

CHAPTER NINE

REREKO IVIVA

SIGNIFICANT WOMAN

I am convinced that mission work amongst savage people, if it is to succeed, must be on industrial lines. I hope that I shall not be misunderstood when I say that the most objectionable creature in the Pacific today . . . is the religious loafer . . . [T]he half-civilized native who loves to strut round quoting passages of the Bible, singing hymns, and shaking hands on the slightest provocation, but who has learned nothing of industry, honesty, or cleanliness, is the most objectionable of all . . . He has been taught a Christian creed divorced from Christian conduct . . .

To get the best from these people, we must teach them to be industrious, honest, clean, and self-reliant, and if need be, self-sacrificing.

J.F. Goldie, 1914, quoted in Latukefu, 1968: 306

These [gendered images of self and society] were cogently contained in the idealized domestic group, a household based on the nuclear family with its sexual division of labour . . . [I]t was during the eighteenth century that this family-household took on the status of a "natural atom", the God-given foundation, of civilized society. Its enshrinement in the social canon of Protestantism was to assure that it would become a vital part of the civilizing mission to "undomesticated" savages abroad . . . [F]ew things were to excite evangelists . . . more than the "need" to remove all vestiges of heathen kinship and family life.

Comaroff & Comaroff, 1991: 68

Women and men are normatively *tinoni iviva* ("significant/important person/s")¹ upon marriage. At that time they take on the responsibility of establishing a household, engaging in exchange relationships with cognatic and affinal kin and gradually increasing their participation in lineage and church affairs. *Iviva*, however, is not a static category. Although, like *koburu*, there are few linguistic specifications of degree, one nonetheless becomes more solidly *iviva* with increasing participation in, and acceptance of responsibility for, all aspects of adult social life (Counts, 1984: 50). A person with several children, a stable marriage and consistent involvement in church and lineage is *iviva sosoto* ("truly *iviva*") in contrast to younger kin. For young married people, the term evokes expectations of restrained behaviour:

Now you are married, now you are *iviva*. Beware not to walk around aimlessly. If you go places, you go with your husband so people won't suspect you. Attend to your gardens and *lotu* and live quietly. You are *iviva* now.

For older people, however, the term evokes respect for their position, achievements and influence:

He is a *tinoni iviva*. I am respectful/shamed. He is an important person.

Older people who do not achieve status or behave in a manner befitting *iviva* are scorned.² A couple married for many years but lacking an independent household and gardens, a chronically adulterous woman, a greedy or stingy person, a lazy, violent or consistently drunk and disruptive man all fail to achieve recognition as proper *tinoni iviva*. In this chapter, I trace the movement of *rereko iviva* ("significant female/s") from early marriage, when *iviva* implies normative expectations, to established marriage and motherhood, when *iviva* describes respect for those who have achieved the status.

Tinaviti Rereko—Women's Work

In the last chapter I wrote about the establishment of marriage and the birth of a first child. The tensions within conjugal relationships, which I described as typical of that period, continue for some years as husband and wife negotiate their respective rights and responsibilities. Their affines continue watching and assessing them and they experience the added pressures of having to sustain their own household and contribute to those of others. For a woman this involves responsibility for expanding gardens as the number of her dependent children increases, for the household tasks described in the previous chapter, informal presentations of cooked or uncooked food to neighbouring kin and her husband's and her own parental households and for assistance with preparations—including donations of raw food—for the weddings or funerals of cognatic and affinal kin. She is also often responsible for distributing the cash or goods generated by her husband's (or, later, children's) wage-labour, a responsibility hard to fulfil to everybody's expectations.

McKinnon (1972: 257-261) assessed the work responsibilities of married women on nearby Bilua some twenty years ago. He noted that agricultural responsibilities occupied 17.8% of their daylight hours, 30.5% was spent on "housework" and 35.3% on "leisure and food".³ These figures are dated, and distorted by an *a priori* determination to see men as producers and women as domestically pre-occupied. Time devoted to childcare and lineage matters is conspicuously absent. Nonetheless they are the only figures available on time and labour distributions in New Georgia.⁴ They are roughly applicable to Simbo, with the significant exceptions that paid employment is much higher (probably a historical development) and that, whereas McKinnon has men more involved in *lotu* attendance and business (3.5% and 1.7% respectively) than women (2.7% and 0.7%); on Simbo women

commit far more time than men to *lotu*, especially after marriage. McKinnon's figures are, however, rendered problematic by the presuppositions which underlie McKinnon's categories and interpretations. Thus:

As further evidence of the emancipation of women from the role of weeders, breeders, feeders and carriers, to which they were confined at the beginning of the Century, women today are often entirely released from agricultural work to attend to matters relating to the household (1972: 257-261).

Sometimes, however, "a father would stay at home and nurse a small baby with a bottle so that the mother could go to the garden for a change of scene"! (McKinnon, 1972: 261).

Quite apart from the offensiveness of McKinnon's "poetry", his presumptions that household work is "emancipatory" and that women benefit in being "released" from agricultural work are highly questionable. Moreover, this claim is at odds with his report that women spend 17.8% of daylight hours on agricultural production, which I suspect excludes time spent on the gathering of green vegetables and work in feeding domestic pigs as well as pandanus cultivation, harvesting, processing, marketing and weaving. As Mies' (1982, cited in Moore, 1988: 83-85) study of lacemakers in Andhra Pradesh demonstrates, women's textile work may be rendered invisible by the observer's presumption that handicrafts are a leisure activity. McKinnon also seems not to include women's—and less frequently men's—gathering and processing of canarium almonds, and their foraging for crustaceans, mussels, sea-snails, etc., both of which take considerable time in season. Finally, he blithely ignores both the effort and quantity of work entailed in the household maintenance described in the previous chapter.⁵

If women have experienced some freedom from agricultural work it has not been during this century, in which domesticity has been made an issue, but occurred with the adoption of metal gardening technology. Salisbury's (1962) analysis of the adoption of metal by the Siane of PNG has become a standard reference in assessing the social, economic and political impact of metal implements in societies which previously depended on stone, shell or wooden tools. (Bennett, 1987, and McKinnon, 1972, both make use of it in their Solomons analyses, for example.) Salisbury points to the ways in which metal freed men from much of the time required to fulfil their usual responsibilities for clearing and fencing gardens, thus enabling them to spend more time on warfare. According to Salisbury the labour time needed by men was reduced by at least thirty per cent. He argues that Siane men monopolized metal technology, leaving female productivity unimproved. Bennett (1987: 34-35) accepts this thesis as true for the Solomons, arguing that women continue to be restricted to use of the digging stick.

was This is untrue of New Georgia. Not only is the digging stick not used today but, on Simbo at least, it is unknown. Old people say that their parents, like themselves, used iron hoes (*piki*). Indeed, the acquisition of metal is not a prominent part of modern discourse about social change and interaction with Europeans, and no-one is sure just when it was made available to women. Although early sources, such as Cheyne, stress the demand for axeheads (Chapter One), by the turn of the century, women and men were using hoes and bushknives. Clearly, metal technology was applied to female gardening work, if not simultaneously with its application to warfare, at least some time before pacification. The reasons for this significant difference from Siane can only be speculated about: the fact that Simbo men also participate in cultivation (although I do not know how long this has been the case); the cognatic descent system which allows both sexes to inherit; the need for increased production to enable the expanded feasting which accompanied the elaboration of headhunting (although Bennett holds that captives facilitated this production); the low occurrence of polygyny; women's own participation in exchange relationships and rights to sponsor feasts; and the relative material equality of men and women on Simbo may all have been factors. But this is to problematize female access to new technologies whereas the problem is equally one of why Siane women did not gain access.⁶

Certainly, at some time in the past male and female Tinoni Simbo were confronted with the issue of increased productive efficiency and its implications for social, exchange and productive relations. It is difficult to know what choices were made. Bennett speculates that captives were expected to help with gardening. In the case of Simbo, however, Hocart (1931) notes only one case of a captive being put to such work. Further, my analysis of their incorporation as kin (Chapter Two) suggests that any work they contributed was as kin who were ultimately obligated to provide for their own spouses and offspring. Moreover, everyone, captive or not, contributed to the *banara*'s gardens and to communal work, such as restoring shrines. Hocart (n.d.h.: 7-8; n.d.k.: 2) also notes that taro, imported from Kolombangara, Vesu Gogoto and Vella Lavella in exchange for canarium almonds and trade goods—was the essential food at feasts, which suggests that there was no direct linkage between expanded feasting and female gardening.⁷ (Pigs and *bonito*, the other major feast items, were largely the product of male labour.) While contemporary tales of pre-Christian women as “queens” (*kiwini*) must be treated with caution, it is nonetheless possible that female labour was reduced as a direct result of metal implements. A number of factors suggest that subsistence labour was relatively light. Bananas, which require considerably less cultivation than root crops, were a major staple before the adoption of sweet potato, which

was grown only in very small quantities in 1908 (Hocart, n.d.k). The canarium almonds and now-abandoned "bush foods", which old people recall eating in substantial quantities, also require little productive labour and the same may be said of the spoils of headhunting or the food purchased with booty. Finally, the fecundity of pre-Christian women was low.

Metal tools, then, may have been used either to reduce subsistence oriented labour or to expand production. If the use of metal, and later firearms, in headhunting is any guide, however, metal gardening tools may have been used to elaborate production in order to expand the elaborate system of feasting which dominated internal political relations, rather than to reduce labour. Whatever the impact of metal technology, there is no support for McKinnon's implications about the relative drudgery of women's domestic and gardening responsibilities. McKinnon overlooks a number of factors in his claim of female "emancipation" through domesticity. In particular he neglects the reconstruction of domesticity in the wake of missionary and government interventions: the impact of contemporary fertility patterns on the labour required of women and men, and the interrelationship between the contraction of kinship networks and modern labour relationships, which I consider below. Simbo women and, I would argue, women throughout New Georgia clearly do concentrate greater energy on household duties than in the past. Technology has eliminated some tasks. In particular, piped water and factory-made utensils mean that they no longer have to fetch water in coconut shells, have the option of boiling food and are easily able to fulfil personal and child hygiene needs. At the same time the variety of household-tasks and the number of dependents has multiplied.

When missionaries pressured people to abandon the traditional male and female loincloths, women no longer had to make *tapa* but they did have to sew the family's clothes and they assumed the daily responsibility of laundering clothing for each household member. The expensive metal pots and pans need to be scoured to visible cleanliness after each meal. Likewise, when missionaries insisted on floored houses the mats on which people had previously slept on the earth were regarded as not comfortable enough. The store-bought bedding, which local integration in the cash economy presented as the obvious solution, needs to be laundered and aired regularly. Women also adopted the "Samoan style" of mat, usually laid under mattresses, either as a result of missionary persuasions or aesthetic preference. These mats take weeks of preparation—harvesting, boiling, dying, rolling, storage and slicing of pandanus and extended fine weaving—in comparison to the indigenous mats which can be made in an afternoon. (The pandanus is cut, dragged through flame, allowed to cool and woven without further processing. It is then left under the house to dry.) The house

surrounds, now kept clear of swine, must be swept daily. More numerous possessions impose greater work obligations. Thus, floored houses must have their floors washed regularly but "iron houses" also have to have their walls washed. Steley (1983) reports with some satisfaction that the Methodist Mission had not fully succeeded in inducing Tinoni Simbo to "clear" their villages in the 1930s, unlike areas where SDAs were predominant.⁸ This situation did not last and, as domesticity was overwhelmingly constructed as female (Jolly and Macintyre, *et al.* 1989), the onus of "cleaning up" fell squarely on the shoulders of women.

While a "domestic domain" arguably emerged after pacification, this does not mean that women exclusively shifted into it. Their responsibilities in the gardens continued or increased. They were no longer concerned with procuring surpluses for feasting, but the subsistence effort required increased dramatically for men and women as a direct result of the fertility explosion reported earlier. Providing for two children is a fundamentally different matter to providing for eight, ten or twelve. This is a point constantly made by women—and sometimes men—today: "Many children make much work".

Although labour requirements may have decreased with the subsequent decline in fertility rates, this has not been proportionate to the numbers. Leaving aside the constantly increasing need for cash for children, which I discuss shortly, land degradation has undoubtedly reduced yields. Simbo is a small island (< 4 sq. miles) supporting a minimum of 1300 people. The land around the volcano is infertile. Other areas are characterized by heavy clay soils. Only in the relatively small centre of the island is the soil a rich dark loam. Substantial proportions of land are dedicated to villages, megapode grounds and coconut groves—Burman (1981) reports canarium trees being cleared to make way for the latter, which also alienates land to individuals. Land alienation is associated with heightened conflict in many areas (e.g. Rodman, 1984: 68-69). On Simbo, land is in such short supply that people joke ruefully that they make land disputes over one metre boundary violations, whereas people on other islands dispute over areas bigger than Simbo itself.⁹ Fallow periods are constantly abbreviated and gardens eked out for as long as possible. Some people claim to have used the same garden areas for seven straight years. Their yields diminish markedly every year. Others claim that even "newly" cleared land provides lower yields than previously. Megapode grounds are also less productive as increasing numbers of people search for eggs and as feral dogs and cats decimate fowl numbers. This is one reason the Minister's *meke* signs (Chapter Four) were so popular and why the previous Member of Parliament had an ordinance passed enforcing an annual two-month moratorium on harvesting eggs. While the necessity of this measure is abstractly acknowledged, the constant

requirements of landholders for eggs has seen ongoing agitation for its abandonment. Finally, fishing yields are reputedly diminishing as a result of Japanese trawling in the western Solomons. Men look back wistfully to times when their forebears could call shoals of bonito into the harbour if they knew the right charms.¹⁰

Under these circumstances, women and men work much harder than previously to achieve adequate subsistence. By "adequate" I do not mean that total subsistence needs can be met. Store-bought foods are staples and, quite apart from being valued for adding variation to an otherwise monotonous diet, I doubt that the current population could be sustained on local horticultural production alone. Everybody, as I have noted, eats rice, tinned fish, noodles and navy biscuits on some occasions, unless they are very poor. Most people expect to eat them at least weekly, others do so daily. Although this reflects a new form of inequality (Chapter Five), the great consumers of purchased food may be seen as freeing some land for use by the less affluent.

Soqu Koburu, Varialava Neqi—Many Children, Established Marriage

Much has been written about the colonial creation of wage-labourers partially sustained by local subsistence production (e.g. Comaroff, 1985: 161, *passim*; J. Kahn, 1984; Moore, 1988: 80-81, 96-97; Murray, 1979; Rodney, 1982). In the Solomons, Malaitans were forced to undertake temporary wage-labour migration from the time the BSIP government imposed a head tax early in this century (Keesing, 1992a; Bennett, 1987). Throughout that time, the affluent western Solomons were resistant to the plantation labour jobs then available. From WWII, however, migration from the West increased. This was partly, as Bennett notes, related to the Methodist Mission's education, which allowed New Georgians to fill the vacancies for clerks and other literate employees created by the expanding, and increasingly interventionist, colonial presence. However, it also received impetus from the expanded local needs for cash. While some of this may be attributed to the classical imperialist creation of needs, it is increasingly to do with adequate sustenance. While copra production would be sufficient for most people to pay government charges, as it was in the days when Malaitans were forced onto plantations, sustained low copra prices, aging plantations and difficulties in expanding plantations mean that it is inadequate for all monetary needs—for kerosene, soap, tobacco and betelnut, clothing, school fees and uniforms, fishing, gardening and household utensils, food and contributions to weddings, funerals and church. It is particularly the parents of several children who find themselves consistently strapped for money. As one woman put it: "A lot of children means a lot of *naked* children!"

indig Concern about money to support children is constantly expressed by women. Men reserve their greatest overt concern for expressions of anxiety about land shortage. Newly married women and men, as I intimated in the previous chapter, are anxious to embark upon parenthood. By the time they have more than two children, however, fertility begins to become a issue for married couples. The subject, played out as a struggle over female bodily autonomy, is constructed and negotiated through Christian doctrines and engagements with the capitalist system. I begin by analyzing early Christian interventions before considering contemporary male and female perspectives. I conclude with an account of men's partial solution to the contradiction between female bodily subordination and contracting resources.

As I noted in earlier chapters, missionaries, anxious to reinforce marriage as the primary site of gender relations, and to counter the uncontrolled sexuality depicted as typical of heathens, succeeded in removing contraceptives from the grasp of unmarried girls. Indeed, for some time, they suppressed all indigenous contraceptives (as well as abortifacients and infanticide), even for married women. Quite apart from their ideals about conjugal sexuality, or any perceptions they may have had about local depopulation, indigenous contraception involved the invocation of ancestral *tomate*, which were anathema to missionaries. When modern European contraceptives eventually became available, married women, to whom they were restricted, should logically have had no problems in constraining their fertility. The subject, however, became entangled with the question of authority within marriage. Simultaneously with investing marriage, rather than siblingship, with primacy in gender relationships, missionaries attempted to empower husbands with conjugal authority. Indeed, it might be speculated that the prospect of direct control over wives facilitated men's loosening of their grasp as *luluna*. Certainly today men are quick to cite Pauline doctrine on family power relations. But women, as I noted in Chapter Eight, vigorously dispute such tactics. They acknowledge only "traditional" obedience as obligatory. Other issues, such as sexuality and fertility, should not come under the rubric of obedience to spouses. Here again they weave a new pattern from exotic and local ideas. Traditional marriage was between mutually autonomous persons *and their kin groups*, rather than the mutually respecting persons of women's current dialogue. Indeed, as I pointed out earlier, *pamana* ("shame/respect") is intrinsically hierarchical. It is possible that men were the initial revolutionaries in embracing early missionary directives about Christian marriage and were simultaneously conservative in coupling those innovations to indigenous ideas of hierarchy. Today, however, their views appear conservative relative to women's combination of contemporary church views and

indigenous marriage ideals, which imply a potentially subversive, new model of mutual respect. It would be wrong to paint this as an engagement between neoconservative men and innovative women. If social practice is motivated, so too is dialogue, and women and men on Simbo, in their disagreements, disputes, objections and struggles are engaged in strenuous dialogue, the terms of which shift through time. Conjugal disputation a decade ago was, and a decade hence will be, somewhat different to that of the present time. Indeed, the contemporary form of conjugal disputation reinforces this point. Although it is expressed in a variety of issues—childcare, obedience, participation in extra-household activities such as church and lineage meetings—the greatest acrimony between spouses relates to struggles over female bodily autonomy and modern contraception.

Non-indigenous contraceptives have only been available since the development of the oral contraceptive pill. This is reflected in the decline in birth rates from the 1970s. With the exception of the “natural” rhythm and withdrawal techniques, there was clearly little scope for spouses to dispute about contraception before that time. It was about then, too, that tubal ligation became readily available. A number of women recall suddenly being asked by medical personnel if they would like to finish childbearing, to which they readily acquiesced. When it was introduced, the technique was willingly accepted by men and women. The first Simbo woman to have the operation described her experience to me:

I went to Gizo because I was going to have twins. I had already borne eight children and now I was having two more. Everyone was cross: I was *kiso*,¹¹ Zila [her eldest D] was irate, all my sisters were angry about the pregnancy.

Alright, I went to Gizo and I gave birth in the hospital. After I gave birth the doctor came, a European doctor.

“How many children have you given birth to?”, he asked.

“Ten”, I said.

“Ten!”, he said. He was “amazed” [signifying disapproval]. “Ten! Tell me, how many more would you want?”, he asked.

“I don’t know. I don’t know how to stop”, I said.

“How about [this]—would you like me to fix it so you can stop?” he asked.

“You can?” I asked.

“I can”, he said.

“Alright, good, very good”, I said.

So he called Pita and asked, “How about your wife? She has babies continually and she’s weary. How about I operate on her so she cannot be pregnant again? Would you like that?”

“Very good”, said Pita.

So we wrote our names [signed] on the doctor’s paper and I was cut. One day my abdomen was painful and then I was alright. [She then named several other senior women] We were the first; we all had the operation. We asked our husbands because the doctors said we must. We asked them and they signed, every one of them, and we were all truly happy. Not one woman was ill after the operation. Now all the women are afraid of the operation. It weakens them, they say, but I tell you they are crazy. The operation is good, many children are bad. I tell you truly.

that rates remain significantly higher than indigenous rates.

Lina's account compresses a number of elements—the inevitability of many births; the medico's presumption that female fertility control was a conjoint conjugal decision, despite his clear disapproval of multiparity; the husbands' easy compliance and the women's ready conviction that the operation was beneficial.

Today, there is widespread anxiety about the safety of tubal ligation. Indeed, all contraceptives except "natural methods" are now credited by men and women with harmful effects. Concurrent with the development of this belief, men have become strongly opposed to female fertility control because of their concerns about female obedience and fidelity (Chapter Eight). Women and men express their struggles over relative male power and female autonomy primarily in terms of female corporeality, especially sexuality/reproductivity. For men, sexuality is the most pertinent concern; for women it is fertility. Men argue that women should use contraceptives only with their express permission, which many consistently refuse to give. It is widely held, including by many women about *other* women, that contraceptive usage facilitates promiscuity. This clearly mirrors early missionary arguments. There is evidence, however, that the equation of contraception and promiscuity precedes European contact, at least in PNG (McDowell, 1988b). It is feasible that it was a concern—which they were impotent to address—of pre-Christian Simbo men, although low fertility rates and endemic warfare may have made it less pressing. Wherever the conviction has its origins, it is strongly held today by men, who assume the power to act upon it.

In endeavouring to make wives subservient to husbands, missionaries have explicitly linked female submission to corporeal control—O'Collins (1978, 1979) implies that their successors did so when they successfully constrained the Solomon Islands' government's family planning policies. The government successors to missionary health services, by ensuring the husband's ultimate right of veto, have persistently reinforced the notion that female reproductivity is a legitimate concern of husbands. Pita's ready agreement with the doctor's suggestion, that he allow Manu to have a ligation, suggests that twenty years ago the issue was not an issue. The same process has occurred with all contraceptives over the past two decades and underlies contemporary wives' continual complaints about the burdens of maternity which they attribute squarely to male jealousy (Dureau, 1993; n.d.a.; n.d.b.).¹² It is possible, then, that women's complaints about the consequences of their reproductivity are relatively new, or have acquired an added dimension with the awareness of possible limitation. Although there has been a marked recent decline in reproductive rates, the point is that rates remain significantly higher than women desire.¹³ Women express their coerced

places. Further, it undermines the purpose of supplanting subordination with

compliance with their husbands' constraints in terms, not of autonomy, but of unreasonable labour obligations—in the gardens, within the household space and in childcare obligations. I will not replicate their arguments here (see Dureau, 1993) but simply note that these focus on problems of fatigue, pain, debility and inability to adequately fulfil all their obligations in kin, lineage and church affairs. Their concerns about the effects of excessive fertility are, then, personally focused: they suffer the consequences. Men are concerned with fertility rates, but for them, the pressing issue is understood as that of resource scarcity. It is well recognized that current human fecundity contributes to the dwindling of local resources and men express a conviction that these should be arrested by greater recourse to family planning programmes. This issue arose in casual conversation, formal development seminars and church Quarterly and Bishop's Meetings. Men's arguments that fertility rates should be reduced are, however, removed from the level of personal responsibility: Simbo must reduce its rate of reproduction but they, personally, should not be obligated to practice family planning. Thus, a father of eight could argue in a single speech that high fertility must be arrested and that women should not freely have access to contraception (Dureau, n.d.a.; n.d.b.). There is a central contradiction in men's awareness of the problem. I would not argue that they *want* to see their wives burdened with unwanted children. This is not so much a case of the old misogynistic axiom that "women belong, barefoot and pregnant, in the kitchen". It is, rather, that ongoing anxieties about female fidelity and obedience preclude recourse to the obvious feasible remedy: if women must bear the consequences of adultery—exposure through pregnancy—then they are less likely to do it.

stressed over belief and the present over future salvation (Harwood, 1991, p. 116).

Riniu Tataviti—Labour Migration

One response to the difficulty of providing for families has been a growth in the rate of wage-labour migration. While women and men undertake temporary migration before marriage, only men, with the exception of nurses and teachers, do so afterwards. Single people may be encouraged to go out to work by their families, but little pressure is applied and many do not do so or quickly return.¹⁴ Many married men, however, undertake wage-labour. Surveys indicated that over fifty per cent of married men had done so and the proportion of younger married men is even higher. This option is not happily pursued. Although there have been a number of high achieving Simbo men, most are manual labourers and consider the work in fish canneries, tobacco factories and logging camps to be harsh and unpleasant. It is also lonely, given that it is difficult for families, or wives refuse, to accompany them to many such places. Further, it undermines the purpose of supplementing subsistence labour by making the

latter much more difficult. It is intriguing that Rivers' informants (1922: 104) (Chapter Three) described pacification in terms of "working for the white man", for this is precisely what has occurred over the last fifty years, although their employers now include other Solomon Islanders and Japanese corporations.

Pacification alone was not sufficient, however. It also took the vital intervention of the Methodist Mission. It is simplistic to see missionaries' significance only in terms of their indisputable role in economic incorporation (Smith, 1990: 149-150). Motives and structural effects are to be distinguished, as must intended and unintended consequences. This was undoubtedly true of the Methodist Mission which was not keen to stimulate labour migration. Indeed, their emphasis on mission self-sufficiency and local production reflected their predisposition towards the creation of a local peasantry. Nonetheless, Methodist ideology, more than any other Protestant denomination was explicitly directed at imbuing a Protestant work ethic and converts were first introduced to time and industrial discipline through mission schedules and routines (J. Comaroff, 1985: 129-137, 142).

The Methodist Mission was, assertively, an "industrial mission", determined to teach New Georgians the value of honest toil, acceptance of European values and obedience (Harwood, 1971; Jackson, 1978; Latukefu, 1968; Towers, 1968). Indeed, immediately prior to the establishment of the Methodist Mission at Munda, Rev. Danks, of the Australasian Methodist Missionary Office, explicitly linked the "natural wealth" of the Solomons with the "scope for missionary enterprise" (Danks, 1901: 1). Goldie's attitude was that Christianity was to *replace* indigenous society and in the pursuit of this image of a new society, work was stressed over belief, and the present over future salvation (Harwood, 1971). The main instrument of this training was to be the copra plantations of the mission which were simultaneously designed to provide mission income. Plantations were established near mission headquarters at Munda and near local congregations whose members were expected to regularly provide labour. Latukefu criticizes the scheme on the grounds that the range of skills proffered was inappropriate and that it failed to develop entrepreneurship because of the stress on obedience and the refusal of mission personnel to allow Islanders to assume any kind of managerial responsibility. I would argue that it systematically undermined those entrepreneurial capacities which Tinoni Simbo and others had displayed in the 125 years before pacification. The vital point, however, is, as Latukefu notes, mission adherents learned to work *for* others. This can only have been reinforced by the kinds of humiliating gestures of servitude imposed on islanders by a racist colonial society, described at length by Kwaio men (Keesing, 1992a), stars and brothers. Unintentional violence and the white man's burden.

Wage-labour partially obscures the connexion between local population levels, individual fertility and local resources and thereby permits men's continued assertions of their rights to impede women's desired fertility control. It simultaneously alters the pattern of productive activities on the island. The migration may be prompted by the reasoning of the man, his wife or a joint decision. Some men leave in order to escape disputatious marital relationships; others to buy the materials for "iron houses"; to raise the funds to set up households or pay secondary school fees; to escape the drudgery of copra production or because that option is not available to them; or simply to complement subsistence production by increasing household consumption of purchased food. Although many women encourage their husbands to go away to work, men's absences have equivocal effects: migration may enhance women's daily autonomy and ensure a regular supply of cash, but it also changes the nature of female work.

As in so many transformations of Simbo sociality, it is not fruitful to assess this in terms of an absolute improvement or worsening of conditions. Women married to labourers have considerable disposable income, much of which is directed at the purchase of food. They thus consume more store food and are able to purchase root crops and fish, which relieves their food-providing burden and frees them from cash-generating labour. Zoana, for example, was able to buy food until her new gardens began producing after the birth of her third child and she never engaged in weaving, copra manufacture or other cash related activities. Such economic reliance on men might be interpreted as promoting women's dependence and, thus, sexual subordination. In areas where individual labour is a major way of generating wealth, there is an obvious potential for migrating men to reserve vital cash resources for themselves. Oboler (1985) thus notes the animosity and tension generated in Nandi (Kenya) marriages by that very issue. Kerns (1983) also points to the ways in which Black Carib women are made dependent upon men for cash (see also A. Strathern, 1979). As Moore (1988) points out, however, independent male and female income does not ensure gender equity and the reverse, that income dependence does not guarantee inequality, is also true. Whitehead's study of Ghanaian households (1984; and cited in Moore, 1988: 58), for instance, shows that income itself is determined by gendered access to resources such as land and labour and it is these kinds of control which are crucial elements in gender relations (see also Fett, 1983; Sacks, 1979; Tanner, 1974).

Simbo women are not totally dependent upon their husbands for cash. Although they cannot rely on their siblings, if the latter have regular employment they may periodically remit money to their sisters and brothers. Unmarried women and men who work always send some

cash to their parents. And women themselves have their own sources of cash. The most profitable, if labour time is excluded, is mat-making. A single-sized Samoan-style mat with wool fringing sells in Gizo for about \$30 SBD and in Honiara for more. When I visited Honiara with Zila, she carried six large mats, three from siblings, which she sold through her contacts there for between \$50-\$60 each. Given more time and a willingness to sit in the market, she could have obtained \$70 apiece. The seriousness with which mat-making is regarded as a source of income was reflected in the anger of a number of women when Ana accepted \$30 for what was regarded as a \$40 mat. They argued that the precedent would lower prices. Women also market fruit or megapode eggs in the markets at Gizo, crossing on the biweekly market canoes. An orange is 40c at the markets and an egg is 60c.¹⁵ Both are sold in flour-buckets about twice the size of those pictured at the front of this work. When someone has one or two buckets of fruit or eggs, they sell them within a morning at Gizo, netting between \$30-\$60 after paying canoe fares. Women also sell watermelons in season.

~~resp~~ It is not just a matter of women's potential economic independence, however. Migrant men do not deprive their wives of cash.¹⁶ Not only do women remain responsible for household disbursements, but it is recognized that migration deprives them of the male assistance, in provisioning their mutual dependents, to which they are entitled.¹⁷ Men who do not regularly remit wages are loudly criticized by their wives. Thus, when Emoni sent no money to Rupi for over three months, everybody heard of her tirade over the local radio-telephone: their children were hungry for rice; she was embarrassed because she was unable to reciprocate the food shared by both mothers; did he know how long it was since he had sent money? If he would not do so, then he should return and expand their gardens. While men may reserve some money for themselves, then, they must, minimally, give some "for the children" and contribute to household economy, like women, who both reserve and contribute their own money derived from weaving and marketing.

~~thro~~ As Rupi's outburst indicates, however, there are difficulties entailed in the loss of a husband's labour. In particular, women with absent husbands undertake much more of the burden of gardening both proportionately and in variety. The former is obvious—with an absent husband, a woman is responsible for all of the gardening work. The implication of this is easily missed. Prolonged male absences make wives responsible for the range of tasks usually assumed by men, including clearing gardens, cleaning, digging, maintenance and carrying firewood. There are a number of ways of dealing with this absence: a woman can use her husband's remittances to pay other people to work; she can get her husband to do the

initial clearing of plots while he is at home; or she can do it herself. Women use one or a combination of these in different degrees.

A fourth possible approach would be to elicit the assistance of other kin: that is what *tavitina* are ideally about. This possibility is rarely resorted to because, according to women, their *luluna* who would traditionally have undertaken the task remain indifferent to the obligation. This contraction of ties of obligation arises from the increased nuclearization of families since pacification. This has partly been facilitated by the transformation of the local polity. The emphasis on reciprocal generosity between close kin was probably reinforced when the tribute and public redistribution of patron-client relationships disappeared with the decline of *banara*, which Hocart noted to be well advanced by 1908.¹⁸ In that context, retention of wealth within the household, the site of production, was one possible outcome. The abandonment or reduction of broad cognatic ties under the later impetus of wage-labour was enhanced by the missionary emphasis on nuclear families as the site of primary responsibility (Mann, 1985: 101). This privileging smoothed a shift from redistribution between *tavitina* to one between spouses (and affines). Thus, when Gure returned widowed to Simbo, she had to pay her natal brothers to clear a new garden for her. For similar reasons, Zoana independently cleared a new garden after the birth of her child, despite the fact that her natal brothers were living in the same household. The contraction works both ways. Zoana lived in the same house as her sister, Pula. It was only rarely, however, that she gave store-bought food to Pula, and Pula did not give Zoana food from her own gardens while she was waiting for the new garden to become productive. It is this reduction of redistribution which underlies the novel material inequities suffered by women, such as Sera.

Rereko Iviva Sosoto—Truly Significant Women

Peacock (1990) argues that it is necessary to rethink gender divisions to take account of shifts through the lifecycle, a guiding premise of the latter half of this work (also of Kerns, 1983; Weiner, 1977). Nowhere on Simbo is this shift more apparent, perhaps, than in the transition from mother of several small dependent children to mother of older and, eventually, adult children. Such mature women are less exclusively preoccupied with infants and small children and are more empowered within the household. They are also central—to lineage and affinal networks, to church and to society at large. They continue to be responsible for the household and to work hard: supplying food for between five and seven co-resident children, themselves and their spouse and other kin such as parents, siblings or siblings' offspring is not

prevent or forbid Great prehistoric and modern history

an easy task. More than ever before, however, they are managers of the household's economy and labour. Daughters, as they grow, contribute more and more household labour.

Daughters are valued by women. The ideal for Simbo families is two girls and two boys. While a family without boys is grist for humorous community remarks, for women, a lack of daughters represents real hardship. They are particularly eager to have a daughter first, "so she can help me". Indeed, from a young age, girls contribute labour to the household (see Chapter Six). Despite this assistance, women complain about the work burdens entailed in their large families and remain anxious about further pregnancy if they have not had a tubal ligation. Indeed, their gardening burden is greater than ever before or again, because they informally supplement their M's and HM's gardens and exchange food with cognatic and affinal households. If redistribution has declined, it has by no means disappeared. Indeed, becoming influential remains dependent upon exchanges.

Women's reputations reflect their generosity. Such renown reflects evaluations of both their efficacy and their morality. Most women would deny any intention to rival their neighbours, but the obvious satisfaction that they take in doing so suggests otherwise. Thus, when Lila's husband regularly caught a surplus of fish, she took great delight in sending her children with containers of cooked fish and sweet potato or with clusters of uncooked fish to her nearby sister or her HB's nearby household. As the situation of Zoana and Pula suggests, there is no absolute obligation to share food with siblings. Rather, Lila was, through her generosity, overtly developing her reputation within the hamlet and beyond. Thus, she tied her generosity to comments implying the lesser viability of both her sister's and her HB's households. She was scrupulous in mentioning her generosity the next day, emphasizing the size of the catch and quantity she had given away. Likewise, Zila, an extremely hard worker, was triumphant over a period of some three months. The gardens of her HMZ and HMZSW (Fig. 5.2) had not lasted until a more recent planting matured. Zila not only gave them some sweet potato—she led the two women to her gardens with their netbags, invited them to fill them, and did so for some time. For weeks she talked quietly to her friends and cognatic kin about the unpreparedness of the other women and their need to rely on her.¹⁹

It is not merely a matter of manipulating relative status through sharing, however.

"Sharing" (*vaiaia*), as I have stressed, is a fundamental tenet, which ensures sociality (Chapter Six). "Greed", then, is definitively antisocial and is reflected in reserving one's good fortune to oneself, a characteristic long attributed to Europeans (Hocart, n.d.1). If it is discouraged in children, it is reprehensible in adults. It is notable that "greedy" (*ruruti*) derives from *ruti*—"prevent" or "forbid". Greed "prevents" social relations. To describe someone as a *tinoni*

ruruti is criticism enough. *Pui* is an extreme form of greed which contemptuously describes the person who not only does not distribute, but does everything possible to avoid being put into a position of being obligated. I only ever heard it used directly in reference to one person (although the point was sometimes made that modern wage-earners who hide their cash from kin are *pui*):

Sai is *pui*. He really is *pui*. Do you know what he did? Do you know his custom? Some people are *ruruti*. He is the same, but he is *pui*. I'll tell you: when he has rice at night he turns out the light in his cookhouse and makes [his wife and children] sit there and eat *in the dark* so no-one will come into the cookhouse to talk to them. No light! They eat in the dark! [Do you] believe it? I tell the truth. That's rotten isn't it?"

Gardening, for subsistence and sharing remains a mature woman's primary orientation. She may direct others towards the tasks associated with the household but she, often in combination with her spouse, undertakes most of the work associated with gardens. This orientation is facilitated, despite women's claims to the contrary, by the lifecycle progression of their children and husbands. Grown and growing children impose their own burdens, but they also permit concentration of female effort on production and the building of reputation. So, too, husbands.

By about forty, most men have finished wage-labour migration. They are thus freed to co-operate in island-based enterprises with their wives. Men continue to constrain women's autonomy—notably in terms of sexual demands and attempts to enforce respect or obedience. The violence or coercion of earlier days is, however, usually long finished. The exceptions to this demonstrate both the potential limits on female autonomy and the disapproval which greets men who continue in their domineering ways:

One day, as Zila and I were sitting in her cookhouse, she began talking about an event several months previously. Secretary of her branch UCWF, she was elected as one of three officers to go to Munda for the annual UCWF meeting. For a week before she left, she said, she had worked hard. She had gone to the gardens repeatedly in order to bring down sufficient sweet potato to leave for her husband and five children. Their clothes were all laundered; her house was clean and the surrounding grass was weeded.

On the final evening she rested with her husband in the cookhouse. In high spirits she made a joke about him, saying he would miss her and want her back before the week at Munda was over. How would he manage all the work without a wife? Maybe she wouldn't come back—she would find a new husband there. At this point in her narrative, Mosesi came in and I became the rationale for their mutual articulation of perspective. Mosesi, she said, had suddenly leapt up and beat her around the face with his fists for her lack of respect.

"I was amazed. I was happy, so I joked, but he was furious. For many years, he never hit me but when everything was ready, when we were prepared for Munda, he struck me. My eye was swollen, my face was bloody. I wailed. It was so bad. I was ashamed—all the women at Munda would see me and know Simbo men hit their wives. But it was late. I must go because it was tomorrow. 'I am going to prepare for sunrise', I said.

"You are not going to Munda, you are staying here. You have no respect, so you can stay', said Mosesi.

"I was amazed. 'All the women are expecting me. Tomorrow sunrise we leave. It's too late to find another woman for the meeting' I said, 'If you don't let me go, all the people of Munda will laugh at Simbo because men on Simbo prevent the call of *lotu*.'

Telen "But Mosesi was dreadful. He continued to prevent me. I wept, I wept, I begged forgiveness, but he prevented me. [The President] was furious. She came to talk with him, but he refused. [The pastor] came, but he refused. Even the *maramar* came, but he prevented me. I remain amazed; Mosesi is dreadful, isn't he?"

An Mosesi, who had been sitting, listening, spoke: "Zila, it's you who is dreadful. You cannot be quiet. Your words were rotten. Your own behaviour prevented you. I punished you for your behaviour. Nothing more. A woman who talks continually, that's you."

a wom Zila: No, no. I requested your forgiveness. All night, I apologized. All night, I wept but you were hard.

food Mosesi: You were not truly sorry. (HUMAN ZONA). A "good person" is also a *tinou*.

varitokai Zila: All night, I apologized. All night, I wept. I was truly sorry, Mosesi.

shares her Mosesi: You begged forgiveness because you wanted Munda—lying words, nothing more. You have no respect for your husband; you're a hard woman, Zila.

The boat had, ultimately, gone to Munda without Zila where, she said, the other women had been amazed that "a husband prevents his wife worshipping Tamasa".

regula The self-righteousness with which Zila relates this account in front of her husband, and the outrage with which it was related to me by other women in the community, however, reflect the expectation that mature marriages should have passed the stage of violent negotiation and that men, as fathers of many children and husbands of faithful wives, should have ceased their jealousy (see also Counts, 1984: 58-59; Toren, n.d.). Thus, towards the end of my final fieldwork, I met a woman at the tap, where we all queued to bathe. Ani was introduced.

unlike Zosi: Christina, do you know Ani? We never see her because she stays home. Her husband hits her constantly.

Yan constantly. (1987) following Schneider, develop the argument that [Pleasantries exchanged].

anthro Ani: My husband has gone to stay at Pailongge [Gizo]. I am truly happy. I am happy. We have been married for more than twenty years. All our children are grown. Yet he still cannot curb his jealousy. Every week he hits me. Every day he asks, where did I go? Who did I talk to? Did I walk aimlessly? A rotten person.

mutua Nezita, Ani's HZ, joined in:

questi She's a good woman, this one. For twenty years she lived here [virilocally] and we watched her ways. A good woman and still he cannot quieten his violence. It is reprehensible.

Not only are husbands, at this point of a woman's life, usually more pacific, but they are more often present than in the earlier days of marriage. Although married men are the major category of wage migrants, it is in early marriage that this is most prevalent. Most men with big families remain at home and concentrate on local enterprise to meet their cash obligations—running small "stores" in their houses (stocked when they finished work), making copra, raising pigs, marketing megapode eggs or fish. They also receive remittances from urban-living siblings or children. A minority are school teachers, ministers, nurses, politicians or occupy local government positions such as radio operator or Area Council Member. They are thus able to contribute to greater production for domestic consumption and spouses generally work hard together and more harmoniously at this time.

Tatamana—Paternal Family²²

An ability to manage other people in order to fulfil her own responsibilities, reduced constraint by spouses, and a reputation built by dint of hand work and generosity, all facilitate a woman's increasing involvement in lineage, church and community affairs. Generosity with food merely epitomizes a "good person" (*tinoni zona*). A "good person" is also a *tinoni varitokai* ("person [who] engages in helping"). For a woman this means one who not only shares her food, but participates in all the activities that facilitate community living. She may help her friends to weave mats or allow their children to stay around her household. Perhaps she has lent money at crisis moments, given sage advice or other support. She contributes regularly to communal responsibilities, such as clearing public paths and around church and school buildings and providing hospitality to visitors. She helps her mothers and her mother-in-law in their gardens and is scrupulously balanced in her treatment of cognates and affines. For affines to call a woman a *rereko zonana* is perhaps the highest of praise, for along with prolonged helpfulness towards them, she must juggle the needs of the conjugal household, keep her husband to their liking and continue to show respect to affines throughout her marriage. This has become more difficult as spouses have been transformed, under the influence of both Church and the monetary economy, from affines to "family".

Yanagisako and Collier (1987) following Schneider, develop the argument that anthropological studies of kinship have too often been constrained by the folk biological models which pervade European kinship. They argue that sexism and naturalism pervade both kinship and gender studies, which need to be reformulated as intimately intertwined and mutually causative: all relationships, usually taken for granted as units of analysis, are open to question. In particular, there are no "natural" gender relations (*cf.* Comaroff & Comaroff, 1991: 105). Although this approach has been interpreted as "[threatening] to 'tip over' into a radical idealism that would deny any connection between cultural constructions of kinship processes, human biology and varying economic systems" (di Leonardo, 1991: 25; Scheffler, 1991), this is not really their point. At issue is the question of whether the ways in which biological relations have been held to underlie gender relations everywhere are, in fact, generalizable. What is culturally made of biological difference is the vital question for analysis. While this is something of an anthropological truism, Yanagisako and Collier demonstrate the degree to which it has *not* informed kinship analyses to date. The recognition, in some cultural contexts, of multiple sexes (e.g. Wikan, 1977), institutions such as woman-woman marriage (e.g. Krige & Krige, 1943: 83, *passim*), the elision or elaboration

of sexual differentiation in cultural models and relationships, all undermine our usual assumptions of the naturalness of gender categories. But these rather spectacular practices can too easily be discounted as exceptional. Yanagisako's (1987) analysis of the reconstitution of "ordinary" conjugal relations by successive generations of Japanese-Americans, which exposes the assumptions underlying universalistic models such as those of M. Rosaldo (1974; 1980) and Ortner (1974), is thus particularly instructive. (So is Rapp's, 1987, demonstration of the contingency of nuclear family relationships in rural France.) Yanagisako clearly intends to undermine the notion of a "natural" conjugality between women and men as underpinning all conjugal relationships.

There are many anthropological analyses of the social and political ramifications arising out of "natural" conjugal relationships (e.g. Fortes, 1958, a particular target of Yanagisako and Collier.) I am not aware, however, of any analyses that explicitly construe conjugal relations as *affinal* relations. Affines are impressionistically one's *spouse's* kin, or one's offsprings' spouse or siblings' spouse and their respective kin, but not one's own spouse. Yet the implication is clear in classical analyses about the father as "stranger" in places like the Trobriands. On pre-Christian Simbo, I would suggest that was precisely the case—husband and wife combined, to produce children for the many descent groups of each, and as the intersection of social relations between those descent groups. For those two purposes they necessarily engaged in co-operative productive activities, yet the wealth each produced was not mutually owned. For both spouses, loyalty and interest lay first with their own *tavitina* and their primary gender relation with their *luluna*. Conjugal obligations were formal and delimited, like other affinal obligations. The rate of divorce perhaps reflected the contingency of the relationships so established, in distinct contrast to both natal and adoptive relations.

Given this background, it is interesting to note the disapproval evoked by contemporary divorce—especially of people who divorce more than once or, most significantly, after church marriage—and of the ancestors with their reputation for unstable marriage. (I can only assume that divorce was not disapproved in the past, for it was the norm). There is a strong sentiment that marriages blessed in church are indissoluble. Although the UC does sanction divorce under certain circumstances, community sentiments disregard this.²³ Assessments of its possibility range from *tapata* ("hard") to *-ke boka* ("impossible"). Some quote, in English, the words—"What God has joined let no-one put asunder" or, more redolent of the potency attached to Christianity, "*God em i joinem. Hao nao man em i save breakim?*" (Pidgin: "God has joined. How could people break it?"). Christian marriage, in other words, unites in a manner not countenanced in pre-Christian marriage. The accompanying dialogue about

"family" relations not only exerts stratified gender relations, transforming respect expressed in restraint into respect ideally expressed in obedience, as I have argued. It also brings the affective relations previously normative within *tavitina* relations into the field of marriage as the ideal relation of spouses.

Thus, I consider the balancing of natal and affinal relationships to be more difficult under Christianity. The mission and church ideals of male authority and conjugal love can only be reconciled by transforming the restraint expected of spouses into an analogue of the benign potency previously ascribed to *banara* or *luluna*. This, however, is at odds with both contemporary Christian appeals to loving conjugal equality and pre-Christian norms of distant, non-affective conjugal parity. In privileging conjugality, women and men are partially removed from their own kin to focus relations on the marriage, but this remains in conflict with the persistent norms of *tavitina* sociality (Chapters Two and Six). Affines on both sides, now excluding spouses, thus resent the concentration of wealth, labour and commitment within conjugal units and this resentment tends to focus, not on the novel institution of marriage, but on the spouse of their kinsperson. Thus, Sali could argue that her brothers' wives would prevent them helping her financially if she remained separated from her husband (see Dureau, n.d.a.). Lidia's sisters also complained frequently that her husband, who kept a small store at their house, would not distribute any of the foodstuffs he kept there, and Zila's HM, Nola, complained bitterly that her SWs would never allow her sons to give her enough money or tobacco.

Few women manage to perfect the delicate balance of affective and formal relations, given the tensions between traditional generosity and the monetized economy and nuclear families. Indeed this is much more difficult with virilocal residence, which becomes more frequent with age, where a woman's affines are aware of all events within the conjugal household and of all incomings and outgoings of food and wealth. By the time a woman reaches about 35, however, she has settled into a more stable existence: divorce, a residential shift, changes in wealth and childbirth are all less likely and she has established at least pacific, if not harmonious, relations with her husband, his mother and sisters. A man has done likewise with his wife, her mother and sisters. Relations with the brothers of each remain calm but more distant; with the respective fathers they are more affectionate. Women have more time for lineage concerns and church affairs and, provided they have not violated the norms of generosity, and found themselves marginalized, begin to assume greater authority in both.

Bubutu—Lineage men, may be extremely important from time to time. Most *bubutu*

As I have noted, the *bubutu* is the main corporate body, but in this cognatic system it is the *tavitina* that occupies the greatest place in everyday sociality. The *tavitina*, however, being ego-centred cannot act corporately. It provides a field of action for the individual and provides both human resources and obligation. Beyond humans, however, it provides no resources—neither rights to control land, sea, shrines (in the past), or human action. Simbo kinship, like other cognatic systems, is amorphous, fractured, shifting and flexible.

Nonetheless, it is not anarchic. Minor decisions—today mainly involving land and management of marriage violations—are frequently necessary and these are made by irregular *bubutu* meetings. *Bubutu* affairs are one thing that remains independent of conjugal relationships—neither spouse is entitled to influence or coerce the other in such matters and such instances are greeted with outrage. There are relatively frequent occasions when the respective *bubutu* of spouses are in conflict: in such cases they should each “keep quiet”, at least in public. The acrimonious land dispute into which I stumbled when I first arrived on Simbo, as well as imposing considerable constraint, also provided many insights. The following is one:

Naza lived virilocally with her husband Seli. They were members of the “Narovo Community” which was one party to the dispute. On this occasion the land in question was the alienated land owned by the UC which was subject to return to its “traditional owners”. The “Community” was not a descent group, but a voluntary co-operative economic organization centred in Narovo district, the fertile plain at the centre of Simbo. Nonetheless, as its binding to place suggests, it was composed of people generally linked by common descent and their spouses. The “Community”, as far as I could tell, was arguing simultaneously that their descent relationship to the land gave them rights to it and that their non-descent connexion to it would ensure that the public facilities located on it—school, church buildings, minister’s and teachers’ residences, clinic, wharf, the main water supply and most piped water—would remain generally accessible. The other party to the dispute was a segment of the Vunagugusu *bubutu* to which Naza also belonged. Naza was thus in a situation of not uncommon conflict between conjugal and *bubutu* interests. She publicly took the side of Narovo Community, making disparaging comments about the Vunagugusu side. A member of that side initiated a conversation with me in which he raised Naza’s name.

Edi: Naza is going to be in big trouble. She’s making a big noise about the dispute. When we win, we [a small group of people co-ordinating the campaign] have decided that she’s not going to have access to the land. She is talking out against her own *bubutu*.

Dureau: It must be hard for her. She and her husband are members of the Community. It’s hard for people who are on two sides.

Edi: No it’s not like that. Everyone knows she’s married to Seli. She’s married in the Narovo Community, but we are her *bubutu*. When you marry you do not abandon your *bubutu*. Some day your children will need the *bubutu*. You do not abandon it. You do not abandon your siblings, your *tavitina*.

Dureau: What should she do then? I feel sorry for her. It’s hard.

Edi: She should remain quiet/still. She should close her mouth and wait and see what eventuates.

of maximal lineages. The term, like *bubutu*, applies to the recognized leader of any level of

Bubutu affiliation, then, may be extremely important from time to time. Most *bubutu* activities are less spectacular but still significant. If a *bubutu* withdraws support from an individual, it deprives them of resources and validation of their way of living. Such power can leave deviant persons to manage alone and with difficulty. Thus, when Bobi married his MZD, Elena (an extreme incest violation), the *bubutu* they shared attempted, according to usual practice, to strip him of his shared *bubutu* linkages, to socially neutralize the incest, in other words. He refused to co-operate, so he has not been formally expelled. However, he and Elena, are *varivataru* ("in a pitiable state") because of their ongoing incest. They live in a ramshackle house, but can find no-one to help them with supplies of sago palm or labour for building, they are rarely given food except out of pity, wear rags and are only tolerated with resignation when they visit others.²⁶

The powers of *bubutu* today, as these two cases demonstrate, rest on the collective withdrawal of social support. Members meet informally when summoned to consider a particular matter. Any *bubutu* member is free to speak and be listened to, in theory. In fact the voices of respected women and men carry the greatest weight and nonentities tend to be too *pamana* to raise their voices. Although increasing age confers greater respect, especially for women, younger women can also achieve it through exercising the kind of generosity depicted above. Men may also hold sway because they are known as "good" men, or they may be influential because they are regarded as "powerful" or "big" through the deployment of wealth or land resources or through the holding of political or church appointments. Pastors, for example, are inevitably granted respect in *bubutu* affairs.²⁷

Bubutu decision-making and concerns are quite different to those pertaining before pacification. Decision-making today is informal and consensual. This does not fit the patterns suggested by Hocart's (n.d.a) description of *banara* roles at the turn of the century. Although *banara* were constrained by the ability of adherents to transfer their primary loyalty to another *bubutu*, they were undeniably dominant over those who remained their dependents. Hocart describes their ability to exact obedience and client labour in their gardens. According to oral accounts, they also had a permanent body of retainers, including "lieutenants" (*bagu*), usually captives, who conveyed their demands to followers and expected obedience. Such accounts also describe the *banara*'s right of execution and their role in peace-making (as did Hocart). *Banara* achieved the role through both inheritance and ability, which implies some necessity for consultation. Still, their power was arbitrary—they could demand the execution of deviants or impose reconciliation on estranged persons. This was especially so of *banara* of maximal lineages. The term, like *bubutu*, applies to the recognized leader of any level of

bubutu segment, but it was the most potent *banara* who achieved leadership of maximal lineages and, presumably, the most autocratic prerogatives. In such situations, they may have conferred with their lieutenants and other influential people but have had ultimate right of decision.

People today argue that *banara* were elected by a meeting of the *bubutu* collective unless a successor had been named before the previous *banara* died. Hocart, however, ~~non~~ recounts the investiture of a *banara*'s descendants in their childhood and suggests that only incompetence (i.e., non-achievement) could then deprive them of the office, in which case they were simply disregarded. This is also at odds with contemporary assertions that they could be unseated. Perhaps this disparity reflects a historical succession: from authority based on inheritance/achievement, to formal election of an authority (influenced by Western models of titles or investiture?), to the present rather amorphous pattern in which the *banara* is no more than a somewhat influential figure, nominated by his predecessor^{28, 29} and able to influence decisions.

~~UXON~~ *Bubutu* concerns have similarly transmogrified. Pre-Christian *bubutu* were focused around shrines which marked ancestral power. They were concerned primarily with the maintenance of shrines and feeding of ancestors, with enforcing conformity to moral norms, and with the corporate politics of alliance in warfare and trading. Today, *bubutu* are concerned, at all levels, with the distinct issues of land ownership and personal relationships. Both of these tend to localize action and concern. Only if a land dispute was over a major tract would the full *bubutu* or a major segment have an interest. (There was one such meeting during my work—a strategy meeting concerning the abovementioned dispute.) This is largely, although not exclusively, the province of men, who keep written genealogies, prepare cases for court and constitute the majority of witnesses. Very influential women may initiate cases, participate in strategy planning and appear as witness. They often also control land independently, and deployment of land is an issue of mutual concern to men and women. To my knowledge, however, no woman has ever conducted a land case.

It is the other role of *bubutu* which is pre-eminently, although once again not exclusively, women's sphere today. *Varivatozomo* ("process [of] making straight") is concerned with mending social rifts, approving new marital relationships or diverting *luluna* aggression. Participants meet discretely to discuss a situation, devise a strategy for resolution and then implement it. The most senior kinswoman of the person under discussion is very important here. If compensation is to be paid, it is she who is responsible for raising it and one of those who must distribute it. She must also concur with the eventual decision. The

MB may also be influential or consulted, especially if negotiation is at an impasse or if the matter is very serious. Thus, when Ketī obstinately refused to "straighten" Lena's elopement with Davi, Ketī's oldest brother, Beni, prompted by their aged mother, attempted to negotiate a mutual settlement (see Fig 5.1).³⁰ ~~never, the minister did not intervene further.~~

There are no formalized occasions for *varivatozomo* meetings. The sensitive nature of their concern makes that inappropriate, for decisions are often ideally taken, and amelioration effected, before news becomes public. If a girl elopes or is pregnant, for example, her mother, MZ, FZ or MM quickly summons other senior women to confer and either legitimate or reject the relationship before the gossip spreads. Even if news is public, however, meetings are discrete, informal and quickly concluded. In these meetings, too, although specific kin ties to the person/s under consideration are centrally important, so too is a woman's reputation and influence. Ketī would not have been able to so strenuously resist reconciliation with Lena had she not been a "big woman"—influential in the UCWF (see below), mother of a grown family and of a number of her siblings' children, owner of prolific gardens and copra trees and living uxorilocally. She was also "strong" in character, eclipsing her reserved older sister Maga as well as her younger siblings and her increasingly fragile mother, Neli.

Varivatozomo does not only mend social rifts. It also punishes offenders against serious norms. If the meetings to legitimate premarital pregnancies, elopements or "straight" marriages are usually relatively cursory affairs, serious breaches are not readily healed. Bobi's mother, for example, continues to find her son "rotten", years after his refusal to submit to the ritual needed to "make straight" (*vatozomo*) his incest.

Likewise when Neta ran away with her MZS there was silence from Tuku, where her other MZ lived, while she talked with other women. After several days, she sent word to Neta's HB₃₁ and HM: Neta was no longer her daughter, nor was she any longer related to anyone at Tuku. The consequences of this were apparent when Neta eventually wanted to find refuge. One woman sheltered her temporarily on Ranongga out of the "love of *lotu*" (*lotu tataru*), but her remaining mother's siblings refused to acknowledge her. (Her father came from the Shortland Islands where she felt she would be killed on return.) While she was there, her *luluna*, whom no-one had restrained with compensation, seriously assaulted her. She was left with no place to go except back to her husband, Zoie, but no-one offered to "straighten" things between them.

Eventually the minister, Basi, effected a reconciliation and she returned to her husband. Their relationship deteriorated markedly, however, and she wanted to find another place to live but was unable to do so because of her continuing estrangement from her kinswomen, who continued to deny their connexion with her.

The minister's role was pivotal. Where the *bubutu* publicly disclaimed Neta, leaving her in a kind of social limbo, he manipulated the new ideas about marriage to resolve the situation. His significance lay not only in the manner in which he filled a role previously the domain of *banara* but in his single-minded determination to reconcile *marriage* partners. At no time did he move to resolve the impediments to communication between Neta and her *bubutu*, nor to

restrain her *luluna*: rather, he strongly counselled her husband to "forgive" her. In particular he was concerned lest Zoie become violent and it was only when he promised not to attack her that Neta finally returned. Once she was back in her household and subject to Zoie's harangues and jealous outbursts, however, the minister did not intervene further.

Both *banara* and minister were/are involved in conflict resolution. Not only did/do both have right of forgiveness, but both also mediate/d between aggrieved parties. For *banara* this applied to a whole range of offences focused on the *bubutu*—disputes over resources, witchcraft accusations, etc.—but for current purposes I concentrate on a roughly analogous situation of sexual misdeeds. When Neli's daughter, Mona, died as a result of her mother's adultery in about 1940, the *banara*'s power of execution was long gone, ancestral sacrifices abandoned and *lotu* was established, but the *banara* still had authority in the community.

Verbal and physical taboos also attended his³² person and name.

Neli confessed to adultery immediately upon her daughter's death whereupon her husband cast her out. First, however, his cognatic kin dragged her up upon one of their old ancestral shrines which was forbidden to women. The shrine was so potent, say she and her older children, that she instantly developed a fulminating skin disease which forever ruined her famed beauty.

The skin disease was ultimately cured by the prayers of the resident missionary [the mission having gone a long way towards appropriating indigenous health practices] but he could not persuade her husband to reconcile, despite the wishes of Neli and her own kin. So the *banara* eventually intervened at the behest of Neli's MZs, who gave him a clamshell valuable. He negotiated an agreement to resume cohabitation and officiated at a big feast between the two families, at which Bule was also given a valuable. The issue was resolved for all time and Neli and her sons stress that Bule put it entirely from his thoughts.

Although this is not an account of a pre-Christian society—it is, rather, a midpoint in the shift of power from *banara* to minister—it clearly shows the mediatory role of *banara* before that role shifted to ministers. It also suggests a significant difference in views of marriage and sentiments. The *banara*'s intervention was an intervention in a *bubutu* concern—thus Bule's kins' assault on Neli and the ultimate joint feasting. The minister was concerned with *family*—he wanted to re-establish a domestic unit removed from *bubutu* affairs. In 1940, only the *banara* could resolve conjugal problems, despite the obvious powers of divine intervention held by the minister. In 1992, although *banara* were seriously affronted by the incest, there was a strong feeling that the resolution of the conjugal problem was not their concern and widespread approval of the minister's efforts.³⁴ There was a difference, too, in the resolution of the two adulteries. Zoie, the modern Christian husband, was *asked to forgive* Neta on her return. The wrong she had done simmered and he was expected to be strong in resisting his anger. Bule, however, less immersed in Christian ideology about marriage, was *obliged to forget*: his compensation, once accepted, undid Neli's deed. Thus it is socially inept or destructive of people to mention a deed for which compensation has been paid in

UCWF and their own *bubutu* meetings. These "big women" who do speak, however,

front of the person/s who have been affronted. To talk of it is to again make it true, almost to cause it to re-happen. The different responses of Bule and Zoie who, respectively, disregarded and brooded about their wives' adultery is thus significantly more than a variation in ~~and all~~ personality. ~~ices except morning form (when they are preparing food) in greater numbers than~~

~~also, in general, far more insistent upon public worship than men. Many of~~
Lotu—Church ~~at a direct personal approach to Tamasa is far more satisfactory. Thus, /Zia~~

As marriage has shifted from being a *bubutu* to a *lotu* affair, the Christian focus on the nuclear family as a key point of sociality has directed energies away from *bubutu* and *tavitina* affairs and towards household and church concerns. The former is shown by the earlier discussion of labour migration and cash distributions. The latter is reflected in the importance of the United Church Women's fellowship (UCWF) as a focus of mature women's activities and the Quarterly Meeting (QM), which acts as a forum for considering local issues. Although mature women's greater autonomy in regard to household and domestic responsibilities frees them to assume major roles in *bubutu* concerns, far more energy and interest is expended on church affairs.

Women go to weekly UCWF meetings and are involved in numerous activities connected with it (Dureau, 1993). Quarterly Meetings (QM) are more formal occasions, which elected members from each congregation and each organization attend. Others may also attend and they participate in discussions, although they are theoretically only observers. These meetings, dominated by men, ideally decide upon local church issues—the disbursement of moneys, election of pastors, approval or disapproval of the minister's and *maramar*'s activities and election of delegates to annual synods at Roviana and of nominees for pastoral or ministerial training in the Solomons and PNG respectively. In fact a number of factors tend to pull against the autonomous decision-making of these meetings. Depending upon his personality, the minister may attempt to subvert the consensual process and impose his own will on the meetings. He does this, as chair, by combination of ongoing harangue, deciding upon the timing of the vote and by formulating the words in which issues are phrased for voting. Keana, backed up by Zulian, was a master of such tactics. The regular Circuit Meetings, attended with much less fanfare by a coterie of key men, also limited the impact of QMs both by subtly reformulating QM resolutions and by pre-empting QM discussion and presenting decisions for approval by the QM. The UCWF, however, although officially the counterpart of the Men's Fellowship, provides a balance against the QM.

Most women refuse to talk in mixed-sex public forums although they are vociferous in the UCWF and their own *bubutu* meetings. Those "big women" who do speak, however,

wield considerable authority. At QMs, they put the consensual views reached at UCWF meetings on behalf of the women who do not attend. At this point I digress a little to point out that the UCWF is a stronger organization than the Men's Fellowship. Women attend all church services except morning *lotu* (when they are preparing food) in greater numbers than men. They are also, in general, far more insistent upon public worship than men, many of whom insist that a direct personal approach to Tamasa is far more satisfactory. Thus, Zila attended *lotu* every morning and three times on Sunday as well as all UCWF meetings and special services, a habit facilitated by her children's ages. Mosesi, however, occasionally attended Men's Fellowship and rarely attended *lotu* services. Every Sunday they argued when it was time for the main service:

Zila: [after trying to make Mosesi attend] Christina, Mosesi is a person of darkness. Every week he neglects *lotu*. I am "amazed" [disapproving]. Tamasa can see and will punish him, won't he?

Mosesi: Zila, you're bad. You *lotu* every day. You are straight like a gun. But like a gun you have no love. You are a stone. You *lotu* so you say you are a good person but I tell you Tamasa's love is in every place. I can *lotu* in the room, *lotu* in the garden. You are a person of *lotu* but you are a hard person.

Such scenes are commonplace, especially in households where men do not have a "career" in the Church. The key significance of women's greater attendance is that the UCWF far outstrips the Men's Fellowship as an influential force both in the community and in QMs. The presence of senior elected women in the QMs, then, is more consequential than their numbers imply, by virtue of the weight of the implicit support of other women with which they are invested. Their ability to direct policy and thus community affairs is well illustrated by the following two accounts, the second of which also reveals, again, the transcendence of old powers.

The first concerns the UCWF hall, which had been built sometime in the 1980s with the assistance of the New Zealand High Commission. Intended to facilitate women's income-raising activities, like a number of other development projects on Simbo it was more a reflection of attempts by local Big Men to be seen to be sponsoring major projects. There had never been any capital available to purchase the envisaged sewing machines and materials to seed the project. Further, the man who often attested his role in organizing the project was widely rumoured to have appropriated much of the building material to his own purposes. The building had quickly been taken over as a "temporary" schoolroom pending the building of a new schoolroom to fit the growing student population. It was occasionally used for UCWF feasts but otherwise UCWF activities were centred on the Church building.

The issue began to simmer when Maramar Zulian decided to sponsor an extension to the hall, an office which would parallel her husband's office. She asked me to make a request to the visiting NZ High Commissioner. The Commissioner's answer was straight—she could see no evidence that the building was used to facilitate women's activities and would therefore refuse an application. A year later the issue suddenly re-surfaced. To contextualize this, I must mention that there is an ongoing tension between Nusa Simbo and Narovo, the two most populous districts. Narovo has long been the point of contact with the outside world and, for many years, the church has been located there. Nusa Simbo is, however, regarded by many of its population as more strongly Christian (for reasons not considered here—just as Tapurai is, ambivalently, regarded as more *kastom*-ary) and a number of influential people from there have been keen to displace what they regard as undue Narovo dominance in church affairs. Thus, for example, they were triumphant when they induced the bishop to hold his local conference there in 1991, while Narovo people grumbled about the lack of appropriate facilities. The divisions were also readily visible in the approval and disapproval of different sides when Keana was ousted. The UCWF building later provided further grounds for contestation.

Lise, the UCWF Circuit President, was a very forceful person from Nusa Simbo, as was her husband, a long term pastor. As far as I am aware they first raised the question for discussion on Nusa Simbo, wandering around strategic cook houses at night to talk to their owners. I was living close to Zila, one of the Nusa Simbo branch UCWF office holders, when the subject arose again. After a discussion in which they complained of the situation but nothing seemed to be going on, I foolishly went off to write up my fieldnotes.

The next week at the QM, Zila, as a Nusa Simbo representative, argued that her branch members were dissatisfied that the hall was out of women's control. There was consternation. She had children at school. Why wasn't she concerned about them? She was, she retorted, but the men should get moving on their eternal promises to build a new schoolbuilding. The conversation flowed backward and forward before a pastor from another village pointed out that Nusa Simbo was only one district and thus hardly representative. This was what Lise was waiting for: she stood up, as Circuit President, and "straightened" him. The UCWF members *are* concerned, she countered, as their representative "We want [to] take back our building", she claimed. It was a brilliant strike. The UCWF representatives from other areas were stunned—unprepared, they could not claim to give their local view, and Lise purported to represent all districts. No decision was made about the building but the meeting was manoeuvred into calling for an official meeting between all concerned parties to consider the issue.

At that meeting, the minister, schoolmaster and a number of UCWF representatives and influential men argued that it should remain a schoolbuilding. Lise shrewdly countered that it was none of the men's concerns and there should be a special UCWF meeting. "Do men now run the UCWF?", she asked. As a result, there was a special meeting where lines of cleavage fell clearly between Narovo and Nusa Simbo. Nusa Simbo claimed most delegates from other districts, however, by pointing out that they needed it as a rest and changing area when they came for circuit UCWF meetings at Narovo. The school was, successfully, ordered to vacate.

The issue of the UCWF building was, clearly, not just a women's issue, although some of the taunts thrown at opponents of the resumption—that they were following the wishes of their husbands—did suggest as much. While it evoked the power of UCWF women to affect

community decisions, however, it is perhaps just as significant as an indicator of male-female co-operation in exploiting local divisions. The UCWF can, however, oppose women and men—as in the conjugal strife centred around participation by younger women (Dureau, 1993). It also, finally, provides frameworks in which women, collectively, can challenge male authority figures. While I have no knowledge of a direct UCWF stance against ministerial directives, members have opposed strategies agreed upon by the minister and *maramar* and introduced by the latter at the regular UCWF Circuit meetings. Far more significant, from the perspective of a work designed to trace the shift from pagan to Christian world, however, was an incident in which women wilfully and openly defied a *banara*: ~~the community expelling~~

CASA 50 For some time there had been pressure on the community to build a new house for the resident nurse. One district had already completed their allocated task, but none of the others had done so. The senior men of the first district were increasingly irate about it. Then the teachers returned to commence the new year but several of them decamped to Gizo, refusing to work until their houses were repaired. There was an urgent call and allocation of duties to all districts. The UCWF from the district in question was to come and help clean up on the next Wednesday. On the Tuesday their *banara* forbade them to go because none of the other districts had contributed to the clinic building. The pastor, caught between his feelings for the big man and for community obligation, said nothing. The local UCWF President, however, went to her members' households. According to her retrospective account, and that of her members, she challenged, not his community authority but his moral authority over the UCWF—"Who is he to challenge the work of *lotu*?" she asked. "We are doing the work of Tamasa [because they were organized in a church group]; he does the work of the earth. Does he tell the *banara* of heaven what to do?" The next day all but the *banara*'s wife went to work on the school building. She stayed away from UCWF meetings for several weeks, whether from support for her husband or because he forbade her, I don't know, and then quietly returned when his anger faded.

To this point, I have stressed the greater strength and autonomy of mature women in pursuing their own goals and participating in broader social activities. I have contrasted this to the constraints of both conjugal and maternal obligations in early marriage. Senior women, however, are still wives in an environment in which conflicting ideas about conjugal relations prevail. The differing perspectives of women and men are never actually resolved but the conflict becomes more muted with time. Ties of companionship may strengthen as a relationship becomes less sexually oriented (Kerns, 1983; Toren, n.d.). Certainly as older children begin to resume responsibility for caring for younger children, their welfare, less directly linked to the mother's presence, provides less justification for male outbursts. Women, further, are more adept at juggling their responsibilities, leaving less room for dissatisfaction.

Nevertheless the issues of conjugal authority still erupt from time to time. It is ironic, given that both women and men ostensibly conform to the ideals of Christian marriage, that conflict so often focuses on the ultimate women's Christian organization, the UCWF (Dureau, 1993), which consistently stresses domesticity in its "learning programme".³⁵ At this point

women's activities may continue to be constrained by the male reiteration of household authority. The account of Zila and Mosesi indicates the ways in which the mission's creation—Christian marriage—itself constrains the modern church. This stage marks a turning point, however. As women become elderly (*qoele*), they become increasingly significant and autonomous as we shall see in the next chapter. Their own children's marriages and the birth of grandchildren positions them anew at the head of a minimal lineage to which they continue to contribute. In the past this centrality of old women and men continued as they move toward ancestorhood. I argue that old age has acquired significantly new meanings in the Christian worldview, meanings reinforced by the constantly expanding cash economy.

3. He groups leisure and the things to be made and doing... men congregated in the... while... women, although distant... in some... with the...
4. My way of computation... of the... gardening and copra production... Men also devoted 7/16 of their... 73... 13...
5. In lying... of Bilua men.
6. Elsewhere, the... and shifts from farm... and shift.
7. It is intriguing and... control productive nation... provide large quantities of... control of important persons... this—see also... The... 'givers' control of... maintain those relationships... Highlands societies, a... in... and... in which the ability to marshal... domestic productive...
8. I am not sure... 'Tulu is certainly... would not thereby argue that...
9. ...one... ag... land
10. Even these... one of my neighbours... provide food and... congregation, and the... English, when a large... hundred fish would have...

NOTES

1: In Chapter Two I described ordinary people as *tinoni hoboro*, or "people without particular purpose". *Tinoni hoboro* is specifically applicable to those who are not *tinoni lavata* ("big people") or *banara*, that is, those who wield broad influence. They are not opposed to *tinoni iviva* ("important person/s") or related to *tinoni kike rena* ("rubbish person/s"). *Tinoni hoboro* may be *tinoni iviva* for *iviva* is a status ideally applied to all adults. Hocart (n.d.a) glosses *tinoni iviva* as "married man" and is somewhat surprised that hamlet heads (who are definitively heads of minimal lineages) are referred to only by that term. The issue resolves itself if we realize that it is only with marriage that adult social status is conferred, and that all married people of both sexes achieve that status. Thus *tinoni iviva* is more accurately translated as "person/s [of] significance", a title applicable to all married persons or to those who assume significant roles, including that of hamlet heads.

2: That is unless they are categorically excluded from *iviva* status. A severely disabled person, unable to engage in adequate productive activities and so excluded from marriage, exemplifies this. Such people are, although subject to humorous commentary, are more compassionately regarded. It is failure to act as *iviva*, either through incompetence or character flaws, that is despised.

3: He groups leisure and food together because, in comparing men's and women's work activities he found that men congregated in the cooking houses to talk and relax while women were preparing the evening meal—women, although distracted by work, were able to join in some of the conversations.

4: By way of comparison he says men spent 20.6% of their time on agriculture, almost equally divided between gardening and copra production whereas women's agricultural time was overwhelmingly dedicated to gardening. Men also devoted 7.6% of their time to employment and 38.7% to "leisure and food".

5: In tying husbands to his own view of domesticity, McKinnon simultaneously creates a rather offensive image of Bilua men.

6: Elsewhere, the same problem attends the association between transformations from hoe to plough cultivation and shifts from female to male labour.

7: It is intriguing that an *imported* food should be so central to feasting, given the degree to which the capacity to control productive relations is essential to classical Highlands societies. I would speculate that the ability to provide large quantities of imported produce was also indicative of the resources and relationships under the control of important persons. Taro was never cultivable on Simbo. (There is a pre-Christian myth accounting for this—see also Hocart, n.d.k.) The ability to give it away in quantities was therefore necessarily indicative of the givers' control of exchange relationships abroad as well as of their ability to accumulate the wealth necessary to maintain those relationships—through local leadership, productive and exchange relationships—at home. Unlike Highlands societies, a leader in an outward oriented society, such as Simbo, was necessarily competent at manipulating both domestic and foreign relationships. As Highlands societies have engaged more in wage-labour and cash cropping, analogous developments have occurred. A. Strathern (1979) for instance, points to the ways in which the ability to marshal cash to buy commercially bred pigs has resulted in shifting enablement in domestic productive and exchange relations.

8: I am not sure what was meant by the claims of comparative Simbo slovenliness. Today the SDA village, Tuku is certainly (to European eyes) neater than UC villages because of the greater formality of its layout. I would not thereby argue that it is cleaner.

9: Thus, on one occasion a vehement dispute arose when a man planted his coconuts on a diagonal from an agreed boundary point on a main path, thus "accidentally" incorporating a narrow wedge of his neighbour's land.

10: Even these deteriorating conditions do not undermine faith in the greater power of Tamasa. When Paola, one of my neighbours, was wandering down by the wharf one Saturday evening, he was worried. He had to provide food and hospitality for the preacher the next day, a task rotated between all households in a congregation, and the seas had been too rough to allow fishing. He had just thought, "The Lord will provide" (in English), when a large fish leapt out of the sea and landed at his feet. As people noted at that point, previously a hundred fish would have jumped out but there simply are not enough in the sea anymore.

11: *Kiso* is a word I have much trouble translating adequately. It is, in Pidgin, *lez* ("lazy", "tired") and suggests a variety of feelings—"reluctant", "opposed", "irate", "disinclined", "disappointed", "indifferent", "resentful", "lazy". There is, however, often a vehemence, resignation, self-righteousness or pathos to the phrase *Kiso qua!* (I am *kiso*) that renders these glosses inadequate. Hocart (n.d.d.: 2-3) glosses it "depressed" or "melancholy". Today, however, *pavu*, which Hocart translates as "fatigued", is more indicative of depression.

12: I am more perplexed about the parallel development of convictions about the dangers of modern contraceptives. Their very parallelism suggests some kind of causal linkage, given that they arose from the same set of historical issues and circumstances. This is not to discount the very real problem of the dangers and complication of contemporary medical technologies. Quite apart from debates about their political and health dimensions, probability dictates that there must have been side-effects, and harmful experiences to western Solomons women. There must, inevitably, have been episodes of post-operative peritonitis or septicaemia, hypertension following use of oral contraceptives and uterine infections or perforations from IUCDs. The bad experiences recounted by women who have used depo provera injections have a graphically empirical quality and could not have been prompted by reading warnings about side-effects, since these were never supplied.

13: A desire probably reinforced by the knowledge of very low fertility rates in pre-Christian times.

14: There is actually considerable low key disquiet about the number of unmarried young men who "wander aimlessly" (*soana hoboro*) or "layabout" (Pidgin: *liu*). Those young people who remain abroad often marry elsewhere or develop careers in urban centres. Some of the unmarried men are more entrepreneurial than others. They may, for instance, accumulate enough money to buy a canoe and engine for ferrying passengers and freight to and from the markets in Gizo.

15: Simbo is the only island in the West with large numbers of megapodes.

16: I knew only one man who did so: he and his family were living in Honiara, where his wife had little access to garden land and was dependent on him to drive her there. He ostentatiously doled out money to her whenever she went to the markets. He also consistently refused to give her money for her widowed father.

17: Men love their children and would not willingly see them deprived. Even after a marital separation, they may send money "for the children". Doresi's husband had sent her back to Simbo when he suspected her of adultery. Two years later, her sister did "not know" whether Doresi's marriage was over because her husband still sent her money regularly "for the children". When Malo's and Sali's estranged husbands, each working in Honiara, sought reconciliations, they also began sending money "because he misses his children". Both women ultimately accepted reconciliations because it re-established joint responsibility for their children, whose welfare they were anxious about.

18: This is a vital point of differentiation from Santa Isabel, where White (1979; 1991) depicts the processes by which chiefly power was recontextualized within the Anglican Melanesian Mission. The difference stems from the way in which Santa Isabel chiefs were instrumental in facilitating mission objectives—in contrast to the establishment of Simbo Christianity on the backs of defeated *banara*.

19: I presume that in pre-Christian times this was one way that a women could become a *banara maqota*. Zila and her husband always planted bigger gardens than needed—on an island of land shortages—and she melodramatically complained about her crops going "rotten" (*ñabo*) because they could not consume them. When her husband balked at the work entailed, she would manipulate him, in front of the constant visitors to their cookhouse, into situations where he appeared to be refusing to contribute to the gardening.

20: If someone visits a cookhouse, basic courtesy dictates that they be offered something to eat or drink if people are already eating there. The expectation is waived if they are not visiting socially or are not kin—then the host (the wife if she is present) has discretion.

21: My accounts about violence are slanted towards women. My horror at violence in general and conjugal violence in particular was well known. From my first stunned reaction at finding that one of my friends had been beaten by her kind and charming husband (I do not use the words ironically), the word spread: "Christina is astounded [disapproving] at the violent behaviour of Black Men". I think it quite impossible for a feminist ethnographer to treat violence against women impartially and I do not pretend to do so here. I am convinced that

I acted as a kind of magnet for women with grievances against their husbands, especially after I underwent a marital separation in the field. Two points modify the obvious ethnocentrism of my work in this field. Firstly, I remain aware of the fact that violence is received differently by Simbo women—different visions of the relationship between person, corporeality and rights ensure that (see McDowell, 1990: 171-172). An assault on a woman, even a particularly violent assault, is not an existential assault as it might be in Australia. They also hold, *contra* myself, that particular circumstances merit physical assault. I continue to ponder the nature and implications of violence in Simbo society—from the sacrificing of captive “offspring” in headhunting days, to young men’s outbursts in soccer matches, to *luluna* violence in all its forms.

Secondly, Simbo men and women were expressing disapproval of domestic violence long before my feelings on the subject were known. Women, never cowed, consider it both illegitimate and of passing moment unless it is chronic and frequent—that elicits outrage. I assume that their disapproval stems simultaneously from continuing indigenous ideas about equitable marriage, from church and government adjudications and from their own feelings or knowledge that given instances are “unjustified”.

22: *Tatamana*: H, W and offspring, as opposed to *tamatina*, M and offspring and *tamaniana*, husband and wife.

23: Or it may not be generally known. As far as I was able to tell, church policies on divorce could hardly have been said to have been advertised. Ministers, consulted about marital problems, always directed their efforts towards reconciliation (see below).

24: It is also relatively common for individuals to belong to both disputing *bubutu*, especially if the dispute involves large *bubutu* segments.

25: *Bubutu* interests are also beyond all other ties. Paola was the best friend of Lidia and Robi, to whom he had no kin relationship. He spent part of every evening in their house—not the cookhouse where most visitors go—drinking tea and conversing with them. On bad terms with another senior kinsman, he often griped about him. The two families were true *baere* (“friends”). Thus, I was amazed to find that, when a land dispute had broken out between Paola’s and Lidia’s *bubutu*, Paola had joined in the party which had attacked Lidia’s and her siblings’ gardens and coconut groves, felling trees and uprooting crops. Lidia was upset but understanding: “I have bad news, rotten news. While you were in Australia all [named group] came up here and [described attack]. Paola participated. Now we never see him. We are only friends but when a ‘thing of the earth’ arose, he joined his *bubutu*. It is hard to abandon your *bubutu*.” Disbelieving, I sought out Paola who was also my friend: “Paola, I do not believe what I heard. You abandoned your friends, Lidia and Robi. Why?” Paola: “Yes [laughs]. I joined with my *bubutu*, of course. What’s your problem, Christina? Don’t you understand? This is the *bubutu*!”

26: On one occasion, when they left the village for a few days, their neighbours removed the floorboards from their house to discourage them from returning. Rivers (1924: 168) relates another case in which the community punished infractions of marriage rules by ostracism. A man who had wrongly taken a second wife was spurned until he gave her up.

27: This rather begs the question of their empowerment. They are elected by members (usually male) of the congregation at Quarterly Meetings on the basis of their prior status. I do not consider these issues here.

28: All modern *banara* are men.

29: A recent *banara* was, according to some reports, appointed by the Council of Chiefs, sponsored by the government.

30: Other senior women defied Ketu in paying compensation to Lena’s *luluna*, but she remained unreconciled with her family despite numerous *varivatozomo* conferences.

31: This was an indication of the seriousness of Neta’s act. When she first fled her husband with another man, her “adultery” was widely condemned. When it became known that she was with her *luluna*, however, the outrage was sustained. I was repeatedly told she had *not* committed adultery (*babarata*) but incest (*kakabe*) which is “much worse than adultery”. The distinction is reflected in the payment of compensation. He received \$10 “compensation for adultery” (*ira barbarata*) from her. However, before she could return to his village, he had to pay \$30 to the local *bubutu* heads to resolve her incest.

32: The *banara maqota* were also long gone.

33: This should be seen as a gift, rather than payment. As Hocart (n.d.a) makes clear, *banara* often expended far more than they received in resolving conflicts. Other than having clear monetary functions (N. Thomas, 1991), such valuables also initiated or validated social actions. The *luluna* acceptance of "compensation", today often as little as two cents, reflects similar values.

34: The minister was also enjoying a kind of "honeymoon" after his recent arrival to replace the ousted Keana.

35: The programme is divided into four—"devotional activities", "learning", "service" and "recreation" (Kalo, 1979). At least on Simbo, the "learning activity" which is one week in four, stresses skills related to domestic work—sewing, cooking, nutrition, home decoration and so on.

Plate VI

Mami Qobelo, 1942, showing the traditional
 house of Mami Qobelo, and the
 traditional Mami Qobelo house.

CHAPTER TEN

QOELE, POMATE

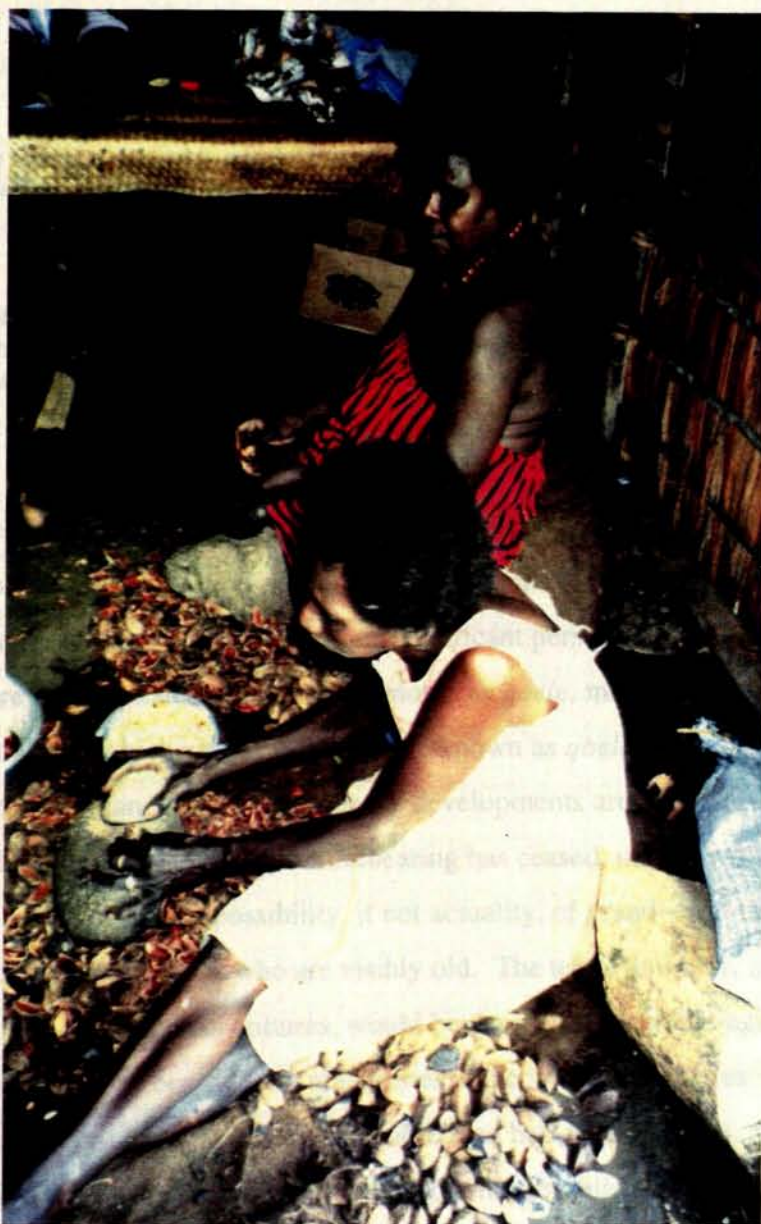


Plate VII: Manu Qoele, shelling canarium almonds, helped by Mita, her DHN. (Both women were visiting Manu's daughter's cookhouse.)

CHAPTER TEN

QOELE, TOMATE

OLD WOMAN, ANCESTRAL SPIRIT

The historical context in which Christianity encountered the Melanesians was rather unfortunate because it was heavily biased against the Melanesians.

Mantovani, 1990: 24

"[M]ate-ness [mate: "dead"] is itself a state rather than event, which may last for long times, in some cases perhaps for years. No progress is likely to be made till we have recognised that ... death in primitive thought is not an event, but a durable state or condition.

Rivers, 1912: 405

expressing to this people a new use of an expression, "mate-ness" follows only used in the religious formulae of the cult of the dead

"Old age" is the only stage of life in which neither sex is known by a generic term. Before marriage, one is a *koburu rereko* or a *koburu marane* (female or male child), later people are *marane* or *rereko iviva* (male or female significant person/s). In old age, however, male and female are differentiated. Women are known as *qoele*, men as *barogoso*. There is no particular event which causes women to be known as *qoele*. Nor is a woman called *qoele* by everybody simultaneously. A number of developments are associated with becoming a *qoele*: greying hair, an expectation that childbearing has ceased, maturity of at least one's older children and the obvious possibility, if not actuality, of grand-parenthood. Some people are categorically *qoele*—those who are visibly old. The term, however, transcends "old age". Women who, in European cultures, would be described as middle-aged are also called *qoele*. The attribution may begin in the mid-forties and continue for the rest of one's life. For those who live to very old age, it may cover more than half their lifespan.

- It is a term of description, address and, once established, part of one's proper name. Thus, Lodu, the centenarian whose death concludes this chapter, was properly known as Suzana Lodu Qoele or Lodu Qoele. The term is not concerned with evoking the passage of the lifespan so much as with acknowledging status. A *qoele* has met the ideals of a mature female adult life. She has borne and raised children as a married woman and engaged in those exchange and nurturant relationships described in the last chapter. This is not to say that she no longer does those things. Indeed, there is so much overlap between the activities of

younger *qoele* and older *rereko iviva* that I devote most of this chapter to analysis of those who are older *qoele*. While *qoele* may still engage in exchange and childrearing—and fosterage extends the latter far beyond a woman's physiological reproductive span (see also Counts, 1984 55)—she has already amply demonstrated her capacities for doing so.

I would tentatively suggest that in pre-Christian times, a *qoele* was a person who was highly regarded as a kind of pre-ancestor,¹ that is, one who definitively engaged in the reciprocal sustenance, tempered by the greater authority and potency of the elders, expected of everyone but archetypally definitive of ancestors (Mantovani, 1990). This is in keeping with the observation that in societies practising ancestor veneration, ancestors remained active social participants because death constitutes a transition rather than a break between modes of existence (Keesing, 1992a; Kerns, 1983; Macintyre, 1990; Mantovani, 1990). Indeed, Rivers (1912: 397-398) notes that a very old man was

not only regarded as *mate* [dead], though really one of the most live people on the island, but in speaking to him people made use of an expression, "*manatu*" [efficacious], which otherwise is only used in the religious formulae of the cult of the dead.

It was older people who possessed the arcane knowledge and skills associated with ancestral shrines, magic and healing lore (Hocart, n.d.e). They were also the socially powerful actors, possessing more wealth, upon which *banara* status was founded, than most younger people. Warfare, clearly the pursuit of young, fit men, was nonetheless, a source of prestige for older men, both through the sponsoring of expeditions and through the prestige previously acquired as warriors. Warriors with the proper character and skills could evolve into supernaturally efficacious persons, peacemakers or feastgivers, which are key regional attributes of leaders (White, 1978). Pacification thus eliminated one route to venerable eminence, namely warfare. Moreover, Christian practice and belief had a more far-reaching effect for it eliminated ancestors as the key to social efficacy. In so doing, it reduced any efficacy attributed to those soon-to-be ancestors (compare Macintyre, 1990). I am suggesting, in other words, that it diminished the significance, not only of male and female *banara*, but of the seniority progressively attributed to *tinoni iviva* as they aged. In a telling contrast to *qoele* and *barogoso* today, who should not seek ornamentation (see below), photographs from the turn of the century show older people ornately decorated with the armrings, earrings and other valuables which constituted indigenous wealth and money. It was probably at this stage of life that one's future character as an ancestor was established. A strong *qoele* or *barogoso* would become a potent ancestor: the most powerful social actors received the most elaborate mortuary rites as a means of placating their more potent *tomate*.

Sinuveri Qoele beto Barogoso—Lifestyles of the Aged

Women's concerns with kin and descendants have always been lifelong, but the means of addressing those concerns shift. In old age, in the past, for example, women were increasingly involved in placating the ancestors (Mantovani, 1990; see also Kerns, 1983). Unless severe debility or senility intervenes, old women remain central to the functioning of kinship networks throughout life, but their roles as ancestors have disappeared.

I met only two people who were so severely incapable of coherent communication that they could not properly engage in social life. One was aphasic following a stroke some years ago; the other was senile. A few people were rather vague, but not so severely that they were dependent on others or unable to engage in some social reciprocity. Such people are not regarded as insane or childlike. They are *rura* ("lost"). The discussion of *teku siboro* in which the "soul" (*malaunu*) is detached from the body (Chapter Two) suggests that this is because the soul is gradually distanced from the body and cannot be recovered.³ Kali, for example, lost the thread of conversations, misunderstood people's intentions or forgot minor events, but she remained capable of caring for herself and her daughters' or sons' small children or grandchildren. She was also regarded as a valuable fount of knowledge about genealogies and land ownership.

There are more people who are physically disabled with age but once again most are capable of caring for themselves until shortly before death. Lodu Qoele needed assistance with hygiene only briefly before she died. Neli Qoele, aged well in her eighties, frail and bent double with scoliosis, continued going to her garden for light weeding until weakness finally halted her in 1991. Dao Qoele (? about 75) continued gardening and caring for children until her death in 1990. Nola, somewhat younger (?65) but troubled with severe arthritis, still plants and harvests her own gardens, carries the produce home and sews and cooks for herself and co-resident grandchildren. Naro Qoele no longer works in the gardens, but weaves mats and cares for young children. Silvia Qoele sweeps and weeds her household's compound, oversees the distribution of food and collects fees for her healing knowledge.

Those who are completely incapable of self-care or reciprocal assistance are usually cared for by their daughters or adopted daughters (often their own DD or SD). Such people are *tinoni toiridi* ("decrepit persons"). Counts and Counts (1985a; 1985b) use precisely this term to describe people who are physically or mentally incompetent due to age. However, its terminological equivalence to Simbo masks divergent practices. The distinction, between able and disabled old is a widespread social distinction (Amoss & Harrell, 1981; J.C. Barker, 1990:

295; Counts & Counts, 1985a; Keith, 1980). This distinction, along with the maintenance of control over vital resources, is said to be crucial in determining the ways in which the elderly are treated (Keith, 1980: 42; Nason, 1981). According to this theory, the elderly can only expect to be treated well if they continue to hold resources which make them independent or able to influence other kin, and if they continue to behave in an appropriate manner. Thus Counts and Counts (1985a) relate the story of an old, blind Kaliai woman who ultimately died as the consequences of neglect by her closest kin. Dependent, and thus marginalized, she was regarded simply as a burden. Nason makes similar claims.

I do not deny the significance of control over resources in ensuring a more materially satisfying old age. On Simbo one of the ways in which land is transmitted is from disabled elderly persons to those who cared for them during their decline. Zila, for example, controls her land because her, and her mother's, adoptive father gave it to her when she cooked and kept house for him before he died. Nor do I mean to suggest some kind of idyllic pan-Pacific experience of old age. Clearly this stage of life is as variable as any other. I do, however, question the emphasis on resource control as a necessary concomitant of quality of old age everywhere. On Simbo, resource control is not the key factor. Rather, the notion of reciprocity for the care of offspring during their youth and "love" for elderly kin is centrally important in their treatment. The elderly are sustained whatever their access to resources. Before citing instances of this it is instructive to consider Simbo constructions of European treatment of the elderly. Tinoni Simbo have strong notions about European behaviour, norms and morality (Dureau, 1993) and I was frequently asked to verify or deny reports they had heard about the care of the dependent elderly. Thus,

Zeremiah: Christina, I heard that you Europeans abandon all your old men and old women in special buildings. They say you close them in (*va loki*, lit. "make lock") with strangers and don't care for them? [Is that] true? They lie perhaps.

Dureau: Yes and no. There are special buildings for old women and old men because sometimes there's no-one to care for them when they become weak.

Zeremiah: Really? That's true? I'm amazed [disapproving].

Hilida: But how/why? Where are all their offspring? Don't they love their parents?

Dureau: They love them, but sometimes they can't care for them. It's very difficult—their offspring are busy with work or they live far away or their spouse doesn't like the old man or woman.

Zebedi: I'm amazed. Why busy? Busy so they can't care for their mothers and fathers? No—that's not "fitting" (*tozomo*—"straight"). You Europeans, you have no "love" for your mothers and fathers. That's truly dreadful.

Dureau: Dreadful, but they can't help it. Many people are very concerned about the lifestyles of old people but they can't help it.

Hilida: Europeans aren't people of compassion and mutual help. We already know that, but I'm amazed you don't care for your mothers and fathers. The old women and men, they cared

burdens for you, carried you and fed you when you were young. How can you forget the love and help they gave you? I tell you Christina, we black people, we're poor, we're dirty and we're shamed/respectful in regard to you Europeans. That's true—but some of your behaviours are truly dreadful. That's true, too.

a Di The same themes of love and reciprocity as necessary bases for relationships with the elderly were replayed again and again. I would suggest they are not unique to Simbo—certainly they echo McDowell's (1988b; Courts, 1984: 55) analysis of the value of having children in rural PNG. Reputation for "goodness" also seems to affect the treatment of the old and the dead. This, like the potency of the old and successful in the past, is a kind of accretion. One who was demonstrably "good"—because generous and helpful—as a younger person can only lose that reputation through blatantly contradictory behaviour in old age. And a "good" *qoele* or *barogoso* is well cared for. As one young man explained when he was accused of giving away too much wealth in a rather flashy manner:

Why accumulate all of this when I'm young and be alone when I'm old? I want people to fight to carry my coffin. It's like that.

Ideals are, furthermore, reflected in the actual care of the elderly. Thus, when Nao's father became severely senile, she (the youngest daughter) undertook his care. Her husband was living and working on Gizo. She remained on Simbo for the duration of her father's dotage, keeping him clean, changing his clothes, feeding him and cleaning up behind him when he frequently defaecated on the path instead of down on the shore. If he had resources to dispose of, he was quite incapable of doing so. Mata's mother certainly has no such resources. A woman from Choiseul, she lives in Mata's (her oldest daughter) house where, housebound and non-ambulatory, she is heavily dependent. Mata and her daughter Esta speak of her with something approaching awe:

You know, Christina, This *qoele* has seen five generations. Five generations! She's like Lodu to her MM? Qoele: she's a strong person. Not many people see so many generations, do they Qoele [Esta, to her MM]?

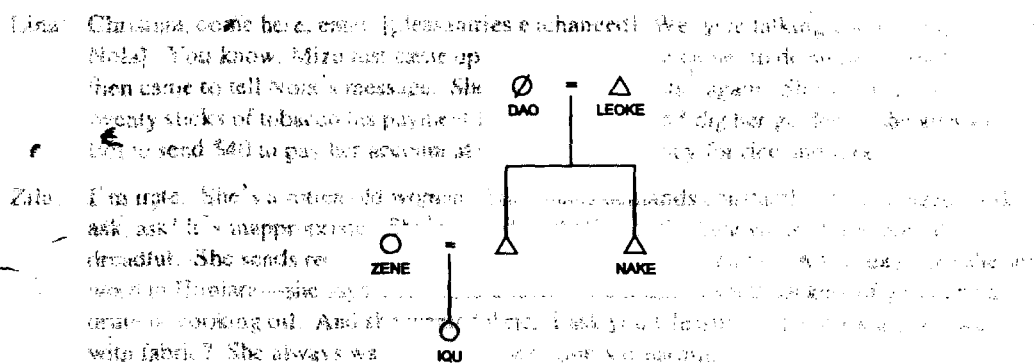
Iqu, my research assistant, also determined to remain at the other end of the island and travel to meet me regularly because she slept in her FF house at night and helped care for him.

None of these cases were extraordinary—indeed they elicited no commentary. It is, simply, the "way" (*hahanana*) that elderly people live in closer proximity to at least one of their children as they age. I also have assertions from four young women—all youngest daughters—that they will only live uxorilocally or will remain unmarried in order to care for their aging parents. One of them has since married, but insists on remaining in her fragile mother's village despite her husband's constant efforts to force her to live virilocally. The thought that they may become obsolete—"defunct" (in Counts and Counts' idiom)—or

burdensome is simply reprehensible. One cares for one's parents because they are one's parents. Once again the equivalence of parents and grandparents emerges—it may as well be a DD or SD as a uterine daughter who cares for the old person.

Hahanana Qoele—Characteristics of Qoele

Such care should derive from the spontaneous love of an older person's offspring. Old people should not have to ask—neither should they do so. The worst thing that can be said of an old person is that they are greedy or selfish (see also Nason, 1981: 166). Thus Dao Qoele, Iqu's FM, exacted a promise from Nake, her second son, that he not marry but remain to care for herself and Leoke.



He kept his promise but Dao was widely criticized, even after her death, for being "hard" and there is considerable sympathy for Nake, now aged about fifty and, without independent home and family, a rather sad and marginal figure. Likewise his BW, Zene, is critically regarded for her repeated sabotage of Iqu's potential marriages—to date she has prevented three marriages and it is widely held that two of those occasions were motivated by a selfish desire to keep Iqu to help her with her household and gardens and the care of Leoke.

It is not only in relationships that the old should not be greedy: they are expected to be beyond the point of being possessive or greedy about material things. This has different permutations to the unselfishness of the elderly in pre-Christian times. Then, it referred to generosity in giving material things to others; *qoele* and *barogoso*, as ideal near ancestors, should not reserve their wealth to themselves. Today, they are people without sources of wealth and wealth-generated prestige. Wage labour is the province of young people. *Qoele* may continue to manufacture mats or to market eggs, etc. to contribute to their own households for so long as they remain independent. With increasing age, however, they become less able to expend the extra energy or time on such productive work. By the time

they begin to live with or near their offspring, they spend more time contributing to that household by caring for children, cooking, weeding and other chores. The patron-client relationships that kept old people powerful until very old age have long gone. Today, unselfishness does not refer to redistribution of accumulated wealth: it refers to not being demanding of those who do hold greatest wealth—the *tinoni iviva* of the previous chapter who are fit enough to make copra or go abroad in search of work or to cultivate sufficient produce for marketing surpluses.

The following is part of a conversation between Zila and Lina Qoele concerning Zila's HM, Nola (see Fig 5.2). They were sitting in Zila's cookhouse while Lina cracked and shelled canarium almonds.

Lina: Christina, come here, enter. [pleasantries exchanged] We were talking about the Qoele [i.e., Nola]. You know, Mizu just came up [on a canoe]. He came [to do some business] . . . then came to tell Nola's message. She's making requests again. She wants Mosesi to send twenty sticks of tobacco [as payment for men to clear and dig her garden]. She also wants Edi to send \$40 to pay her account at the store, and money for rice and food.

Zila: I'm irate. She's a rotten old woman. She makes demands constantly. I'm amazed. Ask, ask, ask! It's inappropriate. She's a *qoele*—that's not the behaviour of a *qoele*. It is dreadful. She sends requests here and to [her S and D in Honiara]. A few days ago she sent word to Honiara—she says she wants a sack of flour and several packets of yeast and a drum of cooking oil. And she wants fabric. I ask you Christina, what does a *qoele* want with fabric? She always wants new clothes. She's dreadful.

Dureau: Wait a little. What's the difficulty? She lives alone [i.e., in her own house] and she's an old woman. She can't dig her own gardens. It's Simbo practice to help the old.

Zila: Help her, yes. Her daughters help her with the gardens. Edi pays her account at the store and Rupi gives her store things when she has money from Emoni. But she can't be quiet. What can a *qoele* do with these things and why does she never wait? We cannot give to her because she's a rotten *qoele*—she wants to keep the young men happy . . . [Extended list of Nola's sins]. Isn't that right, Mama?

Lina: Yes. She can't be quiet. She doesn't follow the appropriate behaviour of a *qoele*.

Dureau: What about you [Lina] Qoele? Don't you want/like your offspring to give you some things? Some rice, money or clothes or things like that?

Lina: Yes, I do. If my offspring think of/remember me, I am happy. If they give me some fabric or betelnut or money that's good. I'm happy because they love their mother, I think. But I cannot ask them. They must do so independently.

Zila: You look, Christina. This *qoele* [Lina] doesn't constantly seek everything. She doesn't solicit new fabric. She doesn't take constantly, she's a *qoele* who shares, this one. So everyone loves her and says what a good *qoele* she is. All her daughters' husband are happy with her ways. The same with my father [i.e., the sons-in-law liked him].

Lina and Zila were elucidating ideal *qoele* traits in the context of tensions between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, a relationship which is inherently fraught. It cannot, then, stand as representative of behavioural norms. However, relationships between Ego's parents and spouses are often clearly harmonious. Thus women often, although not invariably, spontaneously declaim the virtues of their HM or SW⁷ and such pairs are frequently to be seen

sitting companionably or spontaneously helping each other. Those ideals expressed by Zila and Lina do conform to the statements made by women and men about both their own parents and their own offspring. One day I asked Pilipi Barogoso about his adult children's contributions to him and his wife.

Pilipi: Sometimes, not often, they send some money or a [25kg] sack of rice. Mostly the *qoele* and in general, I maintain ourselves. comes largely from within the family, especially from a

Dureau: Why? You have two idle sons sitting around the village. Don't they help you in the garden? Why don't they go to work and earn some money?

Pilipi: I don't know. It would be good if they did but I cannot tell them to do so. It's appropriate that they help us but they don't.

Dureau: What about your offspring in Honiara: do they send you money or rice?

Pilipi: Sometimes. Not often.

Dureau: Why don't you ask them? (ine). Mei, a sixteen year-old girl who felt entitled to

Pilipi: I can't ask my offspring. They should remember/think of me. That's good. But they don't remember/think of me so we remain alone, me and the *qoele*. to give up sleeping together.

Likewise, in a conversation I overheard, Muke reported that he thought daughters were better than sons, because, it is the ultimate violation of the sacred and responsible expected

If I request something of one of my sons he will try to do it but I am shamed to make requests.

However my daughters remember/think of me independently. Independently they send me and

Qoele some rice or money or things. That's the true love of an offspring.

Finally, it is notable that community attitudes to particular elderly women are often consonant with their affines' evaluations of them. Thus Nola was regarded, by most people other than her own sons and daughters, as undignified, at best, whereas Lina was invariably referred to with the epithet *na qoele zonana* ("a good old woman") by anyone who mentioned her, irrespective of relationship.

Qoele are expected to curb all of their appetites, not merely those related to material goods. To European eyes, their ideal behaviour is suggestive of expectations of increased dignity with age. It is, for example, unthinkable for an ideal *qoele* to cadge betelnut from others or wander into another cookhouse and embarrass others into giving her food. Hence, too, community and affinal reactions to Lina's constant importuning. On the other hand, a *qoele*'s offspring, especially natal or fostered offspring, should remember her and her husband generously without prompting. Even so, *qoele* redistribute much of what they receive to other kin, a continuation of the strategic generosity of *rereko iviva* but also, increasingly with age, an expression of the benevolence attributed to good old men and women and previously to ancestors. *Qoele* ought also to curb their sexuality and reproductivity. Although, given the youthfulness at which some women first give birth, there is some overlap, women ought not to continue having children after they become grandparents. This ideal is observed almost as

much in the breach as in the norm, but most people agree with it in principle, including women who violate it. Thus, Lidia declaimed her embarrassment when she became pregnant again at age 41: *ristian and pre-Christian norms. In pre-Christian practice, adultery was*

PO It's dreadful. I'm so angry at Robi [her husband]. I'm almost white haired. Helena [her eldest daughter] is close to the age for marriage. I'm ashamed.

In general, however, disapproval comes largely from within the family, especially from a couple's own children. Thus, Lidia apologized copiously to Rodi, her eldest son who was primarily responsible for the care of her previous youngest because his sister was absent at boarding school. She had promised him that there would be no new infants for him to care for. Likewise, Zila's anger was clearly one factor in Lina's acceptance of tubal ligation following the birth of twins (Chapter Nine). Mei, a sixteen year-old girl, also felt entitled to castigate her mother when she became pregnant with her eighth child. In other families, like Aneta and Zoni's, a couple's offspring may pressure their parents to give up sleeping together.

Birth for married *goele* is inappropriate at most. Extra-marital sexuality, by contrast is regarded with derision. It is the ultimate violation of the restraint and respectability expected of *goele*. In the extract of Zila and Lina's discussion about Nola, they argued that her constant seeking after cloth and tobacco reflected her active illegitimate sexual life. Nola did have a wide reputation for promiscuity. Divorced from her husband after she was discovered *in flagrant delicto* with one of his brothers, she had a long list of reputed liaisons with married and unmarried men. Stories abounded, linking her worsening arthritis to her sexual incontinence. When she begged the visiting bishop to cure her, he was said to have immediately divined her "character" and roundly chastised her, saying that Tamasa was not ready to help one such as herself, a clear development of the idea that ancestors afflicted those who violated community norms. Despite the intrusion of Tamasa into assessments of Nola's behaviour, however, she was not regarded as having committed any sins since her divorce. She "sought men" (*naqo marane*) rather than "committed adultery" (*babarata*). Despite decades of local church teachings to the contrary, one must be married in order to commit adultery. Nola was thus regarded with disapproval because of her intemperance and indignity rather than because of any wrongdoing. She participated widely in *lotu* affairs, including the UCWF, was welcomed into village cookhouses and onto verandahs and had ample female and male visitors to her own household.

This was in marked contrast to attitudes to Viki. She also had a long history of affairs with married and unmarried men. The salient difference was that Viki was married and was thus a blatant adulterer. Community disapproval was widespread and almost explicit. I twice

sat in UCWF meetings which she was goaded into leaving, through other women's refusal to listen when she spoke or their making derogatory remarks about her words or behaviour. Viki violated both Christian and pre-Christian norms. In pre-Christian practice, adultery was potentially redeemable through exposure and reparation (involving at least implicit confession). In Christian practice, too, confession can theoretically entail forgiveness which should, like pagan forgetfulness, redeem the adulterer. In both views, adultery is an event—and thus containable—unless it becomes habitual, as it was for Viki. Not only did everyone—including her husband and sons—hold that she had “some hundreds” of encounters, but she had rarely admitted to her transgressions or made reparations. Indeed, when one vengeful woman pushed her face into the dirt, which is the usual course of action, Viki had her summonsed to the magistrate's court and was awarded compensation.

Qoele beto Barogoso—Elderly Women and Elderly Men

So negatively regarded was Viki, that I never heard her called “*qoele*”, either directly or in reference to her. The word, like its male equivalent *barogoso* is a kind of honorific. Like *iviva* (Chapter Eight) the titles are ideally assumed by all women and men but are subject to conformity as much as temporal progress. *Barogoso* are ideally pacific in temperament: a recurrent image of a “good” *barogoso* is of a man reclining in the shade, making mild jokes, sharing his knowledge or advice with those who seek it and carrying the children of his co-resident daughters or Sws (Hocart, n.d.p: 2). He takes little responsibility and causes little friction. He may be valued for his accounts of his past life outside Simbo if these are entertaining and, like *qoele*, for his genealogical or land tenure knowledge and treatments for particular illnesses. If he was previously a “good man” (*marane zonana*) then he is cared for affectionately and respected for his past. *Barogoso*, however, are relatively marginal compared to *qoele*. While both sexes cease or markedly reduce their productive activities with age, *qoele* continue to make significant household contributions into old age. As a comparison, consider Rekisi and Kali, *barogoso* and *qoele* respectively, left to mind their daughters' children while the younger women worked in the gardens:

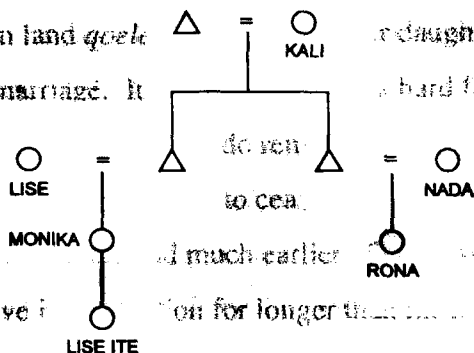
Rekisi walked up and down around his co-resident daughter, Agi's cookhouse, a child in a sling on his hip. The child intermittently slept and cried. The oldest child whinged and whined for sweet potato. Gradually it began crying and ended up in the corner by the cookhouse screaming and kicking. The youngest woke and joined him. Rekisi murmured comfortingly to them both, “Quiet/still . . .” to no avail.

Rekisi: They're hungry, the two of them.

Dureau: Why don't you give them food?

Rekisi: Agi didn't cook before she left . . . She'll be back shortly and she will cook for them.

because the food comes from land *goele* had access to through their marriage. It mother anything. It is, further household until frailty also insubstantial figures around was that women remain active



a daughters to use or land that they a hard for a woman to refuse her mother's request to someone's mother's belief rather subsidiary neglected to pursue Given the nature of their

res:

Monika and Nada had gone to the gardens together leaving their young daughters with Lise and Kali respectively. They were away for a considerable time and the two children became restive. Rona, at her FZ cookhouse with Kali, began crying for potato.

Kali: Don't cry or Christina will come and give you an injection.

Rona: Potato! Potato! Mama Qoele give me potato. I'm hungry.

Kali: You're hungry? You want potato? Wait a little first and I'll cook for you.

She busied herself stoking the fire and preparing a pot of sweet potato. Astrid, also aged four, joined in.

Astrid: Potato, Mama—potato!

Dureau: You be quiet and wait, or you'll get nothing at all. Don't you speak to people like that!

Kali: Quietly, Christina, quietly. Two hungry girls . . . Wait a little first and I'll cook for you, alright? That's the thing for hungry children. Christina, don't you be angry to no purpose. This is the work of the *goele*. You go up and tell Lisa I'm boiling potato for the children. Tell her I'll send some for Lise Ite. Asi you stay and wait for potato, alright?

I wandered up to Lise's house to find her walking up and down with a crying Lise Ite. We exchanged pleasantries.

Lise: I was going to cook some potato for Lise Ite but I have no potato. [It was to her garden that Monika had gone].

We sat down on her verandah to talk and the baby started crying again. Lise waved her nipple at her: "Here, breast, breast" and placed it in her mouth so she could dry suckle until the potato was ready.

Dureau: Careful, *goele*, or you'll have breastmilk again.

Lise: Don't you make fun. Wait till you're a grandmother. This is painful you know. Many *goele* refuse to do it, but her mother's gone to the garden for too long and I can't prevent her. She cries piteously.

Barogoso do sometimes reserve or solicit some food for young children whom they are minding, but they do not actively prepare food. This may in part arise from men's general lack of responsibility for food preparation, although everyone knows how to build up a fire and cook. It is at least equally because the food is not theirs to give—it belongs to the child's mother or parents' mother.⁹

If old *goele* desist from gardening, they often maintain their own cookhouse to which their daughters and daughters-in-law contribute garden produce. In the event of their not having an independent cookhouse, as in the case of Kali, they are nonetheless relatively free in the use of food, especially when it is their daughter with whom they eat.¹⁰ This may be

because the food comes from land *qoele* have allowed their daughters to use or land that they had access to through their marriage. It is also because it is hard for a woman to refuse her mother anything. It is, further, because *qoele* do remain significant contributors to someone's household until frailty absolutely forces them to cease, whereas men become rather insubstantial figures around the household much earlier. One possibility I neglected to pursue was that women remain active in production for longer than men. Given the nature of their respective tasks this is quite likely, for men's clearing and digging is heavier work than women's digging, weeding and harvesting. Even when women are too weak to continue digging and carrying produce to their house, their weeding could still make a significant contribution.

The difference in social power of *qoele* and *barogoso* is also more widely apparent. It has often been noted that elder women may take on greater status or new roles. What is significant on Simbo is that this accompanies a parallel decline in male efficacy. In the church it is notable, for example, that senior office bearers, particularly presidents of the UCWF, may be "young" *qoele* as I noted earlier, but older women continue to have considerable authority in discussions and decision-making. The reason they do not hold office, I would suggest, is because they do not often make the effort to walk to other districts as the meetings rotate. It is also somewhat unnecessary, given that their reputations are established well before this age. Whether office holders or otherwise, *qoele* are listened to when they speak up. There is a notable contrast in men's and women's fellowship and general church discussions between male and female contributions, depending on age.

With a few notable exceptions young women and old men are quite mute. Most mature men and some mature women are very lucid, senior women and men are confident speakers, elderly women are as articulate as senior women, but elderly men are notably less so. Both genders reach their peak at about the same time, but women never really lose that position. An old woman has, in most cases, long transcended any conjugal disputation regarding authority and autonomy. Her options are much more open than previously—she may, for example, leave a troublesome husband for several months to go and live with sons or daughters in other households or on other islands. Thus, when Lina and Pita came to visit their daughter Zila they quarrelled, as always. Lina told Pita to get off her land and he returned to his own place, telling her not to follow. She remained with Zila for several months, only returning to her virilocal residence when he invited her back and because a

younger daughter had had a child and insisted on hurrying back to her parents' virilocal residence after only one month.

There were also a number of obvious reversals of earlier patterns of gender authority which, while regarded as comic, also suggest the autonomy of older women.

One morning, Emi put her head around my doorway:

Emi: [Whispering] Christina, come, come. Come and look.

We walked quietly around the corner to look into the next "yard". Silvia Qoele and her husband Bela, both in their eighties were fighting about something. She had been sweeping her yard and raised her "broom" as if to bring it crashing down on his head.

"Get away, get away, you fool. I don't want you here. Get away! Get away!"

He retreated with his arm over his head while she brought the broom down on his forearm and continued berating him. He scampered to the far corner and called that he would hit her. She taunted in reply,

"Come, try, come, come—I'm awaiting you".

He then picked up a rock and gestured in her direction and she started after him with her broom:

"Come here. Come throw the rock at me. You fool. Come".

She got closer with the broom and he dropped the stone at his feet and left quickly, mumbling quietly about her being a "rotten qoele".

Although this incident was regarded with hilarity, the object of amusement was Bela, not Silvia. It was his inability to deflect her anger and his undignified retreat that was recounted with much chortling. Yet Bela was simultaneously regarded with great respect for his past as a benevolent *banara* and leading light in the early Christian church. The next account also sees levity directed at the man, rather than the woman. Muke, some twenty to thirty years younger than Bela was respected for his role as a *lotu* stalwart as well as for his, now declining, physical strength¹¹ and knowledge about land rights. The anecdote refers to the inversion, not of direct conjugal authority but of the sexual rights which are closely related to it.

This story, for obvious reason, had a much more limited currency than did the travails of Bela. I was told about it by a couple of young men and later by a young married woman, in company of her mother, the morning after its occurrence.

Muke and his wife Mata slept separately, she in a house with her frail elderly mother and two grandchildren, he in a small separate nearby house. One night when the rain and wind made the weather quite cold—the time when all men want coitus—he went up to Mata's house at about 10pm. One of my informants, sitting in his darkened antechamber by the open door was watching him. In his words:

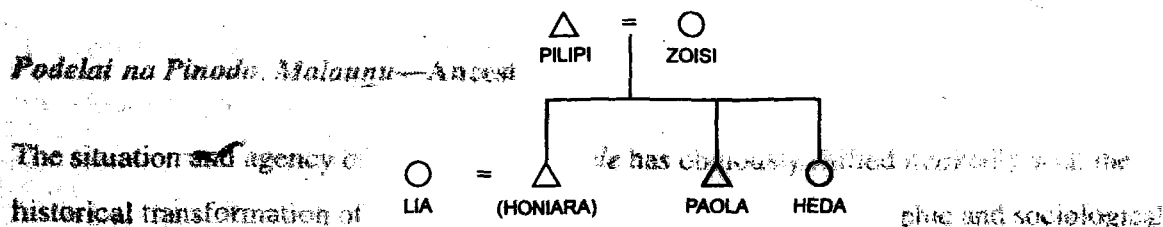
"Alright, he went and knocked on the door and the *qoele* (Mata) came out. He wanted to enter, he started to enter but she prevented him. He requested permission to enter but she didn't want him to. She spoke strongly to him. The *barogoso* wanted to sleep with the *qoele*. He was cold, he said, but the *qoele* closed the door. She forbid him. He wanted to but he's a *barogoso* so he was unable. She's a strong *qoele*, Mata."

All four of those involved in telling the account laughed each time they juxtaposed Eroni's desire and Mata's ability to refuse.¹²

What is significant about both of these accounts is that they are direct inversions of conjugal patterns of control in earlier life. Although not all marriages involve violence it is archetypally men who hit women, never the reverse. Although Silivia's attack on Bela could not be regarded as equivalent to conjugal violence—most notably in that it was not intended to inflict physical harm—it does express a negation of ideas of male authority. The same negation is obvious in Mata's refusal of sexual access to her husband. Younger women constantly bemoan their husbands' insistence on having intercourse whenever they so desire. Indeed, one of the attributes of a perfect husband is a man who does not enforce his sexual desires. The concluding sentences of the account about Mata and Muke says it all: *barogoso* are unable to enforce their wishes and *goele* are strong or in control.

The contrast between depictions of *goele* as strong women, expected to be in control of their appetites, and *barogoso* as declining and therefore unable to satisfy theirs is aptly illustrated by reactions to a totally unexpected adultery towards the close of my final fieldwork. Aneta (Fig. 5.1) was aged somewhere over fifty. Pilipi was about sixty. Both were married, in now celibate relationships¹³ and were known to have previously committed adultery—she on one occasion, he three times.

One evening I was visiting Lila's household when Zila came hurrying up to call me back to her house. On the way, she talked excitedly: Christina, the whole place is going to be "scattered".¹⁵ Aneta (Fig 5.2) has committed adultery! I just heard.



Heda told Lia and Lia told me (Lia and Zila were friends). No-one else knows yet but by tonight the place will be scattered. Come back to the cookhouse [hers] and wait to see what happens. We returned and waited. Zila quietly told her husband and a number of women who called in, but she stayed away from Aneta's and Pilipi's kin. Eventually, Lia went and told Paola who, in turn, informed Zoisi. For several days, Pilipi denied his adultery until Zoisi was admitted to the clinic with severe hypertension.

Meanwhile no-one knew, initially, what had happened to Aneta. On the evening of discovery, Heda had walked out to her parent's cookhouse and spied her father and Aneta sitting there in the dark. "What! Why do you sit down in a dark place?" she had called out. Aneta had stood up and fled, no-one was sure where. Late that night there was a sudden outburst of wailing from Aneta's house—somehow her husband had heard and told his children. It was two of their daughters who were shrieking.

Aneta had, in fact, fled to her MB house (her mother was long dead) but he, in disgust had repulsed her. Years previously he had helped her repair relations with Zoni. He was unwilling to do so again. She had then run to the house of her MZ Monika in another district and no-one knew

she was there until the following evening when Sila approached through an intermediary about compensation.

Commentary on the adultery revealed differential assessment of the *qoele* and *barogoso*.

Unlike most adulteries, this one was talked about for weeks. Pilipi was widely criticized for his selfishness in repeatedly distressing his wife, both through his refusal to confess, which threatened her life, and through the multiplicity of his offences. On the other hand, there was a degree of admiration for his stamina:

Imagine, he's a *barogoso*, but he's strong. He can still "hammer" (Pidgin) in the forest. He still seeks women. I'm amazed. Strong, isn't he?

In regard to Aneta, however, there was no such ambivalence. She was overwhelmingly disapproved. Muke was reported as having explained his refusal of sanctuary thus:

One time I helped her. We siblings arranged compensation for her. She was young, then, that's the way of young women. But she's a *qoele* now. It's inappropriate.

Aneta consequently watched her authority unravel. Kini, her daughter Lili's husband, had long been at loggerheads with her. When Lili had returned home for the birth of her son, Aneta had pressured her to remain there for several months, much to Kini's irritation. When Kina heard the news of the adultery he was "happy, because Aneta torments him". He announced that they were returning to his own island immediately Lili's minimum one month's rest was completed (and they did). Next Zoni announced to his brother and his own children that Aneta's stance over Miri's relationship with Timote was now to be disregarded: he wanted them to arrange a marriage as quickly as possible. As Miri told me: "Why should we listen to the words of a *qoele* who can't remain quiet. That's what my father said."

Podelai na Pinodo, Malaunu—Ancestors and Souls

The situation and agency of *barogoso* and *qoele* has obviously shifted markedly with the historical transformation of Simbo society. Quite apart from demographic and sociological factors, the shift to Christianity has seen a significant shift in their cosmological relevance. Above all, *qoele* and *barogoso* no longer have any connexion to metaphysical powers, neither through near-ancestorhood nor through control of arcane knowledge or *kezo*. *Qoele* remain valued because of their contributions to household maintenance and their key role in activating kinship obligations through fosterage. *Barogoso*, on the other hand, now have few resources to control and less contribution to make. Carrier and Carrier (1991) argue that on Ponam, economic incorporation, which has eliminated men's inter-island trading roles, has worked to raise women's status and power, which derives from domestic dominance and management of intra-island ceremonial exchange. On Simbo, such effects cannot be

homogeneously applied throughout the lifecycle. The privileging of marriage has seen a shift in male dominance over younger women from that within siblingship to within conjugality. But the greater stress on conjugality has a very different effect on older women.

Once again this stems from the *lotu*'s displacement of ancestor veneration. Pre-Christian *barogoso* and *qoele* were "loved" for their nurturance and for the way they had lived, as Leoke's comments (Chapter Two) suggest. However, I would assume that they were also respected, not just because of their contemporary power but because of their anticipated potency as ancestors. As Leoke makes clear, ancestors reciprocated not just the care they received as ancestors, but the events which preceded their deaths. This logic was replicated in 1991 when Mikelo died. In his seventies, he had been estranged from his son, Kera, for several years, no-one knew why. Although they lived in the same hamlet, they had not spoken in that time. He died unexpectedly, so he and Kera had no chance of deathbed reconciliation. The day of the funeral, a number of people murmured ominously that hardship would now come down upon Kera for the ill-feeling between them. A month later, his copra-house burned down and this was immediately pointed to as indicative of the consequences of mistreating one's mother or father.

This event was *not* attributed to ancestral wrath, but to Simbo *kastom*:

Starting in the Time One Day, up until the present time, that has been the way here. If you don't love your mother and your father, every misfortune will befall you. This is just the start.

The fact that it was not attributed to ancestors is, itself, indicative of the transformed cosmological perspective on Simbo. Individuals categorically no longer become members of the ancestral collective today—they become individual souls. The mechanism of that development and the actual location of the soul may be imprecise (Chapter Seven), but the independence of the soul is not in question. It is notable, then, that the days of the dead are now kept for only ten days, the period necessary for the *tomate* to leave the local environs. After that, awaiting the Last Day, the *tomate* is irrelevant so long as the person did not have a bad death. *Barogoso*, then, are loved and cared for because of their nurturing histories and because unspecified hardship, which can be differentiated from pre-Christian ancestral vengeance, will befall those who mistreat them. *Qoele*, on the other hand, are both loved for the same reasons, and respected for their continuing strength in household, church and lineage, the three areas which are significant to women throughout their lives. For neither sex is power now derived from imminent ancestorhood.

Macintyre (1990) has described the persistence of Misiman conceptions of the person, despite almost a century of counter efforts by Methodist (later UC) personnel. She points out

that the postmortem continuity of personhood is axiomatic. I take her description of Misiman spirits of the dead (*sevasevan*) to hold good for the ancestral *tomate* of "One Day" on Simbo:

If offended, the spirit . . . can *feel* hurt or anger, that is, it retains human responses associated with . . . "personality". Thus offended, the spirit may inflict injury or otherwise disturb the wellbeing of living relatives. On the other hand, if the living have consistently maintained a loving reverential relationships with the spirit and provided abundant mortuary gifts, then the spirit may comfort, reward or protect the living . . .

. . . Spirits have allegiances, lineage identity, and continue to experience emotions that motivate moral, purposive actions. The distinctions between the ancestors and their mortal descendants are effectively very different from the spirit/body distinction that dominates Christian thought (Macintyre, 1990: 98).

Mantovani (1990) describes three features of Melanesian ancestors—they remain fully functioning members of the community, differentiated only by their loss of body; they mediate between the living and cosmic forces and they are bound up in reciprocal relations with their kin. These features no longer characterize the spirits of dead Tinoni Simbo. To the extent that they do so, it is in the very abbreviated and inexplicit form manifested in the reactions to Kera's father's death or the vaguely attributed misfortunes which afflict wrongdoers, misfortunes which are more likely to be attributed to Tamasa or to Simbo "ways starting One Day". I noted in Chapter Seven that *tomate* persist uncontradicted, but alienated, on Simbo because missionaries did not confront their epistemological foundation. Unlike Misima, however, where missionaries challenged "un-Christian behaviour", on Simbo they attacked spirits, including ancestors, as manifestations of Satan. This, in tandem with the greater development of individualism (Chapter Eight), has seen a different outcome on Simbo, where a more different form of spirit now dominates cosmology.

Other than . . . solve, ideas of Heaven and Hell in European tradition

Minate—Death—place for concerns about the implications of individual human mortality

It is time to admit the final fallacy in my use of lifecycles. A cycle does not just imply the changeless repetition which I problematized in Chapter Five: it also suggests some kind of a return to the beginning. On Simbo, however, there is—and was—no concept of regeneration or reincarnation. Ancestral regeneration, whereby the social identity of clan members is ensured at birth through mechanisms like the *baloma* of the Trobriand Islands (Malinowski, 1916; Weiner, 1977) has apparently never occurred. Personhood was developed through nurturance rather than inherited substance. Thus, the fostered captives, described in Chapter Two, could become "truly people of Simbo" entirely through the nurturant love evoked by Leoke. The sociality which commenced with the progressive uterine co-residence of siblings is definitive and constitutive of Simbo relationships. Before Christianity, the dead became

ancestors but these eventually faded into a vague existence on Sondo in the Shortland Islands as new and more recent ancestors came to replace them. ^{theological training and to}

It is interesting that a similar kind of approach informs contemporary religiosity. While people say, on parting for long periods, that they will meet again on the Last Day if unable to do so beforehand, this is not necessarily different to the idea of continuing to engage in social intercourse on Sondo. It is perhaps not surprising, then, that the concepts of Heaven and Hell are not elaborated. Heaven is referred to in terms of its location (*pana oka* "in the firmament"), just as the pre-Christian afterworld was, and occasionally as "Paradise" (*Paradaisi*) when people want to evoke the good living in the hereafter. It is not, however, part of common conversation and, when pressed, most people are vague about its constitution and one's activities there. Most at this point simply say that they will "remain in the love of Tamasa" or "again see all our *qoele* or *barogoso* there". Far more interesting is the issue of ensuring just reward or punishment in this world—thus the illness which strikes one's loved ones in the wake of adultery or the admonition to those who are worried: "Don't worry. Tamasa will fix the way", or "Wait, Tamasa will punish them for their acts". This is not to say that people are unaware of European conceptions of Heaven as a place free of the travails of earthly existence. It is simply that that notion has little relevance (*cf.* Hogbin, 1969: 181) for people who would like to be free of such difficulties here and now, and for whom Europeans' visible wealth and power is proof that such goals are not dependent on going to the afterworld.

Other than as a posited future salve, ideas of Heaven and Hell in European tradition have provided solace for concerns about the implications of individual human mortality. I would suggest that on Simbo, Christianity was irrelevant in this respect both because concerns about the individual's fate are dependent upon indigenous ideas of personhood (Dureau, 1991) and because the future community of ancestors provided *a priori* answers to such concerns in the event that they did arise. If ancestors were materially present, the future fate of any individual who did worry about existential issues was plain to see. The only potential uncertainty, as in Christianity, was of what position one would occupy there.

If Heaven is something of an irrelevancy, Hell is even more so. Everybody was sure that they would continue in Heaven after death. Nor did I ever hear any person consigned to Hell or any speculation that anyone would go there (compare Levy, 1969: 131-132). In direct contrast to the idiom of Christian missionaries who lamented the daily descent of unbaptized heathen into Hell (Langmore, 1989a), Tinoni Simbo do not suggest that even the "naked

heathen Kwaio" of Malaita, who overtly oppose Christianity, will be condemned to Hell. Even the ministers and those pastors who have undergone theological training tend to disregard the concept. It is usually formally acknowledged but disregarded. If it is probable that early missionaries threw down threats of Hellfire, their efforts left little impression. This may stem from the pragmatic concern for supernatural efficacy which underlay conceptualizations of ancestral *mana* (Chapter Two) and which invested pacification with bitter significance. In such a view Hell is very much on earth—it is manifest in the failure of enterprise, the serial or concurrent deaths of one's family members in an epidemic, in crop failure and hunger, military defeat and any of the other exigencies which have beset Tinoni Simbo. Indeed, one young pastor said that Hell was the Bible's way of talking about this-worldly torments, that afflict those who transgress norms of good living:

If I commit adultery and then my children die because I don't confess, that is the kind of thing we read about. That is Tamasa rejecting me and casting me out of the company of Heaven which is the love of Tamasa.

In company of a small group who had gathered to discuss *lotu* with me, he went on, to murmurs of agreement:

You can think about Hell all the time. It's in the Bible. But why do you think about Hell when Tamasa's love is also in there? If you think about love and you live in the love of Tamasa, Hell is unnecessary.

Simbo Christianity, like the ancestor veneration which preceded it, is a celebration of the good things of life and the promise of ongoing collective sociality.

The ongoing connectedness of the dead person to their homes and kin is finally demonstrated with the preparation of the body for burial and, at least one year later, the cementing of the grave. The dead are buried within a day or so of death. Ideally, members of their natal and conjugal family are present, but their presence and acts on the fourth day after death are far more important. A brief description of these events will demonstrate the continuities and changes associated with the Christian delegitimation of the ancestors.

The dead person is laid in a wooden coffin (*bokesi*, lit. "box") which has been quickly constructed by the men of the family. After the day of lamenting, when the dead must not be left alone and everyone must keen loudly so that the dead may know of their grief (close family members in particular do so copiously), preparation is made for the church service¹⁷ and burial before sunset. While the dead person's husband, brothers or sons seek the boards or nails (the latter often found with difficulty) for sealing the top of the coffin, their wife,¹⁸ sisters or daughters sit by the coffin and sort out their personal effects. Some articles of clothing are packed around the corpse while others are retained. So, too, with personal

possessions. These vary, but they are objects which were regularly associated with the dead during life, rather than things with particularly high value. Old clothes or artifacts are as valid as new. (Recall the discussion of *tabuna* relics in Chapter Two.) When Mikelo died, along with some of his clothes, his wife placed a bent spoon, a china mug and bowl in the box. Finally, and in all cases of death, a glass softdrink bottle is placed resting upon one of the corpse's shoulders, between the upper arm and right breast.

In explaining these artifacts, the dead person's persistent consciousness and attachment to home is assumed by everybody. The goods are to ensure that the dead person, about to be removed from the village, will

[f]eel all their things about them. They will see their things and clothes and not come looking for them in the village, i.e. not return to haunt their village.

This, as I noted earlier, was a major concern of pre-Christian ritual—to get the spirit on the road to Sondo. Most importantly, the invariable glass bottle explicitly acts as the child of the deceased. In a final replication of the *kokoburu* play of little girls in which glass bottles are carried over the shoulder as “babies” (Chapter Six), the deceased takes “one of their offspring” with them into the afterworld:

If we don't give them a bottle and make them think they have one of their children, they will be distraught. Their longing for their beloved offspring will be too great and they will return to take a child with them. So we give a bottle to the *tomate*₉ (?corpse ?spirit) so the offspring can remain here where they ought and live their proper lives.

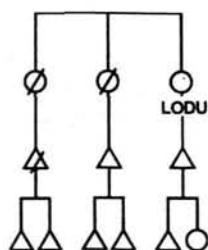
***Na Minate te Lodu*—The Death of Lodu Qoele**

It is appropriate to end this work with an account of the death of Suzana Lodu Qoele, for with her death pre-Christian ways symbolically ended. Lodu was the last remaining person with any memory of the missionary arrival at the Tapurai end of the island in 1903. What she witnessed that day was the precursor of a radical transformation of practices, relationship and worldviews on Simbo. Her own life was transformed when she decided, against her husband's wishes, to participate in *lotu* and “make Jesus true”, i.e., to believe in him. Yet Lodu also represented the old in the new: her purported character, her extreme longevity, her very connexion to pre-Christian sociality and, finally, her inability to die a Christian death until released by *kastom*-ary invocations all gave her a special status. I would not suggest that she was liminal—rather she was the last of the metaphorical ancestral “giants”, able to transcend times and cultures. She did not slot between eras—she encompassed them.

To Tinoni Simbo she was iconic of the best of two ages and of a type of person who never would be again. In a world in which *kastom* is visualized as “lost” (in the sense of

being off-track as well as disappeared), her resilience reconciled ancestral and Christian powers and spoke to a past which was both unattainable and buried deep in the common being of Tinoni Simbo. Lodu was the only prominent person against whom I heard no slander from members of other *bubutu*. Her death may be contrasted, then, with the ambivalence with which the death of the old man, Rona, who was a strong man of *kastom*, was regarded (Chapter Four). In thinking about the significance of Lodu's death to my analysis, it has occurred to me that if I were to deliberately fictionalize Simbo cultural history, I would need to invent a Lodu. She is, in other words, iconic to me. Occurring at this point in the narrative and representing the closure of eons, her death provides a suspiciously neat finale to my narrative. Yet unlike literary devices, social practice untidies things: imperfections creep into my account.

The greatest of these from the point of view of credible anthropological narrative is that I was on another island, attending a wedding and missed both her death and her funeral rites. The events, then, are a record of hearsay. A second flaw, from the point of a romanticizing anthropology is that the symbolic value of Lodu in signifying unitary *Simbo* "identity through history", was subverted by petty politics when a pair of natal brothers, descended from Lodu's ZS, attempted to upstage the sons of another ZS and Lodu's own son and his son and daughter by unilaterally appropriating the obligation to distribute cooked rice and tinned fish to the mourners.²⁰



Finally, the closure is not as complete as might be suggested by my characterization of Lodu as the last embodiment of old and new. Four or five old people still carry the distended ear lobes caused by indigenous ear piercing techniques and had made ancestral sacrifices in their youth. But above all, as this work has been concerned to show and as Tinoni Simbo intuited in their recognition of a shared cultural identity with Lodu, the past remains present in the *bricolage* that is the practice and knowledge of changing Simbo sociality. Further commentary would, I think be redundant. What follows is an account of Lodu from my first interaction with her shortly after my first arrival to my last "encounter" with her, after her death and shortly before my final departure.



Plate VIII: Suzana Lodu Qoele, d. 1991.

I had been on Simbo only about two months when I first heard about Suzana Lodu Qoele. My Pidgin was then reasonably fluent, my vernacular language still non-existent. Visiting Nusa Simbo, I was accosted by a man who assured me of his importance and told me what he expected of an account of Simbo—no “lying stories” [i.e., custom stories], an account of the church on Simbo (Methodist, not SDA), a history of Simbo people who had been missionaries and an account of the strength of Simbo Christianity. I bristled at his idea of my work (rather ironic in retrospect) but he insisted. As my first step he wanted me to meet Lodu, who was the last witness of the missionary arrival. Visions of the anthropological possibility proffered by one who had lived in a world unsullied by missionaries danced in my head as, differently motivated, we set off. We entered the house where she lived with her son and his wife. She was sitting inside wearing a light cotton dress, toothless, her eyes blinded by cataracts. Her voice, when she spoke, was weak, rusty. Clearly, she ordinarily spoke only in brief sentences. Neither of us addressed each other—Moni was the complete go-between. I recorded her brief account, reproduced in Appendix III and asked a few clarifying questions which she answered vaguely and, to my mind, disappointingly. Again, I heard the words, “The missionaries told us to”, as explanation of conversion. Lodu was clearly well into her decline—she was vague, her short-term memory was poor and she clearly wished we would go away and let her rest. We did so. She remained living with her son and SW. Her other son and two daughters lived in other villages (one on another island). Born in Tapurai village at the other end of the island, she had remained most of her life in that district renowned, despite the missionaries’ first landfall there, as the regressive home of *hahanana rodomo* on Simbo. She had moved in her later years to Nusa Simbo, the area whose inhabitants prided themselves on being more fundamentally (*sosoto*—“true”) Christians. For several months there was no further news of Lodu and then, one day, indicating my intention to go and speak to her again, I was told, “You can’t do that. Lodu is lying down waiting to die.”

The next week, the Narovo branch of the UCWF called all members, including myself, to go and visit Lodu. The UCWF always makes visits to moribund people and postpartum women. I participated in a number of those visits—none with delegations as large as that to Lodu. We trooped single file to Nusa Simbo, each woman carrying a small offering to the family—a bar or two of laundry soap or a kilo of rice, half a dozen large sweet potatoes or something of similar size and utility. These were left discretely on the front verandah: the visits are marks of respect and compassion rather than of ostentatious giving. As many as possible then moved inside, the others clustered around the verandah.

Inside, Lodu lay semi-comatose on a mattress in the corner. The women sang a mournful hymn before the president addressed her, her SW and son, speaking of the love of Tamasa, the length of her life and their knowledge that she was at peace. There was more Christian ceremony which I will not elaborate here, before Taru, her SW, spoke quietly, thanking those assembled and replying that Tamasa would bless those who had come. Lodu, she said, had asked her, rather than her own daughter, to care for her because she had lived with Taru for many years and loved her as her “true child” (*tuqu sosoto*, “my true offspring”). Two weeks ago, said Taru, Lodu had told her that “her life is now finished. ‘I lie down and wait for my death. Tamasa keeps us all, do not worry.’” She had subsequently declined all nourishment other than occasional sips of orange juice or water because she did not want Taru to have the burden of cleaning a soiled body and bed.

Still Lodu lingered. “She’s truly strong, that *qoele*. Truly a person of the time before”, people began to say. The UCWF from other districts made similar visits. Likewise the Men’s Fellowship. Her sons and daughters returned home to wait as did any grandchildren able to do so. The verandah was full of people sitting, chewing betel and talking. Passers-by made a point of calling to see her sons and enquire. Inside, Lodu lay quietly, Taru or Taru’s daughter always in attendance. On the occasions I looked in she lay quietly, one might almost say patiently—there was no stertorous breathing, no fidgeting with the bedclothes or restless movements. She answered—minimally—when spoken to, made no complaints.

Several days after the UCWF visit, my friend Liza Beri asked me to re-visit Lodu with her because she had unavoidably missed the UCWF visit. Carrying rice and oranges we set out alone on Sunday afternoon. Shaking hands with Taru and Lodu’s sons, we entered. I sat in the corner, as Liza approached the bed.

Liza: Qoele, [it’s] me, Liza.

Lodu: [faintly] Liza—you were almost late, my offspring. I thank Tamasa you came a last time. Now I can be peaceful, my offspring. Very good.

Liza: [crying] I praise Tamasa for keeping you strong for a long time. I want to tell you the immense "love" of my family. Very good *qoele*. On the Last Day we will see each other one more time. Very good. You remain at peace, my mother. Very good.

Lodu: Tamasa keeps us all, my offspring. Don't you be concerned.

At that point Lodu collapsed into silence. Liza sat beside her bed for some time, weeping silently before standing and motioning for me to leave. We shook hands with everyone again before returning to our own village.²³ That was the last time I saw Lodu, but she remained alive for some time. Everyone was amazed.

Two weeks later I left for the wedding and on our return we heard that she had died and been buried during our absence. The following is a composite of the accounts, I was given about her eventual demise.

Lodu continued to lie immobile on her mattress. She got no weaker, no stronger. She wanted to die, her spirit was anxious to leave her body but she was too strong because she was a person of the Time One Day. The Minister prayed and her family prayed, begging Tamasa to release her, all to no avail because "it was not a thing of *lotu*". "She was already baptized long ago. Her soul was a *lotu* soul but the people of One Day worked spells on her to make her strong. Before *lotu* came down, they did that—they made her body strong so she couldn't die." Finally, her relatives told her they were going to call in a man who knew *kastom* medicine to release her. "Good/Thank you", she replied. Then a man who knew the words from the Time One Day came and said the words over her to release her, telling her breath to go to various named places and: "Leave this *qoele* so she can be [at] peace. You go!" Hearing these words Lodu stopped breathing and died.

I omit account of her funeral which seems to have been marked only by the unseemly politics of generosity, the large number of participants and nostalgia for a time now definitively ended.

There was, however, to be one last encounter with Lodu:

Over a year later, working with my research assistant on transcribing and translating tapes, we started work on Lodu's account of *lotu*. Iqu, aged about 24 and herself the granddaughter of a venerable old man (Leoke), began to reminisce about Lodu:

Iqu: Lodu was the last of the People of One Day.²⁴ She was born in the Darkness.

Dureau: Tell me more of what you think about Lodu Qoele.

Iqu: A strong person, a good person. All the *qoele* and *barogoso* say that the People One Day were good people, people who helped each other, people with love. They were big people and they lived a long time, the People One Day—she had a good life and a good death the *qoele* Lodu. Now we're small and weak and we die young. People today aren't good people like the People One Day. They are greedy, they don't help. We came into the Light, we came into the love of Tamasa but our ways are rotten. It's like that.

We returned to work, Iqu turning the tape on and off as she transcribed. Two young girls (about fourteen or so) wandered in and watched us. One of them interrupted: Whose is the voice of that *qoele*?

Iqu: Lodu Qoele

Girl: I'm frightened! Is it her spirit? Aren't you afraid, Iqu?

Iqu: I'm not afraid. Lodu was a real *qoele*. Her life was finished so what should I be afraid of?

Girl: No, I'm afraid.

Iqu: Nothing! Lodu is peacefully dead. She is at peace. Your fear is aimless.

Dureau: Well, what about the spirit of Lodu, Iqu? Is she a ghost or an ancestor now, or what?

Iqu: No, nothing. She's not a spirit. She's not an ancestor. She's dead. Finish. Nothing further.

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NOTES

- 1: J.C. Barker (1990: 311-312) has this explaining the *mistreatment* of the frail.
- 2: As in many other places, a seriously ill person was also regarded as *mate*.
- 3: The partiality of the condition suggests that the "soul" is some kind of quantifiable substance (Rivers, 1920), but this possibility is not developed. The *malaunu* is always an entity.
- 4: Converting such discourse into written text does not convey an accurate sense of what was going on. Responding to Hilida I recall feeling increasingly uncomfortable and struggling to justify the difficulties of sons and daughters in caring for the elderly in modern European society. Facial expressions of sheer disbelief or perplexity greeted me as I faltered to a halt.
- 5: Hocart translates *tepa* as "beg". This implies too great a humility to cover all contexts. To *tepa* is, usually, to expect a response as a right. Only in cases of obvious hierarchy is "beg" appropriate—one might beg the bishop or, previously, a *banara*, for example. The term also means to "request" or "demand". A woman does not beg of her sons, for example.
- 6: In fact, all Lina's DHs *did* speak of her with affection and admiration. It is intriguing that all of her daughters of an appropriate age had stable first marriages but all of her sons of marriageable age had been unsuccessfully married for very short periods—one for as little two months—and unable or unwilling to remarry. Whether this had anything to do with Lina's and her husband's ways, I do not know.
- 7: Siblings are less inclined to praise their ZH or BW, irrespective of residential proximity.
- 8: Children are often chided with the threat of injection by a European.
- 9: Men do cook, but it is usually in a situation in which it is clearly understood that they will do so—when their wife or mother is ill or absent on business or a visit, for example.
- 10: In fact, Kali slept in Nada's house, but she usually ate in the house of the daughter whose sweet potato she cooked.
- 11: That decline was visibly demonstrated when he went fishing, along with other men, in rough seas: his dugout was capsized, his *lavalava* lost and he had to be rescued by a younger man. Jokes about his nakedness were juxtaposed to comments about a *barogoso*'s foolishness in going out in such weather.
- 12: Many *goele* refuse sexual intercourse with their husbands, either because "I don't want to" or because "I don't like it". This is not inevitable: the fact that other women complain about *barogoso*'s impotence suggests a range of sexual activity among older people.
- 13: She because her husband's and her children had urged them to stop procreating eight years earlier and he because his wife refused (according to popular report).
- 14: She later discussed the case with Lila, her HMZ. However she was not the one who gave her the news.
- 15: *Piera*, the word used to describe the scattered debris attendant upon houses falling apart. I take it to mean that social relations were to lose their cohesion.
- 16: This issue was never discussed with SDA members. However, this latter quotation expresses sentiments which are not very different to the SDA Church's doctrinal view that the concept of a material Hell of eternal torment is inconsistent with belief in a God of limitless compassion and forgiveness.
- 17: Which the UC Minister conducts for all denominations.

