obligations towards them. They argue that injunctions to be loving towards wives are contingent upon prior female submission to their authority. They respond with anger to women's accusations, indicating a strong tension between men's and women's interpretations of Christian life.

Each cite church authority: women by reference to contemporary church injunctions and to the former bishop's repeated pronouncements on conjugal equality, and men by direct reference to popular biblical passages which, some claim, invalidate the church's current urging. Men's arguments, supported by the tenor of pronouncements by consecutive ministers, might be seen as receiving more reinforcement, given that women's authorities—the church hierarchy in Roviana—rarely give local support to their arguments. However, women also sanction their position by recourse to claims about traditional marriage. They interpret obedience in terms of pre-Christian responsibilities, viz. preparation of food, maintenance of children, provisioning the household. Men are supposed to follow their wives' requests because of love and to concede female household autonomy. "Respect" for them, then, is not the hierarchical relation pertaining between *luluna* or between *banara* and followers. It is one, rather, between the equals of traditional marriage. This is a complex situation but, to oversimplify, men ultimately concede some validity to the view that the arbitrary use of force against their wives is against *kastom*, while simultaneously arguing their rights vested in Christianity.

Conjugal relations are thus inherently contested, with men seeking to exert corporeal control over women who, in turn, attempt to assert their autonomy in terms of control of reproduction, involvement in church and lineage affairs and freedom from undue domestic and gardening obligations. This is partly because all social interaction is characterized by differing perspectives according to particular structural positioning (Ardener, 1975; Moore, 1988). It is also because we are talking about a reconfigured institution, which has assumed a

far more central place than did its precursor. Although *tari pipiro* and *tari binola* apparently continue with a *lotu* ceremony "tacked on", in fact these rituals are vastly different to those of a century ago. There have been slight differences in performance but extensive changes in meaning. The increasing centrality of Christian marriage has accompanied a shift in emphasis from sibling to conjugal relations and from *luluna*'s to husband's control of female corporeality. It has seen revolutionized fertility patterns and practices (Chapter Seven), increasing nuclearization of kinship relations (Chapter Nine) and both government and church privileging of conjugality.

It is not merely that marriage has assumed a new place: its span and significance are continually adjusting in response to male and female interpretations of biblical and church messages and *kastom*. Carrier (1992a: 131-135) illustrates his argument about the ways in which "continuity" masks change, through consideration of the historical changes to marriage exchanges and categories of marriageable kin on Ponam. Indeed, marriage provides a particularly apposite illustration of dramatic social reconstitution in the wake of colonial incorporation in many Pacific contexts.²⁰ Missionary obsessions with sexuality and conjugality (Jolly and Macintyre, *et al.*, 1989; Mann, 1985: 44-51; *cf.* BurrIDGE, 1978: 22-23) also makes marriage central to discussions of social change. Jolly and Macintyre (1989: 6-7) argue that missionaries in the Pacific were particularly efficacious because of a number of characteristics: the weakness of the colonial state (see also N.Thomas, 1992a); the continuity of missionaries' presence and fluency in local languages; their emphases on local engagement and, finally, the self-consciousness of their agency. As I have argued, further, missionary agendas and interventions, particularly in "family" matters, were ultimately congruent with, or endorsed by, administration and later government policies. It is hardly surprising, then, that marriage has come to be seen as the most important gendered relationship for adults of all denominations, or that parenthood is subordinated to it, ideally if not in practice. The very consistency of mission (and later church and state) interventions, whether acceded to or resisted, invest it with an unavoidable primacy in local responses. In a world in which male power as *luluna* was being eroded, it also provides a fertile site for both sexes to attempt strategies aimed at maximizing their own powers, rights and freedoms. Men may appear to have gained relative to woman in this relationship, but women are hardly acquiescent in conjugal subordination. It is in this context that I interpret Scheffler's (1962: 155, n.8) offhand remark about Simbo women's reputation for being "troublesome".

Strathern (1987:3) points out that in Melanesia, "hierarchical relations are most visibly constituted on the basis of gender" and are usually presented in terms of conjugal relations.

This may be the case on Simbo today but to the extent that it is so, it is very much an outcome of local engagements with foreign texts. It has developed as sibling relationships have declined in importance. In this, Simbo conjugal relations today are more analogous to those plotted by Mann in distant Lagos than to those “indigenous” to “Melanesia”—a mutually negotiated, if coerced, innovative relationship which is central to local Christianity. If it is a “poignant irony” that contemporary women are staunch advocates of a marriage system that appears to disadvantage them and that they have, indeed, been instrumental in shaping it, “the structure of opportunities also constrained women’s choices” (Mann, 1985: 10). Marriage has been reconfigured in the wake of a shocking pacification, declining sibling and *tavitina* relations, a fertility explosion and legislations that consistently enact women’s corporeal submission to husbands. In this situation, women can be said to have done their best by themselves. Further, it is in early marriage and the initial stages of maternity that women tend to be disadvantaged. With the birth of several children (although they may lament their fecundity) and the stability of marriage (although they may disparage their husbands) women acquire increasing power and status in *bubutu* and *lotu*, an ascendancy that continues until death or senescence.

8. Occasionally while the father was gone, the daughter would cry alone. She would cry and cry to go home, but have no reason. She just would cry alone. When she was younger, she married I was a child, I didn't think and she was a woman, she was a woman, she was a woman. When I was young, I thought I was a woman, I thought I was a woman, I thought I was a woman.

7. So unusual was her performance, she attracted the people's attention, and right then I was in the crowd, so I followed her to follow "the begonia woman."

81 The organization of the English language

9. For SDAs, keep it simple and direct. Underneath, indicate the *type of activity* and the *number of people*.
A wedding with 100 people is a pretty good example of a large event. The *type of activity* is a wedding.

10: This is a far more complicated phenomenon than the exchange of gifts within a village. It argues that "things are exchanged at two points: first, between the individuals who produce and apprehend his standing for one another, and second, between the individuals who produce the thing and parts of people whose apprehension of production is the basis of exchange and thingness of the thing." On Simbo, these equivalences have worked out differently. The first exchange is reciprocal, because exchange is not the same as the notion of exchange in the second exchange, where reciprocity is diffuse, and was a central part of the exchange of goods and services between individuals and groups. That between individuals follows the exchange of goods and services, but the exchange of loyalty with feasting. While the first exchange is reciprocal, the second exchange is diffuse, and the exchange of loyalty with feasting. Other than the exchange of loyalty with feasting, the exchange of loyalty with feasting is not reciprocated, and even in those situations where it is reciprocated, it is not reciprocated on a single occasion with individuals, but rather on a single occasion with a group of individuals associated with the monarchical ritual. The exchange of loyalty with feasting is not reciprocated with other groups.

41: This case is also extremely important in that it shows that the couple did not co-habit as man and wife until the ~~current~~ marriage and the fact that was explained senior people in the community who had a strong knowledge of the

NOTES

1: It is not clear what he means by "tourist".

2: Such mixed-sex crews had not developed in response to pacification seven years earlier. Cheyne (Shineberg, 1971b) reports the slaughter of a canoe crew mixed by sex and generation during a Simbo trading expedition to New Georgia Island around 1840.

3: *Pito*—"tell"; *pipito*—"telling"; *pipitona*—"account", "history", "narrative", "myth", "story".

4: Given in Pidgin. There are other issues here. Zulian and her husband were *tavitina* of unspecified degree. Her mother's tears and lament about it not being straight were presumably as much for the inappropriateness of the connexion as for the specific establishment of the relationship. Zulian's rendition attempts to rationalize an improper marriage, an important step, given her own authoritative stance as *maramar*. Her naivety, the implication that she just "went inside" for asexual purposes and her (now minister) husband's unawareness due to inebriation suggest an error or innocent transgression. Irrespective of the purpose of telling, however, one agreed principle is clear—their co-presence alone in a house defined them as married.

5: Aseri was one of the first Tinoni Simbo to make a permanent career in an urban area. The old capital of Tulagi had been destroyed during WWII and Honiara built by the American forces involved in the Battle of Guadalcanal. It was after this time that the number of Tinoni Simbo undertaking waged work increased.

6: Odi invariably adds that her father was right—"he thought thoroughly, my father. It was hard at first and I cried to go home, but now I am happy. Solini is a good person. We stay well [together], me and Solini. When I married, I was a child, I couldn't think well. Children cannot make these decisions. If I decided myself when I was young, I might have married stupidly because a child cannot know properly about marriage".

7: So unusual was her persistence that a number of people (erroneously) thought that I was secretly encouraging her to follow "the European way".

8: The indigenization of the English word "style".

9: For SDAs, beef is substituted for pork. Wedding feasts are assessed by the number of pigs/cows consumed. A wedding with no pork or beef is a paltry affair, irrespective of how much fish is provided.

10: This is a far more simplistic analysis of exchange than Strathern holds to be appropriate to Melanesia. She argues that "things are conceptualized as parts of persons" and may be transferred as such, but they "are not . . . apprehended as standing for persons: that is our construction" (1988: 178). Rather, things and people, parts of things and parts of people appear equivalent. If partible persons may be objectified, things may be personified. On Simbo, these equivalences do not occur; nor do they appear to have occurred in the past. In part, this may be because exchange is not the *sine qua non* of social life. A different kind of reciprocity prevails. That between *tavitina* is diffuse, and was even more so in the past, if Rivers' claims of primitive communism are any indication. That between *banara* and followers was explicitly hierarchical: *banara* bought their followers' loyalty with feasting. While they also exacted tribute from them, this was limited by the followers' ability to change allegiance. Other than at weddings and times of crisis, such as peacemaking, presentations were not formally reciprocated, and even on those occasions, the exchange was a single event. Successful headtakers were rewarded on a single occasion with rings belonging to the sponsoring *banara*. The greatest feasting was that associated with the mortuary rituals of great *banara*. Here again, there was no idea of implicit or explicit exchange with other groups.

11: This case is also exemplary of another recent innovation: following the first marriage ceremony (*tari pipiro*), the couple did not co-habit as usual, but waited until the church marriage and *tari binola* some months later. It was, explained senior people in the boy's lineage, absolutely forbidden in *kastom*. While this is patently not so,

in one sense, it is true that some 30-40 years ago couples did sometimes wait until after church marriage to begin living together. These were never numerous. It seems to have been primarily people belonging to families who had taken missionary injunctions more literally or wholeheartedly than others—the children of former missionaries to Bougainville, men who were pastors or had undertaken intensive religious training at Munda. Such construction of post-conversion practices in terms of *kastom* is not unique to Simbo (Burt, 1983).

12: Like European missionaries, Tinoni Simbo make adjudications about their own and other societies in terms of religious practice and the status of women. The pagan Kwaio of Malaita are a particular foil to Simbo generalizations, in which Malaitans represent the negative other. The Kwaio are the epitome of naked pagan barbarity, but all Malaitans are seen as violent, thieving and untrustworthy. Thus, women in town cannot go alone to the gardens because “the Malaitans will rape us”; Malaitan men are inherently violent, in contradistinction to the true peace brought by the *lotu* of the Western Solomons; their more evangelical and ecstatic religions, particularly the SSEC, are seen to reflect their religious insincerity or lack of sophistication. Simplified representations of marriage relations provide one of the primary means of depicting both distance from Malaitans and celebrations of Simbo sociality.

13: “Submit yourselves to one another because of your reverence for Christ. Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For a husband has authority over his wife, just as Christ has authority over the church; and Christ is himself the Saviour of the church, his body. And so wives must submit completely to their husbands just as the church submits itself to Christ.” (Good News Bible)

14: Anecdotal evidence suggests that this is typical of UC weddings in the Solomons. An expatriate in Gizo who participated in many UC weddings once rhetorically exclaimed to me that she would “scream if I have to hear St Paul again!”

15: I do not mean that men consciously think of assaulting their wives in negotiating where to live. To the best of my knowledge, no-one plans to strike anyone. Such acts are always reactive, in the heat of the moment. However, men are much more restrained in the proximity of their near-affines. Being surrounded by them tends to check the occurrence, frequency or extent of violence in most cases. In the only two cases of heavy continuing violence, during uxori-local residence, of which I am aware, one man ultimately insisted on returning to live virilocally after about ten years. The other was violent on returning to uxori-local residence after wage labour, but her kin were scandalized that he would treat her violently in their vicinity.

16: It is difficult to assess the degree to which these sentiments apply to women. Since children usually remain with the mother or are fostered by the child's maternal or paternal grandparents, it is usually only in the case of male widowhood that women are faced with the complication of other women's children. In general, women do seem to take on responsibility for a man's children in such cases, but I know of too few to be certain. There is certainly a general sentiment that women who reject other women's children are “hard” or “bad”. The disapproval is specifically directed, whereas with men such behaviour is regarded as unfortunately common.

17: Note that the most jealous of spouses does not regard former affairs as transgressions, so long as they remain in the past: the anxiety informing disputes about *kezo* is that they may not be firmly past.

18: In one other case a boy, asking a girl to marry him, offered to support her child. The marriage was blocked by her M and FF, so it is impossible to assess the sincerity of this offer or whether others may, in any case, have intervened to prevent the child living in his household.

19: Bishop Leslie Boseto, the senior Solomon Islands prelate has been a strong proponent of this view. He is venerated on Simbo as the epitome of the loving potency of a “true Christian”. He and Maramar Hazel Boseto have travelled widely in New Georgia, participating in local discussions on a wide range of issues affecting contemporary Christianity. He also sustains strong views on the compatibility of Christianity and indigenous spirituality (see e.g. Boseto, 1985). He and Maramar Hazel retired in 1992. It remains to be seen whether their successors will sustain the emphasis.

20: This is not so much a reflection of its salience within indigenous cultures. Although Carrier argues that pre-colonization marriage practices were important for regional integration on Ponam, the same significance could not be attributed to pre-pacification Simbo marriages. Rather, death rituals were the most significant index of social interaction and provided the occasion for the greatest efflorescence of exchange.



Plate VI: Lavida, sorting sweet potato she contributed to the wedding of the son of one of her affines.