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Same People, Different People

Recognition, Knowledge and the (Re)construction of Relationships in Bilua, Vella Lavella

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Anthropology, The University of Auckland, 2015.

Lekasa Donli Kaki comforting Lekasa Lewis Aivekera at the mortuary feast for his son-in-law

ABSTRACT

When talking about the past, people of the Bilua region of Vella Lavella frequently lament the pre-Christian era, which is imagined as period of interdependence, partnership and solidarity between diverse groups. During this period, those placed in the relational categories of 'same people' and 'different people' were united through intermarriage and the sharing of land. Many juxtapose this era against the present context of more self-serving, globally-inspired agendas associated with 'progress' and 'development,' which are seen as influencing recent changes in social structure and land ownership, and as promoting an increasing emphasis on money and consumer goods. In this context, people struggle to reconcile individual opportunity and the distribution of limited monetary wealth and resources with what are presented as the customary values that ideally ensure the continued well-being of communities. Contemporary chiefs who encourage or capitalize on commercial ventures that are associated with logging and development are often privately criticized for prioritizing exclusive monetary interests and neglecting the social and moral well-being of their lineages and communities.

Bilua people address the perceived conflict between monetary and social values in terms of a moral framework that simultaneously denigrates individualism and advocates adherence to group affiliation and the ideal of sociality. Through the discursive practices associated with this critique, historical events, myths and gossip are deployed as moral stories which demonstrate the ideals of social solidarity and 'belonging' – the reciprocal relationship between person and group, such that each person is constituted as a person by virtue of their group relationships.

This moral framework can be best understood by investigating social practices of recognition, the acknowledgement of common connections and the respectful ways of relating to people based on these shared bonds. Bilua people demonstrate recognition by showing their awareness of *nianio*, which translates as knowledge, and specifically knowledge of genealogy and the social entanglements of people, land and ancestors. *Nianio* implies social responsibility: 'to know' or to understand social connections of kin and social entanglement is to recognize the obligations of connectedness and engage them accordingly.

On the interpersonal level, Bilua recognition applies specifically to the acknowledgement and prioritization of relationships through adherence to cultural norms in exchange for support and nurturance. On the wider social level, recognition provides a connecting thread between the triadic, mutually constituting relationships between people, land and ancestors that are foundational to Bilua *kastom* – the values and practices that represent what are considered to be the best parts of the ancestors.

Drawing on emerging anthropological approaches to this topic (e.g. Keane 1997; Fabian 1999, 2001; Povinelli 2002; Robbins 2003, 2009), I investigate recognition as a vital and dynamic process through which relationships and cultural knowledge are exercised and renewed. By focusing on the cultural values exhibited through Bilua concerns with recognition and its practice, I interpret the ways in which people engage with ideological constructions of the past and participate in everyday constructions of self and others. My analysis emphasizes the reciprocal social responsibilities that exist between individuals and between groups.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BSIP	British Solomon Islands Protectorate
CRC	Christian Revivalist Crusade
DO	District Officer
MP	Member of Parliament
NAN	Non-Austronesian Language
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NNGTC	North New Georgia Timber Corporation
SDA	Seventh Day Adventist
SGMWC	South Gate Wesleyan Methodist Church
TTRIDC	Tribal Rule Reformation Intervention Development Concept
UC	United Church
WDC	Wagina Development Corporation
WPHC	Western Pacific High Commission
WMC	Wesleyan Methodist Church

CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION

In 2008, the village of Maravari, on the island of Vella Lavella in the Solomon Islands, hosted an island-wide soccer tournament, a common form of fundraising on the island, bringing in revenue from entrance fees and providing opportunities for women to market their garden produce, fish and chips and baked goods. The event was to raise money for rebuilding Seven Soldiers Primary School,[1] which had been destroyed by an earthquake in April 2007. The tournament consisted of eleven teams from across Vella Lavella, including from Eleoteve, Kuava, Sambora and other villages on the island. Maravari itself entered two teams of different age groups. The only non-Vella team was from Saeragi, a coastal village on the northern side of neighbouring Gizo Island, with kin, language and political connections to Vella Lavella.[2]

During the round-robin tournament, a team from Saeragi was scheduled to play a much younger team from Maravari. While clearly one-sided, the game proved to be one of the highlights for many spectators. Although they had grown up on separate islands, many of the Saeragi and Maravari boys were close kin, and there are many connections and visits between the two villages for feasts, family gatherings and special events.

While strongly outmatching the much younger Maravari boys, the Saeragi side displayed impeccable sportsmanship, deliberately giving their opponents turns at the ball, calling them *visi* (younger sibling) and allowing them scoring chances. The Saeragi team won the game 6-2, and members of both teams embraced each other to the cheers of the

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[1]The school takes its name from seven New Zealand soldiers who were killed on Vella Lavella during WWII. While their remains have since been repatriated, the soldiers had been buried where the soccer field now lies.

[2]Residents of Saeragi primarily speak the Bilua language spoken on Vella. Representatives of Saeragi were included as part of the Vella Lavella District Court and the Vella Lavella District Council, as were representatives from the islands of Simbo and Ranongga (Western Pacific High Commission Memorandum, No F. 202/11/0, March 7, 1960; Appendix 1).

crowd. The victors later went on to become the tournament champions, defeating a team from Barakoma.

Although the event was seemingly minor, the Saeragi boys' sportsmanship towards their kinfolk was later commended by several Maravari women, who had been struck by this expression of affinity between the two sides. The incident marked a positive recognition not only of the relationships between the boys themselves, but of the multi-generational connections between the two villages. What made the incident so remarkable to many people was that it exemplified the public recognition of relationships between different groups in an unusually positive way.

Typically, such connections are publicly considered only when they become problematic, that is, when people fail to demonstrate appropriate behaviours of respect, thereby calling the strength of these relationships into question (for example, when land rights are challenged by people sharing land, or when relatives do not provide the level of support commonly expected of close kin). In contrast, the soccer game described above highlighted the relationships between members of the teams in a positive way, as the older boys temporarily set aside the combative aspect of competition to acknowledge their rivals as kin. Moreover, this was a gesture initiated by members of the younger generation, who are frequently criticized for laxity in acknowledging their relationships to each other according to the principles of *kastom* – the ideologies and practices formulated with regard to indigenous traditions (Chapter Two and Three).

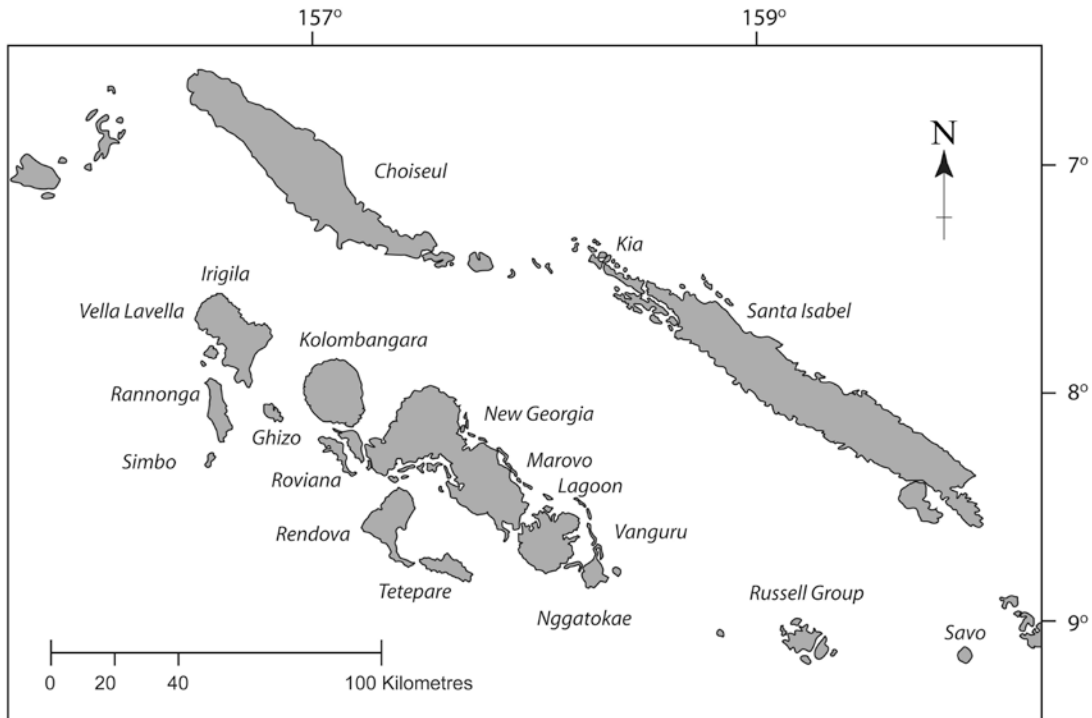
While the level of courtesy during the game was unusual, the spectator remarks were representative of the everyday ways in which Bilua people express concerns with relationality and the responsibility of individuals as moral actors who contribute to the social well-being of community and extended kin groups.

Bilua understandings of *kastom* are often expressed as moral ideologies of relatedness and belonging. To belong, people must 'know their place,' sharing in different kinds of attachments to make sense of themselves and others (Ottoson 2014: 117). For example, *nianio* is the Bilua word for knowledge, specifically knowledge of genealogy and the social entanglements of people, land and ancestors. However, *nianio* also implies social responsibility: 'to know' or to understand social connections of kin and social entanglement is to recognize the obligations of connectedness and engage them accordingly. In his study of the Newars of Nepal, Steven Parish uses the term 'moral knowing' to express an important connection between 'knowing' and acknowledgement in the creation of cultural meaning. As he explains, "Culture cannot be 'known' except in active processes of meaning-construction and social action. That is where culture 'lives'" (1994: 279). For Bilua, failure to acknowledge such attachments in culturally appropriate ways places their continuity at risk. *Kastom* not only relies on genealogical and cultural knowledge, but on individuals engaging this knowledge through the social practices of everyday life. Although relationality is an underlying principle of *kastom*, Bilua people also perceive it to be a struggle, requiring effort and constant negotiation. *Kastom* is only as strong as peoples' willingness to recognize, uphold and enact social bonds on which their social belonging is based.

In this thesis, I use the concept of recognition as a framework for understanding the tensions between individual agency and social belonging. While Bilua understandings of identity take as their core constructions relationships rather than individuals, they are dependent on individuals to participate in – and perpetuate – the ideals of the moral community. Recognition, in this context, is not simply a value but a social practice – the acknowledgement of multi-generational connections and the respectful ways of relating to people on the basis of these shared bonds. Everyday expressions of recognition manifest

and renew lived relationships and the historical connections which they embody. As Keane notes, "recognition entails an inherently temporal dimension, objectifying the moment with glances both retrospective and prospective" (1997: 14).

The Saeragi encounter exemplifies the complex identities and associations that people share across islands, as the connections between Vella and Ijo (Gizo) peoples lie deep in the pre-Christian period (Appendix I). In historical context, the incident is also a reminder of the inadequacy of relying on island and geographical boundaries to understand local ideas of identity. The New Georgia Group is a prime example of the complex history of relationships between regions, emblematic of Epeli Hau'ofa's observation that "boundaries were not imaginary lines in the ocean, but rather points of entry that were constantly negotiated and even contested" (1993: 9). As many scholars have documented (e.g. Bennett 1987; Schneider 1996; Hviding 1996; Dureau 1998a; McDougall 2004; Sheppard and Walter 2006; Berg 2008), the Western Solomons have long been marked by migration, exchange, raiding and intermarriage extending to Choiseul and Isabel in the north and east, Kolombangara across Vella Gulf, Roviana and Marovo Lagoon in the distant southeast, and southwest to Ranongga and Simbo (Map 1). Vella populations are comprised of, and regularly engage with Choiseulese, Malaitans, Tinoni Simbo ('people of Simbo'), Ranonggans, and Tie Roviana ('people of Roviana'), among others. From these different groups, they borrowed and exchanged not only people, but techniques, resources, language and ideas.



Map 1 - The New Georgia Group of Islands

Consequently, contemporary Biluans make few distinctions between descendants of Vella lineages and people from elsewhere. Both are connected through the 'love' of the original landholders who granted them rights to settle, intermarry and plant gardens. Many lineage histories describe their ancestors as refugees who escaped natural disasters, warfare, incest and witchcraft on their islands of origin or elsewhere on Vella. While descendants of immigrants acknowledge the places they came from and other kin connections in the larger region, local lineages begin their genealogical histories with their ancestors' point of arrival on the island, when they were taken in by Vella people. This idea of sanctuary frames memories of the generosity and compassion of the original landholders. Love, in this context, is not an emotion or feeling felt by an individual, but rather comprises a way of living through the expression of concern for the well-being of

others. Significantly, in Bilua understanding, love is perceived as something that is done to help others, "and if it is not manifested in actions, it does not exist" (Kidd 2000: 118).[3]

While ancestral connections across the New Georgia Group and to different parts of the Solomons can be substantiated, these cannot be taken for granted, but must be reclaimed, recognized and maintained on an ongoing basis. In the Bilua region, I propose that recognition is central in explaining the processes of creating, acknowledging and renewing the contemporary and ancestral relationships that are necessary in order to secure membership, nurturance and support.

Anthropological Analyses of Recognition

Anthropologists have investigated how social acts of recognition can occur in contexts of social tension, stressing either social cohesion or social stratification by referencing established frameworks of relationality. The works of James Hagen (1999a, 1999b), Webb Keane (1997), Elizabeth Povinelli (1998; 2002), Johannes Fabian (1999) and Joel Robbins (2003, 2009) have contributed to my understanding of the value Bilua people place on recognition.

These studies have framed recognition in two ways. First, recognition has been used as a way to critique the exploitation of indigenous minorities by the state. While state policies like multiculturalism are intended to reconcile cultural differences and repair the injustices of colonialism, they actually reinforce distinctions by misrecognizing or essentializing the identities of indigenous peoples (Taylor 1994; Povinelli 1998, 2002; Merlan 2014; Sylvain 2014). For example, Povinelli uses recognition to describe how

[3]While this chapter contains some discussion of love as pertaining to recognition, Bilua ideas of love are most prominently expressed through land relationships (see Chapter Four).

Australian national discourses of cultural difference conflict with Aboriginal processes of mutuality and shared values locally.[4] While she differs in her focused critique of the state, the tension between state and local recognition is germane to Bilua. The Solomon Islands government requires lineages to register for exclusive land ownership before they can become eligible for logging contracts; a requirement that overlooks the cultural significance of land as a social resource enabling linkages between different groups (Chapter Four). Where the state and the local intersect, issues of recognition highlight the tensions between moral obligations to kin and rational obligations to participate in larger political and economic systems on which one's livelihood depends in a contemporary market economy. This results in new forms of inequality between landholders and different groups living on their land.

Second, recognition has been investigated as a means of promoting and strengthening cultural continuity, reconciliation and sameness *within* shared cultural environments (Keane 1997; Robbins 2003, 2009; Hagen 1999a, 1999b). Fabian, Keane, Hagen and Robbins explore the intertwining of knowledge, memory and action – a conceptual marriage that is also central to Bilua understandings of recognition as the process through which relationships and cultural knowledge are exercised and renewed.

Johannes Fabian identifies the connection between social knowledge, emotional connection and moral action that are implicit in recognition. He reflects on how early European explorers of central Africa revealed different facets of recognition (and its refusal) in their attempts to connect with and understand the African peoples and the foreignness of the landscape. By reading their travel logs, Fabian analyzes how explorers

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[4]Povinelli (2002) suggests that the state's recognition of Aborigines is ultimately directed by its policy of multiculturalism, which subjects Aborigines to certain restrictions. To have their right to land legally recognized, Aboriginal communities are called upon to be culturally distinctive from "White Australians," but only in a way that is agreeable to the state.

became aware of the presence of locals, placed them in the context of their own memories, and eventually acknowledged them as human beings with particular rights. Bilua people frame social tensions in similar ways, challenging negligent kin who fail to acknowledge them according to culturally-defined relationships of respect. Fabian's distinctions between different forms of recognition have been instrumental in interpreting how Bilua people talk about social tensions and the perceived disconnection between social knowledge and moral acknowledgement in Bilua families.

James Hagen (1999a) also uses recognition to analyze different forms of knowing in Seram, Indonesia, observing that people sometimes identified and manipulated aspects of kinship that conflicted with those favoured by their relations, and demonstrating how individual awareness and emotional connection influence the formation of family and extended kin groups. When a man arrives among the Maneo claiming to be the son of an ancestor, Hagen investigates how people experience kinship through different modalities of knowing, distinguishing between a recognition of sameness (who a person is relative to previous points in time) and the recognition of selfhood (how a person is connected or disconnected to those around them). He uses this case study to investigate the differences between knowing who one is related to and who one treats as kin, a problematic distinction which arises when Bilua families are forced to confront sexual relationships between extended kin (Chapter Three).

I use the works of Webb Keane and Joel Robbins to investigate how recognition is demonstrated in ritualized performative exchange. In *Signs of Recognition*, Keane contemplates the juxtaposition of ritual and everyday life on the island of Sumba, Indonesia. He argues that recognition as a formal practice conveyed through the representations of ritual becomes involved with the social and political dynamics of recognition as acknowledgement or affirmation (1997: 15). Specifically, the repetition and

performance of ritual provides a context in which people are called upon to recognize and perpetuate existing stratified social relationships. Anakalang elders use ritual speech and exchange as a way of recognizing and invoking the ancestors, as well as the authority that they confer. By investigating representations as concrete practices in their own right (as opposed to symbolic or metaphorical depictions of something else), Keane shows how ritual representations call attention to and mediate existing power dilemmas of social life.

Lastly, Robbins observes that anthropologists have had more success in identifying the moral in non-capitalist societies, than they have in capitalist societies. By way of solution, he proposes a shift in terminology; suggesting that anthropologists set aside problems of alienation, exploitation, domination or individualism usually used in critiques of capitalist economies to focus on a problem of mutual recognition (2009: 45). Drawing on his research among the Urapmin of Papua New Guinea, he identifies mutual recognition as a common element at stake in both the capitalist and non-capitalist markets, arguing that "to the extent that capitalist social relations cover over or disregard the issue of recognition that are always at stake in human exchanges, they routinely lend themselves to the perpetration of injustices of recognition" (2009: 55). He poses the relationship between recognition and reciprocal exchange as a way to challenge anthropological distinctions between gift and commodity economies, and investigates instances in which Urapmin exchange goods in order to restore agency rather than to create relationality.

Although they approach recognition differently, each of these studies has contributed aspects which I have used in identifying a Bilua concept of recognition. As in the Saeragi team's respectful acknowledgement of their competitors as kin on the soccer field, recognition is manifested through social interactions that shape knowledge through situated constructions of memory. In this sense, Bilua ideas of recognition are multi-dimensional, requiring kin and entanglements to be socially, spatially and temporally

acknowledged in the context of connecting and continuing relationships between people, land and ancestors. On a day-to-day basis, people recognize connections through the use of appropriate terms of address for kin and by fostering relationships based on standards of respect, assistance and reciprocity. Ancestral relationships based on shared land, alliances or extended kinship are often maintained through generations. Bilua people contextualize and honour their remembered ancestors through contemporary lived relationships, acknowledging their extended networks through support in formal public events such as chiefly inaugurations, weddings and mortuary feasts, and in everyday expressions of kin affection and love. Chiefs – both past and present – depend on the recognition of their followers and must reciprocate this recognition in order to promote themselves, establish social control and pursue development in communities. Finally, in their efforts to be recognized by the state and pursue business interests with outside third parties, lineage leaders are often forced to compromise their everyday relationships with extended kin within their communities in exchange for exclusive access to development.

Recognizing Relationships in Everyday Life

Despite the wide scope of these activities, at its most basic level, recognition in Bilua requires, as Fabian notes, "some form of reaching out" to acknowledge and pursue relationships that are both grounded in the past and deemed desirable for continuing in the future (Fabian 1999: 59). 'Reaching out," as an expression of desired mutuality, refers to both a reciprocal relationship (for example, to feel mutual respect means to feel respect for one another) and something that is held in common, such as 'mutual values' (de Pina-Cabral 2013: 270). In making present relationships meaningful, Bilua people must recognize and act upon their mutual social obligations in order to perpetuate shared values and shared meanings (see also Strathern 1988: 322). Meaning is not intrinsic to the shared

knowledge of relationships, but is manifested through expressions of those relationships, continually shaping and recontextualizing their significance within the contemporary context.

In considering the concept's ontological significance and value to anthropology, Fabian identifies the different elements of knowledge and memory, acts of social acknowledgement and perceptions of moral responsibility that are evident in different understandings of recognition. He defines recognition through three German terms: *Erkennen*, an act of cognition, as in "I know this person/object when I see them"; *Wiedererkennen*, an act of memory, as in "I know this person because I remember them"; and *Anerkennen*, an act of acknowledgement, as in "I give this person/object the recognition they ask for and deserve." He also mentions a fourth element, in the sense of "recognizing a speaker," wherein to be recognized means to be given a voice (2001: 162).[5]

For Bilua people, several of these elements often converge. Bilua ideas of recognition make no distinction between expressions of acknowledgement (*Anerkennen*) and metaphors of cognitive engagement (*Erkennen*): respectful actions are expressions of love. The reverse is also figuratively true. Bilua people use a metaphor of sensory action to describe the failure to recognize one's relationships: a failure to love is expressed as a failure to 'see' or to 'hear' another person in the context of their connections as kin or as people who share the bonds of shared histories. In this metaphor, the absence of a particular sense (for example, vision or hearing) disables a person's ability to perform an action (exhibit compassionate love, treat someone as kin), describing them as figuratively unable to recognize the person before them. Such discourses play out regularly in different contexts.

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[5]The concept of recognition as 'voice' is also relevant when considered in colonial and post-colonial contexts of land tenure and development, by which local landowners attempt to make themselves heard as a means of acquiring both autonomy and access to viable economic resources (Chapter Four).

For example, although adultery is not uncommon in Bilua, it can cause significant trauma within small villages where people are closely related. In one situation, a man, Peta,[6] discovered that his brother-in-law, Mason, had been having an affair with his wife, Meri – a multi-divisive transgression involving the betrayal of both him and his sister Ani (Figure 1). While Mason paid compensation to Peta and Ani, the incident nonetheless caused a rift between their families. When Peta refused to abandon his adulterous wife (largely against the wishes of his family), Mason, Ani and their two children had little option but to move in with their affines in a distant village. Bereft of his sister and faced with an extended family that was as distraught as him at the injustice of losing the daily presence of a much-beloved member of their family, Peta publicly confronted Mason in tears, crying, "Do you not *see* me? [7] Is your wife not my sister?"

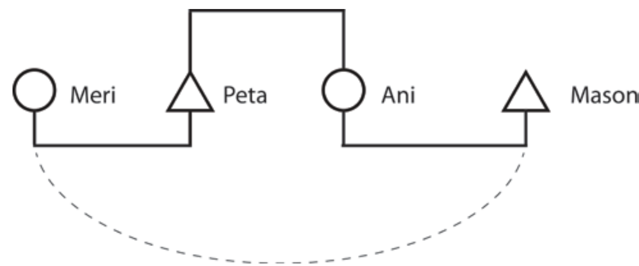

Figure 1 – Relationship between Peta and Ani

In this outburst, the husband expressed his brother-in-law's blatant disrespect for his wife and affines as metaphorical blindness: by failing in his socially defined obligations of behaving in a morally acceptable way, the adulterer had ceased to 'see' the kin relationships in which he was entwined. Instead of addressing his personal betrayal, Peta stressed Mason's failure to meet his obligations as a member of his family, including that of recognizing the most basic requirements of their relationships – acknowledging Peta's

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[6]Where appropriate, I have used pseudonyms to protect the identities of certain individuals.
[7]The literal term for 'to see' (*aqea*) is often used to express recognition.

family as hosts, Peta's sister as his wife, and Peta as the husband of his lover. Bilua people challenge their kin and affines when confronted with blatant acts of disrespect. Each party requires acknowledgement and acceptance of their respective roles and relationships in order to live and work together, or at least to amicably coexist.

Despite the incident described above, Bilua discourses of recognition are not always negative. In other instances, emotive acknowledgement is positively recognized as memory (*Wiedererkennen*). In Bilua, the ancestors do not simply manifest themselves: they depend on "particular efforts to recognize and retain traces of them" in day-to-day life (Hagen 1999a: 177; see also Lindstrom 1990a and Akin 2004). Bilua people frequently recognize themselves in their collective memories of the past, highlighting the generosity of their ancestors in their willingness to allow others to settle and plant gardens on their land and responding to these memories with emotions of love. Yet, as Fabian (1999) notes, recognition as remembrance runs the risk of projection. He observes how European explorers frequently sought out the familiar in the strange, thereby 'recognizing' people and places from home in the African people and scenery they encountered (1999: 55). Similarly, in many ways the discourse of recognition of the ancestors is an idealization. The motivations of the ancestors cannot truly be known, and the values projected onto the past are precisely those that are seen to be lacking in the present. Thus, the 'generosity' of the ancestors can also be interpreted as a commentary on the present climate of land claims, whereby neighbouring lineages have been pitted against one another in establishing rights to logging royalties (Chapter Four).

Recognition and Exchange

Contemporary values and practices through which ancestral relationships and ideas are acknowledged are vital elements of *kastom*. In formal events of ritualized recognition, the performative presentation of speeches, food and shell valuables (re)create and (re)affirm longstanding relationships and obligations between giver and receiver, emulating the values and practices of the ancestors. For example, during meetings and public events, speakers begin by thanking God and formally acknowledging the presence of key elders and important people who are present. *Tanamu* (elder) is a term of respect that suggests qualifications of age, experience and local standing and is usually grounded in family or church membership. As the individuals with the closest connections to the ancestors, the presence of elders during group gatherings provides a necessary sense of authority that sanctions the proceedings and any important issues that may be discussed. Such connections transcend the moment and are symbolic of the continuation of the sacred. However, they also serve a more immediate purpose as a public expression of gratitude, and perpetuating the values that such acknowledgements entail. As Keir Martin notes of the Tolai of Papua New Guinea, "making explicit a history of relations can be seen as an acknowledgement for the debt that people owe to those to whom they are related for their very person" (2007: 289).

During chiefly inaugurations (*papupapu*), bridewealth exchange (*rorotato*) and land 'registration' feasts (*pikezato*), people present pigs and shell money along with detailed verbal acknowledgements of their relationships with the receivers and explanations of the significance of the exchange in further cementing that relationship. Clamshell valuables (known as shell rings or shell money) are an important part of barter and ceremonial exchange throughout the New Georgia Group (Hviding 1996: 93l; Schneider 1996; Thomas 2003; Aswani and Sheppard 2003). They can be understood as material symbols

of recognition as well as illustrative and narrative symbols of relationships between groups joined through land and marriage (Chapter Eight). They can be material representations of specific social history, used in transactions such as land rights (in the present) or as payment for participation in raiding (in the past). In both contexts, shell valuables are potent manifestations of recognition, symbolizing authority, alliance, shared history and support.

Bilua shell valuables come in several different types. The primary ones are *bakisa* and *takula*, which are still in regular circulation and usually feature in contemporary bridewealth exchange and land transactions.[8] *Bakisa* (or *maba bakisa*), marked by a natural orange or red stain,[9] are the most valuable form of shell ring, often associated with chiefs and bridewealth transactions. *Takula* (or *maba takula*) are very similar in appearance to *bakisa*, except that they are plain white and thus more readily available, making them the most common form of shell currency. A third form, *bokolo*, which are rounded shell rings worn as armbands, are also worthy of mention. They are now primarily used for adornment rather than for exchange, mainly worn by big women and functioning as a form of women's wealth.[10]

Unlike cash (*seleni*), shell valuables are used to carry forward ancestral authority in "contexts in which enduring relationships are created, strengthened or repaired" (Akin 1999: 110). Individual shell valuables may also be named and valued according to their

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[8]McKenzie (2007: 113–116) describes several other forms of shell valuables found on skull shrines in the Maravari and Iriqila regions. These include *bareke*, the largest form of shell ring, and *suri*, which are similar to *bakisa*, with two carved bird figures in mirror image protruding from the upper part of the ring. *Suri* valuables are particularly rare, having been pilfered from shrines because of their ornate design.
[9]*Bakisa* were made from the valve of the Tridacna shell, the source of their reddish colour. Because only one *bakisa* could be produced per shell, the value of a *bakisa* is significantly higher than that of a *takula* (Miller 1978: 291, cited in McKenzie 2007: 170).
[10]Writing in 1909, Hocart (ms. n.d.h: 989) notes that one *takula* was worth ten *bokolo* and that one *bakisa* was valued at between ten and twenty *bokolo*, depending on size and quality. In the context of present-day *kastom* transactions such as bridewealth exchange (Chapter Eight), a *bakisa* is carefully weighed and measured and its colour assessed to determine its value, most starting at SBD$50.

specific purpose as well as type. A shell ring associated with chieftainship and the passing down of *kastom* knowledge is sometimes known as *bulo* ('heart'), as a physical manifestation of the retiring chief's desire recognize a successor. Similarly, shell money specific to land transactions are called *jiku* ('treasure') in accordance with their shared purpose with the combined knowledge of genealogy, nut trees and shrines which tie people to land and to the landholders who conferred rights, which are also called *jiku*. In both cases, shell money serves as a powerful representation of rights which are demonstrated by the possession of these potent symbols of ancestral recognition.

Writing about nearby Roviana, which produced many of the fossilized clamshell rings that are circulated throughout the New Georgia Group, Tim Thomas's interpretation of shell money accords with Keane's notion of recognition and exchange, in which both objects and words are used together. The power of shell money, Thomas argues, is not in its exchange value but in its ability to elicit a response: shell money is therefore not a form of valuable but an exchange medium, facilitating relationships between different parties by enabling the value of recognition generated in action (2003: 232).

Specifically, the act of elicitation by one party is followed by acknowledgement (in the form of receipt) by the other. Thomas (2003) frames this process as "encompassment": the presentation of shell money is representative of the extension of the giver's agency, recognized in the act of acceptance. Through this acceptance, the giver is encompassed by a new set of relationships, or, in the case of compensation, reencompassed into previously existing ones existing ones (Thomas 2003: 240). As an index of power, shell money evokes responses that convey recognition of its value. By facilitating value through action, it indexes recognition by transferring agency from one person to another.

The highly ritualized contexts in which these performative acts of recognition take place make such transactions influential in the mediation of power dynamics. Keane

(1997) emphasizes the role of ritual and repetition in exchange, addressing the place of recognition in Anakalang power relationships. In contrast to Robbins, Keane describes recognition in terms of practice: as highly repetitive acts that affirm relationships of power and mutual dependence in contexts of highly controlled public exchange (1997: 20). As he argues, such exchanges also create contexts for relationships beyond the ritual, since "a common effect of ritual or 'formal frames' is to [...] force people to be aware of rules to be followed (and thus of the repeatability of past acts), of behaviours to avoid (and thus of potential consequences)" (1997: 17). Here, ritualized performative exchange is portrayed as an act of recognition, providing a framework for Keane to investigate representation as both action and objectification. Keane condenses signs, language, performance, exchange and ritual into a common category of representations. Notably, this category allows for a holistic interpretation of exchange: "words and things must be transacted together," the authority of speech and the economic power of goods each indexing the other to show the formation and acknowledgement of relationships (1997: 22).[11]

Exchange is also constituted as a mechanism for dispute resolution. In Bilua, a similar process of speech and acknowledgement often occurs during the payment of compensation, which returns opposing parties to equal footing (Chapter Eight). Even though full reconciliation is not always possible, the process of mediation and reconciliation is necessary in order to repair community relationships involving the disputing parties. Robbins describes dispute resolution as the process of mediating "the breakdown of mutual recognition" (2009: 50). While generally viewing gift-giving as constitutive of Melanesian personhood, the exception, he argues, occurs during dispute

[11]This view contrasts with Robbins' observation of the Urapmin, whom he says do not believe that speech can ever communicate what a person is thinking or feeling, and therefore, "verbal recognition carries no weight." For the Urapmin, "the task of communicating recognition falls wholly onto things" and recognition is communicated solely through gifts given and received (2009: 52–53).

resolution, where a restoration of agency, not identity, is the desired outcome. As with Bilua, Urapmin ideas of social order and well-being depend on the restoration of individual and group relationships – a process often requiring the realignment of individual and communal values that is ideally achieved through mediation and exchange. Yet, even when relationships cannot be restored to previous states of amity, Bilua people seek reconciliation and 'peaceful relationality' above all else (Brown 2006; Chapter Eight).

Conflicting Ideas of Recognition

Unlike disputes, ideological conflicts are less readily resolved. Many Bilua people lament the behaviour of those who do not acknowledge each other as kin and connected beings and are instead driven to more selfish pursuits that inhibit their obligations to others. Such attitudes are seen to alter the dynamics of social relationships. Wealthy and socially-mobile Bilua leaders who are locally perceived as beholden to kin for their success are frequently accused of being blinded by personal ambition and greed. Any apparent unwillingness to share generously in wealth and opportunity is interpreted as an inability (or refusal) to 'see' the networks of social support that played a substantial role in elevating their status. Such leaders, in turn, are often conflicted between desire to use their own personal successes to further opportunities for their immediate family and increasing pressures to share with an expanding network of kin.

However, such displays of individualism are not always perceived in the same way. In his ethnography of the Tolai of Papua New Guinea, Keir Martin (2007) explores how an emerging elite has adopted a new moral personhood characterized by possessive individualism. He argues that Tolai businessmen (whom he calls 'Big Shots,' in contradistinction to 'Big Men') portray themselves as the proprietors of their own person and capacities, and therefore as possessing the moral right to determine the extent of their

participation in formal and informal acts of reciprocity. Martin reveals how conflicting expressions of personhood exacerbate the struggle that is present in mutual recognition. His assertion that possessive individualism is perceived as a moral right (or violation) conveys how competing ideas of personhood are entwined with practices of social reciprocity or personal agency – the honouring of one may be perceived as the violation of the other.

In Bilua, such individual claims for power are also manifested on the larger level of the lineage. While individual families hold demarcated plots of land for settlement and gardening, large territories are held by matrilineages, or *toutou* – "a named matrilineal descent group, all members of which claim descent from an apical female ancestor" (McKinnon 1972: 20). In explaining the meaning of *toutou*, Bilua people commonly say that 'woman is strong' or 'the side of the woman is strong,' qualifying phrases indicative of the significance of wider kin relationships beyond the structural boundaries of *toutou*. While important as an organizing descent principle, the matrilineage is not definitive of Bilua ideas of social belonging, which are fostered and grounded through a complex web of relatives who are all due recognition as cognatic kin (Chapter Three).

However, over time, the matrilineage has become the primary unit of discourse associating people and land, becoming more rigid and defined as a result of ideologies of land ownership which were introduced by colonial government and which are perpetuated by the contemporary Solomon Islands state in negotiations with foreign corporations. In return for state recognition of land claims (which are needed to pursue logging contracts with foreign companies), Bilua lineages are required to delineate their membership boundaries according to a unilineal system of descent and provide evidence of state-recognized forms of ownership, which are incompatible with inclusive traditional landholding practices (Chapter Four). While oral traditions celebrate how Bilua ancestors

shared land with a range of immigrant groups, formal legal registration of land title requires lineages to assert exclusive title, often alienating multi-generational alliances forged through the sharing of land.

The resulting dilemma is consistent with the pressures on Australian Aborigines generated by conflicting state and social recognition, as described by Elizabeth Povinelli (1998; 2002). In *The Cunning of Recognition* (2002), Povinelli presents an ethnographic analysis of Aborigines in the Northern Territory as a lens through which to write about white Australians and multiculturalism. She describes contexts in which Aborigines are simultaneously, and often irreconcilably, obliged to both the moral recognition of their "traditional" beliefs and values and the practical recognition of the state's power to define their economic livelihoods, their relationships with land and their participation in Australia's national identity (2002: 5). Here, political discourses of recognition have emerged in response to the perceived neglect of and injustice towards indigenous peoples, referencing processes of reconciliation and reparation.

The Cunning of Recognition is a play on Hegel's (1956) discussion of 'the cunning of reason,' by which he argues that actions that are declared to be carried out for the greater good often favour the objectives of one group over another. For Povinelli, 'reason' is the primary characteristic of late liberal discourse, which, she previously argued, "sets the hopes and passions of subaltern groups [in this case, Aborigines] to work for its own development" (1998: 4). She frames liberal multiculturalism cynically, as "a form of domination" that uses "social ethics and social technology to distribute the rights and goods, harms and failures, of liberal capitalist democracies" (2002: 6–7).[12] By this, she

[12]Povinelli's portrayal of Australian multiculturalism pertains to relationships between Australian Aborigines and what she calls "white Australians." She has been criticized for not considering the Australian immigrant experience, as well as for her omission of several key Australian works on the histories of Australian multicultural policies (Miller 2002; Merlan 2003). She has also been accused of misjudging Aboriginal agency, dichotomizing the Aboriginal response to the state in terms of "resistance/cooption" (Moses 2011, cited in Merlan 2014).

means that the social and cultural identities of Aborigines are influenced by the state, which attempts to compartmentalize the characteristics of Aboriginal culture, demanding evidence of traditional beliefs, practices and dispositions before granting land titles or accepting certain elements of "customary law" at court. Aborigines are called on to "perform an authentic difference" in exchange for cultural recognition – "the good feelings of the nation and the reparative legislation of the state" (2002: 6). I use Povinelli's work to contextualize the different and conflicting obligations many Bilua perceive between state concepts of exclusive land ownership and customary ideas of shared land as a means of forging relationships between landholders and settlers (Chapter Four).

As I show, Bilua people make membership choices as part of larger kin groups and communities, fulfilling social obligations in exchange for nurturance and material support. They are simultaneously engaged in ideologies of personhood that are defined in terms of relationality rather than individuality (e.g. Strathern 1988). In the next section I outline some of the different types of relationships that are prominent in Bilua discourses of recognition.

Constructions of Sameness, Constructions of Difference

Recognition ideologies are framed through the categories of same people (*omadeuma maba* – 'one people') and different people (*edoloma maba*). These categories illustrate the contextual closeness or distance that comes to the forefront when relationships come into conflict. Through their grounding in the triadic relationship of people, land and ancestors, individuals establish and are caught in networks of obligation and support in pursuing idealized forms of intersubjective belonging. In such contexts, memories of ancestral connections substantiate or contextualize the ties of kinship and entanglement established

over generations, through which people do or do not acknowledge reciprocal relationships of obligations and support.

Michael Scott (2007) describes how Makiran people, on the other side of the Solomon Islands, frame categories of sameness and difference in relation to autochthony. People who are *auhenua*, or autochthonous to the island, are contrasted with those who are *awataa*, in-marrying affines of *auhenua*, and *mahuara*, through-faring strangers, such as doctors, nurses and anthropologists. The latter are often collapsed into the single category of *sae boboi*, 'people from elsewhere' (2007: 7–8). In Bilua, *edoloma maba*, 'different people,' variably refers to 'marriageable people' (non-kin) and 'people from elsewhere.' However, unlike Makira, the absorption of autochthonous landholding lineages by migrant groups in Bilua means that the majority of descendants of migrant peoples claim land rights through their ancestral connections to the original landholders, rather than to the land itself (Chapter Two; see also McDougall 2004).

Both landholders and settlers are subject to particular codes of behaviour towards one another. As on Makira, Bilua settlers are expected to live quietly on landholders' land and follow their lead "without provoking them to unseemly assertions of authority," and landholders to not embarrass settlers by reminding them of their dependent relationship on the land (Scott 2007: 9). However, in both cases, the relationship with different groups has resulted in highly entangled inter-lineage connections characterized by exogamous marriages, cooperative exchange practices, and accounts of how representatives of one matrilineage came to be settled on the land of another (Scott 2000: 61; Chapter Two). As Scott notes,

> Just as it is necessary to know one's autochthonous history in order to know where one is *auhenua*, it is equally necessary to know the extent of one's social entanglements in order to know to whom one is bound by substance, reciprocal obligation, material support, and love (2000: 61).

Because landholding lineages needed exogenous people for the continuation of thriving populations, Bilua historical discourses commonly centre on the arrival of immigrant lineages, as well as the 'captured kin' who were described as a primary incentive for inter-island raiding (Chapter Two). Lineages intermarry and forge multi-sided connections through sharing land, and affiliations and belonging become diffuse and scattered through networks of kinship, church and community. These obligations and networks of support are not only created in the present but also substantiated by kin and affinal relationships over generations. In particular, land is claimed and reclaimed through historical narratives, evoking connections to ancestral relationships with other lineage groups and settlement stories. Likewise, ancestral affiliations are grounded in the landscape, as certain rocks, valleys and skull shrines (repositories for the skulls of kin and sacred places to communicate with the ancestors) become emblematic not just of lineages but also of group alliances (Chapter Four).

Taboos against discussing the status of landholders are lingering reminders that in the past, people endeavoured to promote mutuality and equal standing between landholders and immigrants in order to ensure amity and social reproduction (Chapter Two and Four). However, at present, differences are brought to the forefront in competing land disputes over central control of logging resources and its promise of development. While Hviding (1993, 2002), McDougall (2005) and Scott (2007) have examined the problems that arise from attempts to clarify hierarchical relationships between landholders and settlers, in Bilua, past ambiguities have also presented opportunities for settler groups to make claims as inheritors of land – frequently a source of tension in land disputes, which have become increasingly frequent given the new role of land as resource (Chapter Four).

Recognition is an expectation of both landholders and settlers. Ancestral connections can only be reinforced in the present through the acknowledgement of ties between

descendants, including the obligations and respect they entail. The extent to which these relationships are recognized and renewed ensures their continuity, creating networks of support on a day-to-day basis and, more broadly, evoking economic sponsorship during significant events requiring feasting, the exchange of shell money and substantial labour, such as chiefly inaugurations, the solidification of rights to land, and marriage and mortuary ceremonies. As Godelier notes, "the land nourishes men, but men by their flesh fatten the land that they leave to their descendants" (1998: 10, quoted in Sahlins 2011: 4). Such is the cycle of interrelationship between people, land and ancestors across the Pacific. As McKenzie (2007) notes, in Bilua, when a founding female of a foreign lineage arrived in the region and married a man from an established matrilineage, upon her death, her skull was placed on the skull shrine belonging to her husband's matrilineal descent group. The foreign woman's lineage was described as 'the children' of the established lineage, and this protective relationship was symbolically acknowledged by the placing the skulls together (2007: 164–165).[13]

Sharing land helps to constitute the multi-generational relationships between 'same' and 'different' people as distinctions of distance and degree rather than kind. Different people are people who are potential partners for marriage and having children; therefore, different people are potentially same people who have not yet become kin.

Kin and Prospective Kin

It is this potential for kinship that makes relationships between same and different people provisional and tangled. As Pitt-Rivers (1973) describes, both kin and non-kin relationships share the potential for amity. This potential is actualized in Bilua through the

[13]These skulls were eventually moved when a new lineage skull shrine site became established (McKenzie 2007: 165).

sharing of land. Pitt-Rivers draws this shared potential for amity from Fortes, who defined it as "sharing without reckoning" (Pitt-Rivers 1973: 99). This definition of amity explains how relationships both between kin and between friends are moral relationships, committing the individual to acts of generosity, through which they forgo self-interest in favour of and for the sake of another (1973: 90). Much like the Western Solomons taboos against speaking about the inequality of host–guest dynamics on land, a power relationship exists in Pitt-Rivers' description of giving that goes undiscussed. As "the full significance of marriage alliance lies in the kinship it creates" (1973: 91), so in Bilua, the sharing of land can be distinguished by the necessary amity between same and different people, already friends by the necessity of alliance, both as possible friends and possible kin. Pitt-Rivers likens friendship to a "free gift" bound by "attachments of the heart":

> We may well ask then, what is the 'free gift' free of? It would appear that is free of any jural obligation. It is an act of homage [...] the donor accompanies the gift so that all gifts are, over and above their economic value, gifts of self, for they remain morally attached to the giver. Therefore though they are, and must be, conceived as free of obligation they create a relationship of amity which must receive recognition (Pitt-Rivers 1973: 99).

After making this point, Pitt-Rivers explains that, by 'recognition,' he is referring to the French composite of 'gratitude,' which he sees as necessary to acknowledge the gift of proffered amity in order to avoid humiliating the donor. This is a shared sentiment expected by 'different people,' who in Bilua were expected to express gratitude for the 'love' extended to them by being allowed to settle on land. These sentiments become visible in contemporary land disputes, and even in relationships between Maravari Methodist and United congregations sharing the same church building (Chapter Five). Pitt-Rivers' passage expresses a certain irony in the altruism of the "free gift," which "must be conceived as free of obligation." It is not the physical gift but rather the recognition of the relationship that must be reciprocated in the transaction through gratitude.

Participating in Partibility

Like Pitt-Rivers (1973), Strathern (1988) argues that both kin and non-kin relationships can be conceptualized through Mauss's metaphor of the gift, which she uses to explain sociality as constitutive of the Melanesian person. She contributes to this argument by elaborating on what 'gratitude' or 'recognition' means within the Melanesian context. While kin relationships are jural in the sense that they are subject to obligation, they are also moral, reliant on the giver's willing participation in mutual generosity and its acknowledgement. Hence, the rules and obligations that Pitt-Rivers assumed to frame kin relationships have no meaning if they are not followed (except in so far as this is itself meaningful). Failure to follow normative rules of behaviour carries consequences for people as contributing members of society as they risk being excluded from support networks. In Bilua, while moral lapses can be atoned through compensation, the closer the kin (i.e. the greater a role they play in an individual's social personhood), the more difficult these lapses are to reconcile (Chapter Four). Contemporary kin groups frequently complain of the problems created by situations like incest, usually attributing their frequency to young people's indifference towards and reckless treatment of kin. After a series of hearings regarding young people in the village who had engaged in sexual relationships with members of their extended kin, the elders of one *toutou* gathered the descendants of their shared lines (those who were connected to them matri- or patrilaterally) for a meeting to appeal to their younger members. As one elder lamented:

> This is our suffering:[14] listen, every young brother and sister, and every niece and nephew.[15] Today we have no money. Our purses are empty [from paying compensation]. So we would like to speak to every young brother and sister and

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[14]This was said as "*Koi kio an̲a ko matu ma tubu tubu*," which translates more accurately as "These are our many sores/boils" – an example of how the absence of recognition is often conveyed through sensory metaphors. In this instance, emotional pain caused by illicit sexual relationships between kin is communicated through an expression of physical pain and sickness inflicted on the *toutou* as a whole.

[15]This was said as "*Kiada ma visi poso ni apakora poso*." As with the case of the man and his brother-in-law, the elder is drawing attention to their relationships to one another rather than simply addressing them as individuals.

> every niece and nephew here that do not know how to play and be well together. Our [compassionate] love and our knowledge are on one path. Today we follow two paths in our understanding, as if we were a different [separate?][16] *toutou*. We are like a different *toutou* now because we do not follow the shared path of our blood. Heed our words. Follow what your elders tell you, and then we will all lead a good life.

Two points of difference are alluded to in this speech: the diverging paths of understanding between the customary ways of the elders and the young, and how 'same people' become 'different people' by failing to treat one another as kin (in this instance, by engaging in inappropriate sexual relationships with one another). The potential of 'a good life' lingers promisingly in the future, attainable if people amend their behaviours and return to 'the shared path of their blood' (the path or the respectful ways of their ancestors towards their kin). Significantly, while the word *pitaso* commonly refers to contentious sexual relationships between people considered too closely related to marry (and, in some cases, adultery), its literal meaning is 'division,' referring to the *effect* of the act rather than the act itself.[17] By treating one another as if they were 'different people' (marriageable people), young people threatened to break the lineage into two separate lines.[18]

Drawing on these ideas, the failure to participate in and acknowledge kin relationships carries implications for understandings of personhood and the relationship between the individual and society. De Pina-Cabral (2013) has recently investigated different constructions of mutuality in anthropological usage by distinguishing and drawing connections between Strathern's (1988) concepts of dividuality and partible personhood. Strathern's influential theory of Melanesian personhood constructs a person as a 'dividual': a social microcosm, the plural and composite site of the relationships that

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[16]The word '*padoma*' was used here, instead of '*edoloma*' ('different'). *Pado meqora* means 'only child,' so the meaning suggests that they act as two lineages which are 'separate' or which 'stand apart' from one another.

[17]While the Bilua word for the act of incest is *kabio,* during my fieldwork, incest was almost exclusively referred to as *pitaso*, an expression of incest's divisional consequences for the lineage.

[18]Oral histories describe *pitaso* as a common reason for lineages splitting into two separate lines in the past, and several lineage migration stories begin with how their ancestors 'ran away' from incestuous kin to settle in Bilua. The metaphorical aspects and logistical effects of *pitaso* will be covered in depth in Chapter Three.

produced that person (1988: 13). In being multiple, a person is also partible, an entity that can dispose of parts in relation to others (Strathern 1988: 185). In addition, if a divisible person is composed of others, it is necessarily in a participatory sense.

Drawing on Strathern, Sahlins defines a kinship system as a "manifold of intersubjective participations, founded on mutualities of being" (2011: 10). These participations can be explained by Strathern's notion of unmediated partiality:

> Through mediated relations, items flow between persons, creating their mutual enchainment [...] Through unmediated relations, one person directly affects the disposition of another towards him or her, or that person's health and growth... Despite the absence of mediating objects, these latter interactions have the form of an 'exchange' in so far as each party is affected by the other; for instance, a mother is held to 'grow' a child because the child, so to speak, also 'grows' her (1988: 178–179).

This unmediated mode of exchange constitutes what Strathern calls "gift exchange without a gift" (1988: 179). While Robbins notes that the human subject is created through material reciprocity, for Strathern, the gifting of obedience, respect, and other expressions of shared being reveal the formation of the partible person not as a given, but as something that must be actively reinforced through mutual relationships of dependence and support. Recognition, in this sense, implies the willing participation in mutually constituting relationships – the 'gift exchange without the gift.' Therefore, recognition addresses key anthropological concepts of sociality such as 'selfhood', 'personhood', 'community' and 'agency' by providing the rationale not only for the progression from individual desire to mutual dependency (see Honneth 2008: 89) but also for *being*.

The reconstruction of cultural norms through recognition is grounded in nostalgic ideas about the past, present behaviours being situated in and judged against an idealized past entailing values of respect (*pan̲ao*), love (*roquano*) and shame (*qurato*) (Chapter Three). Belonging in this sense has less to do with a bounded place than "an imagined state of being or a moral location" (Gupta and Ferguson 1997: 38).

In constructing this belonging through acts of recognition, Bilua people make choices as part of larger kin groups and communities, fulfilling social obligations in exchange for nurturance and material support. My emphasis on cultural ideas and values attempts to engage the dynamism implicit in recognition as reflective of the actively engaged choices made in the context of everyday constructions of self and others and the constant reinforcement of social responsibilities between individuals and between groups. On a wider scale, these choices have influenced the broader ideologies of belonging and identity that have been written into the historical landscape of Bilua, and more widely, Vella Lavella and the New Georgia Group. Understanding how Bilua people perceive and reconcile everyday acts of recognition with these larger historical processes is a primary focus of this thesis.

Development of Fieldwork

This study is based on eighteen months of ethnographic field research (September–March 2007 and November 2007–November 2008), primarily in the village of Maravari, Vella Lavella Island, Western Solomon Islands, an island which has a population of 12,648 people (Solomon Islands Population and Housing Census 2009). Using Maravari as a base, I made frequent research visits to other villages in the Bilua area of Vella as well as elsewhere on the island, and spent time with Bilua wantoks (derived from Eng. 'one talk,' referring to extended family members) in the national and provincial capitals of Honiara and Gizo.

I arrived in May 2006 under the auspices of the Bilua Bifoa archaeological research project. At the time, a team from the University of Auckland and the University of Otago, led by Drs Peter Sheppard and Richard Walter, were completing the Vella Lavella portion of an archaeological investigation of areas of the New Georgia Group. Part of my task was to record oral histories and genealogies from the Bilua region. Given the diverse history of

raiding, migration and exchange between islands in the New Georgia Group and the resulting diversity of Vella populations, I was interested in an ethnohistorical examination of identity practices in the region. Aware that 'identity' was a broad – and perhaps unworkable – topic in its initial formulation, my objective was to allow myself to be guided by my participants and to avoid setting too many restrictive paradigms early on.

Being part of a collaborative effort had both positive and negative effects on my fieldwork. The broader details of my research project determined that I would receive a research permit through the project's association with the Solomon Islands National Museum, and the archaeological team leaders had already made arrangements for me to live with a family who would build a house for me to use during my stay. Given their previous experiences working with the archaeologists, Bilua people, and particularly chiefs (*lekasa*), had already developed particular expectations about my research, including ideas about how I would work and who I would work with. These were not easily reconciled with social anthropological methods of participant observation. My assertions that my work was 'tea and biscuit,' a phrase I used to describe the informal social context of my methods – that of conversing with tea, biscuits and betel nut on mats and on the raised verandas of the families I visited – did not accord well with the initial notion that I should have an office, from which I would call upon *lekasa* to visit and recite their genealogies for me to commit to paper.

It is significant that Bilua people, and the people of Maravari in particular, are familiar with visiting researchers. Aside from the team of archaeologists, Maravari had hosted the cultural geographer John Mackinnon in 1969–70 and the linguist Kazuko Obata in 1997–1998. The neighbouring villages of Uzaba and (further removed) Valapata were the field villages of Ellen Woodley, a researcher studying indigenous ecological knowledge in 1999–2000. People's familiarity with such a range of different researchers led to many assumptions about the goals and methods of my work. At different points, I was a sign of

status, an inconvenience, a source of financial income, a photographer and videographer, a spokesperson and, after the 2007 earthquake, a potential access point to sources of external foreign funding.

Despite these expectations, I developed good relationships with many people as ‘sister,’ ‘daughter’ and friend, people who invested countless hours helping with my project and making me welcome both in Maravari and around the island. I spoke at schools, helped out with community fundraising, attended church and chiefly meetings, planted a garden, learned to prepare local foods for feasts, attempted to weave baskets and string bags with other women, cracked Canarium nuts at harvest time, took part in women’s groups, participated in mortuary ceremonies, and proudly stood as a bridesmaid at my ‘sister’ Emmee’s wedding.

Throughout my fieldwork, my ability to gain proficiency in the Bilua language was somewhat hindered by the fluency of all but a few elders in Pijin. Indeed, like me, many affines, teachers, and residents from other islands also struggled with the vernacular. School is taught in both Pijin and English, and many children speak in a mixture of Pijin and Bilua outside of the classroom. After my initial six months of fieldwork, I was able to converse and conduct interviews in a mixture of Pijin and Bilua; nonetheless, by time I completed my fieldwork, while my comprehension of Bilua was good, my skill in speaking the vernacular remained conversational at best.

As the terms of my stay were negotiated by others prior to my arrival, for the first few months I lived in the house that was built for me in Mioko hamlet, under the care of the Methodist pastor and his wife. The pastor’s family had also co-ordinated accommodation for the archaeological team before my arrival, and I found myself the subject of a certain amount of envy by other families, particularly by women who wanted the financial opportunity to provide food and lodging for a foreign researcher. It did not take me long to

realize that strained relationships between several families and the geographical layout of the village would inhibit me from developing relationships with much of the village. After three months, I negotiated a move across the Maravari River to live with a family in Berao hamlet. The new location made me more accessible to a whole range of new people on the other side of the river; in addition, the fact of moving in with a United Church family opened up contacts for me among a wider spectrum of residents.

When I returned to Maravari to begin my second round of fieldwork in November 2007, several changes affected my fieldwork and my living situation. First, a magnitude 8.1 earthquake three weeks after my departure had damaged or destroyed many buildings, rendering the school and church unusable. This exacerbated a number of pre-existing tensions between church congregations over the land on which the church was built (Chapter Five). The limited supply of government and internationally sponsored aid and resources also revealed other village divisions that had not previously been apparent. Moreover, the abandonment of villages during the quake and the retreat to the safety of the bush revealed spatial ideologies differentiating the domains of people and the domains of spirits and ancestors (Chapter Six).

In a different and much more personal context, the eldest son of my previous host family had become terminally ill, making my presence in their house burdensome. I was grateful to Walter Semepitu, the father of my good friend Amallyn Moses, for stepping in and offering me a house for myself and a small plot of garden land in Tenabesi hamlet, between the United and Methodist rest houses in the middle of Maravari village. I stayed in this house for the remainder of my fieldwork. Receiving no immediate financial gain, Semepitu was not subject to the envy experienced by the other families who had housed me. Moreover, whether intentionally or unintentionally, his actions appeared consistent with the contemporary idealization of pre-Christian chiefs who are credited with granting settlement

and garden land to foreigners, the ultimate expression of 'love' (Chapter Four).[19] Having a house to myself allowed me the freedom to cook for myself or travel elsewhere in the village as I saw fit. It also meant that I was accessible to people throughout the village who wanted to visit.

Maravari village has twelve lineage chiefs, and in my first period of research in the village, I recorded the oral histories of these lineages and their arrival on the island. In most of these accounts, these ancestors were foreigners who came or were brought (willingly or unwillingly) to the island, were adopted locally, and inherited land rights. In some cases lineages had a 'caretaker chief' (*miduku ko vaelo*) from another lineage. In others, lineages became entangled with one another, with people re-ascribed to another line to sustain that lineage. All of these testimonies caused me to reconsider what I knew about the boundaries of kinship and matrilineal lines of descent, as it became apparent that relationships *between toutou* (lineages) had their own histories and were as significant as those within the lineages themselves.

In recording genealogical histories and oral traditions, I was quite often directed towards particular chiefs. Even those who claimed to know these lineages seldom agreed to give me information because they determined it was not their right to do so. In this process, I learned much about Bilua ideas regarding the ownership of knowledge and intellectual property. Also, even where some people disagreed with lineage histories as they were outlined to me, they almost always deferred to the authority of the chief who was seen as holding rights to that knowledge.[20] In several instances, I was directed to a 'caretaker chief' who described these descent lines. At any rate, the strategies employed by chiefs and men

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[19] The esteem in which Semepitu was held as a 'quiet' and 'gentle' man made him a friend to many lineage factions, even during land disputes, and his generosity to me even in the face of my prolonged stay in this compound was illustrative of his character.

[20] In several cases, people retracted their stories when they heard that a particular chief had given me a different version.

in positions of leadership were strongly revealing of the chiefly negotiation of knowledge and power (Chapter Seven).

During my time in Maravari, I attended church services regularly, dividing my time between the Wesleyan Methodist Church, the United Church and the Christian Revival Crusade. Church relations represent an additional layer of complexity in how people negotiate community relationships, particularly as the relationships between denominations (particularly the first two) were often turbulent and fraught with a history of disputes over finances, doctrine and membership. The fragile relationships between these three congregations in Maravari village brought me to reflect on the findings concerning Christianity of past studies in the Western Solomons, particularly those of Dureau and McDougall, who both take Christianity as one of the central pillars in their work. In particular, compared with the dualistic metaphors of 'time of darkness' / 'time of light' that Dureau (1994) recorded on Simbo to define differences between the pre- and post-Christian eras, Bilua people appear far more critical of Christian ideologies, possibly due to the history of dispute between Bilua congregations (Chapter Five). While the churches provided alternative sources of support, they also provoked community divisions, as the ideals of 'Christian love' were strongly at odds with the ongoing inter-congregational tensions over financial imbalances, land and members. Indeed, multiple Christianities represent yet another aspect of 'entanglement' for Bilua people to manoeuvre, presenting idealizations of 'one people under God,' but also complexities as a site of the foreign and the local and of unity and division between families, lineages and communities.[21] The existence of these disputes, and the fact that they were largely fought along lineage lines, suggests that these

[21] This appears to be a relatively recent phenomenon. In 1972, McKinnon commented on being struck by "the very poor opinion most people had of the period that preceded the establishment of the Methodist mission" (1972: 5). This was substantiated for me by several elders who remembered similar sentiments from their childhood. It was not until the late 1990s that multiple village congregations provoked community divisions over land.

Christianities were an extension of larger issues already present (Dureau 1994; McDougall 2004).

Rather than a time-of-darkness / time-of-light divide, Biluans frequently express nostalgia for the pre-Christian period, juxtaposing the 'love' expressed by their ancestors in allowing others to settle and take up usufructuary rights on their land against the present context of land disputes caused by logging rights (Chapter Four). Because land is such a contentious issue on Vella, I focus on how people talk about it in reference to their relationships with one another, and how social relationships are initiated, and reinforced, *around* land – specifically, how they are affected when land becomes an economically lucrative resource, such as in the context of logging. While I recorded genealogies and settlement stories, I was highly aware of the loaded nature of the act of committing these stories to paper. Indeed, while some chiefs mistrusted researchers and were hesitant to discuss histories, others were enthusiastic, seeing the opportunity to validate their version of history by having it officially documented. Also, while some people are acknowledged as having the authority to tell the histories of these lineage lines, it does not necessarily mean that the stories themselves are authoritative. As Berg (2008: 9) notes, accounts of lineages and descent lines are highly subject to real-world interests and partiality – something I became aware of when witnessing contesting land claims. I became interested in how people responded to contesting claims, privately making their opinions known without challenging chiefly authority. Recognition means acknowledgement and respect, notwithstanding individual differences or opinions.

Over eighteen months of fieldwork, in their entirety, these experiences were diverse and dynamic, yet they set the scene for my analysis of Bilua understandings of recognition. Throughout this time, recognition surfaced as a common theme to explain the processes of forming and renewing relationships through the enactment of knowledge and memory.

As Merlan notes with reference to state reconciliation practices with Australian Aborigines, any analysis that portrays recognition as normative practice is liable to contain considerable ambiguity (2014: 297). And yet, within that ambiguity lies the awareness of shared history, the recognition of which provides considerable opportunity to convey goodwill and strengthen relationships through acknowledgement, reciprocity and gestures of common understanding. For these reasons, the study of recognition has much to contribute in the ongoing anthropological discussions of social personhood, *kastom* and identity.

Overview of Chapters

This thesis is divided into eight chapters. In Chapter Two, I situate the history and demography of the Bilua region within the larger context of Vella Lavella and the New Georgia Group. Describing the context in which pre-Christian migration and warfare shaped the current diversity of populations, I explain how Bilua rights to land were defined through host–guest relationships and their connection to the original landholding lineages. Here, I provide important context and comparison for the Bilua lament for an idealized past, the basis for contemporary ideology of the moral values of how things 'should' be – an underlying theme throughout this study. I consider the contexts in which these established lineages of foreign origin were seen as 'different people' and 'same people' and ask what this suggests about wider lineage, island, and national identities throughout New Georgia.

In Chapter Three, I draw on the work of Dureau and McDougall, juxtaposing the primacy afforded to the *toutou* in land issues against the everyday networks of mutual support and obligations characteristic of wider cognatic kin relationships. While matriliny is significant in regard to formal social organization and lines of descent, wider bilateral networks determine sociality and ideas of personhood and identity. Knowing these relationships and

making and maintaining distinctions between kin and non-kin is an important element of Vella social identity and provides a framework for moral behaviour.

In Chapter Four, I expand upon these inclusive and exclusive classifications of kin by examining contemporary ideas of land ownership as a relatively recent phenomenon in Bilua history. While land is of central significance in legitimizing the 'belonging' of lineage groups, it can also be the means of inclusion and exclusion, of unity and division, susceptible to manipulation as groups strive to define their relationships to each other geographically, historically and ideologically. In particular, the introduction of logging in the 1990s triggered a rash of land disputes across Vella and much of New Georgia as lineages sought to consolidate their entitlements to foreign investment by registering their territories (Bennett 1987; Hviding 1993; Scales 2003; Berg 2008). Through this process, ancestral ideas about sharing land are overshadowed in favour of the need to clarify and legally establish ownership and rights of entitlement (McDougall 2005). Continuing my argument from Chapter Two, how people remember, share and negotiate relationships through land is pivotal in shaping Bilua perceptions of morality because both the 'love' (*roquano*) exhibited by their ancestors in allowing different groups to settle and plant gardens on their territory, and the acknowledgement of this generosity by settlers through feasting, are emblematic of the moral idealizations of the past and representative of the disenchantment people feel regarding land disputes in the present.

This association between love and land has also surfaced in the framework of Bilua Christianities, and in Chapter Five, I investigate the roles of Christianity and the Church in influencing Bilua ideas of belonging, in both historical and contemporary contexts. As others have argued (e.g. Dureau 1994, McDougall 2004), New Georgians have typically understood and practiced Christianity quite distinctly from the way it was imposed upon them by missionaries. As a case study, I analyse the tensions between the Methodist and

United Church congregations within Maravari village and the role played by land, kinship and ancestors in challenging and establishing the public legitimacy of each congregation. My intention in this chapter is less to analyse the interpretation of Christian morals and values *per se* than it is to show how churches, as simultaneously foreign and localized institutions, have permeated Vella understandings of belonging, becoming a source of both integration and division. While different Christianities create divisions within villages, they also enable Bilua people to participate in new regional, national and international communities by engaging in ideologies of Christian fellowship, as they envision unities of 'one people under God.'

Since the introduction of the Church, coastal communities have come to be commonly seen as local symbols of stability and order and the bush as the domain of spirits and immoral behaviour. These associations of order and chaos were challenged in April 2007 when an earthquake destroyed many village houses across New Georgia. Forced to set up temporary inland shelters for several months out of fear of tsunamis, many people recounted strange stories and sightings of devol (spirits) in the villages, symbolic of the chaos and uncertainty experienced by many families after the earthquake. Drawing on several Bilua stories of spirits and ancestors, I analyze what these oral traditions reveal about local ideas regarding the social order and its inverse, and the respective places where people and spirits belong.

In Chapter Six, I show how discourses of land and ancestors are frequently intertwined and validated through interpretations of history, embodying potent moral symbols that are employed in dualisms of sickness/health and order/chaos, and representing the dichotomy between villages and "socially uncolonized spaces" (Levy, Mageo and Howard 1996: 20). As mediators between order and chaos, chiefs have continued to play an important role in Bilua communities. Bilua ideas concerning chieftainship vary from village to village

depending on the social histories of lineages and the complexities of the social entanglements between them, whose origins often extend back to their arrival on the island.

Chapter Seven addresses how the role of chiefs has changed since traders first came to Vella and how chiefs negotiate and balance obligations to their kin and community with their own ambitions for leadership and authority. I analyze how contemporary chiefs establish themselves and become high-profile public figures based on their abilities to bridge relationships with outsiders (such as influential chiefs and politicians on other islands, traders, missionaries and logging corporations) as much as through established lines of descent. Using oral and historical accounts to profile two prominent Bilua chiefs from the late 1800s and the present, I consider the changing ways in which chiefs have drawn on and modified local 'rules' of legitimacy, using access to external resources to expand and create longstanding relationships of patronage, dependence and obligation. Whether as middlemen with early traders, big men in the church, or contemporary businessmen and politicians, many chiefs have acted as mediators between local and foreign values, drawing on local rights to establish, manipulate and push the boundaries of accepted spheres of belonging and influence.

In Chapter Eight, I follow up on notions of community and social order by showing how ideas of belonging and enactment of social obligations as a practiced form of recognition play out in everyday dynamics. While belonging evokes the reciprocal relationship between the individual and the group, recognition is the process by which belonging is established through the enactment of shared ideas of respect and obligation. Social relationships between kin groups are symbolically enacted and re-enacted through transactions and discourses of exchange. Warfare, marriage ceremonies, compensation and feasting are conceptualized in the context of public transactions in which Biluans demonstrate their mutual desire to manifest and maintain social obligations between different groups. These

formal public exchanges of traditional and non-traditional forms of material wealth help maintain "peaceful relationality" (Brown 2006) by providing recompense for moral breaches and reinforcing the social obligations defined by shared understandings of community and "social entanglement" (Scott 2007).

Honouring these obligations is a strong component of Bilua ideas of morality and belonging. Discourses of 'straightening' (*koroto*) and 'covering' (*boroko*) illustrate the negotiation of public and private spheres of activity, including the regulation and acknowledgement of more informal social sanctions such as gossip and shaming. Moreover, these transactions act as *kastom* while simultaneously enabling people to manipulate the shifting boundaries of *kastom* practices. 'Putting down' shell money can enable people to talk about land, alter lineage lines or bestow chiefly authority without public recourse.

Throughout this study, I investigate how the settlement history of Bilua has emphasized the social entanglement of different groups, ideologically creating longstanding relationships of obligation, material support and love. Often volatile, these ties must be constantly reinforced and negotiated through recognition – the emotional and performative enactment of reciprocity that engages moral ideologies of respect and obligation and validates the mutual relationship between different groups and between groups and their members. These ideologies centre on local understandings of ancestors and ancestral values.

CHAPTER TWO – MIGRANTS, CAPTIVES AND HEADS: SOCIAL REPRODUCTION AND 'DIFFERENT PEOPLE'

> Dobeli was the last place I visited in Wella-La-Wella [Vella Lavella]. But let me add the following: the people of Wella-La-Wella and Renongo [Ranongga] are of the same race as in Rubiana [Roviana]. They are related to each other, men marry into Rubiana families, women marry into Renongo families and vice versa. They visit each other and one helps the other. Even the islands of Gizo, Kulambangra [Kolombangara] and Simbo belong to that group (Ribbe 1903: 254).

> In sum, the diverse and wide-ranging socio-political regional systems of precolonial Marovo, whether for warfare, exchange, or marriage, served to handle a multitude of 'other people' living beyond the horizon, by classifying them into subsets of enemies, allies, exchange partners, and even kin. In successful cases of the last kind, it seems that through a process of exchange, alliance, and finally marriage, distant groups were gradually defined as being of the 'same kind' (*meka tonu*, literally 'one purpose') as one's own group, and of 'one line' (*meka tuti*). Such groups were no longer 'other people,' a term that implies a status of 'non-kin.' Consequently, reliable alliance partners were obtained in overseas islands that were otherwise enemy country, and raiding and trading parties from Marovo could count on practical and spiritual support through the state of 'sameness' (Hviding 1996: 95).

Bilua is the southernmost and most densely populated region of Vella Lavella, Western Province, Solomon Islands. Four distinct islands and island groups make up the Western Solomons: the New Georgia Group, Choiseul Island, Santa Isabel Island, and the Shortland Islands. Vella Lavella is one of the westernmost islands in the New Georgia Group, a 300-kilometre chain of high volcanic islands and lagoon systems that includes the islands of New Georgia, Vella Lavella, Kolombangara (Duke), Ranongga, Gizo, Simbo, Rendova, Vangunu and Tetepare (McKenzie 2007: 10). Together with the islands of Choiseul and Isabel, the people of the New Georgia Group have been connected by a history of trade, migration, intermarriage and pre-Christian warfare.

The origin of the name Vella Lavella is uncertain, although it has generated much speculation on the part of foreigners and locals alike. Some locals believe that it originated from Veala, a district near Paramata, which some oral traditions describe as one of the first

places to be settled on the island (Itoh 1967). Woodford (1905: 38) and Rivers suggest that it may be a foreign variation of Vekavekala, the latter describing this as “the name for the whole island used by people of certain other islands” (1912: 461; this theory was shared by some locals as well). Hocart refers to the island as Ghore Ghore (ms. n.d.e: 850, 983), a name corroborated during my fieldwork by one elder, who said that the name was in relation to Ndughore, an alternate name for Kolombangara (Duke).

Similarly, Vekalo or Vekala is sometimes referred to as the original name for the language of the island (Berg 2008: 39; Obata 1998: 28), the name of the northwestern Iriqila dialect as called by people in that region (Berg 2008: 39), or simply, a word meaning ‘language.’[1]

The Bilua language presently has around ten thousand speakers with five dialects corresponding to different geographical regions: Bilua, Kurikuri, Java, Dovele and Jorio (Woodley 2002). Notably, it has been of interest to linguists because, despite the extensive shared history of the New Georgia Group, it is a relatively isolated non-Austronesian language (NAN) surrounded by Austronesian languages (Map 2).[2] Of the eighty-five vernacular languages in the Solomon Islands, only four, though possibly seven, are classed as non-Austronesian: Bilua, Lavukaleve, Savosavo and Baniata – also referred to as Central Solomons languages (Greenberg 1971) – and, more uncertainly, Reefs (Aiwo), Santa Cruz and Nanggu in the Reefs–Santa Cruz family. Todd (1975) points to a more direct relationship between Bilua and Savosavo. Although they are the most geographically isolated of the four languages, oral traditions strongly suggest a history of travel between Vella Lavella and Savo Island during raids and migration (Itoh 1967).

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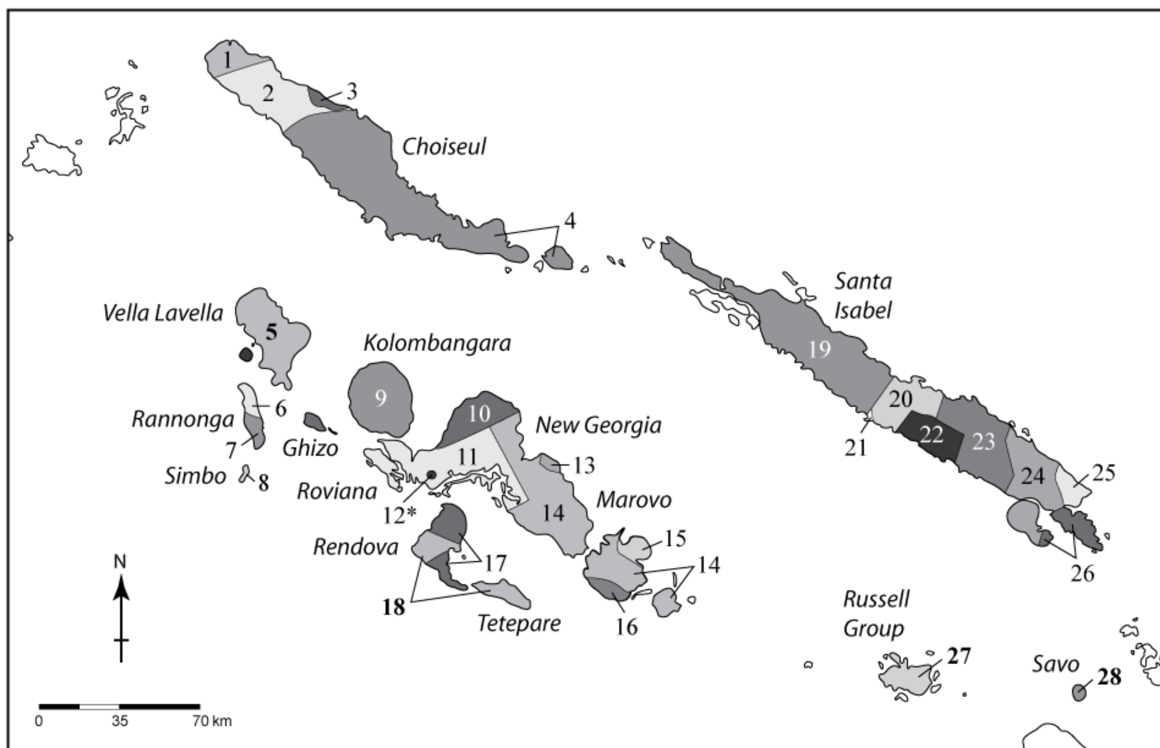
[1] This corroborates Allan (1957) somewhat in his association of Vekalo with both Vella Lavella and Ganonga (Ranongga).

[2] While non-Austronesian languages are also sometimes referred to as Papuan languages, the former is more accurate, as unlike Austronesian languages, they cannot be traced back to a single ancestral language. Hence this classification seldom reveals much other than not being Austronesian (Foley 1986: 2–3).

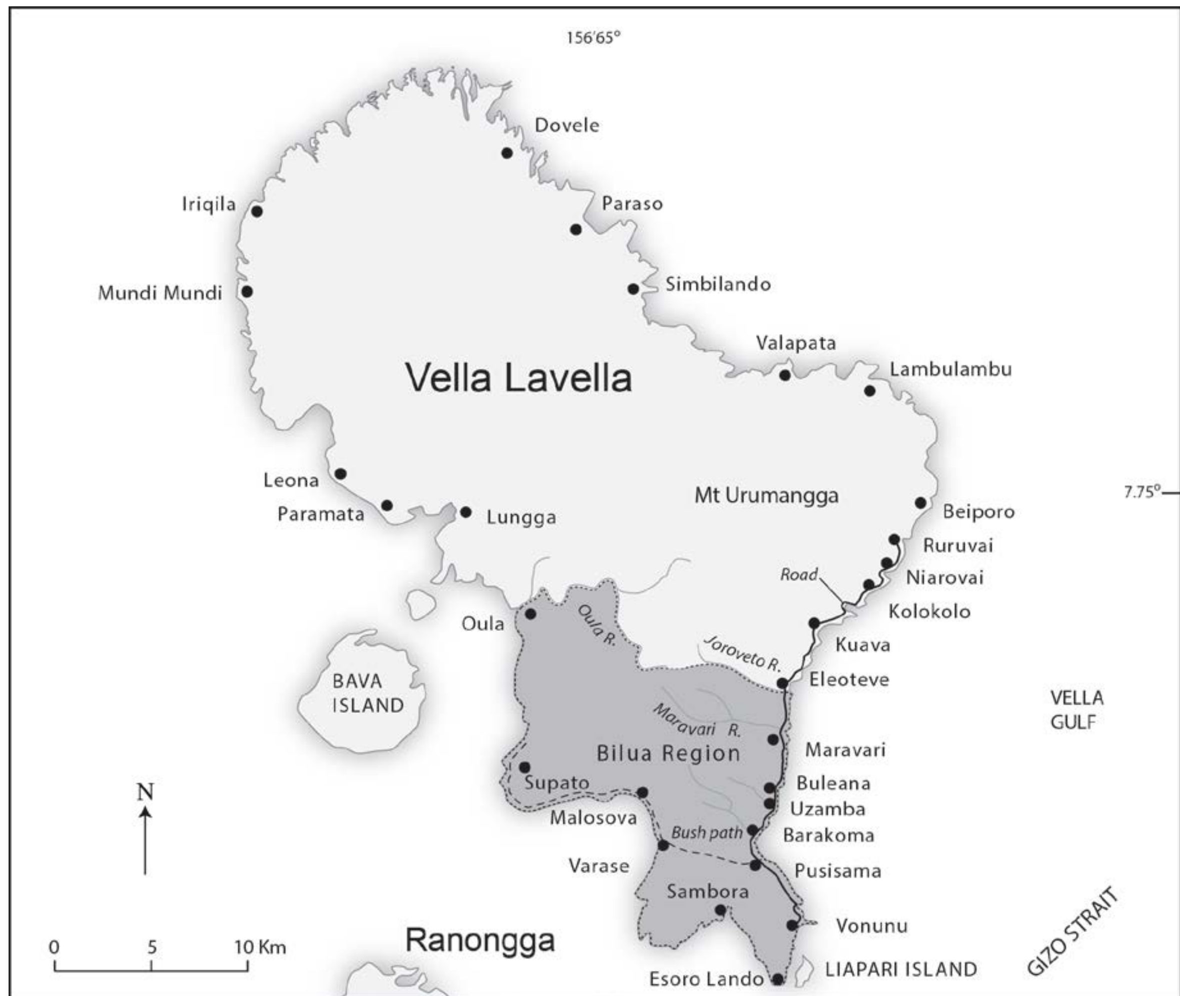
Politically, Vella Lavella is comprised of North Vella and Southeast Vella: two rugged, hilly areas geographically divided by a broad valley running across the island (Jackson 1978: 15). Historically, the Bilua region refers to the combined wards of Vonunu (Ward 7) and Mbilua (Ward 8), which have a combined population of 7,848 (Solomon Islands Population and Housing Census 2009).



1 Vaghua	8 Simbo	15 Mbarke	22 Zazao
2 Riro	9 Nduke	16 Vungunu	23 Blablanga
3 Varisi	10 Kusage	17 Ughele	24 Maringe
4 East Choiseul (5 Dialects)	11 Roviana	**18 Mbaniata**	25 Nggao
5 Mbilua	12 Kazakuru*	19 Kia	26 Bhugotu
6 Ghanongga	13 Hoava	20 Kokota	**27 Lavukaleve**
7 Lungga	14 Marovo	21 Laghu	**28 Savosavo**

Bold numbers indicate NAN languages; * indicates an extinct language.

Map 2 – Languages of the Western Solomons (Sheppard and Walter 2005: 4)



Map 3 – Vella Lavella Island and the Bilua Region (Illustration by Briar Sefton)

Situating Bilua

The term Bilua (or Mbilua) is polysemous. It has been used to refer to a subregion of the island of Vella Lavella, as an alternate name for the whole island, and as the name of its people and language. Like many place names on Vella, Bilua is a Choiseul word. Its meaning is 'place where the water runs' (from '-*lua*' meaning water). All contemporary Bilua settlements are situated on a narrow stretch of coastal plain about one hundred metres long, comprised of a shelf of broken coral overlying a submerged reef and rocky, cobbled beaches (Woodley 2002: 142; McKenzie 2007: 71–72). When I refer to Bilua, I mean the politico-geographical region in the southern portion of the island, an area that

spans fifty square kilometres, bordered by the Oula River in the west and the Joroveto River on the southeast coast (Map 3).

The establishment of Bilua as a culturally distinctive polity is largely rooted in the wider regional history. After the allied groups of Roviana and Simbo, Jackson describes Bilua as one of the most powerful factions in the pre-Christian history of the New Georgia Group (1978: 23). While Bilua people have historically engaged with people from neighbouring islands through exchange and intermarriage, warfare, in particular, demarcated Bilua in the historical record of the British Solomon Islands Protectorate (BSIP). The people of the Bilua region were known to early traders and colonial officers for their aggressive raiding practices, distinguishing them from the people of the northwestern Vella regions of Dovele and Iriqila, and regionally, from those of Roviana. The scattered settlement pattern of pre-Christian hilltop hamlets helped to protect them from coastal raiders and accommodated the shifting cultivation system, which required large areas of land for both production and fallowing (Woodley 2002: 138). The absence of a reef has meant that economically, people in Southeast Vella are largely restricted to deep-sea bonito fishing and were historically more dependent on horticulture than their contemporaries in North Vella.

Bilua's geographical proximity to other islands influenced its involvement in relation to early European visitors as well. Whalers first visited the New Georgia Group in the 1820s, and by the 1840s, traders arrived in search of bêche-de-mer and tortoise shell, which they exchanged for hoop iron and axes (McKinnon 1975: 293; Bennett 1987: 46). Exposure to traders in particular seems to have been influenced not only by geographical proximity but also by land and weather patterns. Ribbe (1903) noted the difficulty in finding anchorages north of the Joroveto River as the wind came from the north-east, east and south-east, producing a strong current in addition to a depth of at least fifty metres.

Given the sheltered anchorages of Uzaba and Vonunu, it is not surprising that traders tended to favour Bilua over northern parts of the island.[3] The influx of wealth spurred by trade also meant that men of lesser status were able to earn prestige by acting as mediators with traders, such as in the instance of Liqe Liqe chief Maghratulo (Chapter Eight).

Following the British suppression of raiding at the turn of the century, settlements moved from small, family-based hilltop hamlets to "corporate coastal villages" consisting of numerous allied yet distinct lineage groups (McKinnon 1972: 129). While matrilineages constitute the primary means of political organization of individual members, numerous overlapping networks of kin are found within villages. People have similar sentiments and obligations towards both their matri- and patrilineal kin, and closeness often has more to do with residence and interaction than with genealogical affiliation (McDougall 2004; Scheffler 1965 and 2001; Hviding 2003). Although virilocal residence is common, this too is largely variable and dependent on personal circumstance.

While migration to the coast contributed to the development of coastal copra plantations, it also removed people from their gardens as coastal soil was inadequate for agriculture, aside from some adapted species of nut trees. Woodley relates this settlement transition to the change from the traditional diet of taro to sweet potato, a crop requiring less attention to yield (2002: 140). In addition, the increased distance to swidden gardens (sometimes an hour or as much as three hours from coastal villages), coupled with an increased dependence on a cash economy supplied through copra and logging revenue, has had a significant impact on the routines of daily life. Many senior members of the community said that where once their ancestors worked their gardens daily, many people

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[3] McKenzie (2007: 125–128) notes that Maravari skull shrines contained significantly more European artefacts than Iriqila skull shrines. These artefacts included ceramic imitation shell rings produced by Europeans for trade (Bennett 1987: 85; Miller 1978: 291), as well as clay pipe bowls, glass buttons and beads, and metal gun parts, knife blades, buckles and axe heads.

now tend their gardens only once or twice a week, tending to different varieties of taro, cassava, banana, sweet potato, slippery cabbage, eggplant and snake beans. Reduced garden time and increased dependence on commercial staples such as bagged rice, tinned tuna and packaged Chinese noodles have created significant changes in local diets and daily activities and an idealization of the work ethic of the ancestors over the perceived 'laziness' of contemporary village life.

However, collective memories of the past are not only about how the ancestors worked the land but also how ancestral relationships between lineages were forged *through* land, creating the foundations for communities that exist today. Reconciling past and present is imperfect, often requiring negotiation of the sacred. While ancestral shrines are no longer maintained, they still exist as markers of territorial boundaries and features of the landscape that serve as powerful symbols of identity and connection to the past. Ancestors are remembered and valued through storytelling, moral stories, land inheritances, and '*kastom* medicines' that are incorporated in treatment alongside any available antibiotics and Christian prayer. Memories and ideas about the past provide a measure of continuity and change in everyday life. While *kastom* is nearly always described as belonging to, or characteristic of, an individual or a group of individuals (see also Bolton 2003: 6), it is constantly subject to debate, contestation and change (Lindstrom 2008: 165).

Reconciling the Past and Everyday Life

Very early in my fieldwork, I had a conversation with Lekasa Granville Sariki, who came to visit me on my veranda. As Head of the Maravari House of Chiefs, Sariki expressed more interest in my work than most, regularly visiting to inquire how my research was progressing. One day, when I asked him about some apparent inconsistencies I had observed in particular 'traditional' practices, he responded, "Sera, *kastom* does not

change." Leaning in towards me, he added, "But sometimes it can be 'burned' a little bit." This perplexing statement remained in my mind and went on to contextualize much of what I would encounter during my fieldwork. I was to hear references to 'burning' or 'bending' *kastom* twice more – once in the context of an old man using what was referred to as *kastom* medicine in tandem with holy water for the treatment of illness, and then again in the instance of a Dovele chief whose swearing in took place in Honiara instead of on his native soil.

Over time, I began to realize that what Sariki referred to as 'burning *kastom*' was the revision and readaptation of cultural knowledge, part of the responsibility of chiefs, who are simultaneously the guardians of traditional knowledge and the initiators of community change. Yet, on a different level, *kastom* can also be made malleable in the decisions, behaviours and opinions expressed in day-to-day life, through which people often aspire to the values of the past, yet are affected by the different motivations, concerns and issues of the present.[4] In both ritual and the everyday, *kastom* entails recognition because it is dependent on historical agents[5] who connect the present to the past through contemplation and meaningful action. Thus, if *kastom* constitutes the best qualities of the ancestors (Chapter One), then recognition is the process through which *kastom* is given meaning.

The analysis of tradition and Melanesian *kastom* has been a focus of debate and discussion within anthropological analysis since the early 1980s. Early analyses of *kastom* provided a much needed connection between the study of tradition and "the ways in which societies reproduce themselves, the ways in which culture and history interact to produce

[4] The distinction between the performance of *kastom* rituals by chiefs and the everyday values of *kastom* expressed in the community is made explicit by Martin (2013) in his ethnography of the Tolai, as I shall soon explain. However, for my purposes here, the malleability of *kastom* in both forms is notable.
[5] By this, I mean people who actively reflect on the past and select elements of ancestral practices, beliefs and behaviours that are seen as worthy of carrying forward in the present as resources to interpret and incorporate economic, political and cultural change.

change, and the role of human agency in both processes" (Turner 1997: 347). Tradition has been analyzed as 'invention' (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983), as a form of indigenous political empowerment (Lindstrom 1982; Tonkinson 1982), and has been called both a 'contentless symbol' (Keesing and Tonkinson 1982) and 'multiplicitous' (White 1993). In short, *kastom* is characterized by the same ambiguity that Merlan (2014) ascribes to recognition (Chapter One). Both concepts are expressed in diverse and culturally meaningful contexts, yet elude concrete definition beyond a culturally determined set of variables assembled in a historically situated context. Capturing the essence contained in this ambiguity has been an underlying objective of *kastom* analyses for the past thirty years.

As Ballard notes, histories are profoundly performative – "they exist in the present and are remade in the act of their communication" (2014: 96). In Bilua, *kastom* refers to distinctive features seen to derive from local precolonial practice. These range from the specifics of ritual to generalized social values and reciprocity in everyday life. Enacting *kastom* serves as a marker of place, family and identity. As a descriptor, *kastom* can be used to bestow local significance to an activity (like a *kastom* dance). In its active form, to 'work *kastom*' (wokem *kastom*) refers to ceremonial transactions involving the exchange of shell money and/or feasting (as with land, bridewealth and mortuary rituals) or the performance of medicinal or spiritual rituals incorporating knowledge of local flora and/or local spirits. Ceremonial transactions often require substantial funds, planning and people power to buy pigs and coordinate feasts for mortuary and land rituals. Martin describes how among the Tolai, the elite often saw themselves as having a major role in preserving *kastom* because they were the only ones with the money to sponsor ritual events, taking it as an opportunity to guard *kastom* (and by extension, the community) against "corrupting modernising influences" (2007: 286). In Chapters Eight, I describe how Lekasa Lionel

Alex coordinated three separate feasts over as many years. While some people quietly noted Alex's own level of personal investment in the feasts, which were designed to honour his deceased grandfather and his living chiefly uncle (whom he would eventually succeed), very few people possess the financial or political resources to host important and multiple acts of ritual in such a short period of time. In enacting ancestral values and practices, such events serve as powerful manifestations of *kastom* and thus as assertions of moral personhood on the part of the host.

Present understandings of morality and moral practices strongly influence people's understandings of the past. Christianity is regarded as a strong component of Bilua *kastom* and ancestral practices that do not accord with Christian values are notably ambiguous. Practices labelled "bad *kastom*," such as sorcery, are actively suppressed or said to be passed down discretely through families, only surfacing by means of rumour during times of unexplained misfortune.[6] More widespread practices in the historical past, such as headhunting, are often not discussed at all. *Kastom* is manifest in everyday propriety but also through participation in formal networks of support, marking the boundaries of reciprocal obligation and interdependence (Martin 2009: 94).

Acknowledging the value of these different historicities as we would our own requires encompassing history as both its representation and its practice (Ballard 2014: 100). Discussing Sahlins' *Islands of History* (1985), Denning argued that "for Sahlins, 'history' is the cultural process itself. [...] It is historical consciousness expressed in human actions, events and environment" (1986: 46 in Ballard 2014: 100). Throughout my fieldwork, I remained interested in how people made the past present. My informal conversations with people on the meaning of *kastom* often led to descriptions of the

[6] Witchcraft and sorcery are most often attributed to others. However, I did encounter a couple of instances where individuals claimed to have inherited knowledge of sorcery but chosen not to use it or pass it on.

‘proper’ ways to treat one another in day-to-day community life, which could be described as models of morality. As Rousseau notes, *kastom* is more than just “the mechanics of an activity,”; it also incorporates and legitimates “a specific orientation of persons” (2008: 16). While the content of these discussions varied, they were characterized by similar themes. Women were inclined to describe *kastom* as being about land and compassionate love, without which people would not be able to settle peacefully. As one woman commented,

> Land is what *kastom* is all about. In the past, we respected our ancestors for giving us land where we could settle. We acknowledged their love and were quiet [grateful, uncomplaining, humble]. Not like today. People do not ‘see’ what has been given to them. They lay claim to the land as if it was theirs, because of money. *Kastom* is not strong like it was before.

As this example shows, collective memories of the past are about not only how the ancestors worked the land but also how ancestral relationships between lineages were forged through land. The identification of primary landholders, usually necessitated when negotiating with foreigners over land, has resulted in the exclusion of some groups and the prioritization of others, polarizing and further emphasizing the magnanimity of ancestors in their principles of inclusion and love. For many, the existence of a diversity of lineages along the Bilua coastline is evidence of the compassion and generosity of early Bilua peoples in permitting the migration and settlement of foreign lineages – the reverence with which people accord host–guest relationships.

The Importance of Host–Guest Relationships

Migration is woven into the fabric of Bilua origin stories, as it is throughout much of the New Georgia Group. People comment on the complexions of their neighbours, distinguishing between different shades of ‘red’ and ‘black’ as reflecting different island ancestry; they whisper about elements of personal disposition they believe are associated

with ancestral heritage; and they forge new connections with others as wantoks, people who share common identities in the context of urban settings and new surroundings. During feasts and chiefly inauguration ceremonies, prominent and wealthy chiefs travel across the islands to publicly acknowledge their ancestral connections to other lineages, thereby showing their support for the continuation of lineage ties.

One of McDougall's informants described people as having come ashore "like coconuts floating across the sea," taking root in the land through adoption, intermarriage and affiliation and offering tribute to local chiefs in return for protection, support and usufructuary rights (2004: 199). On Marovo, these were called *tinoni ta paladi* (persons adrift [in the manner of a lost canoe]) (Hviding 2002: 81). Bilua people refer to immigrants as *pakepakeama maba* (people who crossed over), although more commonly they are just referred to as '*edoloma maba*,' the ubiquitous category of 'different people' that was applied to variances in kin lines and origins, describing those who are unrelated but who were always necessary to maintain ongoing social reproduction and strong communities.

According to contemporary land histories, early Bilua inhabitants came from the two extinct original landholding lineages of Kutakabai and Miqa. Connection to these two landholding lineages, rather than autochthonous connections to the land itself, is a distinguishing characteristic of the Bilua region. Prior to Christianity, Bilua received immigrants from across the Western Solomons, many of them refugees fleeing warfare, sorcery and incest on their home islands. Host–guest relationships entailed settlement and protection in exchange for loyalty, support in warfare and first fruits, and immigrants forged kin ties with landholding lineages through intermarriage and fosterage.

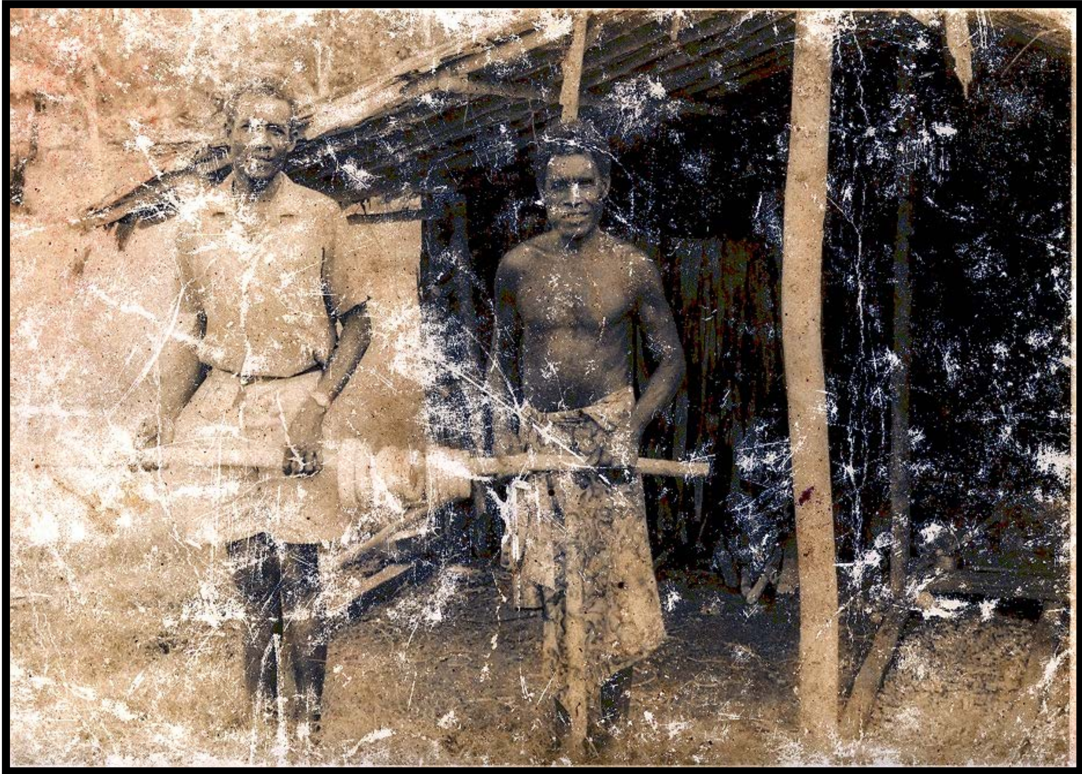

Figure 2 – 1960s photo of Luke Nonipitu and Alan Mene holding twelve *maba bakisa* called *jiku*, pledged by Kutakabai toutou to Maravari lineages (photo courtesy of Janet Nonipitu Butler)

Given the primacy of the host lineage in historical narratives, one of the most significant Bilua events of the pre-Christian era was the Kutakabai war, which people described as wiping out four major lineages during the nineteenth century in a major battle in the hills above present-day Barakoma (see Map 3, p. 44; Appendix II). According to oral accounts, the war broke out between members of Mudi and Kutakabai, two branches of the same lineage, in a dispute over Buni women who were brought back from a raid on Vona Vona, New Georgia Island. The fighting later expanded to include the larger Miqa *toutou*. In demonstration of their allegiance in return for usufructuary rights, numerous smaller lineages allied themselves with each side, and some secured secondary rights through these means, inheriting the land from the previous inhabitants. Although the extent of this warfare is unknown and unrecorded, it left a lasting impact on Bilua societies and is widely remembered as marking the end of the Viva, Mudi, Joinovilu and Miqa

lineages. As elders recount, a Kaneporo (a surviving branch of Miqa) warrior fired two poison arrows (*sikiti*) over a valley where fighting was taking place, and as the arrows passed over, all of the Mudi side fell dead, with no bloodshed, weapons in hand.[7]

While McKinnon (1972) describes these autochthonous lineages as becoming 'extinct' (presumably in line with this somewhat climactic oral history), perhaps it is more accurate to say that they became 'politically extinct' as distinct lineage groups. As Berg (2008) points out, autochthonous lineages were absorbed by migrant lineages. Individual members of Kutakabai continued to live in the Maravari area until at least the first decade of the twentieth century. Several elders described how their parents had told them stories of how Kutakabai granted foreign lineages usufructuary rights to settle in the area, in the form of twelve *jiku* (shell rings symbolic of land rights) gifted to the twelve lineages of Maravari (Figure 2).

Unlike the case of Roviana, where chiefly polities absorbed immigrants into landholding lineages, Bilua social continuity was not so much about replenishing the lines of autochthonous lineages as it was about ensuring the continuity of populations who claimed inheritance of land rights through them.[8] Continuity through association, not autochthony, was the primary means through which ancestral land and favour were sustained. McDougall describes similar land relationships on nearby Ranongga:

> On the level of social reproduction, the replacement of an autochthonous matrilineage with a foreign one is a discontinuity. On the level of cosmological reproduction, however, this replacement might ensure a kind of continuity, if the new lineage would continue to venerate ancestors of the original matrilineage. They would be sustaining relationships between ancestors, the living and the land even after the demise of the original matrilineage (2000: 110).

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[7] Many people today credit the Kaneporo of the past as possessors of strong magic (there are very few Kaneporo alive today). Deceased in 2011, Maravari chief Rimu Baesovaki was one of the last remaining Kaneporo elders, through adoption by his maternal grandfather, David Buta Apo.

[8] This is not to say that autochthonous lineages could not have been continued, particularly as it is common to adopt people into different lineages and even change the direction of inheritance to favour patrilineal descent.

Such 'cosmological reproduction' on Vella Lavella entailed not only transferring the rights of territory, chieftainship, ancestral shrines and shell valuables, but also the authority to narrate genealogies and oral histories, a factor which became significant in competing land claims, as only certain senior members claimed rights which they substantiated through the recitation of complex narratives and the display of inherited shell money connecting them to the original landholding lineage. The combined significance of oral history and *kastom* money to validate claims resonates in the transmission of contemporary land rights (*pikezato*), not as evidence of a 'transaction' but as the invested recognition of ongoing relationships between groups (Chapter Four).

The need for strong and diverse populations with whom people could reproduce and forge alliances was often overlooked in precolonial accounts, which centred on of raiding, tellingly described as headhunting raids, which frequently consisted of warriors from multiple islands. Bilua people believe that without 'different people,' 'same people' would have children with their own, be ostracized for it, and die out (Chapter Three). A well-known *kastom* story describes a man who did not know how to make children until a Raru chief, Sabembangara, showed him by having sex with his wife. Hocart describes Sabembangara as a god-like being who threw a stone from Raru Island which flattened Vella Lavella (ms. nd. i: 982-983).[9] While this story is told with much laughter and ribbing, it effectively conveys the need for other groups, or 'different people' for the creation of healthy offspring. Similarly, McDougall describes how Ranonggan people associate interactions with people of other places as the advent of true humanity, using *kastom* stories to explicitly contrast their ancestors against proto-lineages of ogres, described as stupid and greedy (2004: 199, 204–205; see also Stubbs 1989). Because Bilua

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[9] Such dualities between ancestors and spirits is a common characteristic of Bilua moral stories (Chapter Six).

populations reflect the diversity of the wider region, the larger context through which such groups interacted in the New Georgia Group needs to be considered.

Social Reproduction and the Pre-Christian Past

> "...if a man of Kalikonggu married a woman of Munda it was good; men of Roviana have married into Kekehe; Toni of Ughele married Nggulavuto, daughter of Minu of Tovivi: that was good; but if they belong to one place it is bad." That is why, according to Mbale, there are so many marriages with Ysabel. In fact this was fully borne out by the pedigrees which exhibit a remarkable proportion of marriages with distant places.
>
> I objected that Elona and Vandimali (41) were both of Munda, but they pointed out that Elona was of Kekehe, Vandimali of Parramatta [Choiseul]; besides Vandimali was descended from Simbo (*tuti pa* Simbo) as descendant of Mbitia. Ponggo and Anggu (20) also both belong to Munda but it is all right because they are descended from different people, they are 'another kind.' Miambule and his wife are both of Parramatta [Choiseul], but Miambule is looked upon as a Simbo man (66) (Hocart, ms. n.d.e: 5).

The pre-Christian past of the New Georgia Group has seen diverse renderings by historians (Jackson 1978; Bennett 1987), anthropologists (Hocart 1922, mss. n.d.a–i; Rivers 1914; Zelenietz 1979; Aswani 2000; Dureau 1994, 2000; McDougall 2000), geographers (McKinnon 1975; Bayliss-Smith 2005), linguists (Obata 2003) and archaeologists (Sheppard and Walter 2000; McKenzie 2007). Much of the archaeological and ethno-historical focus has centred on inter-island activities, such as raiding and exchange, in an effort to gauge the spatial and temporal relationships between islands and island groups (Aswani and Sheppard 2003: S52). Exchange routes channelled foodstuffs, shell valuables, weapons and iron tools between allies. For example, Bilua people traded taro, shell money, canarium nuts and pigs in exchange for eggs, tapa, baskets and shell rings from Simbo and shell forehead ornaments (*ndala*) and tobacco from Ranongga (Hocart ms. n.d.g: 4–5; Riesenfeld 1950: 207; Dureau 1994: 51). North Vella, more isolated, primarily

negotiated for goods with Choiseul, providing a connection that opened the way for later Choiseulese migration down to the Bilua coast (Berg 2008).

Exchange was often combined with warfare as allied groups from different islands combined forces to raid common enemies. Colonial and archaeological records frequently associate warfare with headhunting[10] – the former for the sensationalism of a violent and seemingly primitive recent past and the latter to explain the material record of shrines and human remains in the context of economic mobility and chiefly polities. Yet, as McKenzie (2007) has observed, studies of headhunting in the New Georgia Group tend to conflate headhunting with other acts of aggression and violence, such as raiding and captive-taking carried out on extant populations, frequently falling back on Roviana examples (and to a lesser extent, Simbo) to argue the extended emphasis on warfare (see McKinnon 1972). This has created the impression of a uniform and simultaneous system of warfare in the region.

McKenzie's study is particularly valuable as a comparative analysis of the prehistoric periods on Roviana and on Vella, examining skull shrines as the "pivotal mediums and material testament to ancestor veneration, the shell valuable system and headhunting" (McKenzie 2007: 27). She uses the archaeological record to bridge the gap between the two prevailing historical foci of Western Solomons scholars on warfare (Jackson 1978; Aswani 2000; Sheppard and Walter 2000) and social reproduction (Dureau 1994; McDougall 2004), suggesting that Vella (and particularly Bilua) had a "long-term pre-existing cultural difference" with Roviana, which was indicative of other reasons for raiding and aggression (McKenzie 2007: 37).

While Bilua and Roviana people both practiced headhunting, the significance of heads as trophies and ancestor veneration appeared as a much later phenomenon in Bilua

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[10] See Aswani 2000 for an analysis of different academic approaches to headhunting in New Georgia.

than on Roviana. Moreover, Vella did not exhibit many of the cultural incentives commonly attributed to the taking of heads, suggesting that headhunting played only a secondary role in Vella raiding. Sheppard, Walter and Nagaoka argue that Roviana headhunting resulted from "a conceptual transformation of origins on the landscape to origins from deified ancestors" (2002: 53). Sometime during the 1600s, Roviana people descended from the coast and began to develop a stratified chiefly polity ideology supported by beliefs that the ancestors of some lineages were descended from *mateana* – angels – thus sacralizing their ancestors above those of other lineages. McKenzie argues that this transition helps to explain the fundamentally different approaches Roviana and Bilua peoples adopted towards outsiders: while "social change in Roviana society is considered an internally determined phenomenon without any external references," Bilua, and Vella as a whole, relied on external populations to sustain and thrive (McKenzie 2007: 31; see also McDougall 2004).

Indeed, much of the scholarly fascination with headhunting appears at odds with Bilua understandings of inter-island raiding. [11] Unlike Dureau's experiences on Simbo (1994), I found it very difficult to persuade people to talk about headhunting. Most said they did not know why their ancestors 'caught heads.' While on the one hand, headhunting has been over-emphasized by missionaries and colonial officers who saw themselves as a civilizing force to end 'savage' practices, this downplaying and (at best) tentative speculation about headhunting is also a reflection of the Bilua collective memory: headhunting is less a part of meaningful history for contemporary Bilua life than the very real continuity of peoples and lineages locals engage with every day.

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[11] As a point of comparison, a naval officer investigating a headhunting case on Simbo in 1898 reported being told by islanders that "they did not know we white people took headhunting so seriously" (Jackson 1978: 130).

Stories of the past are frequently contextualized through accounts of historical relationships. Raiding is remembered both as acts of revenge against groups who had attacked their own and as *zuzuku* (roughly translated as 'assassination'). The latter was rationalized as an exchange transaction: warriors (often from different islands) received payment in the form of shell money and sometimes land to attack enemies (Hviding 1996: 93; White 1991: 60–64; Keesing 1985). However, most commonly, raiding is remembered as being not about violence, but social reproduction – specifically the seeking out of men, women and children to bring back to Vella to support and sustain populations.

Halfway through my second fieldwork trip, I forged a close relationship with Eli Volosi, a man I came to call *taite* (grandfather). Eli lives at a settlement on the hill atop Saeragi village on Gizo Island. Eli's father, David Volosi (often known as Sasa Volosi), was one of the chiefs who welcomed the first missionaries to Vella. His great-uncle Matu Volosi (also known as Sike Sabu) is remembered as one of the most influential chiefs of the Bilua villages of Sabora and Uzaba. He was one of the few not to dismiss my questions about headhunting, and his narratives about the warrior Sito are revealing on a number of levels, serving as his own attempt to understand Bilua's violent past and the moral ambiguities of Bilua ancestors.

Sito Latuvaki was a notorious Bilua warrior and one of the last notable holdouts of New Georgia's history of inter-island warfare, persisting as a raider and headhunter for a full ten years after official British pacification. While there is no doubt that he was feared on Vella Lavella, official government correspondence differs markedly from local memory.[12] In particular, Volosi's efforts to explain the violence in Bilua's past is

[12] Sito became notorious in government and mission circles for targeting the members of the small European group of traders, not least of which was the entire Biniskin family, based on Bava Island (Nicholson 1924: 45–52).

significant in understanding what people choose to remember as *kastom* and history. He began his story in response to my question, "Why did people used to 'catch heads?'":

EV Sito was given *kastom* money called *zuzuku* from the chiefs of Kia. They sent it for him and asked him to go and kill everyone from Maringe district. Isabel too. Now there's one man who knew headhunting! He didn't have mercy, he didn't have regret. Everyone he saw he would kill.

SK Yesterday you told me he was a man for war but he was also a man for peace too. What did you mean by that?

EV Sito? Yes. It was like this: when he was given money to fight, he went and fought. On Vella too they used *zuzuku*. Once he went to kill Sorezaru people in Lakalaka. I asked my father, 'Why was this man always killing people? Did he kill just to see people die?' 'No, he has a *kastom*, his *liqomo*.[13] Suppose his axe becomes dry. If the blood on his axe dries, then he'll become sick. So he must go and kill people,' my father said. 'It's rubbish.[14] But Sito wasn't, he wasn't a man to kill for nothing,' my father said. 'He didn't kill for nothing. He knew how to be a peaceful man. But when people forced him to go and kill, he was the first man to go.'

SK He wasn't a chief, was he?

EV No, only a warrior.

SK Did he fight for a particular chief?

EV Yes, he would fight. All the chiefs used *zuzuku*.

SK What was *zuzuku*?

EV *Zuzuku*. Money to go kill other people. Payment to go fight people they didn't like. *Kastom* money.

[…] So for headhunting, I think that *zuzuku* made them do it. It wasn't 'okay, we'll go and fight there.' No. One headhunting trip they made, I'm not sure how or why they went to Savo. They went all the way to Kwaio, too. Places like that. That kind of headhunting, I don't know. I think their <u>devol</u> [spirits] wanted them to do that one. I don't know. But I've only heard history, reaching Savo, reaching Kwaio, too. But to change their line too, you understand? When the line became short, they went to go take [people]. Yes, yes. Retaliation was one reason. One other reason was when they received *zuzuku*. That was it. They didn't all of a sudden go and fight. No. I think that's it.

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[13] *Liqomo* is a pan–New Georgian term for a spirit (and charms associated with that spirit) that bestowed fighting prowess. Waterhouse (1949: 150) calls it the 'patron of war' (see also Aswani 2000: 61; Thomas 2009: 108-109; Hocart 1931: 307).

[14] By 'rubbish,' Volosi's father was referring to Sito's behaviour, rather than to Sito himself.

As Dureau argues, warfare and headhunting should not be conflated, as "the issue of the causes of local enmities is quite distinct from the causation of headhunting" (1994: 72) – an observation consistent with McKenzie's (2007) comparative analysis of Roviana and Vella precolonial history. Volosi contextualized headhunting as part of a transaction, namely *zuzuku* – payment for assassination – to which taking heads was secondary. During our discussion, I could see him reasoning through the purposes of headhunting. Sito is blameless in carrying out a chiefly decreed assassination, through which he appeases his *liqomo*, to which he is beholden for his fighting power. He is without mercy or regret, killing 'everyone he sees.' Yet he is also 'a man for peace' who does not kill without due cause. Volosi's thought process throughout our conversation – from describing Sito as bloodthirsty to explaining headhunting as a product of either retaliation or *zuzuku*, the fulfilment of obligations and an act of exchange – is revealing of the mixed emotions surrounding the actions of ancestors, contemporary understandings of pre-Christian practices and the networks of inter-island relationships that gave people access to resources and people power.

This 'headhunting narrative' also accounts for the taking of captives during warfare. Dureau (2000) and McDougall (2000) have written on the ambiguous yet vital role of captives in Western Solomons social and cosmological reproduction, a position that placed them in a liminal state straddling not only the political and domestic realms, but also the statuses of foreigner and kin. On Simbo, taking captives was an extension of taking heads. Captives, Dureau argues, helped to continue the mutually sustaining relationships between ancestors and the living. By engaging in reciprocally sustaining social activities, captives became 'truly people' of Simbo. They married local men and women and they acquired land through inheritance as gifts of gratitude or in payment for services. And when they died, their heads were placed in local shrines alongside those of

people who were locally born, becoming part of the larger collectivity of ancestors. Becoming an ancestor, whether it was for the locally born or for immigrants, helped to make the living *mana* (Dureau 2000: 84).

The variable status of captives is indisputable. Captives were sacrificed to dedicate canoes and canoe houses and as *vavoulo* (sacrifice) to follow chiefs into the afterlife, as well as used as prostitutes and labourers. However, they were also taken as children and siblings for New Georgian families to replenish dwindling lineage lines (e.g. Dureau 2001; McDougall 2000). That the Kutakabai wars were attributed to fighting over Buni women brought back from New Georgia suggests that captives were significant not only in contributing to the population but also in securing relationships between different lineages. Hocart notes several instances in which the man who captured the woman was not the man who claimed rights to her through payment. He mentions one instance in which a man promised a captive to one of his relatives but then gave it to another, resulting in the promised recipient boycotting a feast (1931: 317). McDougall (2000) also notes that while captives generally belonged to the chief who sponsored the raid, on occasion, raiders would return the money in order to maintain rights to the women they had captured, and by association, her offspring.

People who were brought to Vella to replenish kin lines were called *mabaku*, the equivalent to *pinauzu* on Ranongga and *pinausu* on Simbo. The status of captives is particularly ambiguous since Hocart claimed that *pinausu* was the term not just for captives but for any foreigner (1931: 305). McDougall (2000) notes that the term *pinauzu* is related to *pauzu*, meaning to adopt, sharing with the Roviana terminology. Likewise, the Bilua term is *pauzuko* (to adopt) or *pauzuzato* (adoption), meaning ‘to feed.’ Similarly, *mabako* (a captive) is related to *mabaeko* (to tame) and *mabailo* (to become tame) (Pike n.d.).

On both Ranongga and Vella, a *pinauzu*/*mabaku*'s foreign origins were not erased after capture (see McDougall 2000). This differed from Roviana, where captives and migrants alike were often absorbed into landholding groups. Indeed, as with the causative differences in headhunting, the persistent idea of captives as 'slaves' is potentially more prominent in Roviana's chiefly hierarchy, where captives played a vital role in the production of shell valuables (McKenzie 2007).

While *mabaku* were taken from throughout the New Georgia Group, Bilua people describe Choiseul and Isabel as having been the most common targets of raiding. Even though Choiseulese lineages dot the Bilua coastline and appear throughout the island, the vast majority of stories I recorded pertained to Isabel captives. Hocart describes Isabel as the favourite raiding ground for Tinoni Simbo (1931: 303), although captives seem to have been passed from one location to another, much like the exchange of goods (see also Dureau 1998a). Particularly in later years when captives were purchased instead of stolen, the line is blurred between payment for captives and women's bridewealth when they were brought back to replenish lineage lines. *Mabaku* were also acquired in exchange for guns at a time when the Choiseulese were unable to obtain arms from the German colonialists (Scheffler 1965: 17). Hocart insinuates that women were little more than slaves who could be bought and sold, and *mabaku* and a chief's daughter alike could be enlisted into ritual prostitution if it helped to further the means of the chief.

The ambiguous status of *mabaku* is evidenced as Eli continues his story about Sito, this time describing a situation involving two *mabaku* who were married into Bilua lineages. In his narrative, the slave Rosa appears twice as the object of exchange, once as a slave, and then again when his life is spared in exchange for shell money.

EV [Sabe *toutou*] gave *zuzuku* to Sito for him to go and kill Aborosa, [who was] from Isabel. [Abo]Rosa was married to Matu Volosi's niece. My father's sister was Rosa's wife [...]. [So when he was given money for *zuzuku*,] Sito took the money and he went to Matu Volosi. Matu Volosi and his niece, my father's sister. "Now," he said, "if you two say it's alright, tomorrow morning I will go kill Rosa."

SK Why did they want to kill him?

EV It's like this: Set, an old man from Barakoma, went and took the wife, ah, the slave of someone Sabe. Soqola. He's from Niaravai. He went and took his wife so they were angry. But Rosa was an Oba slave. Set was a man from Oba *toutou*. So they [Sabe] wanted to kill Rosa because he was a slave of Oba *toutou*. [laughs] So [Sito] went and took money to Matu Volosi and his niece. They didn't want [Rosa] to die because they liked him – he married Matu Volosi's niece, my father's sister. So they paid him compensation. This money Sito took [from Sabe]? It's still there. But Sikesabo [Matu Volosi] paid Sito a higher price. He gave money to Sito to stop his axe from hitting Rosa's head.

This story illustrates the ambiguous and very circumstantial status of *mabaku*. Rather than arranging the murder of the man who stole his wife, Soqola appears to have followed the logic of a slave for a slave. However, Matu Volosi's opinion of Rosa as the husband of his *apakora* (niece) is worthy of him paying a higher price to save his life. Rosa is not 'a slave for a slave' but a valued kinsman, revealing of the status of captives and the importance of 'different people' in sustaining local populations. Furthermore, in this narrative, Sito appears not as the bloodthirsty headhunter of colonial narratives (Nicholson 1924; Luxton 1955), but as a man beholden to others with whom he is entangled in a network of relationships. Sito's regard for Volosi's chiefly status is shown by the fact that Sito afforded him a chance to counter the offer and bargain for Rosa's life. In approaching Volosi to make him aware of the exchange, Sito reveals his own bargaining position.

In respect to this thesis, the point of these narratives is not to downplay the violence which was so prominent in official colonial histories of the New Georgia Group but rather to supplement these histories with Bilua accounts of their ancestors' motivations and actions during the pre-Christian period – accounts which play a significant role in the promotion of particular ancestral values espoused in the present. While headhunting and

warfare were widespread in the region, these activities do not appear to dominate the collective memories of Bilua people.

After the Solomon Islands were declared a British protectorate (the BSIP) in 1893, the focus of raiding shifted from New Georgia to Choiseul and Isabel, which were not yet under British control (Jackson 1978: 105). It was not until a permanent administration was established on Gizo Island that the British were able to fully consolidate their authority in the area. Between 1898 and 1902, extensive punitive expeditions were carried out by Charles Woodford, the first BSIP Resident Commissioner, and colonial officer Arthur Mahaffy in an attempt to quash headhunting and raiding in the region. In 1899, a government station was established on Gizo Island with a trained and armed police force of twenty men, mainly recruited from Isabel, but also from Malaita and Savo (Jackson 1978: 126). However, despite extensive attacks on Marovo, Simbo and Roviana, Bilua raiders continued to ignore the administration's warnings. In November 1901, Mahaffy sent a force of seventy men to Bilua to systematically root out troublemakers from both coastal and inland settlements. Over a period of eight days, they destroyed ten villages and over one hundred canoes from Bilua settlements, "including a heavily fortified stockade in the mountains" (Jackson 1978: 128). The combined effect of these extensive punitive expeditions largely put an end to large-scale raiding practices and 'pacified' New Georgia, creating new possibilities for the establishment of a plantation economy and the arrival of a new group of foreigners to the region.

The Introduction of Christianity on Vella

> The first man to arrive was a Fijian named Avorosa [Aparosa], with his wife Klera. They came by ship and were welcomed by Soso because they were brought by a Roviana chief who was his friend. The people followed what Chief Soso told them, so the missionaries were not attacked, although several died from sickness.
>
> —Dalsi Koloqeto, daughter of Soso's adopted son John Sasapitu

> Accompanied by several Roviana chiefs Goldie landed at Bilua at Vella Lavella on March 19th, 1904, and held the first service there. The visiting Roviana chiefs testified to the value of the Mission with the result that a Fijian teacher named Ratu Aparosa [Avorosa] was appointed and settled near Bilua […]. The Fijian, Aparosa, was a brave man and defied and challenged the power of the local spirits to overcome the power of his God. When nothing happened to him the people were willing to listen to him. It was not long before a church was built and morning and evening prayers were being held (Williams 1972: 243).

In 1902, the first missionaries arrived in the New Georgia Group. While the eastern Solomons had already been claimed by the Melanesian Mission as of 1861, a comity between the Melanesian Mission and Rev. John Goldie, Chairman of the Methodist Mission, allowed the Methodists to pursue the Christianization of the west (Tippett 1967: 36).

Much like the web of regional alliances that inspired migrations in the region, Christianity followed historic routes, from Munda, to Simbo, and then to Vella. Goldie established the first Mission station at Nusa Zonga, Roviana, because of Roviana's status as the most powerful polity in the area – a position that he believed would prove influential in the spread of Christianity to other islands (Tippett 1967: 55).

As evidenced by Dalsi Koloqeto's story of the coming of Christianity, local memory records missionaries as being invited into Bilua through an introduction orchestrated by Roviana chiefs. The Fijian missionaries were welcomed by Soso because

of his personal friendship with the Roviana chief who accompanied them.[15] In fact, historical records reveal that the missionary was accompanied by not one chief, but two.

In 1904, Boas Veo and Gumi Bakete travelled with Goldie on the boat *Bondai* to speak with the people at Bilua. Veo and Gumi were *mbangara* (chiefs) at Munda and nephews of the great Roviana chief Ingava.[16] While Ingava himself had distanced himself from the missionary presence at Nusa Zonga, Carter (1981: 7) suggests that Gumi had been impressed with how his uncle had increased his prestige through his association with traders and government officers, leading him to volunteer to speak to people at Bilua. Notably, Gumi's wife was the daughter of an 'important man' from Sirobae on Vella, and may have also been known to Bilua chiefs through regional extended kin networks.

According to local narratives, the rest '<u>falom wat sif hem talem,</u>'[17] that is, they followed Chief Soso's lead because of his role as 'caretaker chief'[18] (*miduku ko vaelo*) on behalf of the six different lineages that occupied Vonunu at the time Christianity arrived. This does not mean that people followed their chiefs into conversion, but rather that they were bound to respect the chief's acceptance of the guests and could not threaten or mistreat the newcomers without fearing for their own lives. Thus, in many ways, Bilua descriptions of the arrival of Christianity followed the patterns that characterized host–

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[15] It is interesting that Goldie's presence went unmentioned in the Bilua account.

[16] Both men descended from Govae, one of the great warrior leaders of old Roviana. Veo had travelled to Sydney on a boat with Frank Wickham (Carter 1981: 9) and had acquired a knowledge of English. He had established himself as a chief by arranging peace between the people of Munda and Choiseul and he was recognized as a leader in Munda and Simbo. Despite Goldie's desire to use the influence of Roviana chiefs in spreading Christianity, Carter suggests that Gumi and Veo "were among the few people of importance" to help the missionaries (Carter 1981: 6).

[17] Gloss: They followed what the chief told them.

[18] 'Caretaker chief' was the term most commonly used during my fieldwork in Bilua, although typically as a clarification by chiefs in response to my questions about why certain leaders held authority in other lineages outside of their own matrilineage (usually to which they were connected through their fathers or a grandparent). More commonly, these were just known as 'chiefs.' *Miduku ko vaelo* translates as 'keeper of the ground,' a position revealing of the entangled relationships between lineages (Chapter Eight). While sometimes their position was quietly disputed, these men (as they almost inevitably were) were said by some to have been given leadership in the absence of another qualified candidate, although they were expected to eventually cede leadership back to the matriline. In many cases, the idea of a caretaker chief can be contextualized by the shifting significance of lineage chiefs and the ebb and flow of chiefly power since the pre-Christian era.

guest relationships. In welcoming the missionaries as foreigners, the story of Christianity's arrival echoes land narratives in which migrants are allowed to settle at the behest of the 'loving' chief who takes pity on them (Chapters Four and Five). Much like migration narratives, this was a simplification of complex histories and inter-island relationships. Yet unlike Williams' description, as well as Dureau's account of first contact on Simbo, where missionaries were "endowed with authority" and "acceptance of Christianity […] was categorically an acknowledgement of defeat and acquiescence to the forces which enabled the victors" (1994: 128–29, 139), here, the balance of power sits with the Bilua chief, as the missionaries are allowed to stay at his behest and his authority prevents his followers from causing them harm. Much like settling immigrants, the Church was dependent on the good will of the chief to be able to take root in the land before it could gather influence and thrive.

In 1907, Rev. R. C. Nicholson became the first European missionary to be stationed at Vonunu. While his first years appeared slow and problematic, including much discontent on the part of the Fijian and Samoan missionaries who wished to return home,[19] local confidence in the Mission seemed to greatly improve in the aftermath of Sito's capture. After the punitive expeditions Bilua people appeared to fear Sito less than the violence of government officers, vengeful traders and unruly Malaitan militia who were sent to capture him, as these men unleashed mayhem on the Bilua coast, destroying gardens, burning houses and arresting chiefs in their wake. Bringing in Christian and pagan alike, who "gathered from many places along the coast and erected temporary shelters within ear-shot of the Mission House," Nicholson's congregation expanded from eighty to two hundred, less than two months after the Bagga massacre – this despite the

[19] Letter from Aminio Matitici to Rev. Benjamin Danks, March 1, 1908.

Mission itself being targeted by traders who accused Nicholson of sheltering Sito's men.[20] Attempting to put an end to the ruthless retaliatory slaughter, Nicholson sent a small group of Sito's kin out to capture and bring back him and his men. This they accomplished with much struggle, though nearly resulting in the loss of an eye of one of Sito's kinsmen. Thus, Nicholson did what the government had failed to do, which he deemed a substantial triumph in the Mission's increasingly antagonistic relationship with the colonial government. While remote northern communities like Java were much more resistant to religious change, in the wake of the Sito affair, the image of the Bilua Mission began to shift from dependent settler to benevolent protector, a role which has significantly influenced the loyalty and respect many senior members of the Maravari community feel towards Methodism in the present day (Chapter Five).

In 1916, Nicholson took several Bilua men to Kokeqolo College in Munda to be trained as pastors. One of these was Amos Kaki, the father of a prominent former chief in Maravari. Kaki returned three years later to pastor at Eleoteve, a neighbouring village where Maravari people attended services. The first Maravari church was not built until the mid-1920s[21] and Kaki was invited to become pastor. While it is uncertain whether there was significant resistance to the coming of the Church, most testimonies suggest that there was not. Among the last to be baptized was a well-respected *kastom* man, David Buta Apo, in 1925, a date corresponding to the completion of the church building and, symbolically, the establishment of Maravari as a 'Christian community.'

The twenty years between Christianity's arrival at Vonunu and the building of the first church at Maravari is revealing of the time taken for pastors to be trained and

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[20] Letter from Rev. R. C. Nicholson to Rev. Benjamin Danks, December 7, 1909; letter from Rev. R. C. Nicholson to Rev. Benjamin Danks, November 24, 1909.

[21] Different stories have proffered different dates. However, the "4th National Conference Maravari Local Church Pastor's Report" (Papobatu 2001) specifies that Kaki was pastor at Eleoteve in 1916 and began to pastor in Maravari in 1923 or 1924, and that the first Maravari church building was opened in the Maravari hamlet of Ringi on June 26, 1926.

dispatched, churches built and congregations assembled. Given the village's relatively close proximity and close ties with Vonunu, the 'coming of the light' and the creation of Christian communities was a slower process than missionary text suggests.[22] Far more immediate was the end of raiding as a threat and the descent to the coast, although McKinnon (1972) notes that people had started to descend to the coast a few years before the coming of Christianity.[23]

The significance of Christianity's arrival in Bilua memory is evoked in almost every local narrative of the past as the pinnacle event separating the modern age from the taem bifoa (Pijin: 'the time before') or *lula saevo*, 'the life before' the Church came. Across New Georgia, people remember it as the cessation of fighting – and figuratively, as the end of the time of darkness, when their ancestors came into the light. Both McDougall (2004: 204) and Berg (2008) describe the advent of Christian peace as being associated with the freedom of movement on both North Vella and Ranongga. The effect of this was to be of particular consequence to local landholders, as Berg suggests that migration was not truly felt in North Vella until the Mission usurped the rights of local landholders (2008: 119). In Bilua, the Mission's claiming of local land was to create longstanding tensions for Vonunu lineages (Chapter Four). Yet perhaps one of the biggest contributions of Christianity was the introduction of a new model of social life. The ideology of the

[22] Bennett (1987) and Dureau (2001) suggest that the end of raiding was surprisingly abrupt following the massive display of British force in 1899 and that the rapidity of this change was displaced onto the coming of Christianity, which in local narratives is frequently credited with the arrival of peace.

[23]After the 2007 earthquake it became evident to me that leaf houses can be torn down and rebuilt with relative ease, and I noted that people exhibited very little inhibition in relocating. What is more uncertain to me is the details of the exact relationships between neighbouring kin groups that eased the transition down to the coast at the introduction of Christianity. Bennett writes, "Although warfare seems at first to have become more intensive and bloody in many areas, the alliances necessary to the waging of it drew people into larger and larger groupings. Simultaneously, because trade needs peace in order to prosper, leaders in the western and central Solomons tried to eliminate warfare, at least within their own regions. Political blocs of new and larger magnitude were coalescing by the 1890s, and there was very little fighting within the individual islands of the New Georgia Group and the Shortlands" (Bennett 1987: 100–101).

Christian community as people migrated from inland to the coast simulated another displacement that figures prominently in oral histories.

The word *qoqono* translates loosely as 'community,' or 'people who are connected,' referring to people who are related through a certain lineage (e.g. Sabe *qoqono*), community (e.g. Maravari *qoqono* – people of Maravari) or church (*Metodisti qoqono* – the Methodist congregation).[24] It differs from *maba poso*, which is 'people' without connotations of connection (e.g. a random gathering) or *kiada mela* (e.g. everybody, or everyone here). In addition, *Bilua mu ngela* or *Vella mu ngela* or *Vella mabamu* are forms connoting belonging to place (e.g. Where are you from? '*Enge ta Maravari mu ngela'* – We are from Maravari). While there seem to be different associations here between belonging to a *people* and belonging to a *place*, it is interesting that in North Vella, Berg (2008: 107) describes *qoqono* as being in reference to traditional tracts of land rather than to people themselves. However, in Bilua, *qoqono* is most commonly linked with the formation of the Christian <u>komuniti</u> (community).

Today, the movement of small isolated groups moving away from traditional territories to congregate in villages centred around a church is sometimes viewed as the initial steps to the alienation of people from their land (Tribal Rule Reformation Intervention Development Concept [TRRIDC] 2013). However, the most common view is that the concept of the Christian community represents an ideal of union and 'oneness' which people consistently seek to emulate in the contemporary context of multi-denominational villages and ongoing land disputes between landholders and settlers.

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[24] The polysemous nature of this term appears similar to the semantic usage of *butubutu* on Ranongga, which McDougall notes can be used broadly to describe "any group of people regardless of the principles that bring them together, and thus, can be used to describe a church congregation, a nation, or family" (2004:84). Like *toutou*, *butubutu* describes a lineage descended from a common ancestor in its strictest sense, although *toutou* would rarely be used as polysemously as *butubutu* seems to be (see also Hviding 1996 for similar semantic usage of *butubutu* in Marovo).

Aside from the establishment of the Seventh Day Adventist Church (SDA), Methodism remained the predominant denomination on the island until the late 1950s. In 1960, a breakaway movement led by Silas Eto led to the founding of the Christian Fellowship Church. This created further instability at a time when Goldie's successors were gradually transferring responsibility for church administration to islanders. Concurrently, the Church was attempting to strengthen its ties with Methodist missions in Papua New Guinea, as its isolation was limiting its development at the regional level.[25] The fractioning of the Church into different denominations created a new type of 'different people' separate but related to land and kin divisions, leading the utopic ideology of 'Christian oneness' to become an increasingly frustrating and unattainable aspiration (Chapter Five).

Kastom and Loss

The idea of a unity that is, in fact, unachievable is consistent with a larger desire to return to a utopic time seen to have existed before missionaries, colonialists and other foreign settlers entered the Pacific. Tomlinson observes that the language of "loss" is a frequent sentiment in Pacific societies, indicative of anxieties about social decline and fragmentation (2009: 11). In my conversations with Bilua people, I found they shared a common lament: the suggestion that something that is missing or absent in the present, in contrast to an imagined past.

Dureau (2013) describes how Tinoni Simbo were nostalgic for the pre-Christian past after experiencing an increasing disconnection from global citizenship. Where, according to contemporary understandings, they had once been powerful in precolonial

[25] In 1913, the Methodist Church in New Zealand separated from the Methodist Church of Australasia and took on the Solomon Islands as its share of responsibility for Overseas Missions. Due to WWI, this did not actually begin until almost then years later.

regional networks, Dureau argues that feelings of decline emerged with the abrupt inversion of Euro–Islander relationships that came with colonization, and again at Independence with the loss of British patronage, which many later believed would have elevated Tinoni Simbo to European levels of development, had it endured.

For Tomlinson (2009), Fijian senses of loss centred on the tensions between Christianity and the power of traditional chiefs. Tomlinson distinguishes this not as nostalgia, but as *lament* for an idealized past: what has been "lost" is seen not as having evaporated, but only as having been neglected, and thus can be resurrected. As he argues, "[s]tories of decline and loss are not end points in a historical process; they circulate in their own right as metacultural commentaries, framing analyses of unfolding events and provoking new political actions" (Tomlinson 2009: 25). A similar lament is expressed in Bilua, where people frame loss in relation to changing relationships, a perceived loss of respect (*pa<u>n</u>ao)* in relationships between kin and between settler and immigrant dynamics of 'same' and 'different' people (Chapter Four).

Such lamentations can be fruitful in their sadness. In describing the ancestors, Biluans imagine a people who were selfless and magnanimous in their generosity and who manifested the love that they themselves recognize in their own hearts, in contrast to the selfishness and disrespect they perceive in their contemporaries. These 'projected recognitions' (Fabian 1999) resemble what Debbra Battaglia (1993: 434) describes as 'screen memory' – "the forged remains of memory which scarcely resemble its original form." As she describes in context of the mortuary rituals of the Sabarl of Papua New Guinea (see Chapter Six), screen memories are a product of projection, shaping "a capacity of collective action to present an experience of a social process unthreatened by conflict and divisiveness" (1993: 434). Battaglia argues that such acts of collective forgetting act

as a productive experience of sociality by inscribing a cultural ideal onto the past. Through such memories:

> Participants gain control over [...] their own partibility to the extent that they not only recognize but also gain an affectively charged experience of directing their own futurity in coordinated social practice. They gain this control within an ever-changing field of historical contingencies, political realities, and the like. And it occurs to the extent that they are able to recognize and participate in influencing the cultural process of things – or social histories of relationship – falling apart. They also gain an experience of control only to the extent that they are able to fill up the vacuum created in eliminating not merely the cognition, but the active force of the unreleased energy of the memory confronted (1993: 433).

Thus, in projecting the past as a time of love and glossing over many of the negative aspects of the pre-Christian era, such as headhunting, Bilua people continually reimagine the ideals of *kastom*, professing some measure of control over what is seen as lacking and what is seen as needed for setting the world to rights.

Conclusion

The significance of inviting missionaries onto land represents a host–-guest dynamic that is a common power trope across much of New Georgia (Hviding 2002; McDougall 2005). Bilua prehistory can be characterized by the need to sustain local populations through the incorporation of 'different people' from across the region. This focus has influenced contemporary memories of the past, as raiding and headhunting practices are remembered not as events of violence, but as life-sustaining ventures of social reproduction which are meaningful histories of the diverse and populous communities of the present.

Historically, land has served as a valuable medium of sociality in Bilua through which different groups established relationships with one another and continue to engage today in mutually beneficial relationships. In this regard, migration has been a prominent event in New Georgian history that is frequently mentioned but seldom contextualized in relation to long-term land relationships with surrounding lineages. In this chapter, I have

portrayed migrant groups as significant ‘different people’ needed for the continuation and renewal of thriving lineage groups. The entangled lateral relationships between different lineages that are invested in the continuation of shared kin reveal the complexity of ‘same people’ beyond the narrow category of the matrilineage (*toutou).*

While the *toutou* is described as the primary unit of social organization in Bilua social identity, church-centred communities have resulted in larger groupings of extended cognatic kin. In the next chapter, I take a closer look at ideas of matrilineal and cognatic kin, explaining how the perceived decline in recognizing the obligations and boundaries of kin relationships is described as a fundamental element in the perceived decline of *kastom*.

CHAPTER THREE – COMPASSION, RESPECT AND SHAME: RECOGNIZING KIN IN BILUA

> There are many Sabe at Uzaba, Sabora, Karaka, Dovele, and everyone has a different version of how they came to be there. We all recognize each other because of the name Sabe, but how we connect to each other is one of the things that we sort out, how to make it true that we are one. (Lionel Alex, *lekasa* of Wagina *toutou*)[1]

In a regional system based on intricate family networks, kinship is actively employed as a method of connection and support within Bilua and throughout the New Georgia Group (Hviding 1993; Dureau 1994; McDougall 2004). Accepting obligations to care for each other and sharing access to resources are often the first steps to being incorporated as kin (see Dousset 2013). Therefore, inter-lineage entanglements and affinal and host–guest dynamics can be seen as extrapolations of the foundational significance of kin relationships in Bilua communities. Constructing and maintaining these connections requires both awareness and diligence, both of which are reflected in local discourse.

The ideas described to me in discussions of *kastom* as everyday reciprocity inevitably reflected community life, which invariably entails life revolving around kin. Bilua people speak about kinship in terms of recognition as acknowledgement (similar to Fabian's description of *Anerkennen*), that is, by virtue of being kin, people are entitled to the recognition they ask for and deserve, and are held to giving that recognition in return (Fabian 1999: 162). Kin are mutually constituting and defined in relation to each other (Chapter One). Therefore, when people call upon one another and address one another as kin – whether as a request for assistance or an admonishment for inappropriate behaviour (as in the example of Peta and Mason) – it is expressed as a due recognition, "not just a

[1] Alex is Sabe through his maternal grandfather.

courtesy owed, but a vital human need" (Taylor 1994: 99).[2] Despite this, as Fabian (1999) has argued, recognition is a struggle. As I observed in Bilua, kin relationships are dynamic and subject to ongoing negotiation and development in an individual's understanding and changing circumstances – particularly when people do not perceive certain relationships to be equally meaningful or even meaningful in similar types of ways.

Sahlins' 2011 definition of a kinship system as a "manifold of intersubjective participations, founded on the mutualities of being" (2011: 10; Chapter One) touches on both the inclusivity and the fragility of Bilua understandings of *omadeuma maba*, 'same people.' Where *omadeuma maba* refer to kin, they are figuratively one people – people who constitute each other (Hagen 2006: 82). However, people must continually substantiate these relationships by participating in shared understandings of appropriate behaviour. Kin relationships require a performative recognition and if relationships cease to be enacted in fundamental ways, they cease to be meaningful in the present and risk becoming a remnant of the past. These include the respect and fulfilment of obligations towards kin such as providing assistance with garden work, labour, food or financial help in times of need, but also the recognition of kin boundaries, including ascription to culturally accepted behaviours towards particular relatives and abstention from sexual relationships with those identified as kin. As Bell writes of belonging, "identity is the effect of performance and not vice versa" (1999: 3). This notion of performativity encourages the consideration of the constitutive moments of kinship. Bilua kin relationships are constitutive, yet dynamic, dependent on performed recognition in order to thrive.

[2] In "The Politics of Recognition," Taylor describes recognition as vital to identity, "a person's understanding of who they are, of their fundamental defining characteristics as a human being" (1994: 25). As Melanesian people are partible (Strathern 1988, Chapter One), failure to acknowledge kin is figuratively failure to acknowledge an aspect of oneself.

Recognition and Knowingness – Foundational Expressions of *Kastom* in Everyday Life

As I argued in Chapter One, Bilua people do not distinguish between cognitive recognition (*Erkennen*) and recognition as an expression of acknowledgment (*Anerkennen*). Knowing is not a passive state; it is manifested through doing. To know,' or understand, *kastom* is to engage with it, either through ritual practice or through everyday values of generalized reciprocity and respect. Similarly, to know one's genealogy (*vikuvikula* – to go down) is to acknowledge and practice *kastom* relationships of respect and shame that are entailed in this knowledge. Thus, drawing on my example from Chapter One, when Mason (Peta's sister's husband) had an affair with Peta's wife, Mason denied their relatedness through his actions and ceased to 'see' Peta as brother to his own wife.

In relation to *nianio* (genealogical knowledge, lineage history and history of landholdings), the knowledge of everyday life comprises a different form of ancestral knowledge wherein people orient themselves towards others on the basis of the ancestors' perceived values, staying 'true' to *kastom* by practicing relationships of respect and reciprocity. In this form, *kastom* is centred around the ideals of respect, unity and harmony, and the processes that restore these ideas of social balance (Rousseau 2008: 16; see also Chapter Eight). These bonds of shared experience are conceived over time through shared spaces and kin affiliations. While most people command only superficial knowledge of genealogies, ritual procedures and ancestral stories and histories, everyday life requires participation in shared values and a desire for a shared knowingness – "a style of articulation" whereby people express "a willingness to continue an exchange at a particular level of intimacy, a desire to form a bond of shared experience or common understanding of the world" (Goldhill 2006: 722). Consequently, when people say "there

is no *kastom* anymore," they are often referring to the perceived failures of others to exhibit behaviours that enact particular kinds of knowledge, especially those that reflect ancestral life, such as love (*roquano*), respect (*pa<u>n</u>ao*) and shame (*qurato*) (of which the latter two shall be explained in this chapter). Morality, in this sense, is perceived to be reflected in proper conduct, a domain of action pertaining to collectively sanctioned rules, beliefs and opinions (Laidlaw 2002: 312, cited in Barker 2007: 4). Therefore, when people are accused of ignoring traditionally meaningful values that embody behaviours and practices, *kastom* is believed to become weak and becomes a point of contention that is seen as traditionally meaningful. *Kastom* is shaped, strengthened and renewed through the process of reinterpreting the past in relation to the present.

While everyday knowingness requires the proper management of specific *kastom* knowledge, this is not always accomplished. Bilua people were often frustrated with chiefs and elders, who are expected to educate people appropriately about their ancestry, genealogy and shared heritage. In private conversations, particular chiefs were often referred to as "men who know nothing" – their lack of *kastom* knowledge (or their unwillingness to share it with others) resulting in the perceived lack of guidance given to the younger generations. As many argued, if young people do not know their *nianio*, how can they 'see' their extended brothers and sisters and recognize them as being the same people? By which they mean, how can these relationships be culturally meaningful to them, where awareness of meaning is made apparent through behaviours of respect and shame?

Both ritual and everyday *kastom* knowledge require a certain diligence, a self-consciousness that Jolly and Thomas consider to be a distinguishing difference between *kastom* and "unconscious cultural inheritance" (1992: 241, quoted in Bolton 2003: 23). Drawing a connection between kinship and recognition, Hagen (1999a) notes that a

person's *awareness* of their position within networks of social relations is central to understanding how kinship and social identity are experienced. His analysis is influenced by Ricoeur's correlation of 'sameness' (sharing connections based on similar characteristics of contextual meaning and value – such as relations of kinship) with 'selfhood' (the relationally and historically constituted sense of awareness). As Hagen argues,

> Knowledge of sameness follows recognition of who a person is relative to previous points in time; whereas the sense of self, and by extension, the awareness of others, results from understanding how persons are connected or disconnected to those around them (1999a: 176).

Yet, as the quote by Lekasa Lionel Alex at the beginning of this chapter illustrates, awareness alone is insufficient. Common origins and a shared cultural heritage may be known, but they are only as meaningful as people choose to make them through the incorporation of these connections into their everyday relationships with one another. Recognition is a necessary part of this process of meaning-making because it is mindful by definition, requiring the dynamic acts of memory and acknowledgement that are manifest in *kastom* (Chapter Two).

Hagen's observation on selfhood and sameness builds on anthropological literature on the relationships between kinship and personhood, whereby people are constructed through their relationships to one another (e.g. Strathern 1988; Carsten 1995). In contrast to sameness, selfhood is not merely known but also enacted, requiring that active expressions of recognition be given, received and returned through culturally determined kin relationships. Both concepts are dependent on shared understandings of and shared participation in normative kin behaviour. Such principles are evidenced in Bilua ideas of 'knowingness' in which people recognize kin most strongly through their actions, since mere knowledge of relatedness by itself is not sufficient to constitute kin. This

incorporation of kin knowledge and 'knowingness' into selfhood fits well with the ideas of recognition I introduced in Chapter One.

In the previous chapter, I touched on different types of knowledge which constitute *kastom* and how *kastom* has come to incorporate both values and actions connected with ideas of the past. However, how *kastom* is practiced and rendered meaningful in day-to-day life can also vary depending on how it is interpreted. In her work with adult adoptees in Scotland, Carsten (2007) investigates how different types of knowledge influence how adopted children incorporate – or do not incorporate – their birth parents as kin depending on what adoptees do with the information they acquire and how this information is used.

In her analysis, Carsten applies Strathern's (1999) ideas of constitutive and regulative knowledge. As she explains, regulative knowledge is overreaching, not definitive of the activity from which it derives. This may include a set of rules or guidelines for acceptable behaviour (for example, the Maravari rule that women should wear lavalavas in public). By contrast, constitutive information is knowledge which is incorporated into one's idea of selfhood – "the information (and verification) it is drawn from is constitutive in its consequences" (Carsten 2007: 404–405). As Strathern argues, "When people acquire new information about their ancestry, they acquire identity... the information constitutes what they know about themselves" (1999:68, cited in Carsten 2007: 405)

Constitutive knowledge is defined by intentionality, involving "the embodied consciousness of what one may take for granted" (Toren 1999: 266). For Bilua people, kin knowledge includes both knowledge of genealogy and the normative behaviour for individuals to relate to different categories of kin – each constituted in function of the other. However, when kin knowledge ceases to be seen as constitutive and becomes perceived as regulative (a rule, or a principle of procedure), it becomes prescriptive and

optional. People are at risk of losing the intentions they have towards each other as kin. When this happens, Dousset notes, "culture is transformed from a structure of existence to a mere role set: 'the individual can practice culture by choice, by elective affinity, like joining the golf club instead of the Wahabists, at least on Monday'" (2013: 1, citing Friedman 2012: 239).

While Friedman's words are tongue in cheek, they illustrate a very serious contemporary concern in Bilua, that of young people choosing to 'opt out' of certain kin relationships seen as sacred to the continuation of the lineage. Many Bilua people say that many young people have ceased to recognize one another, and when people cease treating each other as kin, same people can become different people. In this chapter, I investigate how changing perceptions of kin are incorporated into a Bilua person's sense of identity through the enactment of prescribed normative kin behaviours, the use of kin terminology and the subjective interpretation of relationships. In addition, I ask the question: when virtually all of one's peers regularly consist of extended kindred, how do people distinguish their extended siblings as siblings, and how is this relationship constituted by their recognition or lack thereof?

Kinship in Anthropology

Anthropological studies of kinship have often focused on how people construct relationships through the negotiation of consanguinal relationships and cultural meaning-making (Schneider 1984; Carsten 2000; Stone 2001). More recent analyses have focused on the meaningful behaviour that produces kin relationships, criticizing approaches that stress kinship as a system of rules and acknowledging kinship as a practice – involving people who "participate intrinsically in each other's existence" (Sahlins 2011: ix) – or as "negotiated relationships created and sustained through contact, conversation and common

life over long periods of time" (Miller 2013: 537). Scholars have framed this shift to the social meaning of kinship in terms of 'relatedness' (Carsten 2000) , 'relationships' (Miller 2007), and similar terminology which emphasizes non-biological social connections between individuals. Even in the early 1970s, Pitt-Rivers observed that "non-kin amity loves to masquerade as kinship" (1973: 90).

This scholarly shift away from biology and towards social meaning resulted from the gradual transition from genealogy to ontology as the primary foundation in the study of kinship. In the 1960s, Leach, Needham, and Schneider challenged the primary place of genealogy in kinship by focusing on kin terminology as symbols representing social categories. As Leach observed, kinship terms "help to teach an individual to recognize the significant groupings in the social structure in to which they are born" (1958: 143 quoted in Read 2001: 242). In this symbolic framework, kin terms and genealogy overlap by virtue of a happenstance between genealogical reckoning and social categories, rather than social categories being fundamentally about genealogy (Read 2001: 242).

For example, looking at the generative logic of kin terminologies, Read (2001, 2007) suggests that a person's kin are determined through the symbol structure (for example, kin terms with their associative behaviours) and its instantiation (their use) – culturally determined behavioural practices which identify how kin relations are formed (for example, name giving, nursing, and co-residence) (2007: 359). Rather than beginning with reproduction as a means for engendering genealogical relationships, through cultural instantiation, Read proposes that culturally meaningful behavioural practices, not genealogy, are the primary factors which influence the construction of kin terminology. The creation and meaning of kin terms is dependent on their associated behavioural practices and not vice versa (Read 2007: 332). This is consistent with the dual role of knowledge and action that defines Bilua recognition of relationships.

However, given the transition from smaller, isolated family-based hamlets to larger Christian communities comprised of extended networks of cognatic kin, people living in close proximity to each other are often related to each other in multiple ways. This has invariably affected how people view kin relationships and their ability to police the traditional social norms governing them.

'Too Many Children'

One evening when I went to visit my friend Nerinda Naqu, the school headmistress, I found her in a state of exasperation. When I asked what the matter was, she sighed,

> Sera, I am tired. All day I look after children. When it is dark, they need to go home to their parents. But still they run around, and I have to scold them and send them home. It's not my responsibility. Where are their parents? There are just too many kids in this village. Mothers are busy cooking and looking after babies. Who takes responsibility for the older children? How are they to see if one child is missing? But after dark, they need to be home.

Here, Nerinda expressed her concern with parents' inability or unwillingness to watch over their children's personal and moral safety. The story contrasts with one later told to me by Janet Aqunaru Butler, a Maravari expatriate living in Auckland, who was nostalgic about growing up in the 1960s and the evenings she would spend with her family in the hamlet of Gorevaha outside of Maravari village: "My father would sit us all down and tell us *kastom* stories. He told us to be careful when going to the village. He said to us, 'These are your sisters and brothers, and you must be careful how you play.'" In contrast to Nerinda's frustrations over parental inattention, Janet's father's warning was representative of many Bilua parents' concerns: that playing together puts children in relaxed and intimate contact, which, while acceptable for younger children, can become problematic as children mature, particularly with respect to taboos between cross-sex extended siblings.

Indeed, I witnessed many situations where church youth meetings would often break into small groups that would leave the church grounds during evening programmes,

which ran late into the night.[3] The mixing of extended siblings has almost become commonplace, making their behaviour toward one another difficult to for parents to monitor, and them more likely to relax the culturally defined behaviour of respect and shame that defines them as kin. As one of Lerche's informants explained, "the reason people are thinking [worried] about respect is because we have multiplied so we do not see our relatives, or our very close cousins or first cousins or whatever for so long [...] the respect needs to be there [...] it is all about recognition" (2008: 8).

Carsten draws on a Geertzian metaphor, noting that while kinship is a process, it is an unstable one, subject to 'thickening' or 'thinning' over time (2013: 247). In other words, ideas of who constitutes kin are flexible depending on context and circumstances. Unquestionably, the prohibitive relationships of respect and shame which for many Bilua people are exemplified through their ancestors were subject to new challenges as people moved from isolated hamlets into larger coastal villages. As with Janet's experience living outside the village, not only were kin geographically distanced and therefore more defined, but as the introduction of Christianity shifted the focus from the extended family centred on the brother and sister unit to the nuclear family centred on husband and wife, the foundational relationship between siblings also became increasingly challenged. While kinship, as a flexible process, needs to be constantly reinforced and acknowledged through everyday life, the danger is that, as Carsten pointed out in the case of English kinship (and consistent with Janet's father's concern), "the reduction of kinship ties proceeds implicitly and gradually, without paying it undue attention" (2013: 249).

[3] Several incidents arose in which sexual relationships between extended siblings were revealed to have started in this context. McDougall described a similar situation on Ranongga in which an elder started wailing after seeing a group of cousin-brothers and -sisters laughing and joking together after youth group (2004: 97).

Thus, Carsten and Hagen's analyses can help contextualize Bilua people's frustration with senior lineage members whom they see as negligent in passing on knowledge of lineage and inter-lineage histories to the younger generations, and more specifically, their monitoring of the activities of the young. If young people do not understand (or do not care)[4] how their ancestors were related, they cannot understand their relationships to one another, and consequently, why they must avoid intimate contact with those who their ancestors would have considered kin. Given the relative decline of prohibitions governing respect relationships between kin (Dureau 1998b; McDougall 2004), I consider Bilua ideas of kinship in regard to current discussions of relatedness and investigate the problems raised by 'not recognizing' kin. I begin with a brief outline of Bilua kin relationships, highlighting particular ideologies of respect and shame.

Understanding Bilua Kin Relationships

As a person's use of particular kin terms is indicative of the way they treat different individuals in relation to themselves (Lerche 2008: 7), kin terminology serves as a significant marker of recognition between kin, conveying acknowledgement of a relationship and implicitly prompting acknowledgement in return. Generally speaking, Bilua kin terminology (Tables 1 and 2) is guided by principles of nurturance and respect that collapse relational distinctions which might otherwise separate members of different matrilineal affiliations or extended kin. All people are subject to the hierarchy of age, and elders (*tanamu*) are owed deference. The term *taite* ('grandparent') collapses degrees of difference from an apical female ancestor; however, it can also be a respect term used by the young in addressing an unrelated person with grey hair. While both male and female

[4] Bilua discourses of recognition conflate knowing with doing. Therefore, failure to act according to kin relationships is perceived as failure to understand why appropriate behaviour is important in sustaining those relationships.

grandparents are called *taite*, this may be modified to *taite requama* ('grandmother') or *taite lasiveala* ('grandfather') if further distinction is needed. 'The ancestors' translates simply as *taite poso*, taking the plural form (Chapter Six).

Saidi	Family (typically mother, father and children)
Niania	Mother, mother's sister, father's sister
Mama	Father, father's brother
Papa	Mother's brother, mother's mother's brother
Apakora (or *Pakora*)	Formally, sister's son; also used to describe nieces and nephews in general
Meqora	Child
Mabuzu	Grandchild
Ravasa	In-law
Mani	Husband's sister or wife's brother (infrequent)
Taite (*Taite Requama* / *Taite Lasiveala*)	Grandparent (grandmother/grandfather); a general term for elders connoting both respect and affection
Taite poso / *Taite madu*	Ancestors

Table 1 – Bilua Kin Terms

A man refers to his wife as *anga ko reko* ('my woman') and she refers to him as *anga vo lasive* ('my man'); however, most couples prefer the affectionate familiarity of the Pijin olo ('my old [man],' 'my old [woman]'), even when their spouse is young. Older respect terminology – *tanala* and *tanama* for 'husband' and 'wife' respectively, expressing acknowledgement of someone as the male or female head of a family or household – is much less common. In his report on the changing of land rights, Allan (1957) interprets the word *tanala* as 'chief.' This is suggestive of both the respected status of senior men and how often colonial officers associated chiefly leadership with male figures who commanded the respect of others (Chapter Seven). [5] Respect is also accorded to *ravasa*

[5] In *Son of a Savage*, Daniel Bula refers to Nicholson as *Tanala* during their visit to Australia. Despite his obvious displeasure at Nicholson's request that he sing for the entertainment of the Australian patrons of the Mission, Bula assents, saying, "All right, *Tanala* […] I will sing if it does any good" (Nicholson 1924: 84).

(mother- or father-in-law). A wife's brother and husband's sister are called *mani*, although I did not encounter this word on Vella. Siblings-in-law were generally referred to by the Pijin tabu.

Parents and grandparents refer to both their and their siblings' children and children's children as *meqora* ('child'), generally avoiding distinctions of gender. A person refers to their mother, mother's sisters, and father's sisters as *niania* (mother) because of their contributions in raising and nurturing them as a child. However, it is also common for a child to call their father's sisters aunti (aunt), particularly if they are geographically removed from the village in which the child was raised. A person's father and father's brothers are addressed as *mama*, while they refer to their mother's brother or mother's mother's brother as *papa*; and in return, he refers to his sister's children and sister's grandchildren as *apakora*. I noted that, particularly with extended kin, these terms often seemed to be used in times when support was needed rather than on a day-to-day basis.

While *apakora* can refer to both sister's son and sister's daughter, the opportunities afforded to men seemed to put them in a more frequent position than the women to call upon their *papa*'s support in business ventures, political pursuits, and community matters. As with other matrilineal societies in the New Georgia Group (Dureau 1998b; McDougall 2004: 83; Berg 2008: 125), the relationship between mother's brother and sister's son is characterized by both support and tension. A sister's son is a reminder of a sister's corporeal identity, the source of a mystical double bond between brother and sister. Her sexuality is a source of danger to her brother (as I shall explain), yet her maternity makes possible allows the continuation of the lineage (Dureau 1998b). In practical contexts, this can become a point of tension in the transmission of lineage power between generations. As an influential businessman and rising big man, Marvari *lekasa* Lionel Alex was particularly sensitive about his relationships with his mother's uncles, on whose land he

built and managed the Wagina Development Corporation (WDC) store.[6] At the conclusion of my fieldwork, when I left a substantial donation for the rebuilding of the school in the care of his *papa*, Semepitu (in whose house I resided), Alex became quite angry with me, accusing me of shaming him because he would be forced to ask his *papa* for money (Alex was both head of the school committee and the director of WDC, which would provide the timber for the rebuilding). Indeed, an earlier dispute I had with Alex at the beginning of my fieldwork was also settled through his uncles. While not everyone treated the *papa–apakora* relationship with such gravitas, such examples illustrate their mutual role of tempering and supporting one another, exchanging help and advice in times of need.

Given that the use of specific kin terminology signifies the acknowledgement of associated taboo kin relationships, changes in terminology can be linked to wider changes in the relationship itself. This is most apparent in Bilua sibling and extended sibling relationships.

Natal Siblings and Age Distinctions

Natal siblings generally constitute an exception to strict taboos governing relationships between opposite-sex siblings, and age, rather than gender, is the key variant in this relationship. A sister helps to care for her younger brother, changing his nappies and carrying him around when he is a baby and sharing many of the responsibilities associated with motherhood (see also McDougall 2004: 90–91). The female handling of male effluvia is described as a defining factor in the familiarity and associated lack of shame experienced by natal as opposed to non-natal siblings.

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[6]Alex would eventually come to succeed his *papa* Donli as the chief of Wagina *toutou* (Chapter Seven).

Conversely, between natal older brothers and their younger sisters, affection is usually developed through trust. An unmarried girl who does not walk alone in the evening, is discreet in her encounters, and avoids situations that might stimulate gossip or bring shame to her family is more likely to have a more relaxed relationship with her brothers than one who has more openly tested these social boundaries. If a girl elopes or becomes pregnant, people often comment that her brothers have not been strict enough with her. Both inappropriate social behaviour and the failure of kin to discipline that behaviour are subject to criticism. As Dureau (1994) notes, once a woman is married, concern about her behaviour – how much she walks about unaccompanied – usually becomes more the concern of her husband, although a woman's brothers do not hesitate to beat her if she commits adultery.

Kaka (*Anggaka*)	Older sibling or cousin (informal)
Visi (*Avisi*)	Younger sibling or cousin (informal)
Saqi	Opposite sex sibling (formal)
Bara/Sista	Brother/sister (Pijin); also used to incorporate non-kin, in the context of the wider 'Christian family'
Tamania	Cousins of the same generation
Tamania ko meqora poso / *Tamania ko meqora kidi*	Cousin's children (group) / cousin's children (two people); also the wider spectrum of kindred

Table 2 – Sibling Terminology

As McDougall argues, highlighting age rather than gender in relationships between opposite-sex siblings connotes a more benevolent, less aggressive relationship between them (2004: 89), an observation consistent with the relaxing of relationships in Bilua. As early as 1914, Rivers (1914: 254) observed that the respect term *saqi* (sibling) was becoming replaced by *anggaka* (my older sibling, male or female) or *avisi* (my younger sibling, male or female). This is a shortening of *anga ko*/*vo kaka* or *anga ko*/*vo visi* (my female/male older sibling; my female/male younger sibling). While brothers, sisters and

cross-cousins refer to each other as *kaka* or *visi*, this is somewhat more common in the patterns of familiarity between those of the same sex.[7] Highlighting age as a sign of closeness appears to be more characteristic of Bilua and Ranongga than of North Vella, where Berg describes *kaka* and *visi* as examples of older, more respect-oriented terminology, indicative of the relationship between kinship and descent, a claim based on a gathering in which the chief recited all the *kaka* (firstborn, senior women) in the uterine line (2008: 125).[8]

***Saqi* Relationships**

The brother–sister unit comprises Bilua ideas of 'same people' in their most basic form, providing the matrilineal foundation to which all other kin relationships are traced.[9] For this reason, the sibling relationship is perceived to be a sacred relationship characterized by continuity and danger. Dureau argues that the characteristic tension of the brother–sister relationship stems from their simultaneous participation in opposing relationships of siblingship and gender (1994: 94) – the first characterized by love and support, the second by spatial prohibitions of respect and shame. While both natal siblings and same-sex extended siblings employ age-based kin terminology – *kaka* (older sibling) and *visi* (younger sibling) – both matri- and patri-extended opposite-sex siblings refer to one another as *saqi*, relationships subject to the associated taboos characteristic of *luluna* relationships elsewhere in the New Georgia Group (Dureau 1998b: 94; McDougall 2004).

[7] Berg notes that *kaka* and *visi* are used exclusively for same sex siblings in North Vella (2008: 106). However, he also suggests that the term *lolo* can be used by a sister to refer to her brother directly, a term which would be highly inappropriate in Bilua usage, as *lolo* means 'friend' – a term used for casual and amicable acquaintances that can sometimes carry insinuations of *baere*, a romantic or sexual partner.
[8] This seems consistent with his descriptions of *toutou* as significantly more hierarchical than in South Vella.
[9] Lineage origin stories frequently begin with the arrival of a brother-and-sister pair on the island.

Although membership in the matrilineage is primarily considered in regards to descent through the female, it is accorded special consideration in the *saqi* relationship. Female agency through maternity ensures the creation of descendants, without which people could not become ancestors. The identity of women as mothers within the lineage necessitates control over female sexuality, which is mystically tied to the well-being of her brother. In the past, a warrior's death was often attributed to the inappropriate sexuality of their *saqi*. Even today, men frequently employ violence in punishing their sisters for any sexual misconduct, and compensation needs to be paid to a woman's brothers before they receive any knowledge of their sister's sexual relationships.

Rispet (Pijin) or *panao* ('respect') is usually demonstrated through a series of demure and restrictive behaviours, sometimes guided by a set of prescribed prohibitions or inhibitions in behaviour expected towards a person's kin or towards chiefs or people of status. Bilua discussions of respect often convey a formal quality, almost inevitably resulting in stories of, for example, women who would serve their brothers by gingerly sliding bowls across the mat with their feet to avoid coming into contact with their food, but they also include more generalized signs of acknowledgement, such as making efforts to walk behind a chief and lowering gazes when talking with people of status. These sit as examples against which current practices of respect are measured, invariably negatively.

In Bilua, lack of respect is associated with a perceived digression from an ancestral ideal. However, the issue is ultimately not whether young people are taught what these relationships are, but whether they are taught (or whether they care) how they matter in respect to *kastom*. For extended siblings, the shift from mystical (the connection of women's sexuality to her brother's health) to social normative explanations for taboos has significantly impacted how they conduct and construct their relationships with one another. That is not to suggest that these explanations are exclusive, but rather, as I shall soon

illustrate, that repercussions are often perceived differently between younger and older generations.

Melanesian ideologies of rispet frequently overlap and intertwine with sem (*qurato*, glossed as shame). As both gender and kinship are inherent within the conceptualization of siblingship, any suggestion of physical intimacy is excluded from this relationship (Dureau 1994: 89). For this reason, brothers and sisters, and cross-cousins more generally, avoid situations in which they might be exposed to knowledge of their sibling's sexual life, and compensation may be demanded of someone who makes them aware of their sibling's sexual activities. Dureau (1994: 94–96) suggests that the sibling relationship is likened to the relationship with a chief, as both relationships are characterized by respect (*panao*) and shame (*qurato*), intertwined and embodied emotions governed by spatial prohibition. As she describes of *luluna* relationships of the early 1900s:

> No woman might go into any part, including the open verandah, of her *luluna*'s house. She must always walk behind and if forced to pass in front of *luluna*, must stoop or crawl and not step over their legs. Physical touch was taboo. She must not eat her *luluna*'s betel-nut or use any of their personal possessions. Finally, it was absolutely forbidden to mention any part of her *luluna*'s head or to use a variety of words associated with eating, sexuality or elimination in their presence or when speaking of them (1994: 96).

Contemporary Bilua taboos prohibit physical touch between extended siblings, although there is considerable variation between ideology and practice. *Saqi* should never pass each other food from their own hands or walk directly towards one another. A woman should avoid crossing in front of her *saqi* and give them a wide berth. Moreover, she should avoid using his name and only address him as '*Saqi.*' In Bilua, such taboos governing brother–sister relationships are seldom or sparingly observed in day-to-day interactions among the younger generation. While brother–sister relationships still constitute relationships of support and tension, observance of brother–sister taboos have become progressively relaxed the further generationally removed a person is from the advent of Christian

teachings, when the base of family relationships first became redirected from cross-sex siblings to the primacy of the husband–wife bond.

During my fieldwork, the significance of *saqi* relationships was a subject frequently referred to in the past tense. Elders lamented the commonality of *pitaso* among extended siblings which they claim barely ever took place in the past of their ancestors because offenders would have been killed. Consequently, many elders associate the deterioration of *saqi* relationships with social decline and the fragmentation of 'true *kastom*.'[10] While restrictions are placed on cross-sex siblings relative to genealogical proximity, transgressions on the mother's side are often treated more seriously than on the father's side. Moreover, it is widely argued that sexual relationships between extended kin have become more acceptable over time, from 'six steps' down to 'three steps' removed from the natal sibling relationship.[11] However, in practice, these boundaries are pushed regularly. Inferences of sexuality between extended opposite-sex siblings are frequent matters of concern within large communities where nearly everyone is kin in some way – a common complaint of people critical of contemporary behaviour. This is largely because knowledge of their relationships are seen as regulative rather than constitutive.

I observed that many young people understood the taboos of sexual relationships with cross-cousins in terms of disapproval and punishment rather than the violation of mystical relationships which threatened their kin with physical harm and carried the potency to disrupt the continuity of the lineage. This was borne out by many young couples often returning to each other, again and again, regardless of punishment. Young people would often help each other coordinate romantic meetings, and it was not uncommon to hear

[10] 'True' *kastom* in this instance can be seen as voluntary relationships of avoidance between sister and brother rather than the *kastom* of reconciling breaches in this relationship.
[11] While 'six steps' of genetic separation may appear to be excessive grounds to be denied marriage, such claims contrast the strict rules governing *pitaso* taboos in the past with the relaxed state of kin relationships in the present and are a key part of Bilua discourses of loss and moral decline (Chapter Two).

them downplay the reactions of elders to what youth described as "just a boy and a girl in the bush."

In one particularly contentious example, a young man had an ongoing relationship with a second cousin. They ran away together several times and had three children together. While this was not uncommon, this relationship was described to me as particularly problematic because the woman's father and the man's mother were *tabu saqi*. Yet, repeatedly the man expressed a particular indifference to the gravitas expressed by others of the union, saying only, "My family will pay compensation and we'll be straight again." Despite this, he was regularly chased away, narrowly escaping beatings by the girl's brothers, and she was frequently verbally abused in public by the man's sisters. They continued to pursue a relationship in secret until the young woman's father died, after which they were finally able to live together as a regular couple.

Both adultery and incest are referred to as *pitaso* – the threat of lineage or family 'division' caused by inappropriate sexual relationships between members. With Christianity, the mysticism that defined the brother–sister relationship lost its potency, although many traces of this mystical relationship persist in contemporary compensation and marriage practices. Punishment by death was replaced by compensation as a form of restitution and the decline in corporal punishment has given women more control over their maternity. Dureau describes how contraception was a common practice in pre-Christian times because infractions of reproduction norms were harshly punished by *luluna* (1998b: 239). While this is still the case today, corporal punishment is much less severe, so the pressure to avoid pregnancies is lessened. While contraception is usually practiced by married women, unmarried women are often indifferent about contraception, seeing it as prohibitive to intimacy. In Maravari, pregnancy out of wedlock was quite common, as a woman's significance in the lineage is enabled through her role in the continuation of kin.

The collapsing of kinship terms means that cousin–brother and cousin–sister kin relationships are widened to include kin even more removed than first cousins. When people challenge the degree of genealogical relatedness of a potential couple for marriage, it is in reference to the brother–sister unit as the relational qualifier. The presentation of shell money to the matrilineage is often sufficient to overcome most criticisms of relational kinship between extended siblings. Because extended siblings cannot marry, this compensation serves the added purpose of changing their relationship, causing them to cease to be brother and sister (Chapter Eight).

The Bonds of Extended Siblingship

Regardless of age or *toutou* affiliation, as a generation, extended siblings are referred to as *tama<u>n</u>ia* (*tamatasi* on Simbo and Ranongga), a group of bilateral kin ideally characterized by mutually sustaining relationships (Dureau 1994; McDougall 2004). Whereas lineages are corporate, *tama<u>n</u>ia* relationships are lateral and cross-cut any lineage in which an individual has ties. Dureau describes *tamatasi* as relationships of compassionate love: a combination of affection, responsibility and obligation expressed through assistance in times of need (1994: 90).

Free from the restrictions of respect relationships, same-sex *tama<u>n</u>ia* relationships are particularly close and are characterized by mutual help, generosity and friendship. For example, shortly after a young boy won a pair of soccer cleats in a raffle, I witnessed him running around the soccer field with his cousin-brother, their arms wrapped around each other's neck as they each wore a shoe on opposing feet, taking turns kicking the ball. Such camaraderie manifests in more vital acts of support as young people get older. When people leave the village, they will often rely on *tama<u>n</u>ia* for food and shelter – expectations and obligations that often place significant strain on urban kin when rural relatives visit,

often for extended periods. Moreover, during my fieldwork it seemed that men of all ages felt particularly compelled (sometimes reluctantly) to assist in whatever their *tamania* asked, whether it was providing support in a fight,[12] coordinating covert meetings for romantic trysts or supporting them in political endeavours in later life. As with brother–sister relationships, individuals go out of their way to avoid displeasing or being openly critical of their *tamania*.[13]

The significance of *tamania* can often be difficult to ascertain in the context of a densely populated village where kinship relationships are extensive and difficult to sort out even for those involved. However, over a wider geographical area, their significance becomes apparent. The children of brothers and sisters and the children of cousins are called *tamania ko meqora kidi* (between two cousins) or *tamania ko meqora poso (*between a group of cousins) – a trans-generational cluster of living sibling groups. Following Goodenough, Dureau characterizes these relationships (on Simbo, called *tavatina*) as a kindred, "a non-corporate, ego-centred group of kin who may be expected to engage in mutually sustaining interaction" (Goodenough 1955: 71–72, cited in Dureau 1994: 90). Such relationships extend the empathy, responsibility and obligation of *tamania* across the wider spectrum of islander identities. These relationships are extended to all cousins, although with decreasing intensity as the genealogical distance increases. The fluidity of kin relationships is apparent in the recognition between connected *tamania*.

During a visit to the village of Sabora, where I was staying in the house of Perisole Volosi, an older woman I had met on a previous trip, I was accompanied by two friends,

[12] Vella stories describe *tamania* relationships in accounts of Sito (Chapter Two), much of whose local support in raiding activities was enabled through *tamania* relationships. One Paramata chief recounts that it was a cousin-brother who was chosen to capture Sito and bring him in to colonial authorities. After a struggle in which his captor was badly injured, Sito was apprehended and "the two embraced, laughing and joking and priding themselves on the strength of their magic."
[13] One man told me that he always left the rice he'd purchased in the boat and carried it back after dark so no one would know he bought it in Gizo instead of from his *tamania*'s store.

Wendy and Veroma, young women who often stayed with me in Maravari. Over tea, Perisole began questioning them about their families in Maravari, which soon revealed a shared kin connection through their grandmother, Pilovuru, who was among her *tamania*. Almost immediately, they began addressing each other as *taite* (grandparent) and *mabuzu* (grandchild), as the demeanour between the two girls and the old woman softened to easy laughter and turned to inquiries about aunts and uncles. Over the next couple of days, the girls began helping the old woman around the house, and when it was time to go, they parted warmly, with promises to visit again.

The sudden warmth of this interaction between previous strangers illustrates how constructing kin relationships serves to create meaningful connections in day-to-day life. Not only did the knowledge of shared kin increase the relational connection of 'sameness' between Perisole and the two girls, but the enactment of this knowledge through gestures of respect and the employment of kin terminology extended their understandings of selfhood. Perisole became a grandmother to the girls, who in turn became grandchildren to her.

As illustrated by Perisole's ability to establish a connection with her cousin-sister's grandchildren, *tamania* relationships highlight the cross-lineage relationships that connect seemingly distinct communities. Through generations, the children and grandchildren of *tamania* forge a network of relationships that expands and contracts depending on both affinity and opportunities to express relatedness, obligation and support. The extended bonds of *tamania* relationships help conceive how kinship can be a flexible, yet unstable, process through which people constitute meaningful relationships of obligation and support. While relationships may become distant if they are not nurtured and maintained, they may also be made anew through the reforging of lost connections and the reaffirming of lineage lines.

While determining genealogical connections is a common, informal way of establishing familiarity, it can also be an active gesture to create affiliation within communities. For example, after church one Sunday, Ravabule, a Roviana man who was married to a Maravari woman, called me into their cookhouse to ask about my research. Speaking of his experiences, he commented that foreign-born affines tended to distinguish between 'us' and 'them,' creating a wall that prevented them from forging relationships with a level of familiarity similar to what they could achieve on their home island. Rather than being content with simply being an affine – 'a different person' – he explained that he used knowledge of his genealogy to actively strengthen his own connection to Bilua. In recognizing a branch of his cousins in a nearby village, he showed them his genealogical records, creating a foundation between them. He noted as well that he chose to call one particular Maravari chief his *lekasa* because of the connections of that chief's lineage to his own, and in pointing out these connections to the chief, created a tie between them (and presumably, with it, a sense of obligation). In both cases, Perisole and Ravabule were able to use their knowledge of extended kin relations to actively further their connections with those around them.

The Importance of 'Recognizing' Kin

As I have explained, Melanesian ideologies of rispet (*panao*) frequently overlap and intertwine with sem. However, a secondary meaning of shame is used in the context of admonishment and attrition, carrying with it the potential for recompense, forgiveness and atonement. Shameful behaviour is ultimately correctable and redeemable behaviour, only indicative of the character of the person in so far as it is perpetuated.

Shame, like atonement, sits on the border between the social and the personal, allowing the community to participate in the moral judgment and rehabilitation of

offending persons while reinforcing ideas of moral behaviour and its role in local understandings of belonging. It serves as both the means of punishment (shaming) and the display of contrition (showing shame) (White and Watson-Gegeo 1990: 17). Hocart described incidents where people hanged themselves in shame because they thought they had slandered or angered a chief (e.g. Hocart ms. n.d.f: 1031). Similarly Bilua people comment that kin who had committed *pitaso* sometimes used to be killed outright for shaming their families. Thus, it is plausible that community participation in shaming is a replacement for the harsher punishments of the pre-Christian era. Contemporarily, a concentrated stare (Pijin: <u>luk luk strong</u>) or a sharp word in a public place is quite often enough to silence or shame someone who has garnered negative attention. More serious or persistent behaviour is responded to through gossip, ridicule and in some cases, alienation.

Pitaso

A person characterized by others as having 'no shame' is one who has failed to follow the social rules governing relationships and behaviour. Most transgressions, such as *pitaso*, theft and witchcraft, are viewed as acts of disrespect for the boundaries of kin relationships, property and rights and were reputedly serious enough to trigger warfare prior to pacification. Because of the wider consequences for associated families and lineage groups, sometimes the failure to respect kin relationships can translate into a loss of rights for transgressors.

In committing *pitaso*, 'same people' (kin) treat their kin like 'different people' (those who are marriageable) by taking them as sexual partners. People talk about this as the offender 'not recognizing' their kin, causing much sadness, and often anger, in the larger kin group. In Bilua understandings, failure to recognize and respect kin relationships is likened to acting like a dog, which is seen as among the lowliest creatures

given its tendency to mate indiscriminately with kin and non-kin alike.[14] On Ranongga, those who commit incest are referred to as *nyete* – "the foul smelling, slimy fruit of ngali nuts that have rotted in their shells" (McDougall 2004: 99).

In the last two chapters I described how relationships between 'same' and 'different' people were needed to create and sustain strong and thriving populations. Beyond associating individuals with immoral and animalistic behaviour, a sexual relationship between kin is a transgression *against* kin because it threatens to divide the lineage, theoretically requiring one of the offenders to be exiled or transferred to another lineage unless money (preferably shell money) is given, both to compensate for the offence and to keep the offenders under the protection of the *toutou*. On Ranongga, the term used to refer to this reconciliation ritual translates literally as 'tying back together' (McDougall 2004: 98). While it is difficult to say how frequently *pitaso* resulted in severing the individual from the lineage in the past or whether past handling of these situations actually did lead to exile or death, accusations of uncompensated *pitaso* are a common weapon in land disputes, where entitlement to rights and resources is at stake.

Frequently, these cases included multiple offenses requiring compensation to be exchanged between both sides. One man suggested that in the past, even the rumour of *pitaso* was enough to make chiefs go wakabaot (walk about) – setting out to speak to the people involved and straighten out relationships between families before further damage could be done. 'Straightening,' which will be given more detailed consideration in Chapter Eight, is a key pan-Pacific metaphor referring to resolving a problem or setting things to rights (see also White and Watson-Gegeo 1990). Given the threat of retaliation by spouses and their kin, the wronged husband or wife is paid compensation called *talina*

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[14] A child who is the offspring of second cousins is sometimes quietly referred to as *siele meqora*, a 'dog child.'

(‘to hear’) to ‘buy their ear’ before they are told of their spouse’s infidelity. This prevented the aggrieved party from violently assaulting transgressors unless they were prepared to pay compensation of their own.[15]

Much like violations of the rules governing *saqi*, *pitaso* also carries mystical connotations, threatening to ‘open a path’[16] for future relationships of that kind within the lineage (see also McDougall 2004). Thus, to commit *pitaso* is to ‘curse the land’ (*miduku ko malueka*), perceived to create weakness within the lineage and cause neighbouring and associated kin to question that group’s entitlement to territory. For this reason, it is not uncommon for people to blame the breach of sexual taboos on a known or alleged history of such behaviours in the past. One woman I spoke to was adamant that local incidents of *pitaso* traced back to one particular chief who allowed his children to marry with extended kin.

Regardless of compensation (*ronu*), when a person fails to recognize taboo relationships, they can be refused recognition in return and their rights in particular lineages called into question. A woman could refuse her brother and his family access to their lineage land in the future because of his past sexual transgressions against kin. *Pitaso* also theoretically excludes men from ever becoming chiefs or leaders in their family. Therefore, offenders must ‘shame themselves’ publicly to show remorse for the suffering they caused their kin in failing to respect the boundaries of kinship. While *pitaso* is framed as a transgression against kin, this does not lessen the love shared through the lived relationships within which they are enmeshed. Consequently, the mixture of emotional pain, sorrow, anger and guilt is felt within the larger kin group.

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[15] *Talin̲a* is also paid to the woman’s brothers when she and a man and woman announce their intention to marry. In both cases, *talin̲a* serves to temper emotion and prevent violent assault (Chapter Eight; see also McDougall 2004: 89).

[16] ‘Opening a path’ refers to setting a precedent. However, it also carries the mystical overtones of a curse (once people begin to have sex with their own, their descendants are cursed to repeat it).

I sat in on a half dozen hearings to straighten relationships damaged by *pitaso*. Before each commenced, the women I was sitting with would reflect that in the taem bifoa offenders were often killed. In these observations they conveyed a shared feeling that people get off too easily and thus are not made to appreciate the consequences of their actions. One chief lamented that most of his shell money went to 'cover' the transgressions of young people who had intercourse with kin. Young people, in his understanding, have little incentive to recognize their kin or carry out their obligations to their families because there are minimal repercussions to their actions. Reflecting on the reputed pre-Christian practice of killing those who committed *pitaso*, he responded quite emphatically that if a person did not have people to support him in the payment of compensation, then he *deserved* to be killed:

> If a person was not able to make compensation they would kill him. If (s)he didn't pay compensation or there wasn't anyone to pay compensation for him [...] people help, you know? If (s)he doesn't have anyone to help them or they can't afford to pay compensation alone then (s)he deserves to be killed. They will kill him. How are things now? The way of young people today is much different. People don't show respect to the tribe. Relationships between cousin-brother and cousin-sister have changed [in] this time [...]. They don't show respect.

By this, he meant that a person who had clearly violated sufficient customary laws in the past forfeited rights in all the lineages to which they had been connected. Someone who failed to respect and thus maintain relationships with those who support them becomes 'man nating' (a nothing person): unrecognizing, and therefore unworthy of the constitutive relationships in which they were entwined and deserving of their fate. In commenting on the former practice of killing those people who do not follow social rules, the chief criticized the leniency of others who allowed offenders to maintain group alliances by 'covering' their transgressions with shell money rather than disciplining them or temporarily exiling them from the community. In the previous chapter, I argued that peopled have an idealized view of the pre-Christian past, glossing over and contextualizing

warfare and headhunting in relation to necessary processes of retaliation (*zuzuku*) and social reproduction. With regard to the perceived laxity in contemporary kin behaviour, the violence of the pre-Christian disciplinary measures is romanticized as a necessity for maintaining social order, ensuring that social boundaries and strict rules of respect are followed.

The recognition of kin relationships is an important concern in contemporary Bilua. The shared history of intermingling lineages in Bilua, coupled with a high number of youth who marry and/or conceive children close to home, fosters fears that people are not sufficiently recognizing each other, essentially treating kin as 'different' or marriageable people. As a result, the majority of lineage and community disputes involve the 'straightening' of kin ties. While these problems are common among young people, many blame elders and chiefs for failing to teach children proper kinship roles and their genealogical connections and obligations to those around them. The responsibility of senior kin of transmitting cultural knowledge and guiding how it is incorporated into everyday life serves as an additional form of nurturance from elders to the young, and that knowledge is shared both through and across *toutou*. These understandings of *toutou* and the status of *toutou* as the primary category in a unilineal system of descent have been complicated by its reification as a category of landholding by the colonial government (Chapter Four) and by conflicting local statements of affiliation, with many people claiming to hold rights in several lineages at a time. However, the same lineage connections grounded in the sharing of land become subject to different challenges as land is increasingly gauged for its value as a financial rather than a social resource.

CHAPTER FOUR – LAND RELATIONSHIPS, LAND REGISTRATION

> Everyone knew of each other before they made boundaries. So since that time until *lotu* came, there was no argument, land argument, no disputing land too. In 1997, the time the companies arrived here, […] dispute came because of money.
>
> – Lekasa Granville Sariki

> Before my grandfather died, he went to my mother and told her he was not leaving any *kastom* money – only land. He said the land was money. Every leaf, every stone, every ground was money. And he spoke true.
>
> – Lekasa Rimu Baesovaki

In his analysis of early twentieth century Highland Papua, Eric Hirsch (2003) proposes that it is the task of anthropologists and historians to investigate a "landscape of powers" through which diverse agents and interests came to contend with each other and shape the landscape. Landscape in this context is not only a reference to place but also "the outcome of these actual and potential forms of person, place, space, time and horizon" (2003: 5). In Bilua, the influencing agents which shape the landscape include not only the different lineage groups that settled and forged relationships through the sharing of land but also the missionaries, colonial agents, and foreign developers with whom they negotiated ideas of land and people's relationships with it. Similarly, as Povinelli (1998, 2002) argued in her investigation of Aboriginal Australia, such a landscape of powers involves the clash of multiple worldviews and invariably creates conflicts of recognition in which people are beholden to different authorities with very different powers over their lives and on which they depend in very different ways. Povinelli argues that Aborigines are dependent on the state to supply their economic livelihoods. To obtain the state's recognition, they are pushed to accept being compartmentalized into the state's idea of their indigenous identity – a misrecognition that challenges how they accept their traditional obligations to one

another regarding the sharing of land. Nevertheless, as with Bilua, accepting and negotiating this misrecognition increases their opportunity to be acknowledged as landowners, ultimately granting them a legal voice that will be recognized by the both the state and foreign corporations in the negotiation of land resources (see Fabian 1999: 53).

In Chapter Three, I outlined how Bilua perceive kin relationships to be constitutive yet dynamic, often at odds with the restrictive categories of matrilineal descent governed through the *toutou*. In this chapter, I argue that inflexible categorizations of groups (like *toutou*), and consequently the clarification of land rights by the state, have led to tensions between the descendants of landholders and settlers and the widening of social difference in Bilua villages. Bilua people conceptualize relationships to land through the Pijin word 'raet' (*pizato*), inflected by the legal discourses of rights. Therefore, western concepts of ownership do not accurately convey the range of ways in which people think about and gain access to land and resources. Bilua representations of the past as a time of love speak to ideas of land as a social phenomenon that enabled linkages between groups, a principle which many see as omitted in state land registration, which promotes the severing of network ties in favour of exclusive rights to land. As McDougall notes for Ranongga, "aggressively claiming exclusive rights for oneself or one's group […] effectively alienate[s] those others who are necessary for a properly functioning polity" (2005: 81). I consider the changing significance of land from social to economic resource, illustrating how the Bilua land transaction of *pikezato* reinforces the ongoing recognition of relationships between groups through land, while co-existing practices of state registration determine differences and establish rigid separations between groups for the purposes of exclusivity and financial gain. My intention is not to 'straighten' a system of land rights (as many local people assumed) but to investigate how land serves as a means through

which to initiate, foster and maintain sociality between groups and to explore how competing colonial ideas of land ownership influenced the landscape.

In contemporary Bilua, people remember their ancestors as inviting people to settle and grow gardens on their land, a gesture envisioned as the ultimate expression of generosity and love.[1] This is espoused as an ideal model for contemporary landholders to live up to as well. In return, this generosity is recognized through the presentation of food and, ideally, pigs to landholders because relationships are acknowledged and 'cemented' through *pikezato* – described as 'customary' land transactions. While giving pigs is considered a sign of recognition and respect, whether *pikezato* qualifies as payment or gift has shifted with the changing significance of land itself, with registration and ownership not having always carried the same meanings that they do today.

Registering land through legal title can be seen as yet another form of recognition, this time of the landholders by the state. By shifting the focus of their identity from a kin group into a corporate body, members of landholding *toutou* are acknowledged as legal landowners, becoming players on the national stage and able to engage their interests with other corporate bodies interested in land as a resource to be used for financial benefit. Scott (1998) argues that the state renders land tenure 'legible' through the reduction of land and peoples to a series of simplified units that can be easily administered and controlled. In turn, landholding groups seek recognition from the state and foreign corporations in order to secure access to benefits – such as the royalties, compensation, employment and development enabled by logging. Through this process, the state confirms exclusive title

[1] While I do not take the idea of the past as 'a time of love' to be a particularly accurate representation of history, it was a consistent theme in my conversations about land and power. As such, I investigate it as a sign of dissatisfaction with how land registration is handled, in the context of local reflections on changing ideologies surrounding land and land rights.

of ownership for a piece of land, which gives permission to the landholding group to negotiate directly with corporations for the logging of their land.

Berg's 2008 doctoral dissertation presents a case study of a logging conflict involving Sauro *toutou* in the northwestern Vella Lavella village of Iriqila. He argues that the line of power has been transferred from the autochthonous clan (through filial links, exchange and alliance) and is now directed through the state and the judicial system, which has become "the ultimate guarantor, with the power to transform fluid modes of customary land tenure and hierarchy" (Berg 2008: 1). Drawing on these ideas, I argue that the legal clarification and fixing of land rights not only has spawned tensions between landholders and those who live on their land in Bilua (see also McDougall 2005; Hviding 1993) but also, in coastal villages removed from traditional territories, has created social distancing between landholders with access to foreign-generated capital and those who do not. Much like the Aborigines' land conflicts (Povinelli 1998, 2002), these two irreconcilable systems of land tenure create a "cauldron of competing social impulses" in which people are forced to choose between the pursuit of state-recognized land rights and the mutuality of ancestral entanglements that have formed through the sharing of land (Povinelli 2002: 5). The economic advancement offered by the state model left little choice in this matter, with people forced to acknowledge the new system of land or lose out to others who did. I investigate the challenges and opportunities faced by Bilua ancestors, using both oral accounts and historical documents to describe and contextualize the different ideas of ownership held by Europeans and Vella peoples of the early twentieth century. I then examine how these historical developments have influenced local ideas of land holdingsand how people negotiate traditional land relationships based on ideas of development and material wealth.

Property, Ownership and Place

In the present context of politically charged land disputes, writing about land introduces particular difficulties as oral histories are fluid and fluctuate according to purpose and intent at the time of their telling. Committing particular versions to paper, particularly in a publishable format, can mean that competing versions become less authoritative by comparison. Contemporary anthropologists have negotiated this problem in different ways. In the Western Solomons, this has resulted in two primary (yet not necessarily mutually exclusive) fields of analysis, the first focusing on contemporary land disputes induced by struggles over extractable resources (Hviding 1993, 2002; Schneider 1996, 1998; Berg 2008) and the second targeting localized 'entanglements' of landholder and settler populations and their negotiation of social taboos against talking about land ownership (McDougall 2005; Schneider 1996, 1998; see also Scott 2007 for the Eastern Solomons).

My own research favours the latter approach. While I witnessed numerous heated land disputes, I consciously distanced myself from this particular aspect of Bilua life in order to avoid the perception that I was allying myself with specific factions who often expressed the desire for – or equally, hostility towards – my involvement in recording and writing about certain stories, which was commonly perceived as a way of 'cementing' them and making them 'true.' Instead, I consider how people conceptualized and expressed opinions about land disputes and how these points of view reflected the changing ideas and meanings of land over time.

Juxtaposing the arguments of competing factions involved in Munda land disputes with the fieldnotes of Hocart and Rivers, Gerhard Schneider argues that no concept of absolute ownership of land existed in the past. Rather, land ownership developed as an expression of the changed socio-economic circumstances through which "the process of

the individualization – or privatization – of 'ownership' of natural resources or the attempts at the expropriation of assets shared by a community of people […] is leading to an individualization of social relations" (Schneider 1996: 5).[2] This changing relationship with land has been a source of consistent concern throughout the New Georgia Group. While allowing for the determination of primary control over the management and distribution of resources, the changing concept of 'ownership' also carries potentially alienating consequences for different groups sharing land. McDougall notes that "to explicitly claim to own land is understood as an attempt to exclude others who ought to be welcomed" (2004: 200). That is, to claim to own land (which requires registering the land with the state in order for logging rights to be pursued) is to assert a social division between landholders and any others who might have a connection to the land through the building of settlements, the planting of gardens and trees and the burial of their dead. While development (in this case, logging) was generally seen as beneficial, it was also seen to be very costly to longstanding friendly and neighbourly relationships between different groups, capable of "[turning] closely related people into people of separate social origins" (Schneider 1998: 193). Schneider intends this literally, in that closely related kin groups are separated in competing bids to obtain exclusive access to resources. However, when villages of extended networks of cognatic kin are far removed from territories of resource extraction, there is also a conspicuous social distancing between the 'haves' and the 'have nots.' Both talking about land as a basis for exclusion and the division of close relations as a result of logging show how highlighting ownership and exclusive capital undermine the function of land as a medium of sociality.

[2] For this reason, I have chosen to forgo references to land ownership in favour of 'landholders' and 'landholdings' through much of this thesis. The problematics of exclusive ownership in relation to land will be made apparent in this chapter.

During my fieldwork, the Maravari community was experiencing a process of polarization due to a growing gap between affluence and relative hardship, a situation stimulated by the logging of Wagina territory at Oula (Map 3). Although these traditional territories were on the other side of the island, far removed from the village, after Wagina *toutou* registered with the state as Wagina Development Corporation (WDC) and negotiated with a Malaysian logging company for the extraction of resources, Wagina families became increasingly wealthy and influential in the village.[3] Several times after the first trees were cut in 2005, I sat and watched the mover arrive with hundreds of cut logs from the logging camp, with which people would build their houses. Every able-bodied man, woman and child from the associated lineages would come and help move logs. By this time, the landscape of pandanus-leaf houses in the village was slowly becoming a motley mixture with the inclusion of new iron houses, complete with tin roofing, glass shutter windows, vinyl flooring and drywalling. Despite trapping heat and being largely impractical in the tropical climate, these changes reflected the local desire to emulate urban styles of housing, which many regarded as a visible sign of local development.

The royalties created other imbalances in wealth as well. By the time of my second field visit in 2007, the number of generators, televisions and DVD players had trebled and 'movie nights' had become a common fundraising activity for many local families. Many women from lineages that did not have access to logging revenue were resentful that certain families repeatedly ordered bushels of second-hand clothing shipped in from Honiara, reserving the best items for themselves and selling the rest to others at what were

[3] Wagina was not the first *toutou* in the village to gain access to logging revenue. However, given the overlap of these events with my fieldwork, the number of Wagina beneficiaries in the village and the rise to power of Lionel Alex, the Wagina chief, WDC Director and Federal Member for Southest Vella, the tensions, affluence and influence generated by the logging of Wagina land had a substantial impact on how people were talking about land and development at the time.

perceived as exorbitant prices. Moreover, although the building of the WDC store raised hopes that it would offer local jobs, this did not turn out to be the case. The two-storey building sold rice, canned goods, sugar and flour, in addition to clothing, soccer shoes and jerseys and other sundry items. By bypassing Gizo and ordering direct from Honiara, the WDC store soon became an appealing alternative for people all over Vella for the purchase of food staples. This, coupled with the rising fuel prices that inhibited regular transport to Gizo, meant that small store owners in the village could not compete with the lower prices enabled by this larger business venture. They began closing their doors or restricting their business hours to when the WDC store was closed – losing what was for many an important source of family revenue.

For Wagina, this new source of wealth was hard-fought. When logging rights are at stake, groups which were neighbours, intermarried and lived amicably can find themselves raising questions about territorial rights and the location of boundaries. Past violations (such as cases of *pitaso*), even dating back generations, are often unearthed to use as grounds for disputing land rights, with questions reintroduced and disputed over whether these violations were resolved and the meaning this holds for claimed territories in the present. In 2005 and 2006, Wagina was involved in disputes over land at Oula that had been gifted to them by Sarapito *toutou* for their support during warfare. Sipo *toutou* (a related lineage to Sarapito) claimed that Sarapito had not had the right to gift the whole of that territory because Sarapito had forfeited title to some sections to them due to incest violations. On these grounds, Sipo made the claim that the Wagina logging operation was within their land boundary. This caused a separation between Maravari Wagina and Eleoteve Wagina, who were closely associated with Sarapito – the major landholder of Eleoteve village (Map 3, p. 44).

Land and Landscape

Bilua understandings of ownership, wealth and development are founded on principles of Melanesian personhood – that "in doing things for others, people construct themselves" (Sahlins 2005: 23). Wealth, in this context, ideally serves as "the currency of interpersonal relations" as it is expected that luxury items will be offered in hospitality and exchanged or presented during special occasions (Sahlins 2005: 29). In Maravari, gifts received from visitors to the village, such as clothing, watches, books and even musical instruments were often shared between kin and affines as a way of building relationships and enhancing social position. Within the same framework, development implies the promise that people will share their access to resources and incorporate them into the larger context of mutually constituting relationships.

To Bilua people, land is synonymous with *kastom* (Chapter Two), at once the site, the medium and the bond through which groups – landholders and settlers – are joined. In this manner, land and people constitute each other as social relationships are manifest through landscape. *Toutou* are named after distinguishing features of the landscape where the founding female ancestor was born.[4] Skull shrines (*sope*) reflected the entanglement of *toutou* through intermarriage and shared land and were often located on land belonging to affiliated lineages and holding the skulls of multiple lineage groups which could not be placed in shrines of their own lineages due to customary infractions (McKenzie 2007: 166). The place where ancestors first came ashore, where they settled, where they planted gardens and where they buried their dead are all part of a lineage's history, knowledge that is passed down through generations. These experiences, narratives and practices oriented around acknowledging how people arrived and their relationships forged through shared

[4] For example, the first ancestor of Sabe was said to be born in a Choiseul garden where *bube* flowers grew, and the first ancestor of Barekasi was born under a breadfruit tree (*bare* – breadfruit; *kasi* – locator adv.).

land are culturally inscribed, creating a shared sense of belonging that helps to transform 'space' into meaningful 'place' (Low and Lawrence-Zúñinga 2003: 13–18, cited in Ottoson 122: 2014).

Melanesians, Kirsch (2001) claims, are more apt to treat what Euro-Americans call the 'environment' as a hybrid, a combination of social relations and things in the world, in part a human creation rather than an independent condition. By contrast, Euro-Americans (and the Asian corporations that manage most of the logging companies) treat environmental issues independently of social relations, in keeping with what Latour has identified as the modernist emphasis on the separation of categories (for example, the classifications and distinctions of nature/culture and science/politics) (Latour 1993: 10-12, cited in Kirsch 2001: 154).

Writing about the sociality of land, Rodman proposes that in general, unitary concepts of property are not fruitful in understanding Pacific ideologies of tenure because they "simply [justify] or [validate] the practical requirements of land appropriation" (Rodman 1987: 33, quoting Ellen 1977: 67). In place of ownership models, she proposes that concepts of place, rather than property, be used to frame understandings of land. As she notes, in the Pacific, land and people share each other, a point that seems to be supported in Bilua, where significant people and events become'written' into landscape through landmarks, boundary markers and place names. Place, in this context, "is not just the 'where' of something; it is the location plus everything that occupies that location seen as an integrated and meaningful phenomenon" (Rodman 1987: 34, quoting Relph 1976: 3). The idea that 'things' are owned but 'space' is lived has been taken as valuable in understanding the sociality of land (e.g. Hess 2009), and consequently, the social relationships formed through the sharing of land are overshadowed when land is analyzed solely in terms of property.

Vella lineage territories follow ridges, rivers and valleys – land features representing allegedly "immovable" boundaries.[5] During land hearings, elders claim rights to land on the basis of the presence of *sope*, shrines housing the skulls of the ancestors; *pandevola*, village sites in the upland forest; and *samberi*, planted nut groves (see also Woodley 2002: 221; McKenzie 2007). Yet within these territories and around these markers of land rights, other stories reflect the lived experiences of meanings that people impute to their surroundings.

Although the Maravari river historically divided the territories of the Viva and Kutakabai lineages (Chapter Two), when I began my fieldwork, I recorded twenty-five different locations, hamlets and distinct places within the boundaries of the village itself that were named after points of arrival and different events, places that are (or were) socially meaningful in telling the story of not only the landholders but also the different lineages of the village.[6] Among them are Ringi, Mioko and Gorevaha, names which take their meanings from Kolombangara, Choiseul and Roviana peoples who settled there. Tenobesi, the hamlet where I spent part of my fieldwork was named for the large platform that once stood on the shoreline where the land transaction took place between Kutakabai and Sabe, securing the latter's right to the territory.

Sacred spaces, while commonly associated with inland shrines, are also marked and recognized in the village. Both the site of the former canoe house (*rava*) and the first church structure are designated sacred spaces where building is forbidden, despite their central locations. While the area of the former canoe house is empty, the area of the former church building is partially cordoned off by a wooden fence and the ground marked

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[5] Nonetheless, accusations of repositioning boundary markers seem to be common, especially during land hearings.

[6] A further three place names became apparent after the 2007 earthquake in relation to new land along existing bush paths that was cleared to build new settlements away from the waterfront. Places, as Ashworth and Graham (2005) note, are in a continuous state of becoming.

by white beach stones. Yet the histories of such notable places are not always commemorated so formally, and the dangers of forgetting these once-sacred spaces can be a matter of concern for senior lineage members. On one of my visits to Paramount Chief Rimu Baesovaki, I arrived to find the old man in tears as he explained that someone, in ignorance, had just chopped down a tree up which Sikuni warriors had once sat to scan the coastline for raiders.[7] To Rimu, the tree symbolized Sikuni lineage's role as a defender (as the braef, or "the brave") of Kutakabai and its removal signalled a final severing of that particular element of entanglement forged long ago.

While ideas of place do not tell the whole story of land in the context of disputes over ownership, they do enrich understandings of territories as meaningful shared spaces in peoples' lives, used by different people at different times to create and substantiate narratives of belonging (Ashworth and Graham 2005). However, associations between people and territories have been affected in more immediate and formative ways as well.

Classification, Alienation, Registration

The Reification of 'Sidedness'

The tendency of states to categorize societies as 'patrilineal' or 'matrilineal' has become an impediment to understanding the relationship between kinship and descent because it privileges the allocation of social status from father to child or from mother to child (Scheffler 1986). Vella, in its supposed matrilineality, is a typical example of this practice (McKinnon 1972; Woodley 2002; Berg 2008). In Chapter Three, I explained how labels of matrilineality are not representative of the meaning afforded to local cognatic kin relationships (see also McDougall 2004; Hviding 1996). Here, I argue that this concept

[7] Rimu said that this tree was called Sielekolo (*siele* – dog; *kolo* – light) because it produced a bright light at night time and had a spirit dog that warned people of any intruders approaching from sea.

and other reifications have influenced Vella ideas about the sociality of land, especially through local and state-organized attempts at 'straightening' land ownership (see also McDougall 2005; Hviding 1993). More importantly, a focus on 'sidedness' places an undue focus on genealogical inheritance, overshadowing other ways of procuring land rights, shown in Figure 3.

One of the most problematic texts in the state reification of lineality in the Solomons was Allan's 1957 *Report of the Special Lands Commission*. Despite no formal training in anthropology, Allen postulated that land disputes in the New Georgia Group were a recent corruption of an original matrilineal condition and suggested that bilaterality be actively discouraged in New Georgia.

> The confusion being caused by the bilateral principle is extensive, but its manifest undesirability is not appreciated by the people. Older people make little comment, and seem to accept it as "fashion b'long this time" while younger ones state flatly that they want to "enjoy all the fruits." While marriages within lineages will serve to control the multiplication of interests, this is offset by increased intercourse between tribal communities, leading to marriages between persons widely dispersed throughout New Georgia. Disputes will become prevalent, and the multiplication of interests will, in time, be restrictive to economic development or a modern tenure system. It is considered that the problem should be tackled through Local Government first of all, by bringing to their notice the dangers attendant upon bilateral descent. They should be persuaded to adopt either a patrilineal or matrilineal principle (i.e., descent through the father or the mother but not both) should be proposed. If this fails, it is suggested that the position warrants intervention by Central Government and the enactment of legislation to restrict descent to the ambilateral principle. Only in this manner can the multiplication of primary interests held by an individual be controlled (Allan 1957: 90).

Such ideas misunderstand the desirability of having connections dispersed throughout New Georgia and of the wide social networks that I outlined in Chapter Two. More seriously, Allan reveals his ignorance of local custom, likely confusing lineage with the African 'tribe' as his report was much influenced by African systems of descent (Berg 2008: 92). As I have described in the previous chapter, marriages within lineages are

incestuous acts of *pitaso* (‘division’), which not only are taboo but also threaten to dissolve the land rights of offspring.

One of the Commission’s aims was to identify “original ownership,” which implied that immigrant lineages would have less claim to land than the descendants of those who lived there previously. Allan downplays the significance of ‘transplanted lineages’ as landholders (cf. McDougall 2004; Scott 2007), citing the Choiseulese of Vella Lavella as destructive of the traditional matrilineal descent (1957: 89). He depicts captives as social inferiors with no rights at all – in stark contrast with the rich ethnographic evidence documenting how many were adopted as legitimate members of local lineages (Rivers 1914; McDougall 2004; Hviding 1996; Chapter Three). Despite such errors, Allan’s report influenced the court settlement of Solomon Islands land claims for decades, and indeed, continues to do so (McDougall 1997).

The Alienation of Land

Another introduction of the colonial government that invited the reification of ownership was the Waste Lands Regulation Act. Under the 1904 Act, the government could acquire land “which [was] not owned, cultivated or occupied by any native or non-native” (Bennett 1987: 131). In other words, lands perceived by the colonial government as unoccupied were taken to be devoid of rights and appropriated.[8] In practice, however, very little arable land could reasonably be treated as waste, given that Solomon Islanders regarded most land as subject to degrees of individual or clan interest; uninhabited bush lands were occasionally used for hunting or were frequently the sites of ancestral shrines, which were looked upon as sacred (Bennett 1987: 130; Jackson 1978: 272); and lagoon islets were

[8] This waste lands trope was commonly used to justify the colonial appropriation of lands from the Canadian wilderness (Baldwin 2009), Africa (Crais 1991; Geisler 2012), and Australia (Turnbull 2004).

used by different parties for hunting turtles, both for personal use and to exchange for western goods (Jackson 1978: 257; Bennett 1987: 132).

The government's assessment of land use was so cursory that, as Bennett (1987) notes, Resident Commissioner Charles Woodford was often content to survey from the deck of his ship and confirm that land was neither "cultivated nor occupied" without taking additional steps to determine whether it was actually owned. As Bennett states, the Waste Lands Regulation Act essentially "made legal fiat out of legal fiction" (1987: 132, 149).[9] However, colonial opportunism of this kind was to be short-lived. By the time of Sito Latovaki's capture in 1911, much local unrest had been alleviated, leading to the gradual establishment of larger villages along the coast. By this time, the flat mile-wide strip of land extending down the eastern coast of Vella (and the predominant area of Bilua settlements in the south) had been densely planted with coconut trees, the fiction of waste land had become obsolete, and Woodford was forced to concede that vacant land in the Protectorate was 'practically non existent' (Jackson 1978: 262). Even despite these developments, according to the 1914 Land Regulation report, 17% of the total land area of the New Georgia Group had been alienated.

With land being cleared and planted on a greater scale (frequently on 'waste' land, without the benefit of transactions), it is not surprising that Allan detected what he called a developing 'land consciousness,' an awareness of how European perceptions of land differed from their own, the understanding of land as a 'negotiable asset,' the expected protocol for legal land transactions and, likewise, an increasing willingness to legally challenge European abuses of local territories (Jackson 1978: 263, 271–272).

[9] Bennett also describes an instance in 1900 where Woodford used the testimony of one "native of Bugotu" and his own view of south Choiseul from the sea (a view, she notes, that a raiding party of Vella would have also seen) to declare the coast "entirely uninhabited" to the extent that "no possible objection could ever be made to the alienation" (1987: 131).

The Methodist Mission and Alienation of Vonunu Land

While the Waste Lands Regulation Act was felt through much of the Solomons, in Bilua, most people tend to associate the alienation of land with a much more localized event: the arrival of the Methodist Mission in Vonunu. The quote at the beginning of this chapter by Lekasa Granville Sariki, also former Head of the Vella District Council, illustrates contemporary beliefs that land disputes began with the coming of *lotu* (Christianity).

The arrival of Christianity is associated with a shift in ideas over relationships to land.[10] At present, Vonunu, the village that once housed the Mission, is a hotbed of contestation and discontent over land rights because of the alienation of lands by the Mission. The following narrative from Eli Volosi is indicative of both an inflexible approach to and an oversimplification of the lineage structure by Australian, New Zealand and European settlers and their different ways of understanding of land and land rights.

EV The history of how the mission took the land goes like this. One white man of Liapari, his name was McEachran, he was the first planter, a man for planting coconuts.[11] He planted coconuts on Liapari Island and also on the mainland at Vidisi. Now, one time, Mister Goldie came from Munda. He came from Munda to see the white men, so Mister McEachran came to eat with him at Vonunu. Huh? The two men had tea together [Eli laughs]. Mister McEachran told his plan [to Goldie]. His plan was for his coconut plantation, to plant to Barakoma. *All* the way down to Barakoma. He told Mister Goldie. So, "I think you should wait first," [Mister Goldie] said. "Wait first, and I will go speak to them [the people of Vonunu] and hear what they say." Now, Mister Goldie, he called every old man. He told every old man, 'Oh, this white man of Liapari, he wants to plant a plantation all the way to Barakoma. Now, [if he does this] he will spoil you,' he said. Mister Goldie. "He will spoil you all. It will be *hard* to take back this place, if he plants his plantation. So what are your thoughts? How suppose [you let] the Mission hold it? If the Mission held it, then you would be able to take it back. Easy." All the old men said, "Alright then." So

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[10] The arrival of *lotu* marked a more permanent presence of European settlers as well. While there were no European residents on Vella in 1904 when the Mission arrived, by 1910, there were seven, excluding the missionaries (Jackson 1978: 255).

[11] John McEachran was only one of the first planters. He leased one of two plantations at Liapari from around 1916 until the mid 1930s, when the land was transferred to Fred Green of Gizo. Green already owned the second plantation, which he had purchased from Union Planting and Trading Company Ltd. in 1916 (Golden 1993: 193).

they leased [the land] to the Mission. Each of the five tribes that I told you. Those of Sabe, Liqe Liqe, all of them [...] Those are all the tribes that owned the land. Now, all of them made the agreement with the Mission. Okay. How it became Sikuni land? Mister Goldie said, "Alright, I will register [the land], but under what name should I register it?" "Oh now, us, we're Sabe, and us, we're Liqe Liqe, and we're Barakasi," they said, giving the tribe names of each other, yes? [Mister Goldie said] "Kuay!![12] If that's the way it is, the document will be full! Give one tribe name so that I can register." All the old men thought for awhile. Before, a long time ago, that area of Vonunu all the way to Pusisama? It was called Sikunirana. Sikunirana. So, alright, 'let us put it [in the name of] Sikuni,' [they said].

SK But the name of the *land* was Sikunirana?

EV Sikunirana was [similar to] the *zone*.[13]
[...]

EV So [they said] "okay, let us put [the registration] under Sikuni." So that was the reason why they registered it under the name of Sikuni.

SK But if they called it Sikunirana, surely Sikuni [*toutou*] must have some history there? Do they hold land?

EV Those Sikuni? Some Sabe-Sikuni lived there long ago [...] Those of Sabe and Barekasi, they are all part of that group. The name they called them was Sabe Sikuni, they recognized each other. They knew each other.[14] But this [present day] group of Sikuni in Barakoma? The Sikuni that live there are from Sirubai [North Vella].

Jackson's archival analysis accords with Volosi's account, with one notable distinction.

As Jackson describes,

> In June and July of 1907, the Mission went on a buying spree and purchased in order, 328 acres at Sikuni, Vella Lavella, 100 acres on Simbo, 16.5 acres at Kundu, Ranongga, a further 745 acres at Sikuni, the islet of Perasare near Njorio, Vella Lavella, and 160 estimated acres at Njorio itself. The total cost to the Mission was £48 (Jackson 1978: 153).

[12] A common Vella exclamation.
[13] I have glossed Volosi's word alsem as 'similar to.' 'Zone' was Volosi's word.
[14] Volosi's exact words were, "Oketa recognizem eas ota. Oketa save lo eas ota." The Pijin word *save* can mean 'to understand' or 'to have knowledge of,' or, as in this case, 'to actively and mutually recognize a kin relationship and the obligations that this entails,' in the context of recognition as I have explained it in Chapter One. While I have discussed the word 'recognize' in its various Bilua forms, this example is a notable instance of its direct incorporation into the Pijin lexicon.

The discrepancy between Volosi's narrative account of a lease and Jackson's description of the acquisition as part of a "buying spree" suggests that Goldie may have been intentionally vague about the terms of Mission control of the area. Furthermore, Jackson goes on to question whether the islanders fully understood the distinction between the Mission land purchases and Goldie's own private purchase of over 6,000 acres at Mundi Mundi (North Vella) the same year (1978: 153). Overall, Bennett tallies Goldie's land purchases across New Georgia at a total of 7,000 acres, only 1,000 of which was for Mission use. As she notes, all of these transactions are highly ironic considering that the chairman of the Methodist Mission regularly complained of other Europeans' land dealings while remaining silent of the subject of his own (Bennett 1987: 143). The discrepancy between island and archival accounts documenting the acquisition of Mission land at Vonunu also illustrates the fraud and confusion that was rampant in these early land dealings.

It is notable that while ancestors are looked upon as generous in sharing land with one another, they are also the focus of much frustration, often perceived as 'stupid' or 'simple' (*udu udu*) in their dealings with Europeans, particularly in those transactions that resulted in the sale or loss of land. However, in many cases, opportunistic individuals were able to profit from these underhanded transactions. According to Jackson, in 1886, Mengo of Roviana sold 7,000 acres of Gizo Island and the surrounding islets to a German planting and trading company (Mengo having excluded his own small patch of land from the sale). On Vella, Liapari Island was conveyed three times and mortgaged once between 1908 and 1910 alone (1978: 111, 256) and neighbouring Uzamba Islet was claimed by both the

Methodist Mission and E. H. Pybus, the latter deal brokered by local big man Maghratulo, who Bennett (1987) suggests was not even a landholder.[15]

Land and the Discourse of High Modernism

The views of land tenure espoused by Allan, Woodford and Goldie reflect colonial high modernist discourse:

> [the] muscle-bound version of the self-confidence about scientific and technical progress, the expansion of production, the growing satisfaction of human needs, the mastery of nature (including human nature), and, above all, the rational design of social order commensurate with the scientific understanding of natural laws (Scott 1998: 4).

This vision created "a static and myopic view of land tenure" driven by economic motivation and the administrative ability to map, contain and manage land (Scott 1998: 46). In this framework, people, land, trees and villages were reduced to a series of units able to be recorded, monitored and controlled by the state (Scott 1998; Jorgensen 2007). Through these changes, portrayals of the social community and of human interaction through and on land became greatly simplified and undervalued. In the case of Vella, the codification of descent downplayed the complexities of Vella peoples as dynamic and contextually situated groups in order to accord with western understandings of land as a commodity (Tiffany 1983; Hviding 1993). With the Mission's appropriation of land, neither the coexistence of numerous lineages on the same land nor the presence of Sabe-Sikuni nearby (who, according to one informant, had little to do with the particular branch of Sikuni on the title of registration) fitted within the paradigm of lineages as independent wholes envisioned in this colonial discourse.

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[15] Maghratulo's status as both a middleman and a non-landholder is emblematic of both the holding of local authority by means other than through land and the arbitrary nature of land negotiations with Europeans. Tulo will discussed in greater depth in Chapter Seven.

In their study of the Chambri of the East Sepik, Papua New Guinea, Errington and Gewertz (2001) refer to this simplication as a process of 'cultural generification,' by which highly specific local knowledge that had once been the basis of social interdependence is converted to a highly general form appearing to comply with a generic definition of 'tradition' in order to be 'made legible' to outsiders (2001: 509–510; see also Scott 1998: 35).[16] High modernists "envisioned a sweeping, rational engineering of all aspects of social life in order to improve the human condition" (Scott 1998: 88). In Bilua, this called for a detachment from history and tradition and, along with these, the complex networks of kinship and obligation conceived and maintained through land. High modernism focussed on the future, promoting a vision of progress and development that necessitated the exploitation of the land and the reconfiguring of 'nature' into 'natural resource' (Scott 1998: 13; Kirsch 2001). These ideologies, once imposed, also became quickly indigenized. Tradition was not something to be ignored so much as reconstructed through negotiations with the state through concepts of divelopman.

'Taem Kabani Hem Kam' – The Logging Boom and the Growth of Divelopman

In Bilua, and likely on much of Vella Lavella, the concept of divelopman (Pijin: development) is commonly associated with the logging industry, which first appeared in the guise of the kabani (Pijin: company), a word applied to designate any of a number of foreign (predominantly Asian) corporations vying for the rights to harvest Solomon Islands timber. As Ndovele leader Dedili Sasabule told Bennett, "To us here many people did not know what the word development meant before the arrival of the company. It could have just as easily been the brand name for some biscuits" (2000: 286).

[16] Errington and Gewertz (2001: 510, 522 note 2) adapt this term from Philibert (1986)'s work on the 'invention of tradition' in Vanuatu.

The relative newness of divelopman as an addition to the Pijin lexicon belies the shifting significance and layered meanings it has acquired within a short time. Edvard Hviding translates Solomon Islands divelopman as 'indigenous enterprises that convert resources reliably into cash' (2003: 543), a succinct definition condensing the shifting of the meaning of natural resources from a source of sustainable revenue, a rise in standard of living and participation in the global economy to a source of "petty disbursements of cash and goods for short-term consumption" (Cox 2009: 970). Divelopman has been both a concept of infinite promise and a source of inevitable disappointment because it has become associated with individualist values of luxury and short-term wealth rather than long-term collective well-being and sustainability (Parry and Bloch 1989; Akin and Robbins 1999; Browne and Milgram 2008).

Writing of 1992 Papua New Guinea, Sahlins argued that development was idealized as "their own culture on a bigger and better scale than they ever had it" (2005: 24). However, in contemporary practice, while the pursuit of development has fuelled existing power relationships, it has also created new ones, not only between the kabani, state and competing local landowners but also, as in Maravari, between a new elite of chiefly development managers and their kin (Hviding and Bayliss-Smith 2000: 237; Martin 2013; Chapter Seven).

Bilua ideas of divelopman are complex and carry the idea that social change is to be achieved through access to wealth. Ideally this is to be achieved through kin networks and customary practices of sharing and obligation. However, in reality, this ends up taking place on the terms of select people in control of the resources. In the case of Wagina land at Oula, access and negotiation of revenue resulting from the ownership of lineage land is controlled by a board of directors that represents lineage interests in negotiating with the kabani. Technically, because land is owned collectively by the lineage, every lineage

member, from the chief down to the smallest child, receives logging royalties equally. However, communal ownership does not mean that everyone has equal control over or access to resources. Ownership can be defined in terms of claims to the control of, or centrality to, a particular set of relations (Leach 2003: 216, cited in Wood 2004: 246). This control over resources supplies a source of capital for other ventures (such as the WDC store) which in turn produces more profit and increases the disparity between the haves and the have-nots.

The History of Logging on Vella Lavella and in the Solomon Islands

Large-scale logging in the Solomons began in 1963 on alienated government land or land leased to the government by landholders. Hviding and Bayliss-Smith analyze logging in the context of the dramatic collapse of copra as presenting a new way for Solomon Islanders to engage with the global market economy (2000: 212). Copra, which had its heyday in the late 1960s, ceased to be the principle trading export of the Solomon Islands by 1979.[17] In the early years of logging, almost 75 percent of production was carried out by Levers Pacific Timber Limited, which began operating on Gizo Island in 1963, with Kolombangara the main centre of the timber industry through the 1970s (Scales 2003).

On Vella, logging began near Jorio in the north in the early 1990s. By late 1995, Choiseul and the Western Provinces were supplying 76 percent of the country's revenue from the export of round logs (Bennett 2000: 279–280). Considering that Vella landholders saw themselves as being in a backwater far removed from the distribution of national development, the potential for revenue was unprecedented.[18]

[17] The main copra trading centres on Vella stood at Liapari, Joroveto, Saqorana, Sibilado and Ruruvai and were on lands that were classified as alienated, having been either sold by the state or by locals.
[18] The discourse of isolationism is not unique to Vella (see also Akin 1999; McDougall 2004).

When government-owned forests became depleted in the early 1980s, the focus of resource extraction shifted to customary land, which accounts for 87 percent of the total land area in the Solomon Islands and provides around twice as much commercially exploitable forest as government land (Frazer 1997: 46). While licences for the logging of government-owned land had been regulated by the Forestry Department, this second phase, which continues into the present, is characterized by a substantial decline in the state's control over logging companies due to lack of staff and resources to implement official policies. In the absence of policing, compliance with legislation ceased to be monitored and corruption quickly became rampant among foreign logging companies (Frazer 1997).

Another administrative change concerning the logging of customary land was the state's expectation that foreign companies negotiate directly with the landholders, thus giving local leaders the power to negotiate the leasing of their traditional territories to logging companies from Malaysia and Australia. This resulted in what Hviding called a process of "compressed globalisation" – local–global connections and systems negotiated within a short time span and between a very limited number of local, company and state players (2003: 542). The minimal role of the state in this negotiation process stirred debate between landholders, provinces and the national government as to who should profit from duties and licences levied against logging companies. This resulted in a system in which the contractor received 60 percent of the proceeds of logging, the Solomon Islands government received 25 percent through an export duty, the landholder 10 percent and the license holder 5 percent. Considering that he was the principal risk-taker, the landholder in fact received very little for the depletion of forest on his land (TRRIDC 2013: 6).

Given the reciprocity of customary land relationships, landholding *toutou* generally expected that mutually beneficial relationships would be characteristic of leasing agreements with logging companies as well. People believed that logging companies

would provide not only employment but also public infrastructure such as wharves, schools, clinics and roads, things that the government frequently fails to deliver. It took some time for many landholders to understand that these corporations did not consider the welfare of the general public as its responsibility (TRRIDC 2013). Corporate ideas of development were not synonymous nor often even consistent with social well-being.

While contracts often stipulated that companies leave existing infrastructure in the form of bridges, roads, iron houses and water systems, the reality of deforestation and abuse of written agreements was much less accommodating (Bennett 1995: 261). At Oula, Wagina leaders had requested that the buildings of the logging camp be left standing in the hopes that someday the *toutou* could return and establish a new settlement there. The promise of logging as development was to provide people with resources that could be redistributed through kin networks. Instead, it created a division in wealth, mistrust over allocation of funds and disharmony caused by conflict over land claims. Claims of falsified statements, manipulation of land boundaries, the 'selling out' of chiefs and favouritism between certain landholders and their wantoks on the Vella Lavella area councils have become familiar accusations in the land claims process (see also Woodley 2002 and Bennett 2000).

The successful management of lineage territories also allowed opportunities for new agents of development to emerge – generally men who were able to harness both exogenous and indigenous land ideologies, engaging in bisnis (business) with foreign companies and using the revenues for personal, lineage and local gain. In Maravari, I witnessed a prime example of this phenomenon in the rise to power of Lekasa Lionel Alex. Within a span of three years, Alex's skilful handling of his role as Director of the WDC allowed him to move rapidly from lineage spokesperson to lineage chief to Honourable Member for Southeast Vella by the age of 36. Alex exhibits the classic characteristics of

other big men of the logging age, described by Hviding and Bayliss-Smith (2000) in the context of members of the North New Georgia Timber Corporation (NNGTC):

> What we are seeing here is the creation through logging of a new type of Melanesian political leader, a big man/chief whose position is legitimated by *kastom* through inheritance, but is cemented by elected office or by a directorship in a new town-based organization like NNGTC. The corporate control of logging royalties in North New Georgia has thus been the main means to power of a class of 'nouveau riche' who are bending and transforming the rules of *butubutu* leadership in order to establish their positions as new chiefs (2000: 237).

While Wagina members and their kin enjoyed royalties, *toutou* leaders also controlled access to the jobs available at the logging camp. In this instance, it was not only Wagina that had access to jobs in the lumber camp but also people who had extra-lineage connections to the *toutou*. Although land ownership was restricted to the lineage, the resources of the land – including employment – were shared according to networks of obligation and exchange. Alex's elevated status as big man can largely be attributed to his skilful negotiation of WDC revenues, and it was largely through logging royalties and salaries that he and his extended family were able to sponsor the large *pikezato* feast, which included the solidification of land rights for his wife and children, and the unusually early cementing of his younger brother's grave barely a year after his death. In this context, development entails both the possibility of reshaping ideas of land and the enacting of traditional ones.

Bilua idealizations of the pre-Christian era as a time of love, as conceptualized through peoples' relationships through land, appear to be in direct response to these changing ideas of land and lineage. The corporatization of lineages, required in the registration of land with the state, reflects the challenges that changing ideas of ownership presented to lineage identity. McDougall questions why logging elicits 'tribal' divisions in contrast to the community focus elicited by church gatherings, even though both involve inviting foreigners onto the land (2011b: 123). As she notes,

> Ranonggan *butubutu* are not a mere artefact of engagement with the colonial and postcolonial state in contexts of resource extraction. Rather, the intractable disputes that inevitably arise in contexts of logging are due, in part, to a gap between the legal idea of a 'tribe' that owns land and local notions that a *butubutu* is responsible for land and the people living on the land but does not necessarily have total control over a bounded territory (McDougall 2011b: 134).

Through divelopman, the lineage itself becomes invested in the process of cultural generification in its attempts to benefit from recognition on the part of the state and foreign corporations. In the context of contemporary logging and mining, Melanesian leaders have become very much their own agents, implementing their own discourses of development in which the past has been reimagined "not as a unifying symbol, but as the reinvention of social ideas that reflect the economic concerns of the people" (Schneider 1998: 193). On Munda, a region of heated land disputes, Schneider describes how contending land claims have led to a distinction between Kazukuru Left Hand Land and Kazukuru Right Hand Land. Similar land disputes in Bilua over ownership of Oula land for proposed logging development divided a lineage which thereafter became referred to as 'Wagina A' and 'Wagina B,' effectively signalling a split between Maravari and Eleoteve Wagina along with their associated territories. These frameworks are not imposed, but rather Euro-American people (administrators, judges, missionaries) and their tendency towards classification through dichotomized discourses (primary–secondary, bush–saltwater, left–right) are used by landholders in processes of reinvention and identity (Schneider 1998: 208; Kirsch 2001). Schneider describes how re-readings of the past include "conscious fabrication" and "manipulation" as historical networks between groups are obscured, turning 'same people' into 'different people' in pursuit of exclusive economic control of land resources (1998: 193). The divisions and separations that are characteristic of the outcome of land disputes are highly inconsistent and incompatible with land as a social medium.

The Sociality of Land

Land and Social Entanglement – Defining Love through Land

In Chapter One, I considered Michael Scott's argument that among the Arosi of Makira in the southeast Solomons, the 'entanglement' of foreign and local people is vital to the continuation of social reproduction. This point can also be applied to the history of New Georgia. However, unlike the Arosi, Bilua does not stress autochthonous claims to land, but rather favours those groups who have the closest connections to autochthonous lineages. Moreover, even those who claim autochthonous title to land can lose or relinquish their ties through a number of means. In this respect, McDougall's analysis of Scott's work is also applicable to Vella:

> Scott identifies in Arosi a fundamental, constitutive tension between the need to become entangled with other lineages and the need to maintain territorial and social boundaries. This is also true of Ranongga, with a few key differences. Ranonggan narratives highlight the possibility that territory may be transferred from one lineage to another, so that a migrant lineage may anchor people to the land rather than the autochthonous lineage (2004: 206).

The proximity of Bilua to Ranongga and the history of relationships between them suggest that their populations have adapted many similar responses to the incorporation of immigrants who ventured ashore. This has included a non-hierarchical relationship between descendants of landholders and settlers to land and local practices of the tracing of relationships back to the original landholders. For this reason, the exclusionary ties of contemporary land ownership belie the complexities of dynamic Bilua social networks. Theoretically, the wider a person's connections, the larger the network of people who will be willing to help them when they are in need. As Scheffler and Larmour note of Choiseul,

> ...interests in groups and their lands do not overlap greatly, but the notion that each man has the right of access to many groups and their resources remains as an idiom of interpersonal and intergroup relations which is not to be understood sociologically, or even socially, in its literal presentation (1987: 309–310).

Bilua ideas of love in this context reflect idealizations of the past, influenced by dissatisfactions with the present. Dureau's (2012) analysis of compassionate love on Simbo is applicable here in her argument that Simbo women look upon their children with compassionate love, mindful of the hardships that they will face and of the fragility of life on an island with high child mortality and a history of disease. *Taru*, the Simbo word for love, is glossed in Pijin as both lavem and sore – the former a more generalized term for affection and the latter reflecting feelings of compassion, mercy and empathy. Similar overlap occurs in Bilua where the Pijin word sore connotes a mixture of sympathy and love, and in Bilua, *roquano* refers to both affectionate love and 'to miss' or be *sore* for someone.

Bilua people talk about the taem bifoa in similar terms of compassionate love, idealizing their ancestors' willingness to allow people to come and settle on their land. Often omitted from this nostalgia is a recognition of the dynamic of a scarcity of people coupled with an abundance of land – the opposite of the contemporary situation of overpopulation and overcrowding. People today fear that their children will not have space on which to grow their gardens, nor do they always have sufficient money to pay the high school fees for all of their children. In this context, "[love] refers to the care that should inform the perfect social life of reciprocal generosity and the compassionate concern of stronger for weaker" (Dureau 2012: 149).

This compassion materialized in different ways, as recorded in oral histories. As Vivian Maeke, former chief of Sorezaru and grandson of Matu Volosi, explained, in the taem bifoa, a representative of the people who did not possess land was made the

landholder to make him sore (Pijin: generous and sympathetic) to those who resided within his territories. While this practice does not seem to correspond with chiefly practice elsewhere in Bilua, it is a characteristic of Uzaba and Sabora, where there appeared to be joint chiefly lines between the Choiseulese-descended lineages of Miduku Buru Sabe and Kubonava. While a person of Miduku Buru Sabe served as *Miduku ko lekasa* ('chief of the land'), someone of Kubonava acted as *Maba ko lekasa* ('chief of the people').[19] The spirit of this practice is similar to common taboos against talking about land ownership elsewhere in the Solomons, which served to create an illusion of equality between landholders and settlers (Schneider 1998; McDougall 2004; Scott 2007). Indeed, it may well have been a strategy to attract and validate incoming foreign lineages that were needed to sustain the social reproduction of entangled lines. There also appears to be a connection between *miduku ko lekasa* and so-called 'caretaker chiefs' (*miduku ko vaelo*) (who appeared to be numerous in the late nineteenth century), that is, individuals who held temporary chiefly positions, often for their father's or a grandparent's *toutou*, in the absence of qualified leaders (Chapter Seven). Both involved entrusting the well-being of land and people into the care of another lineage, thus entangling their interests and making them 'one.' In any case, the ambiguity caused confusion for traders and missionaries who sought to determine the sole sources of local authority and sometimes fuels contesting claims in contemporary land disputes. Such relationships are evidence that rather than focusing on distinctive *toutou*, people were invested in the continuity of conjoined and surrounding lineages as both kin and as potential kin. This ensured both their continuity and their access to local territory.

[19] This practice does not seem to correspond with chiefly titles elsewhere in Bilua and is possibly an adaptation carried over from Choiseul.

Land Acquisition

Apart from intermarrying and relying on each other for protection and mutual support during raiding, Figure 3 demonstrates just how many other ways different groups could become connected to one another and lineages entangled through the sharing and bestowing of rights over land. Land itself is a vital means of forging relationships (see also Hviding 1996; McDougall 2004). Indeed, there were seven different ways outlined by chiefs and elders to obtain land rights, only one of which was the passing down through genealogical inheritance. The other six included *pikezato*, a *kastom* land transaction involving the gifting of shell money, pigs and *mania* (a pudding made from canarium nut and root vegetables); *puaro*, the gifting of land; *leveleveo*, bequeathing land after death; *kulumiduku*, compensation land given in recompense for wrongs committed; *rourao miduku*, land given to a foreign-born woman's children after she has hanged herself (or was strangled) after the death of her local-born husband; and *darabesi*, 'blood land' given as payment for assassination (*zuzuku*) or assistance in warfare.

While I learned about these different forms of inheritance through numerous people and in different contexts, this chart was made out for me by Thornly Hite at the Gizo office of Save the Children, where he worked. A Goldie College–educated man from North Vella, Thornly had carried out contract research for Wagina *toutou* in their attempts to register their land at Oula so they could proceed for logging.[20]

[20] He had a falling out with Wagina because some elders did not agree with his findings.

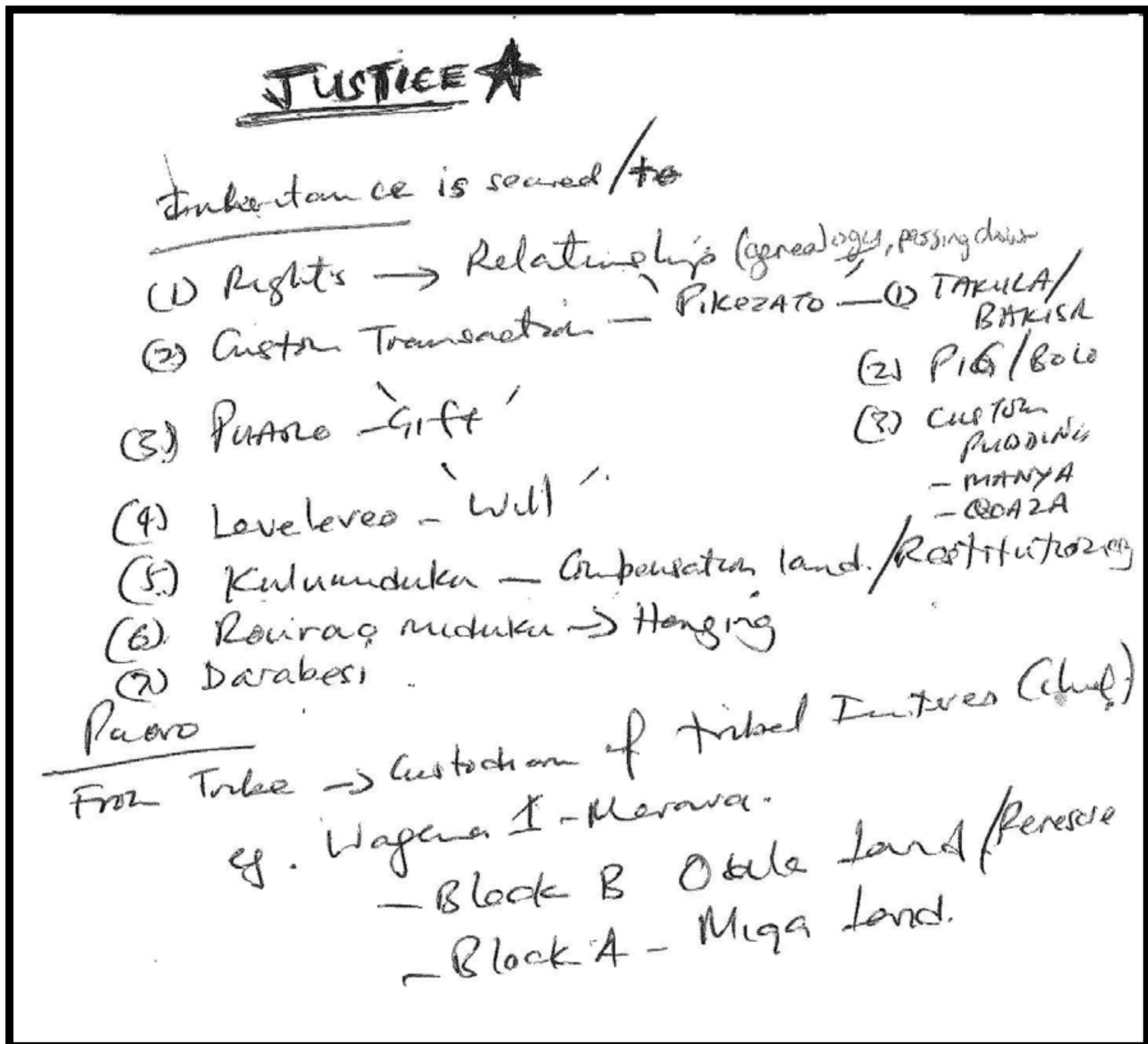

Figure 3 – Methods to secure land claims

At the top of the page, Thornly wrote the word ‘JUSTICE’ double-underlined and marked with a star – a detail I scarcely thought about at the time but have contemplated repeatedly since then, particularly what it seemed to suggest `about Vella ideas of morality, ownership and land. In particular, these types of transactions were relevant during land hearings in efforts to substantiate ownership and thus the rights to use the territories to pursue development options in logging. In comparison to compassionate love, ‘justice’ in this sense (that is, as it was understood by someone who had been active in negotiating land claims on behalf of a lineage) was marked by a transaction between different groups, as evidenced by oral testimonies and, materially, by the existence of *bakisa*. Initially, it

might appear that the ideal of open generosity of landholders towards settlers – such as that envisioned in the 'time of love' – had little place in this ideology of 'justice,' where rights to development were concerned. However, if, as I argue below, *pikezato* is contextualized as the invested recognition of 'love' between groups, the gradual transition of rights ('justice') can be considered an expression of love rather than its opposite.

All means of securing inheritance involved transactions between different groups. Aside from rights,[21] they were all products of established relationships between groups – in the form not of a financial transaction determining ownership, but of the *recognition* of relationships that were already established, carried out through the sharing of land. Both the relationships and the transactions that cemented them were entangled with Vella ideas of landholdings and remain an integral part of the recitation of how land is passed down through generations.

The last three forms of exchange in Thornly's list were common during the raiding period prior to Christianity but no longer occur. While 'genealogical rights' were investigated in my earlier section on matrilineality, the following section addresses the meaning of *pikezato*, the most common form of land transaction.

***Pikezato* – The 'Cementing' of Relationships Through Land**

Land transactions are carried out through *pikezato*, the gifting of pigs, *bakisa*, money and other forms of wealth for the right to live, plant gardens and trees on a landholder's territory. *Pikezato* overlaps with the *kastom* feast known as *Ipu*, more commonly referred to in Pijin as <u>Simen</u> (pronounced seu-men, 'cement') – the 'cementing' of a grave, land rights and relationships through land. In fact, the feast in which land claims are made is

[21] Even genealogical rights stand as evidence of the relationship between an individual and their *toutou*, suggestive of the absence of *pitaso*, which could cause someone to forfeit their rights to land and property.

rarely called *Pikezato*, and almost exclusively called Simen – referring to the final step in mourning an individual, when pigs are gifted to the dead person's *toutou* and money contributed towards the cost of concrete to cement their grave, which is usually completed at this time. While he gives no mention of *pikezato*, Hocart describes *Ipu* feasts, which were held on the hundredth and thousandth day after a person's death, and the feasting for the living coincided with food prestations offered at the shrine of the deceased (ms. n.d.f: 975–978)[22].

Feasts of all kinds are referred to as *nojalao* and require the digging of large pit ovens called *tavoto*, a specialized word which differs from *motu* – the verb 'to cook' and also the noun for the everyday cooking fire or a large cooking drum. Notably, ritual fires made for food offerings at ancestral shrines were also called *tavoto* (McKenzie 2007: 167), conveying the importance of food prestations as a sign of gratitude and recognition for one's entwined relationships with both ancestors and the living.

In the present day, only one *Ipu* feast is held, ending the official mourning period after someone has died. These feasts are not particularly common, and as such are often multi-functional events marking the commemoration of several deceased at once and involving numerous families cementing rights to use the land. In Ranonggan *pajuku* (a comparible practice to *pikezato*), McDougall notes that the prestation must be repeated each generation as each succeeding generation of the landholding lineage must give their permission and be included in the distribution (2005: 88). However, in Maravari, *pikezato* was sometimes performed multiple times for the rights to land, depending on opportunity and available wealth. The timing of *pikezato* depends on the wealth and resources the *toutou* are able to call on to raise money for a major feast. Usually this takes many years,

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[22] The Bilua *Ipu* feast is similar to *Mboni* on Simbo, which Hocart describes as"the Night Festival" (1922: 96–98).

and the feasts I attended were on average five to eight years after the person had died. I was told that in the past, pigs designated as *ipu* were raised by hand – a testament to the love for the deceased. Now it is more common to purchase them, and for several years the family works to raise the funds to buy the pigs necessary for the feast, which are often obtained in different villages around Vella, Gizo and Ranongga and can range in price between SBD$700 and $2,000 each. For the cementing of former *lekasa* Gideon Tolapitu, fifty-four pigs were killed.

Some pigs are given in recognition of land rights, and one, designated as the *ipu,* is given in thanks to the *toutou* of the deceased. In this case, both land rights and the burial ground of the deceased are ritually 'cemented.' After someone dies, the family counts the number of nights after their burial.[23] Both the feast and the whole pig given to the *toutou* of the deceased are called *ipu* ('night'), in reference to the counting of nights after the burial. The pig designated as *ipu* is said to be given in thanks to the lineage of the deceased for supporting them during their life, and its prestation is usually accompanied by money to help pay for the concrete to cement the deceased's grave.

Similar to *pajuku*, privately, people speak differently about the gifting of pigs for land than they do during the actual prestation ceremony. Feasting (for *pikezato* or restitutional purposes) is commonly described as a way to '<u>stap tok</u>' (stop talk) – to prevent people from questioning the feast-giver's right to land. *Pikezato* is most commonly made by women or their children who live or plant gardens on land belonging to their husband's *toutou*. However, it is also made if land has been previously gifted by the deceased so that their relatives will not question the continuation of title. For example, one man worked a garden on Sabe land, which his father worked before him. In order to claim this right and <u>stap tok</u>, he presented Sabe with three *bakisa*, SBD$500 and a pig 'to shut their mouths.'

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[23] In the past, this was done by knotting *vuaro*, a type of vine 'bush string' used to make string bags.

Another woman feasted the sisters of her paternal uncle who had given her garden land because he had no children. To accept food from someone is to acknowledge their rights and the relationship through which they are connected – figuratively, to cease speaking out against them.

The incorporation of contemporary language to describe *pikezato* reveals the changing ideas of land ownership that I am describing. Vella people describe *pikezato* as 'registration,' contextualizing their understandings of this process at the level of the state. Similarly, on Ranongga, McDougall notes that the similar process of *pajuku* can be glossed as 'transfer,' a translation she finds ill-fitting considering that, as on Vella, it is "only recognizing a pre-existing state of affairs."[24] In this respect, my understanding of *pikezato* is akin to McDougall's description of *pajuku*: "a prestation whereby a person or kin group gives shell valuables, currency, and food to an individual or group" (2004: 444). I would also add that, despite being described as a customary form of 'land registration,' Vella *pikezato* lack the finality of state land transactions. *Pikezato* is a delayed transaction, meaning that people are already settled on the land and invested in agreeable relationships with landholders before making *pikezato* – a necessity for affines, settlers and all those living on foreign territory and therefore relying on the goodwill of their hosts. For this reason, *pikezato* is a public demonstration of a degree of freedom to occupy land that had already been assumed, a recognition of land already given. The more generous the offering, the less chance that rights to occupy land would be questioned. A group that was able to give generously demonstrated that it was sufficiently endowed to exercise independence.

[24] McDougall also suggests that there is considerable debate on Ranongga as to whether *pajuku* existed prior to Christianity or was "a colonial invention that has allowed uncustomary land alienation in the name of custom" (2004: 444).

It is hard to say whether there is strong social pressure upon settlers and their descendants to make *pikezato*. This is likely dependent on the relationships between the two parties and on their shared goodwill. Indeed, as McDougall suggests, the ambiguities apparent in occupying land appear to have seldom been a problem before Christianity (2004: 444). This has changed as land has become not only increasingly appropriated but also financially lucrative. In the context of contemporary land disputes, ambiguities that would have once sustained peace between co-habiting lineages with long histories of intermarriage and alliance are dredged up, analyzed and reinterpreted to clarify boundaries and draw divisions in the issue of land claims in order to become eligible for registration and access to logging revenues. Those who are able to convince the courts of their rights and register them with the state are eligible to receive logging royalties, while the defeated *toutou* can be excluded from revenues completely.

Ideas of ownership, rights and reciprocity are interconnected in that they are bound by a system of reciprocity between different people and different groups (Chapter Eight). It is this enabling and continuation of relationships that is absent from commercial exchange. As Strathern argues,

> …the flow of payment releases the flow of life. The release is conditioned by appropriate relationships being in place; it is the payments which ensure that the flow continues. If we call these 'transactions' it is to point to interactions focused on the relationships thereby sustained between the parties, rather than to the narrower Euro-American sense of an exchange of economic values which closes off relations (2004: 4).

In this respect, 'cement' is a metaphor for solidifying relationships through sharing land. The frequency of *pikezato* is determined by opportunity as well as personal wealth and determination to secure this claim. McKinnon notes that if a person does not demonstrate their connection to land, they will quickly lose it (1972: 24). People draw connection to land through their relationship with others, whether through inheritance, gifting or

transaction. Demonstrating knowledge and listing the names through which one is connected to land is part of what ‘ownership’ means (Strathern 2004: 5). *Pikezato* is an acknowledgement not of ancestral connections, but of living relationships – a means through which people not only solidify their rights to land but also work out their relationships to one another (Strathern 2004: 5). While this does carry weight though generations, the more *pikezato* is carried out, the stronger the entitlement to land. For these reasons, perhaps a more accurate gloss for *pikezato* is not so much ‘registration’ as the *invested recognition* of land rights – it is a sign of respect and an ongoing acknowledgement of relationships, not only for oneself but for one’s children. The metaphor of ‘cement’ carries similar connotations to registration. As I noted at the beginning of this chapter, when something is written down, it is seen to become ‘true.’ To cover a grave in cement or ‘to cement’ a family’s claim to land through the gifting of pigs and *bakisa* through *pikezato* is to solidify the future access of your children to that land. It is to render ‘true’ what might otherwise remain a challengeable claim. The more often this claim is ‘cemented,’ the greater the comfort in belonging.

In a large feast in April 2007, three individuals were ‘cemented.’ For the *ipu* feast of three people, six large *tavoto* were dug to cook twenty-five pigs along with fish, root vegetables and parcelled *mania*. Twenty-kilogram bags of rice were also gifted along with the meat.

The three *ipu* were strapped in their entirety onto long sticks (*navi*) fashioned into an ‘X’ shape and secured by vines. Because the whole pig is gifted to the lineage of the deceased, great care is taken not to touch the pork and to leave it intact after it is removed from the *tavoto.* The remaining pigs were gutted and measured into half and quarter sections, each in a handsbreadth to be distributed to different families.

As McDougall notes, compared to food prepared for church and community feasts, which is laid out on banana leaves to be consumed communally, the *pajuku*/*pikezato* food is "carefully distributed to named family groups, which, by virtue of 'holding' this food, implicitly recognize the rights being asserted by those distributing the food" (2005: 90). Once speeches are made and the food is distributed, the separate groups take it away and consume it separately.

Following a prayer led by the pastor, speeches were made, acknowledging all the different families and lineages that were present. With each presenter, members of the family came up and put shell money or cash in a basket, adding their support to the gift being made. After the presentation of the *ipu* to the lineage of the deceased, *pikezato* began.

Each person gifting meat stood up to make a speech or had someone speak on their behalf. In this case, the affines who lived and worked on their spouse's land stood up one at a time to present their gifts to the two elder siblings of the hamlet, Dani and Raporade, thanking them for letting them live on their territory and work their gardens and asking that their children be allowed to continue doing the same. Again, time was given for people to come up and put money in the speaker's basket, thus publicly contributing to this gift and supporting their claim. Each speech was concluded with the speaker striking the gifted meat with a long stick, publicly declaring "*komi ta meko*" – "this is for you."

Of all the affines, Alex's wife Anna, a Kwaio woman, presented the largest pig of the three, matched by a *maba takula* presented by Alex and nine strands of Malaitan red money that the Malaitan CRC pastor presented on her behalf, calling Anna 'sister' and becoming visibly emotional both from the honour of representing her and from incorporating Malaitan custom to mark her place in the community. In acknowledgment of Anna's gift, Dani, Alex's maternal uncle, gave a speech thanking her, declaring that this

was the third time she had presented them with pigs and that both she and her children would always have rights to their land. Again, this differs from McDougall's (2005) assertion that *pajuku*/*pikezato* only took place once for each succeding generation of landholders. As with Wagina's prestations to Maravari village, the signs of wealth demarcating property rights are not easily ignored. In this instance, Dani's assertion that Anna and her children would 'always have rights' suggests a transaction more akin to purchase than invested recognition – a finality shared by the stated purpose of *pikezato* as registration, and an example of the changing meaning of the *kastom* practice coinciding with the changing ideas of land ownership. As I argued in Chapter One, the reciprocal verbal acknowledgement of purpose and receipt is intrinsic to and inseparable from the recognition of both the goods being transacted and the rights and relationships being conveyed.

The feast serves not only as a declaration of land rights but also as a reciprocal public acknowledgement of relationships on and through land, often between groups who are already deeply entwined in affilial relationships, sharing children and often grandchildren in common. The public acknowledgement of rights, the striking of the meat in punctuation of the gift given, and the opportunity for others to contribute to the person's claim reveal land as a social resource through which people form and solidify relationships. While *pikezato* and state land registration coexist, it is difficult to say how these two correlate with each other in the present context. During my fieldwork, *pikezato* marked the recognition of land and garden territories associated with lived day-to-day experience. State land registration, on the other hand, tended to involve distant territories removed from communities, geographically and socially distanced from the relationships affected.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have focused on the integrative and social aspect of land, emphasized in the Bilua nostalgia for the pre-Christian 'time of love' in which chiefs welcomed people onto their land. Here, the ambiguities involved in land ownership worked in favour of fostering reciprocal and mutually beneficial relationships between landowners and settling groups. Using the example of *pikezato*, I have attempted to describe how customary rituals over land serve to cement established relationships, providing an invested recognition in the goodwill of their hosts in anticipation of future goodwill towards subsequent generations. This sits in contrast to the distinction between groups fostered by colonial agents who have attempted to categorize a system of land ownership for the purpose of simplification, glossing over the dynamism of inter-group relationships. Western ideas of exclusive and exclusionary land ownership, legalized through contemporary processes of state land registration, have become a common objective of many contemporary lineages, particularly those seeking to take advantage of logging revenues and control access to resources. This has had dramatic effects on the meanings of land and ownership. As I will show, these ideologies pertaining to land make themselves known in other aspects of Bilua life, such as the embracing of new Christianities. Much as the Methodist land lease created problems for Vonunu landholders, so land has become a key element of contention between Methodist and United Church communities in Maravari.

CHAPTER FIVE – COMMUNITIES OF CHRISTIANS, COMMUNITIES OF CHURCHES: WORKING TOWARDS ONENESS IN MARAVARI

In March 2008, the Maravari Wesleyan Methodist congregation (WMC) held a feast to mark the completion of the dismantling of the church building, one of the major structural casualties of the earthquake a year earlier. Unlike the school, which was demolished with sledgehammers, the church building was gingerly taken apart by members of the Methodist congregation (Figure 4) – first the cross was removed, then the steeple and the roof, and finally, the concrete foundations were chipped away and each wall was pulled down with ropes, ending at last with the large front mural of Jesus on the cross. This structural dismantling symbolized the end of both the building as a centre for the community and the decade-long tensions surrounding the building and the land on which it stood. Maravari WMC elder and Lekasa Sabe Samuel Bule announced that the purpose of the feast was to put an end to bad feelings and signify new beginnings between the UC and WMC communities, which had a shared history under the Methodist Church but had segregated due to external administrative differences (which I shall describe shortly). In his understanding, the entire Maravari community had spoiled the memori[1] of *lotu* (Christianity; the Christian Church) with their denominational disputes and needed to start a new story. Rallying the congregation in the opening speeches, Lekasa Granville Sariki called upon the WMC congregation to come together.

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[1] By which I understood him to mean that the disputes were not in keeping with the legacy of Christian unity or 'oneness' that was introduced by the missionaries following the end of headhunting and raiding. The Pijin word memori refers more to legacy or meaning than to the mental recollection of people or events of the past. Much as I have analysed *kastom* as the 'essence' or 'spirit' of ancestral beliefs and practices (Chapter Three), *lotu* is considered *kastom* because it teaches many of the ideas of unity, generosity and sharing which are seen as consistant with ancestral beliefs.

> Maravari village is a big community, more than one thousand people, yet we [the Methodist congregation] are a quarter of that, a small community with one will, one mind and one path.

This 'oneness of will, mind and path' is a recurring metaphor in Bilua understandings of Christianity, echoing the desire to recognize their shared identities expressed in kinship references to 'one' or 'same' people (*omadeuma maba*) (Chapters One and Three).

Figure 4 – Members of the Methodist Church disassemble the damaged church building

For the Wesleyan Methodists, the decision to leave the United Church was seen not as a departure but as a return to the Church of their ancestors. One woman stressed that it was not doctrinal differences but the power of the Methodist name that compelled them to change, as the name ‘Methodist’ “save rousem devol” (Pijin: chased bad spirits away): it was as Methodists that their ancestors first abandoned the fear and superstition of the pre-Christian era. “When the Church was reintroduced in 1998,” she said, “all the old people cried because they recognized their ancestors in the Methodist name.”

Feuchtwang (2003) describes a variation on the idea of recognition as remembrance in his discussion of Holocaust memorials, by which the victim gains a certain dignity through a process of due recognition being given to events of irrecoverable loss. He notes that memorials present a certain justice for victims because acknowledging past atrocities is perceived as a means of "setting the world to rights." For the Maravari Wesleyan Methodists, it is not only the ancestors that need to be remembered and acknowledged but also their legacy. Despite the changes in the Church, staying faithful to the ambitions fought for by their ancestors during their lifetimes is seen as a powerful form of recognition and remediation (Chapter Six and Eight).

The elements of ‘will,’ ‘mind’ and ‘path’ reveal the tension within the struggle for solidarity in its different forms, reminders of the synthesis of thought and action, belief and behaviour. This is illustrative of what Csordas describes as two converging foci in contemporary anthropological analyses of morality: the responsibility of a moral actor and their obligations within a moral order (2013: 525).

Ryan Schram interprets references to ‘one mind’ in Methodist sermons on Normanby Island, Papua New Guinea, as reflecting the paradox that “the harmony of ‘one mind’ must come from the willing participation of individual minds beyond group control”

(2013: 39). By using such analogies between mind and action, he argues, church leaders help people to negotiate the distinctions "between doing Christian things and being a Christian" – a tension inherent to Protestantism (2013: 40). Similarly, in Bilua, *omadeu kerukeru* translates as 'one mind,' or more specifically, 'one thinking' or 'one focus.' By calling on a unity of 'one mind,' the church calls on people to direct their attention to a common purpose in which they set aside their individual concerns and participate in collective action.

The notion of *vatolo*, or 'will,' carries a similar duality. As the ideal of 'free will' is a primary tenet of Protestantism, in western understanding, 'will' has commonly been synonymous with individual autonomy and self-direction, as it is the individual, not the group, that is judged as a Christian. While the will of individuals could be socially productive, for Robbins, will is emblematic of the tension experienced by the Urapmin between Melanesian relationality and Christian individualism. As he describes,

> The Urapmin tend to see all lawless behavior as an expression of the will, untempered by the counsel of good thinking and often informed by the urgings of emotion. It is the will let loose as naked desire (in covetousness and adulterous longings) or in a frustrated form (in anger and jealousy) that lies at the root of lawless behavior (2004: 186).

However, in Bilua, the concept of will exhibits no such tension. The word *vatolo* is interpreted as willpower that is materialized through hard work, emphasizing the ability of the collective will of the group to move forward and face challenges together. As a friend explained, "*Vatolo* means we do things collectively as one. What the chief says, we follow. In December we used to go as a group to the bush and harvest ngali nuts together as a *qoqono*." Thus, in Bilua, the Christian 'will' is an expression of collective endeavour towards a common purpose. It suggests the overcoming of individual feelings rather than the expression of them.

Finally, the most common metaphor, the Austronesian image of the 'path,' represents a moral trajectory for both Christian and ancestral values (Timmer 2012; Keane 1997), providing "a path of continuity through time metaphorically treated as continuity in space" (Keesing 1997: 217). As a symbol of continuity and social action, it is often used as a call to recognize shared values and shared purpose in times of difficulty. As Keane notes, "The image of the path conflates the authority of original actions and that of generational seniority," consequently implying that "those who follow behind are ultimately subordinate to the trailblazers who went before" (1997: 180).

Verbalizing the ideal of oneness during public gatherings is further confirmation of the need for constant re-enactment and public reaffirmation of community, drawing attention to relationships by highlighting mutual points of connection (McDougall 2004; Dureau 2012). Bule's declaration that they had spoiled the memori of *lotu* expressed many people's frustration at the rifts between denominational communities, which were often seen as a moral failure to live up to the Bilua Christian ideal of 'one people under Christ.' However, the need to start again with 'a new story' (or more precisely, a new *chapter* of the Methodist story), spoke to the perseverance and loyalty of Methodist elders in honouring the way their ancestors first came to the Church and remembering the protection offered by the Mission against a sometimes hostile colonial government (Chapter Two).

Notably, this message, directed towards the WMC congregation as a separate group, conflicted with what people of different congregations said to me in private conversations – that God hem sem sem nomoa (it is the same God): members of the WMC, UC and CRC churches worshipped the same God regardless of denominational differences in method, practice or financial standing. This tension between 'sameness' and 'difference'indicates people's efforts to reconcile their denominational divisions with their overlapping kin and affinal relationships in the wider Christian community, in essence

forging the distinction that a person's relationship with God is entwined with, yet distinct from, their relationship with their church (Figure 5).

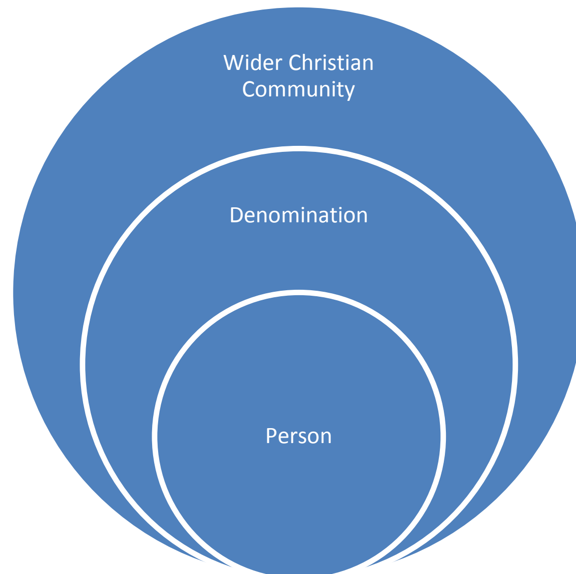

Figure 5 – The Divisions of Christian 'Oneness'

In a recent volume, Tomlinson and McDougall (2013) argue that in Oceania, Christianity is always and inevitably political. As Handman notes in the same volume, "both [Christianity and politics] engage with questions of authority and control in the world, even if the goal is to transform or otherwise alter one's relationship to this world" (2013: 25). It is in this context that I juxtapose the ideal of the Christian komuniti with the distinctions posed by denominations, lineage factions and overlapping loyalties in the village, looking at how they speak to local perceptions of Christianity, its relation to issues around land, and the dynamic between local and wider global Christian philosophies.

Throughout Melanesia, Christian religious identities are connected to the social life of a congregation (Schram 2013) and churches are frequently the initiators and mobilizers of fundraising and community development (McDougall 2003). Local churches foster connections between congregations regionally, nationally and globally, creating access to education, opportunities and resources far exceeding those that would be otherwise

available. Overlaying yet distinct from the social constructs of community justice and peaceful relationality (Chapter Eight), Christian values are held up as models for people in living their lives. Prayer frames daily life, being offered at the beginning and end of every gathering and the start of every day and of every meal. Even while some do not attend church services (primarily men), 'being Christian' is a way of life, fundamental in the lives and the sense of well being of Bilua peoples.

Several Solomon Islands ethnographies have portrayed the Church as a uniting force, a centre for creating community among people who may otherwise share little or no other connection, creating an imagined fellowship through shared belief and cause (e.g. Scott 2007; McDougall 2004). White offers a temporal analysis, investigating Christian worship on Isabel as a meaning-making activity creating historical continuity from an ancestral past "that leads unerringly to the present" (1991: 4). This desire for historical continuity is particularly evident in the WMC discourse of rebuilding and renewal.

Yet, within the idealization of 'Christian community' are different denominations sharing spaces and reconciling their shared and divergent practices of belief and faith. McDougall (2004) asserts that different denominations tend to separate along lineage and territorial lines.[2] Adherence to different churches, in this context, cannot be separated from the politics of lineage affinities and intra-family hierarchies. As evidenced by my fieldwork and Schram's (2013) analysis, people struggle with these distinctions and reflect upon the shortcomings of others in living up to the ideal of Christian unity.

Drawing on the external administrative changes of the Methodist and United Church histories, this chapter investigates the denominational disputes between the WMC

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[2] Itoh (1967: 4) notes that the conversion of Paramata village (on Vella) to Seventh Day Adventism was the main reason for the creation of a new village, New Paramata (now called Leona), to distinguish them from the rest of Paramata. This parallels the formation of separate communities when the CFC broke away from the Methodist Church in Marovo in 1960 (Hviding 1996: 122).

and the UC from the perspective of the Wesleyan Methodist congregation, centring on the stories they told about their own history as a Christian community. While the Methodist interpretation is a narrative of introduction, rupture and renewal, it is framed as a recognition of the past because they returned to the Church of their ancestors. In the larger context, I argue that the Church as a simultaneously foreign and localized institution has challenged Bilua understandings of belonging by becoming a source of both integration and division in local constructions of community.

The History of the Maravari Church Building

The church building is a visible symbol of the unity and divisions of Maravari village. Two smaller pandanus-leaf buildings were used for worship following the establishment of the Methodist Mission in 1904, until fundraising began for a permanent church building in the 1950s. As this project took twenty years to complete, it was affected by the larger institutional effects of Integration[3] – the 1968 amalgamation of the Methodist Church, the Papua Ekelesia and two PNG United Churches into the United Church of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. For this reason, while fundraising began under the Methodists, most of it occurred under the auspices of the United Church until, in 1977, the Maravari United Church building finally opened its doors.

The inability to source external funds for the construction of the church building reflected some of the larger consequences posed by Integration. In particular, many people recounted complaints that local administrative funds were channelled towards PNG instead of staying in the villages. For those elders who later initiated the 'return' of Methodism to Vella, the community having to support the Church rather than the Church supporting the

[3] To Bilua people, this very clearly constitutes a key event in the history of their church.

community was seen as a sharp departure from the extensive educational and medical support offered by the Methodist Mission in the first half of the century. Similar sentiments elsewhere in the country contributed to the eventual separation of the Solomon Islands United Church from the PNG United Church in 1996 (Ernst 2006).

1904	The Methodist Mission first arrives at Esoro Lado, near Vonunu, Vella Lavella
1907	R. C. Nicholson, the first Methodist Missionary, stationed at Vonunu
1916	Amos Kaki and four Bilua men taken to Kokeqolo College, Munda, to be trained as pastors
1916	Amos Kaki serves as pastor in Eleoteve
1923	Kaki becomes pastor in Maravari
1926	First Maravari church building opens on June 26 in Ringi hamlet
1960	Christian Fellowship Church is founded by Silas Eto as a breakaway movement from the Methodist Church
1950s	Fundraising begins for the building of a permanent Maravari church building under the Methodists
1968	Integration: Solomon Islands Methodist Church merges with Papua Ekelesia (formerly LMS) and two PNG United Church congregations to become the United Church of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands
1977	Official opening of the Maravari United Church building
1996	Maravari Paramount Chief Rimu Baesovaki initiates a Methodist revival in the village, with the help of Korean missionaries
1998	Wesleyan Methodist Church is reinstituted in Maravari, sharing the church buiding with the UC church; this reintroduction spurs the revival of Methodism in other Vella Lavella villages
1998	Violent conflict erupts between Maravari chiefs, who are divided between UC and Methodist Church denominations
2006	First joint Christmas celebration with Maravari congregations since the violence
2007	Maravari Church building destroyed in 8.1 magnitude earthquake in April

Table 3– A Brief History of Maravari Christianity

However, separation from PNG exacerbated already existing financial problems as it resulted in the Church being burdened with the costs of having to set up a new administrative centre as well as its own Bible College at Seghe, New Georgia for theological training. In addition, the UC administration was facing the failure of several business ventures, such as the Dutch-subsidized Solomon Western Islands Fair Trade

(SWIFT) initiative for which the church was unable to repay a loan of SBD$1.5 million after being unable to market a sustainably produced 'eco-timber' as an alternative to commercial logging (Ernst 2006: 181) .

These financial problems were not confined to the national administrative level. Many Bilua people reported several cases involving the mismanagement of local church funds in the 1990s, as pastors' salaries were described as inflated and several senior members of the United Church were accused of appropriating Church funds for the construction of larger houses for their families. In addition, there was a feeling among many who had grown up Methodist that the Church had become too liberal in its worship, taking on many characteristics of other churches after Integration, including the incorporation of Bilua language songs, the use of musical instruments, and lively singing incorporating actions and clapping. Sr. Rev. John Soruevo later reiterated this response, commenting that the United Church "hemi no holi" (the United Church does not have holy practices).[4] Such introductions were seen as distractions from the Methodist emphasis on holiness, which advocated the "training of all affections on the will of God" and "having the mind in us which was also in Christ Jesus" – a focus that emphasized the Christian practice of rote pattern as a sign of unity and true worship (Cracknell and White 2005: 110; Schram 2013: 40).[5]

Following the administrative discord in the wake of the 1996 UC PNG-Solomons split, a group of Korean Methodist missionaries travelled to Gizo to investigate a Methodist revival in the region which had been initiated by a small men's prayer group

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[4] This concern with 'holiness' reflected the teachings and guidance received under the Australian Wesleyan Methodist Church, which had undergone its own transformation into the Uniting Church in the 1970s and 1980s based on 'the rebirth of holiness teaching as enunciated by John Wesley" (Wesleyan Methodist Church of Australia 2011).

[5] WMC discomfort with such practices is ironic considering that after the 2007 earthquake many WMC allowed their children to stay involved with the CRC church, which they were introduced to when the earthquake forced Maravari residents to reside in the gardens near the hilltop hamlet of Sieleju, where the CRC church was located.

wanting to return to a more scripture-based style of religious teaching (Ernst 2006: 187). One of the people the Koreans met with was Lekasa Rimu Baesovaki, then a Justice in the Provincial Customs and Land Claims Court, who invited them back to Maravari to meet with the Council of Chiefs.[6] Although no consensus could be reached, the idea of a revival appealed to many local elders. Thus, as Head of the Chief's Council and Paramount Chief of the village, Rimu took the first steps towards reinstituting the Methodist church, which officially made its return in 1998 as the Wesleyan Methodist Church.

Despite the UC having developed out of the Methodist Mission, it is significant to the chain of events in Maravari that in the understanding of the breakaway group, the WMC was not a new church, but rather "the restored continuing church from the Methodist Mission founded in 1902 to the period where the Christian Fellowship Church and the United Church of PNG and the Solomon Islands had broken away and formed their own separate movements" (Ernst 2006: 188, citing the Constitution of the Wesleyan Methodist Church 1996: 6). Given the financial instability of the UC administration, the 'revival' was also motivated by the prospect of a return of foreign resources through the Church. While the Korean missionaries had initiated the reconnection with Solomon Islanders, patronage was quickly taken over by the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Queensland, whose pastors, Rev. Thomas Blythe and Rev. Stanley Baker, guided the small group into their fold as part of their focus on Asia-Pacific ministry (of which the Korean delegation was a part).

While Maravari was the first village on Vella to (re)introduce Wesleyan Methodism, several others soon followed suit. None of these seem to have experienced the discord that erupted in Maravari, which was the specific product of ownership issues surrounding the church building and the land on which it was situated.

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[6] Renamed Maravari House of Chiefs in 2006.

One point of contention with the new Wesleyan Methodism involved negotiating a place of worship in Maravari. Much to the consternation of UC members, who regarded the Maravari church building as theirs, the WMC pressured UC members to share the building on the basis that fundraising for the building had started back in the 1950s under the Methodists. However, more importantly, then-Lekasa Sabe Nathan Kalepitu, on whose lineage land the church was built, was one of the chiefs who embraced Wesleyan Methodism and one of its most influential supporters. It was following this line of argument that the UC congregation conceded partial use of the building. Thus, the two congregations began conducting their weekday services on alternate days, while Sunday services were scheduled to be held by the Methodists from 8:30 to 10:30 am, followed by the United congregation at 11:00 am.

Chiefs, of whom there were nine in the village at the time, seem to have been evenly divided between congregations and urged their families to join or maintain alliances with whichever church they themselves supported. In addition, there were generational differences, with many grown children who had been raised as United arguing with their elder parents who were eager to 'return' to the Methodist Church. Even at the time of my fieldwork in 2006, several grandmothers insisted on taking their grandchildren to the Methodist service even as their children maintained affiliations with the United Church.

Given the tendency for services to begin late and run late, despite formal scheduling, the two denominations' worship times often clashed, exacerbating tensions between them. In a 1998 incident, UC members arrived for day service to find the church house still occupied by the Methodists. When UC elder (then Lekasa Sikuni) Simion Panekera met his family on the road returning home prematurely, in a rage he armed himself with a bush knife and set out to confront the Methodists, meeting them as they left the church. He charged at the presiding Methodist layman, Sorezaru chief Zedekae

Tulavaka, forcing him to jump into the Maravari River with his Bible and all his service documents and throwing stones at him from the riverside before he was physically restrained by Rimu and another brother.

This incident is remembered as the climax of inter-denominational discord between the WMC and UC congregations within the community and through other parts of Vella, where many were familiar with it when I made inquiries eight years later. Although there were no further episodes of violence and the two congregations were eventually able to resume sharing the building, tensions simmered for many years, reflected in separate fundraising and celebrations and, according to local sources, frequent family disputes about church affiliations.

In December 2006, the year before the earthquake, Maravari's three congregations held joint Christmas and New Year celebrations. This event, the first time that the village had jointly celebrated the Christmas season since the 1996 reintroduction of the Methodist Church, was meant to signal the official end to the eight years of tensions.

For the two weeks of festivities, the village was divided into random teams, bypassing the usual division of hamlets into competing groups (for fundraising and feast preparation purposes) to instead mix members from different generations, lineages and hamlets within Maravari for sports, dance, choir and '*kastom* quiz' competitions as 'one people under God.' Groups led by all three pastors took turns ministering during morning and evening services. Prizes were awarded in the form of bags of rice and other food supplies for the winning groups to continue feasting after the competitions ended.

The multi-denominational unity exhibited at these celebrations was sorely tested when the earthquake destroyed the long-contested church building several months later. No longer able to congregate in the church, both the UC and Wesleyan Methodists modified their respective rest houses to accommodate church services. When people

started to discuss rebuilding the church building, UC elders decided to build a church of their own on a plot of land granted by a UC chief on the opposite side of the Maravari River. This decision was made unilaterally, without discussion with Methodist elders, who were left with the substantial task of dismantling the large concrete structure on their own. That the UC congregation abandoned all connection to the building that they once helped to build and so ardently fought for threatened to reopen the wound between the two village factions. However, for WMC elders, it was just another chapter in the long-fought return to what they described as 'the Church of their ancestors.'

Constructing Oneness in a Community among Many: 'Our Ancestors' Christanity'

Affinities and parallels with the Old Testament are common in Melanesian Christianities, with frequent connections drawn between indigenous communities and the people of Israel (e.g. Toren 1988; Parfitt 2002; Scott 2005; Tomlinson 2009) or historical links claimed with these ancient peoples (Burt 1983; Dundon 2011). This association is partially born of the paradox of the missionaries as 'the coming of the light' and the continued valorization of pre-Christian ancestors, who were what Tinoni Simbo called 'good sinners' (Dureau 2001: 153). In short, "the Church is considered both traditional and a defense against tradition's darkness" (Tomlinson 2009: 10). As elsewhere in the Solomons, many people believe that the coming of the Church did not violate indigenous cultural practice so much as reveal the "inherent Christianity" of the ancestors (Toren 1998: 697, quoted in Tomlinson 2009: 10). Scott describes a case in Makira where one chief likened his lineage to "a precursor to the Christian Church in its land" and "an analogue to the people of Israel and the Kingdom of God as a social, physical, and spiritual domain through which a divine blessing originally given to a few is available to all" (2005: 111). This idea expresses the

continuity of a people enduring hardship that eventually achieves unity by staying true to its faith.

So it was that Granville Sariki, the Methodist minister, evoked similar imagery on the occasion of the feast marking the demolition of the church building. In this instance, he made reference not to the founding of Christianity but to Nehemiah and the rebuilding of Jerusalem (Nehemiah 1–3), implicitly referencing the United and Methodist discord. According to the Bible, Nehemiah was the cup-bearer to King Artaxerxes. When an expedition of Jews was led back to Jerusalem with the blessing of Artaxerxes, Nehemiah surveyed the area and decided to rebuild the city walls and thus bring back the people from ruin and despair. By helping to rebuild Jerusalem, his story emphasizes hard work and strength of purpose through faith in God.

> [It was] not the whole people of Israel that rebuilt Jerusalem, but one man […] Nehemiah was cup-bearer […] That's why today, it is not the whole people that will build or it's not the whole Sabe people that are to build the church house. It is my truth and belief that one man can do it. That is why that is my trust and great faith that we are able to rebuild this church house. The only thing, we must walk in the right paths, […] this is a big truth story that we are able to see. For this reason we are not afraid, or we are not weak but we are still strong today, be steady, strong and firm, with one mind, with one will, that we have been standing every time.

In this speech, Sariki draws connections between the Methodist congregation and the imagined community of Israel. The people of Israel are the people 'under one God' and are parallelled with the Christian community of Maravari, especially the Methodist and United congregations that shared and disputed the former church building.

Indeed, Sariki's speech was designed to motivate the WMC community in the face of their perceived abandonment by the UC congregation in the sharing of the church building. He urged the congregation to overcome bad feelings towards the United Church and embrace the challenge of rebuilding the church building on their own. Nehemiah is one man within the tribe of Israel, yet the chief credits him with the rebuilding of

Jerusalem. The metaphor of 'one man' signifies the strength of common purpose and common will required of the Methodist congregation if it is to succeed in rebuilding the new church house without the assistance of their UC brethren. As a congregation, they are a community within a community – united, yet separate from the larger Christian community of Maravari that has abandoned them in the task at hand.

This idea of Christian 'oneness' touches on anthropological debate exploring how the Western Christian idea of individual personhood is reconciled, interpreted and understood in the context of kin-based and group-centred relationships comprising the Melanesian 'dividual' (e.g. Barker 1990; Robbins 2004; see also Brown 2006). Sariki's call for 'oneness' of mind, path and will was meant to inspire unity in the context of the wider discord and divisions surrounding the Church in light of continued community frustrations with the inadequacies of Maravari village members in living up to the ideals of Christian unity. Years of tensions between the Methodist and United congregations had made it apparent that ideals of Christian unity cannot transcend the land and social divisions within the community or override the financial inequalities experienced by members of different denominations. Moreover, people frequently lamented that regular church attendance does not prevent members of the Church – and even its leaders – from stealing, committing adultery and carrying out other morally questionable activities. However, while there was a strong sense of disillusionment with the Church, it was also coupled with hope,[7] resonant in the continued belief in 'one people under God' and the claim that despite structural and practical differences, the two communities were really

[7] Tomlinson (2009: 6) argues that in Fiji, Methodism created a local sense of loss by destabilizing the chieftainship, yet also raised hopes of recuperation through the promise of a new form of social order.

sem sem nomoa, a phrase that frequently comes up when people express their frustrations about the longstanding tensions between the two churches.[8]

The majority of people I spoke to in the village agree that the difference between the United and Methodist church lies in presentation rather than in doctrine. The Methodists conduct their services almost exclusively in the Bilua language, use the Bilua-language Bible, have a weekly open confession on Sundays, and sing solemn hymns that have been translated from English into Bilua or Roviana. They generally frown on the inclusion of lively songs enhanced by the use of instruments, clapping or actions during service.

In contrast, the United Church conducts services in Solomon Islands Pijin, often uses the English Bible and frequently includes actions and instruments to animate songs. Lekasa Rimu's criticism that it had incorporated too many aspects from other churches after Integration was a point considered in its favour by Rev. Roland Mae of the United Church in Kolo Kolo (a village three hours' walk north of Maravari). Referencing Saint Peter, he said that "between *kastom* and the Church, *kastom* came first. The Church is the house that was built upon it, and we need to build a Christianity to fit the Solomon Islands, not fit the Solomon Islands to meet Christianity." By contrast, to Methodist elders, Methodism was *kastom*, and they viewed themselves as returning to the Church of their ancestors.

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[8] This is contrary to the Christian philosophy of Seventh Day Adventist communities who believed that converts to other denominations were not truly saved – a distinction, McDougall notes, which has significant implications for local understandings of 'community' (2004: 30).

Christian Values and Differing Christianities

Stepping beyond earlier monolithic interpretations of Christianity framed in dualistic metaphors of 'darkness' and 'light' (such as the essentializing view of missionary arrival as a time of rupture), anthropologists have engaged the reflexivity of multiple Christianities as 'phenomena in their own right' (Barker 1990). While Robbins (2007) has criticized anthropology as unwilling to emphasize the discontinuities introduced by Christian conversion, his argument depends on the notion that people necessarily see Christianity as fundamentally different from the ways of their ancestors. For example, pointing to an overlap between Christian and *kastom* values, Bilua people frequently lament the end of their ancestors' kindness and generosity, which they generally believe to have been practiced more fervently in the past than today. Moreover, by framing the new denomination as a return to the religion of their ancestors, the WMC sought legitimacy in the face of the changing practices and chaotic financial situation of the UC. Religious change cannot be gauged outside of historical, social and political affiliations that shape the cultural logic of individuals and communities employing multiple Christianities as doctrines of meaning-making in their everyday lives (Tomlinson and Engelke 2006).

In the Solomon Islands, McDougall (2008) has surveyed the diverse religious changes that have occurred since the civil tensions of 1998 to 2003, looking at the significance of churches as alternative support structures in place of an ineffective state. Observing the trend in shifting from originating colonial Christianities to smaller externally funded churches, she posits that the diversity of these denominational changes cannot be explained by theological preferences alone but rather requires consideration of how people engage different Christianities to foster emerging local, national and global identities in accordance with their visions of themselves in an increasingly globalized world. For the Bilua Wesleyan Methodists, the return to Methodism was a return to the

patronage their ancestors received under the Methodist Mission, seen in the external patronage of the South Gate Wesleyan Methodist Church (SGWMC), in Queensland. By framing the conversion as a return rather than a breakaway, Methodist elders reconnected to the religion of their ancestors, regaining the path of the 'true Christianity' that they believed had been lost under the United Church.

Chiefly Love

WMC perspectives on their 'return to Methodism' and on the disputes about the Maravari church building centred around two important parallel discourses: chiefly love and loyalty to the Methodist mission. While UC members focused on the struggle for independence and creating a Solomon Islands church for Solomon Islanders, Methodists framed the new Wesleyan Methodism as a return to their Methodist roots and as honouring the 'true Church' that first brought their ancestors to Christianity.

As evidenced by Dalsi Koloqeto's story of the coming of Christianity, Bilua people describe how missionaries were first invited to the island because of the friendship between Roviana and Bilua chiefs. In this respect, the introduction to Christianity is consistent with both immigrant arrival discourses and longstanding patterns of inter-island connections forged through marriage, trade and migration, and, as with most foreign ideas in Bilua, is remembered as a product of inter-island relationships. The Fijian missionaries were welcomed by Soso because of his personal friendship with the Roviana chiefs who accompanied them.

By welcoming the missionaries as foreigners, the story of Christianity's arrival echoes narratives of chiefly love by which the loving chief took pity on migrants and allowed them to settle. Much like the migration narratives, this simplifies complex histories and inter-island relationships. Yet unlike Williams' description and Hocart's

account of first contact on Simbo, both of which portray the missionary as subduing the power of local spirits, here, the balance of power sits with the Bilua chief because the missionaries are allowed to stay with his blessing and his authority prevents his followers from causing them harm.

This discourse of chiefly love is echoed in Methodist understandings of their relationship with the United Church. In the memory of local Methodists, when it came to finding a permanent location for the Maravari church building in the 1960s, 'only Kalepitu' offered land. Kalepitu became a central figure of the Methodists' church narrative, revealing his potency as an ancestor figure. This revered status is contextual to the dispute: every church building requires the consent of a lineage to use the land. And, following the dispute, for the Methodists, it is Kalepitu's willingness to allow the United Church to continue their services in the church building built on Sabe land that resonates with the generosity and 'love' of chiefs of the taem bifoa and the delicate relationship between landholders and settlers.

In relating this story, other happenings are incorporated to verify Kalepitu's generosity. As Chief Bule told me, during the Japanese occupation of Vella in 1942 enemy forces killed seven New Zealand soldiers near Valapata. According to local accounts, Allied soldiers had difficulty convincing people to allow them to bury the bodies along the coast. It was then-Sabe Chief Nathan Kalepitu who allowed the troops to temporarily bury them on Sabe land, in the area that is now the Maravari soccer field. He also allowed them to build a small leaf church building. Some of the New Zealand soldiers also had been allowed to erect tents and sandbags in Mioko hamlet, a further indication of Kalepitu's generosity. While it is difficult to verify whether these soldiers could have camped or buried their dead elsewhere, by connecting the story to how Kalepitu had been wronged, Bule highlights Kalepitu's influence as a landholding chief and a compassionate

man who helped foreigners in need. In the process, he further highlighted the ungrateful actions of the UC members in the church house dispute.

In the Methodist discourse, Kalepitu becomes the wronged chief whose generosity is met by the perceived ingratitude of the UC congregation. As one woman said matter-of-factly, "all those who instigated violence in the name of the United Church are dead now," reflecting on Bilua ideas that those who 'swore at the land' would be swallowed by the ground (Chapter Four). However, to understand the depth of loyalty felt by the WMC in their return, it is necessary to go back beyond living memory to the role played by the Mission in Bilua at the turn of the century.

The Love of the Mission

Many senior members of the community described growing up with stories of the mission station. In their understanding, Methodism was 'more true' than other denominations because it was through Methodism that Christianity had first been introduced to the island, thus causing it to be seen as constituting a purer form. Moreover, unlike many other denominations introduced in the Solomons, the Methodists readily adopted patron–client relationships with the surrounding communities, sheltering, protecting and assisting them even when most were still pagans (Bennett 1987: 108). It was Christian missions – and not the colonial state – that provided health services and education to rural villagers. Only with national independence were many church-run schools, clinics and hospitals turned over to the state (McDougall 2008: 2).

The mission also offered protection and safety in a more immediate way, as Goldie and Nicholson are understood to have not only recognized the authority of local chiefs but also defended their authority against traders and colonial government agents. In a telling incident in the history of the Vonunu mission, Rev. Nicholson sheltered hundreds of

refugees who flocked to the mission station after government agents, 'revenge-crazed' traders and a disorganized Malaitan militia descended in random killing sprees across the island as they tried to catch the warrior Sito Latovaki, who had attacked and killed a trader's wife on Bava Island. Sito, who had family in Bilua, was hidden by his kin, who refused to cooperate with the district officers. It was only when, after a fortnight of killing, Nicholson organized a group of locals (including Sito's own kin) to capture the warrior that he was finally taken into custody and turned in to the authorities (Rimu Baesovaki, personal interview 2006; Bennett 1987; Luxton 1955). In this respect, the mission is remembered as having assumed protective responsibilities for the surrounding community in the manner of a benevolent chief. With this in mind, it was little wonder that Goldie was referred to as *aikovakova*, the first 'paramount chief' of Vella (Jackson 1978).

While this time period is reflected in stories passed down through several generations of Christians on Vella, locally, more direct ancestral connections are visible as well. Daniel Bula, the first local Methodist missionary, was of Belo Belo lineage and an ancestor of one of the main *toutou* in Maravari. When he was in his teens, Lekasa Wagina Donli Kaki was a cook for Rev. Silvester at Vonunu, one of the few missionaries to stay in the Solomons when the Japanese invaded in 1943 (Bennett 1987: 288). Kaki tells how groups reported the locations of Japanese to Silvester and later hid him in a cave to protect him. Donli's father, Amos Kaki, was a contemporary of Bula and the first pastor of the Methodist Church, first in Eleoteve and later in Maravari. Many elders express a sense of gratitude for the protection and aid offered by the Methodist church, which vastly overshadowed the United Church organization far away in Port Moresby. The loyalty this inspired is evident and lasting in the manner in which the Methodist Mission is remembered today.

A Division of Wealth

Much like their Methodist ancestors, Wesleyan Methodists received much-desired patronage from their larger Christian 'family' overseas. In our conversations, Rimu acknowledged that one of the reasons for the return to the Methodist Church was the desire to channel wealth *into* the community rather than out of it, as was the common complaint under the United Church with its administration in Port Moresby. In several instances, the division of wealth between the Methodist and United Church in the village was graphically apparent. During my fieldwork, Maravari Wesleyan Methodists received funds and several large boxes of used clothing from the SGWMC, in addition to Bibles, school books and musical instruments. While the current pastor pointed out that they were generous in passing on supplies to the other congregation if they were surplus to their needs, these shipments nonetheless stood in sharp contrast with the fortunes of the United Church, which often struggled with fundraising. While both churches in Maravari fundraise, unlike their UC counterparts, the Methodist Church rarely places a fundraising quota on families in their congregation, nor does it fundraise on the same scale, largely due to their access to external aid.

Senior members of the Methodist Church were well aware of this imbalance and appeared willing to go to some lengths in order to avert feelings of jealousy or ill will on the part of their United Church brethren. An example of this was observed at the arrival of a visiting group of SGWMC students from Queensland. Although the arrival was a high-profile event in the village – staged as a re-enactment of the coming of the first missionaries, featuring local children in traditional costume complete with spears and painted faces – the senior Methodists insisted that their young guests disembark on the rocky, open seashore in front of the Methodist church rest house. This was unusual as it is common practice for passengers, particularly those carrying cargo, to disembark in the

relative safety of the river mouth. If these guests had done so, however, they would have to carry their belongings (and many gifts for the Methodist congregation) past the United Church rest house, where a meeting of UC elders was in session. Although my interpretation of this odd behaviour – that the point of disembarkment was chosen so as to avoid offence – was denied by members of the Methodist congregation, I observed that great pains continued to be taken to contain the visitors from exploring areas of the village inhabited by UC members for the entire week of their stay.

Constructions of Church and Christian Communities

As evidenced by the community divisions between the UC and WMC churches, Christianity does not stand apart from Bilua ideas of governance, well-being and everyday life, but rather substantiates and reinforces community and group distinctions. As Terry Brown notes, in Melanesia, people are attracted to groups such as churches because this is where they find their identities as persons,[9] so when they become dissatisfied with their 'group' they are more likely to move to another group than to remain isolated (2006: 175). While their reasons for shifting can vary, it is not necessarily because the earlier Christian practice has lost meaning, as Robbins suggests (2006: 214). Rather, in Maravari, people shift denominations for reasons ranging from closer proximity after moving house and more agreeable times for worship to a deeper engagement with certain pastors and particular forms of worship. For example, after the earthquake and subsequent threat of tsunamis caused many families to build temporary houses inland, some began going to services at the CRC Church in the hilltop settlement of Sieleju. As one woman explained, their small pandanus-leaf church made for cooler, more enjoyable services than the hot tin

[9] Brown emphasizes the importance of other relationships, beyond kin and lineage membership, in the creation of personhood (2006: 176).

roof buiding where the UC services were held during the heat of midday. Describing the row of old men who were often seen nodding off during long UC services, she laughed, "It's hard to see God when your eyes are closing." Similarly, once the risk of further quakes subsided, the CRC church attracted a new strong following of younger parishioners attracted by the lively action songs and more youthful church community. It was the men and women of the older generation who tended to remain the most stalwart supporters of the UC and Methodist Churches. This is the foundation for understanding the formation of communities and the significance of Christianity both at the time of conversion and amid the denominational divisions experienced in the present day.

Community encompasses the larger trans-local Christian identity across the Solomons that overlaid and extended pre-Christian exchange networks and alliances, thus creating a sense of local, regional and national identity (Dureau 1998a; McDougall 2008). As McDougall notes, on Ranongga, "whenever people want to avoid invoking the given differences of gender, genealogy, or territorial affiliation, they can appeal to the notion of an overarching Christian community that encompasses all" (2004: 28). Yet church communities are not impervious to disputes between families and lineages.

The violent incident between Maravari Methodist and United Church elders is well known throughout Vella and has been a factor in nurturing efforts to unite denominations as 'one island under God'[10] and bridging rifts between different spiritual communities. The Vella Christian Women's Association was founded in Vonunu in 2005 and held the first ever Vella Women's Interdenominational Christian Workshop in Maravari during September 2006. A second workshop was held in May 2007 in a different part of the island. Likewise, an island-wide network of ministers and pastors from the Methodist, United, SDA, CRC and CFC churches was organized by Rev. Mae in Kolo Kolo. Like the

[10] Rev. Mae, Kolo Kolo village, personal correspondence, 2006.

president of the Christian Women's Association, he directly cited the incident in Maravari as a reason to ensure that relationships between denominations should be more harmonious in future.

The example of Maravari has wider implications for understanding Christianity and concepts of Christian community nationwide. While Christian values are upheld as ideals, their application in everyday life is constantly challenged, even within the Christian communities which endorse them. Tomlinson argues that "Christianity is especially effective at generating metacultural reflections expressed as dissatisfaction with reified 'culture.' It prompts people to reflect on the social processes in which they are enmeshed and to see the mesh as a net or trap rather than a liberating network" (2009: 20). In this case, the tensions over the land on which the church was built highlighted awareness of both denominational and lineage distinctions in the village and the need to work beyond them to live up to ideas of Christian 'oneness.' This presents a template, an idealized 'Other,' to which people can look in contextualizing both the pre-Christian practices of their ancestors and the excesses of monetary wealth, alcohol and other perceived shortcomings of contemporary life. Being Christian has become an intrinsic part of Bilua *kastom* and local church community structure overlies and is enmeshed with existing kin groups and land boundaries. While Christianity presents a model for people to reflect on contemporary social processes, this does not exempt the Church from criticism by association. Paradoxically, many Biluans view Christian values as corresponding to idealized memories of their pre-Christian ancestors while present-day living is frequently seen as falling short.

How people react and respond to these perceived shortcomings reflects their engagement with both Christian teachings and the bureaucratic limitations of the Church as an institution. For the most part, the administrative changes in the Church were caused by

factors external to local control. The face of Bilua Christianity shifted from the Methodist Mission to the United Church under PNG to the Solomon Islands United Church, and finally, to a slowly increasing number of options. While the social significance of the Church and God's perceived role in the everyday lives of Bilua people has remained ongoing, the external administrative changes at the regional level adversely affected the loyalties people felt locally. These conflicts foster disillusionment with the dual identities of the Church as an institution and a moral structure. People recognize the discrepancies between these and struggle with the financial, resource, and land conflicts between congregations, in addition to those between lineage and kin groups.

The rupture created by the return of Methodism initiating the split between their congregation and their UC brethren is explained as the search for continuity with the past – the recognition of the Church that was first embraced by their pagan ancestors. Likewise, the UC identifies with making a 'Solomon church for Solomon islanders,' drawing on the use of music, dance, and other techniques to establish its own continuities in a spirit of Solomonness. While there is rupture, both churches in their own ways establish their respective continuities. In both cases, continuity is sought through the preservation and restoration of community as they seek out familiar elements of continuity to create meaning. Both the UC and the Methodists reconcile their beliefs in the virtues of the ancestors with religious teachings, and when social rupture took place, many actively sought out and tried to return to the faith of their ancestors. Ironically, Maravari people can at least partly be said to share Robbins' view that despite superficial differences, Christianities have continuities between them: that God hemi sem sem nomoa.

CHAPTER SIX – THE BOUNDEDNESS OF ANCESTORS AND SPIRITS: REFLECTIONS OF UNCERTAINTY AND MAKING PLACE IN TROUBLED TIMES

In April 2007, an earthquake measuring 8.1 on the Richter scale struck an area outside Gizo, triggering a tsunami that devastated many of the surrounding islands and cost more than fifty people their lives. On Vella Lavella, the rising waters were felt more strongly in the North Vella communities of Iriqila and Dovele, while the mid-island Bilua coast was somewhat sheltered. Nevertheless, the earthquake caused considerable alarm, its timing catching many people in the middle of Sunday morning service. In Maravari, the United congregation was in the church. Grabbing children and scrambling over overturned benches, people quickly headed inland where the quickly escalating terrain offered protection from the threat of a tsunami. Many congregated and prayed in the hilltop hamlet of Sieleju, whose CRC church, constructed of wood and pandanus, was more resistant to the tremors than the larger concrete church building down in the main village. The evening was blessed with a full moon and clear skies, and most spent the first night in the open. Over the next few days, people constructed lean-to shelters, soon expanding them into small houses where they lived for three months while the tremors reoccurred, often many times daily.

On Gizo and other neighbouring islands, many believed the earthquake to be a sign of God's wrath, retribution against the perceived rise in immorality, greed and selfishness. However, beyond a few pastors, Bilua communities did not seem to share this opinion, possibly because the loss of life and serious damage was considerably less on Vella than on other islands.[11] Instead, the earthquake was generally seen as the catalyst for the events

[11] There was only one death resulting from the earthquake on Vella, when a house collapsed on a small child in the Bilua village of Sabora. The total death toll was 52, the majority of which occurred in low-lying coastal settlements on Gizo Island.

that followed: physical hardship, public distrust, decline of social order and a series of misfortunes that were attributed to supernatural causes.

This was described as a time of thievery in the abandoned villages.[12] Many families sent a younger male member back to guard the houses as opportunistic individuals made off with chickens and pigs. It is not difficult to imagine how unsettling the experience of guarding these abandoned houses would be while aftershocks continued to shake the ground. Many felt that something sinister moved into the village while people were living in the bush. Some reported fire-like lights appearing out of nowhere. Others came back with stories of ghosts and spirits roving the villages. Interestingly, these phenomena were reported taking place in the village rather than in the temporary bush settlements, which were closer to the deep bush (*muqe* – area of primary forest) typically considered the home of spirits. In its temporary abandonment, the village had become the liminal border space where spirits reside.

Niehaus (2013) investigates how people impose order by framing unfortunate and destructive events within zones of the extraordinary, such as through explanations of the supernatural. Such events, like the earthquake and the misfortune that followed, pose a direct threat to belonging because they threaten or take away the naturalized feeling of safety that characterizes people's connection to place (Yuval-Davis 2006). While such extraordinary events appear to exist apart from as well as undermine existing social patterns and ideas of social order, they are emotional and forthright in their moral lessons. In the case of Maravari, fear and upheaval were manifested in the appearance of the supernatural – both spirits and ancestors – raising questions about their respective roles and how these beings are defined and distinguished in Bilua society. I argue that by the very

[12] This differed to Roviana and Vonavona Lagoon, where, according to Lauer (2012: 181), almost no looting or violence was reported.

quality of being extraordinary, events such as the perceived appearance of the supernatural demand the recognition and amelioration of moral shortcomings which emerge in the context of attempts to reconcile these happenings with everyday social order.

Although their role is increasingly subdued in the day-to-day existence of Bilua people since they first embraced Christianity, the dead continue to hold meaning in the lives of the living. As I have shown in my discussions of Bilua people's collective memories of the pre-Christian past and the time of the mission, recognition as memory is cherished and negotiated in relation to present circumstances (Fabian 1999). However, what is recognized of the past ultimately takes on a meaning that is quite different than the reality of lived experience. Despite being intangible, ancestors and spirits manifest the practices of remembering and forgetting in very discernible ways, as both continue to affect the lives of the living. 'Ancestor' does not connote deceased kin so much as remembered or valued deceased kin, and these entities are believed to embody the cultural continuity of families, lineages and extended kin networks by guiding and influencing the lives of the living. In contrast, malevolent spirits are the half-forgotten beings that sit on the boundaries of society. Mageo (1991) suggests that "spirits are often constructed from the disordered fragments of social life and thought that are left out of education, established ritual, and socialization – fragments that intrude upon experience in a particular way because of this neglect" (cited in Levy, Mageo and Howard 1996: 27, Note 6). This makes them ideal phenomena for individuals to turn to in contextualizing unknown ailments, unexplained events and fortune or misfortune which occur outside the regular realm of experience (Niehaus 2013). Having been abandoned by the living, they represent the constant threat of the unknown.

The majority of spirit encounters are based on individual reports that are consolidated and given meaning through context and shared accounts. While liminal

spaces on the boundaries of communities are powerful places for these kinds of encounters, dramatic events such as natural disasters and migration intensify encounters with the unknown through the manipulation of social space. In this context, discourses about spirits and ancestors help to frame and are framed by geographical and moral boundaries, their appearances frequently paralleling the challenges, fears and uncertainties experienced by individuals, collective kin groups and communities when physical and moral well-being is called into question.

As Kwon observes in postwar Vietnam, "the moral identity of ghosts is relative to the existential condition of the living" (2006: 91). As "the disordered fragments of social life," spirits are a useful means to talk about subjects which are difficult or considered taboo (Mageo 1991). Moral stories about spirits often cross over with historical figures and events to the extent that many people seem confused as to which beings were human and which were supernatural. Notably, all spirits are gendered, and many carry associations of sexual deviance – a common threat to lineage groups, provoking warfare, division and migration. One female spirit, called Baramomo, had a hole in her back in which she could put food and children. *Saqemati*, seaside spirits, had sex with humans and made them sick.

Much like kin who demand respect and recognition in exchange for support and belonging, supernatural beings become volatile and unruly when people stray beyond the moral and geographic boundaries which govern their worlds. Moreover, when ancestors are decontextualized through 'forgetting' and failure to show the proper recognition as kin, the lines between spirits and ancestors become blurred. In this chapter, I take a closer look at how people understand belonging through perceptions of supernatural beings, using them to resolve uncertainties and creating moral stories and discourses of 'sameness' and 'otherness' which help to situate locality, territory and boundedness.

After the Earthquake

When people began to return to the villages several months after the earthquake, spirit sightings continued, usually in the form of old men and women, prompting an elevated fear among women of walking by themselves or sleeping alone at night. This state of unease was also reflective of social unrest, public distrust and a general decline in social order after the earthquake. When materials and relief funds started arriving, there were widespread accusations that people were giving inaccurate accounts of damage to property, leaving some people off lists and channelling relief funds and supplies to kin. Rumours circulated of some villages receiving large amounts of rice and supplies while others received very little. People directed their anger towards chiefs for not drawing attention to their needs. At the same time, village rules on public drinking became lax, and drunken men started wandering the main road not long after dark, leading to reports of 'creeping' – the practice of seeking out women in their homes at night in search of illicit sex.

Most alarmingly, this period of misfortune was characterized by a string of unfortunate deaths – seven between June and December – about the time that people started returning to the village. After I arrived back in Maravari on November 16 to begin my second period of fieldwork, three people died in as many weeks and four more in the months that followed. The circumstances of these deaths varied: two men died from being crushed by falling logs at the lumber camp at Oula on the other side of the island (foul play was suspected in one instance), two more deaths were attributed to heart problems (one in a young man of 25), and two more were due to other illness-related causes. Only one death was due to old age, that being a man of 97.

Given the mourning period of 5 to 10 days, the number of deaths compromised the time spent working in the gardens. After a person has died, villagers are allowed to go to

the garden to take food but should not do any hard labour or maintenance work. Wider community rules are also set in place, similar to proper Christian standards of behaviour for Sundays. Laughing, running or undue noise (such as the noise of chainsaws) is considered extremely disrespectful to the family of the deceased and sometimes requires compensation.[13] Restricted garden work during the mourning period, coupled with the fact that garden land was affected by the earthquake, meant that people's diets were compromised, which in turn led to further illness. In several cases, the family of the deceased bowed to public need and shortened the mourning period to allow people to tend to their gardens. However, given the significance of mourning rituals (*bu<u>n</u>iobu<u>n</u>io*) in helping the family grieve and in putting the soul and lingering spirit to rest, these concessions also likely contributed to the sense of unease in the village. The significance of mourning in channelling the safe departure of the deceased illustrates the seriousness of the decision to curtail the mourning period so that people could go to the gardens following the string of deaths after the earthquake.

While the earthquake was not generally regarded as retribution from God, the string of deaths which followed was attributed to ancestral anger, particularly that of the late Lekasa Sabe Nathan Kalepitu. Of the seven village deaths since June, five occurred in Sabe *toutou*. In Chapter Five, I described how Kalepitu had allowed the church to be built on Sabe land and encouraged the building to be shared peacefully between the Methodist and United congregations. Ten years later, tensions still inhibited relationships between the two groups, often dividing the community along lineage lines. The joint Christmas services between Methodist, United and CRC congregations in 2006 were felt to be a significant step forward. However, damage to the church building in the earthquake

[13] In the past, such signs of disrespect could be seen as indicative of guilt, suggesting that the person had committed sorcery against the deceased and was happy about his or her demise.

prompted elders to re-introduce plans to build two separate churches, one for Methodists in the same location and one for United to be built on the other side of the river. As access to foreign aid from outside church affiliations created considerable differences in funding opportunities for the two denominations, hostilities were quick to re-emerge. Rev. Richard Tokilala, a Maravari man and United Church minister in Marovo Lagoon, returned to the village following a vision in which he had foreseen ten graves following the Sabe line. His intention was to "perform deliverance" and "close the grave" before the death count rose further.

Calling a lineage hearing, Tokilala described his vision and members of Sabe discussed how conflicts over the church had divided the *toutou*, causing Kalepitu much unhappiness. Tokilala pointed out that despite the former chief designating the land to be shared by the community and both churches, conflicts continued. Overall failure of *toutou* members to go to church and pray regularly was also listed as a significant contributing factor in the number of deaths.

Although this vision is not directly related to the earthquake, it occurred in a time where the community was struggling and divided. People frequently reported seeing and receiving messages from deceased relatives, describing them as appearing in 'visions' and dreams, spaces that are represented as liminal, usually bringing warnings and advice about land in preparation for hearings.

In Tokilala's vision, Kalepitu represents the call to return to moral order. While there are Christian references, the primary message is an ancestral one: 'respect the community and share the land.' Unlike many chiefs, Kalepitu is remembered as a quiet man, emblematic of the 'chiefly love' that makes many Bilua people nostalgic for the tiem bifoa. His legacy of allowing the church building on Sabe land and, more importantly, encouraging the community to share the space between both congregations became

suddenly pertinent as the church building that had been the primary source of tension was unstable and needed to be torn down. Thus, the solidarity of the village as a Christian community was called into question. In Tokilala's understanding, the deaths affecting Kalepitu's lineage of Sabe only pointed to their ancestor's displeasure and frustration over their role in perpetuating the disharmony separating the United Church and Methodist congregations.

The Stability of Ancestors, the Disorder of Spirits

The ambiguity of spirits, as people who have died and as unnatural and even sinister beings, is often not defined or even clearly understood by most Bilua people. *Ziolo* is an ambiguous term applied broadly to both, reflecting the sometimes wandering nature of the spirit after death (Figure 6).[14] By contrast, a dead body, devoid of *auvana* (soul), is frequently referred to as a *kobo* (log) or a *lado* (rock) – immobile and stiff, as any inanimate object.[15] In Pijin, the dead body may also be called devol (during the mourning period of *buniobunio* 'olketa man kam lukem devol') – a shade of its former self, even while the soul is 'long gone.'

The concept of the benevolent ancestor sits at the borders of the ideological and the imaginary (Battaglia 1993). As ancestor, Kalepitu represents the most defined and revered form of supernatural being. Addressed collectively as *taitemadu* (the grandparents) or *lulamadu* (the people before), Bilua ancestors represent continuity and stability; their decorated shrines serve as markers of landholdings, symbolizing strength and continuity

[14] Hocart described Simbo *tomate* as equally polysemous, representing "a dead one," "a ghost," "certain spirits who do not belong to deceased human beings" or even "animals connected with spirits or shrines" (1922: 259).
[15] This creates an interesting parallel, as 'bounded' spirits (typically 'unnatural' ones) could be controlled by being 'put' in inanimate objects, such as rocks and trees, by individuals who possessed knowledge of how to do so.

with the past. Individually, they may be directly addressed as kin – *taite* (grandfather/mother), *mama* (father) or *niania* (mother) – subject to the same requirements of recognition and respect as living members of *toutou*. Recognized as kin, they help establish belonging by connecting people to history, establishing longevity and providing a precedent for respect relationships as well as social and moral order.

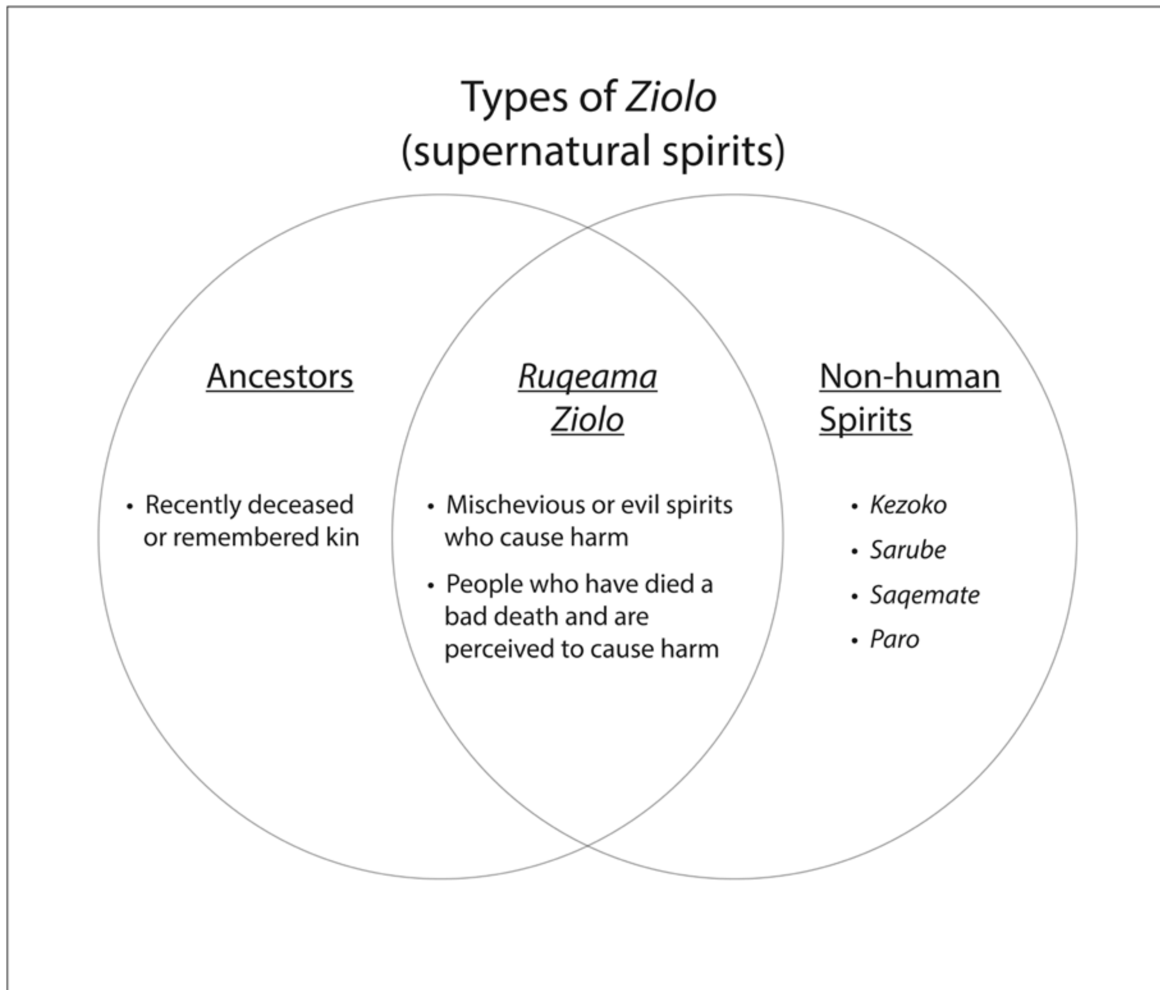

Figure 6 - Types of ziolo

Many people reported interactions with ancestors who had died in the past couple of generations. As illustrated in Sabe's reverence towards the ancestral presence of Nathan Kalepitu, the significance of ancestors is substantiated and solidified by their place in the memories and oral accounts of the living: people continue to evoke their names, to commune with their shades, and to anticipate their presence in times of change and

uncertainty (Lindstrom 1990a). Alternatively, the dead who are forgotten are often seen to lose their power over the living. Despite some controversy, Maravari *Lekasa* Rimu Baesovaki justified his decision to allow archaeologists to study shrine sites in the inner bush because "the ancestors were quiet" and no longer played an active role in people's lives. The extent to which these ancestors have been forgotten by most people meant that very few knew the location of these sites or their significance.

There is no consistent set of ideas about why and how these beings appear. While ancestors are part of the kin spectrum, they are not always easily distinguished from other spirit beings. The humanity implicit in ghosts makes them ambiguous figures highly dependent on the meaning-making activities of local people to contextualize their 'beingness.' As Levy, Mageo and Howard note,

> The ghosts of powerful ancestors often attain the ritual potency of high gods, while the ghosts of disvalued people may roam only the darkest, most obscure corners of the social world (1996: 12).

In becoming 'disvalued,' ghosts become increasingly detached from their historic identities. The more an ancestor slips into the historical past, the more they become detached from living memory, likely to slip into the category of the unknown, which is populated by mistrusted and mischievous spiritual beings (see also Kwon 2006). Dureau notes that in pre-Christian Simbo, different categories of *tomate* ('ancestors' or 'spirits') were seen as antipodal forms of the same being: "[i]f ancestral *tomate* were a kind of disembodied spirit animating the shrines, forest *tomate* were also a kind of aberrant embodied ancestor" (Dureau 1994: 83). The difference was determined by the living, who were ultimately responsible for transforming the dead into venerated ancestors through proper mourning rituals.

Mourning the Dead

As Feuchtwang (2003) notes, loss demands recognition. A death ritual serves to confirm and acknowledge bereavement, enabling close family members and the wider community to acknowledge loss and participate in shared meanings of departure and continuity while renewing the solidarity between the dead and the living by reaffirming kin relationships (Feuchtwang 2003: 77; Kwon 2006: 91). However, failure to properly recognize the newly dead is not merely an insult to the family left behind, but an omission carrying a critical cost to the soul of the deceased. In Bilua, as throughout much of New Georgia, if a person's death is not adequately recognized and mourned they are perceived to be doomed to roam, haunting the land of the living as a wandering spirit. Thus, the purpose of mortuary rituals is ultimately to "distance the dead from the living" (McDougall 2004: 232) and transform "the profane entity into a sacred one; the dead body into an ancestor" (Kwon 2006: 91).

Beliefs about the journey of the soul after death is similar throughout much of the region, as it undergoes its own migration through different islands (Dureau 1994: 81–82; Hviding 1996: 236–237, Rivers 1912: 395–396): in Bilua, it was believed that after death, the soul travels to Kuava to drink from a stream called Ziolo Bube, then to Simbo to Ove to write their name in a cave, and then finally to Sondo in the Shortland Islands, where it crawls inside a hole and disappeared.

Figure 7 – Senior Methodist Minister John Soruevo leads a funeral procession to the burial site

I was assured that the soul's journey to Sondo was a pre-Christian belief. Now that people have embraced *lotu*, most Bilua people say that the soul's place is in Heaven. However, until the deceased is properly mourned, their spirit is still considered to linger dangerously close to the living. Dureau notes that in pre-Christian–era Simbo, the dead did not become an ancestor until they reached Sondo, an arrival indicated by virtue of their decayed body, as this was the point when their head could be removed and placed on an ancestral shrine (1994: 82). While shrine sites are not tended as they were in pre-Christian times, elaborate mourning rituals reveal the precarious state of the recently deceased, who are believed to be reluctant to leave the living.

The first four days after death is known as *bu<u>n</u>iobu<u>n</u>io*, and family and visitors sit with the corpse day and night. As soon as people hear of a death, they will set out to gather at the house of the deceased. This is often a solemn journey, marked by light

conversation, but not usually by abject despair. Those approaching the house will wait outside until their presence is acknowledged by a break in the hymn singing. Then, upon entering the presence of the corpse, the mourners' demeanour quickly changes, their voices rising to a wail as they move to sit and place their hands on the body. Faces are buried in accompanying handkerchiefs as the new visitors join the other mourners to 'help them cry.'

The night visits are particularly animated, with constant hymn singing and the ritual crying of women over the body (*kilikiniao*). During *kilikiniao*, women tell the deceased how much they are loved and that they should be at rest.[16] Many people seemed to disagree whether this crying was for the sake of the person's spirit or for the family of the deceased. Some insisted the soul was already departed from the house while others stressed the reluctance of the spirit to depart their lives among the living. However, one female elder emphasized the importance of the *tavoto* on the fourth and tenth days, explaining that when the soul of the departed looked back, they could see the smoke from the cooking fire and know that they were loved. Such expressions of mourning were said to appease the lingering soul and help them to leave the living. The funeral and Christian burial usually occur after a couple nights or as soon as close kin have been able to return and pay their respects. Even after the body is buried, people continue to gather at the home of the deceased.

During *buniobunio*, people are careful to stay in groups and avoid walking alone at night. Making my way home with a group of women after sitting with the deceased late one night, a friend was distressed to see me pluck a frangipani flower from the tree and put it behind my ear. Frangipani (*seda*), she explained, was a funeral flower, and the scent

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[16] One woman compared *kilikiniao* to the UC practice of united prayer, as both are a form of *ninoreo*, the ractice of making loud, coordinated speech or vocal noise to entreat the divine or supernatural.

might cause the wandering spirit to follow me home and make me ill – until the deceased was properly mourned, there was danger in their continued presence among the living.

After *toni teku*, the ten days after the body has 'laid down' (as if in sleep), the house is smoked to cleanse it of the spirit should it still be lingering, and it is then figuratively 'swept' out of the house using branches of *tevalili*, a plant often used to protect a person from spirits. Similar precautions are taken when caring for grave sites: women sing or chant to tell the dead that they are loved and that they are just there to weed and tend the gravestones. If the dead know they are cared for, they will remain peaceful and not follow them back to the house.

Figure 8 – Katherine Mumasole and Wendy Riqe making wreaths for their aunt's funeral

Commemoration and Forgetting

Robert Foster describes commemoration as "an act of remembrance undertaken to enable forgetting" (1995: 97, quoted in McDougall 2004: 232). Debbora Battaglia makes a similar argument for the Sabarl of Papua New Guinea, noting that forgetting was the stated goal of their mourning rituals. She uses Freud's idea of screen memory in her analysis of *baloma*, the Sabarl spirits of the dead (see Chapter One). As she describes, after death, mourners beautify the corpse to mask the reality of its condition: it is dressed in new clothes and its face is painted and covered with clan markings by a woman of the matrilineage. These adornments serve to continue projecting the identity of the historical person onto the corpse. However, as the body decomposes, so does the mortal identity of the person. In its place, the *baloma* is revealed, "now eternally fragrant and glowing in its new social skin" (1993: 435). For the Sabarl, the transformation of corpse into *baloma* serves as an ideological inscription, "a displacing gloss of the historical person" (1993: 435).

A similar process occurs in Bilua, although unlike the Sabarl, forgetting is not explicitly stated as the purpose of mourning. With each step in the mourning process, the soul of the dead moves further away from the living. Mourning is punctuated by feasts on the fourth and tenth days, which are held by immediate kin and affines. Each feast marks the gradual removal of taboos binding the principal mourners. After the fourth day, kin who have been sleeping in the house or nearby return home. Most village restrictions are also lifted at this time. At the conclusion of the ten days, life generally returns to normal and the mourners return to the garden and resume the routines of regular life. The widow or primary mourner ceases to weep openly and is allowed to brush their hair, wash and generally take care in their personal appearance once more. However, some mourners continue to express their grief by not cutting their hair. After Meda's death, his father, two

brothers and father-in-law opted not to shave as an expression of their grief (Figure 9 and Frontispiece).

Figure 9 – Lekasa Livingstone Niaba goes unshaven for one hundred days as a formal expression of grief over his son's death

After the feast on the tenth day, concern shifts away from the dead and towards the living. Upon the conclusion of the feast for her brother Meda, my friend Emmee took her sister-in-law, Lucy, out in a dugout canoe and bathed her in the sea before both of them returned to wash at the river. Throughout the mourning process and after, Emmee had stayed beside her sister-in-law, brushing her hair, bathing and feeding her and providing

constant companionship. As Emmee explained, Lucy had no child to comfort her as amemori of Meda and she did not want her to be sore. Lucy continued to live with Meda's family for a year after he died. While this marked the point where she would be free to marry again, Emmee said that her family did not want to push her away and always wanted her to know that she was a sister. As they were intended, her actions marked Lucy as her sister, rather than *ravasa*, conveying the love expressed of kin bonds beyond genealogical boundaries.

'Bad Deaths'

Despite the importance of mourning rituals, sometimes even the love of kin was not sufficient to transform the dead. Hocart (1922) remarks that some *auvana* never made the trip to Ove if they had a 'bad death.' Although they may also be identified as ancestors, people who have suffered 'bad deaths' are believed to remain as wandering spirits. In particular, people who have been murdered, women who have died in childbirth, and those who committed adultery or were jealous of their spouses were all seen as bad spirits, dangerous and capable of causing a reoccurrence of their misfortune in the lives of the living (Hocart 1922: 261). If a person died falling out of a nut tree, it was believed that either they had been targeted by a malicious spirit or were being punished for some unknown wrong that they had kept hidden. Their soul is thought to be knocked out upon hitting the ground, requiring proper ritual to restore it to their body. If the soul was unable to be restored, the spirit of the person who died from the fall would be blamed for the future falls of others. Women who died in childbirth were also believed to cause other women to die in the same way. Such spirits are sometimes called *ruqe ziolo* (bad, evil or troublesome spirits), because they become as dangerous and volatile as the non-human spirits who cause harm (Figure 6). *Ruqe ziolo* can cause mischief, sickness or even death

by physically colliding with people on the road or by targeting them and causing them to become sick.

Similar beliefs in 'bad deaths' are can be found in Asia. Heonik Kwon (2006) explores the role of displaced spirits in Ha My and My Lai after the mass killings of the Vietnam War. Vietnamese distinguish the 'good death' as a death at home. A 'bad death' literally translates as 'to die in the street' and includes dying alone without family to grieve, dying violently, or dying accidentally (rather than fatefully). These distinctions typically marked spatial divisions between wandering ghosts in the street (who were unknown or who had died a bad death) and ancestors in the home (relatives who had died a good death at home). However, the slaughter of an entire village population in their village does not constitute death at home. Kwon argues that with the mass killing of nearly eighty percent of the village of Ha My, traditional distinctions between the sanctity of the home and the profanity of the street were rendered meaningless. Much like how Bilua spirits seemed to move from the bush into the village after the earthquake, so in Vietnam, ghosts seemed to be moving from the margins of the village to the interior spaces of the village homes, and people did not know how to distinguish between ancestors and wandering ghosts.

Spirits and Place: The Boundedness of Supernatural beings

The repeated sightings of spirits in Maravari symbolized the disordered state that ensued after the earthquake, when people retreated to live in the bush and the supernatural roamed the coastal village. This unusual reversal of places reveals the association of spirits with particular physical spaces that mark their separation from the world of the living. At the same time, it mirrors the emplacement of particular groups by representing security, stability and moral order.

The negotiation of liminal spaces – such as the bush, coast, river and land boundaries – carry memories of past experiences and events, which are reflected in the presence of ancestors and other supernatural beings. These associations are reflective of Bilua belongings as they are of moral boundaries associated with accepted practices and behaviours. Moreover, the 'forgetting' or disrespecting of these spaces enhances the social disorder attributed them, paralleling other aspects of dislocation, such as loss of knowledge, modernization and change.

The association of spirits with particular locations also identifies them as markers of place, and of events such as migrations, war and death. The movement and placing of supernatural beings frequently mirror people's own, since kin groups are believed to have brought certain spirits with them when they arrived on Vella; their placement marks claims to territory and stories of arrival and alliance. The idea of boundedness creates a context where people can more safely interact with them by adhering to set rules and guidelines mirroring common respect and avoidance relationships with chiefs and kin.

Spirits are often associated with place.[17] In the Bilua village of Uzaba, local stories describe that when Kubonava people came from Choiseul, they brought with them a spirit called Jijo. When they came ashore, they carved a *beku* (totem) out of wood that they placed at the mouth of the Uzaba River, looking out to the sea, as a marker of protection and of their presence there. Originally, there was a strict taboo for women, who were forbidden to walk in front of the totem or to swim in the area – similar taboo behaviour

[17] *Ziolo* were often said to have been brought with certain lineages from other islands when they came to settle on Vella, and were 'put' in specific areas central to the immigrating group. Occasionally, stories are told of *ziolo* from Malaita, Shortlands, or Marovo who are introduced to cause trouble with landholding lineages. While they are too powerful to be dealt with through local means, another spirit from that area can be 'imported' to rouse the offending one (although again, these can not actually be destroyed, only 'put' somewhere where they can do less harm). In one example from the village of Kuava, a local spirit (*lenio buru* – 'tongue eater') was said to work in tandem with a Rendovan spirit brought by migrants to warn locals of invaders and to begin the counterattack: this example seems to be to be reflective of the obligations of incoming lineages to their landholding hosts.

demanded for chiefs and male kin with whom they shared respect relationships. Although the original was destroyed, the spirit was said to have chosen a chief to carve another, 5½ feet tall out of *vivinene* wood and decorated with *bokolo*. Referring to Jijo as the 'god' of Uzaba village, Woodley notes that this first statue was broken, and the death of the offender soon followed, believed to be the revenge of the spirit. Nut trees were also planted beside the river in appeasement (2002: 349–350). As borders of territory are said to follow river, ridge and valley (Chapter Four), placing Jijo's *beku* by the river,[18] at the border of Kubonava land, was a marker of his protection of the boundary, facing outward toward the sea to advise those approaching from the coast.

It is also significant that stories of such spirits are often consistent with those of historical ancestors in regards to the negotiation, recognition and respect of territory. Prior to Christianity, safe travel was difficult, and migrating groups were highly dependent on the generosity of the people through whose lands they travelled. Immigrants landing by canoe quickly fled the exposure of the coast and headed inland. Without compensating local chiefs with shell valuables, they could be killed outright for trespassing. However, showing proper respect for landoholders could often result in the use of usufructuary land for gardens and settlement.

Similarly, contemporary Biluans strongly believe that travelling through foreign territory makes people vulnerable to attack from foreign spirits.[19] *Ziolo* are said to distinguish *omadeuma maba* ('same' people) from *edoloma maba* ('different' people) by smell. When travelling on foot from village to village, I would ideally travel with a 'person of the place' to intercede and offer protection from harm. In addition, I was often advised to carry a 'passport' or 'ticket'– a green leaf called *tevalili*, the smell of which can

[18] Woodley suggests his spirit was *in* the river.

[19] As I describe in Chapter Seven, elders often equate the greatness of ancestral chiefs with how far they were able to travel without being accosted.

disguise the smell of a ‘different’ person (this is the same plant used to ‘sweep’ the spirit of a man out of a house after he has died). If a spirit was to hear language characteristics of elsewhere,[20] they would attack, causing sickness in the traveller. As I will later describe, this was the explanation given for an illness I came down with after travelling through a particularly dangerous section of Vella coastline, which had been a site of intense warfare during both headhunting times and World War II.

Much like kin groups, spirits carry an association with place and do not seem to easily travel, except in times of chaos and change, when they may appear ‘unbound’ or wild. Although they can rarely be destroyed, they can be moved out of an area or relocated to a different territory (commonly in the deep bush, or in certain types of trees, by *kastom* men who possess such abilities).

While stories of spirits may parallel the historical movements of people, at other times it is not always straightforward to determine the difference between human and spirit actors. In a very early interview where I asked Rimu to talk about Vella deities prior to Christianity, he named three: Aubangara, Variatu and Pitubanara. Many months later, while discussing other topics with Lekasa Vivian Maeke of Sabora (who shared Rimu’s heritage in Kaneporo *toutou*), he identified Variatu and Pitubanara as being Kaneporo chiefs. Pitubanara, he claimed, was another name for the first Buta, the namesake of Rimu’s adopted grandfather, David Buta Apo, from whom he claims his rights as chief.

Similar overlap and frequent confusion between historical figures and spirits was revealed in Maeke’s own telling of a *kastom* story, which he told me twice over a few days. In the story, members of Sorezaru *toutou* were searching for land to settle. The first Buta, Lekasa Kaneporo, told them to come with him and ask permission from four Miqa

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[20] For example, words characteristic of dialectical differences in Bilua, such as *puli/pui* for ‘no’ and *meala/maeva* to refer to ‘three or more people.’

chiefs (a now extinct lineage from whom Kaneporo claimed land rights). Several days later, Maeke altered this story, telling me that these were not chiefs but devol, likely *beku*, which Maeke called *sarube* (a type of bush spirit, but that also translates directly as 'crazy'). These *beku* were carved to represent the deceased chiefs of another lineage from which Kaneporo claimed rights to make decisions over land. As *beku*, Maeke said they only had very small mouths, which made it hard for them to talk, although as he explained, "they make a different kind of speech that we cannot hear." Only Buta, as representative of Miqa rights, could hear their talk and speak for them in granting the Sorezaru travellers rights to settle on the land.[21]

When I later asked Rimu about this story, he said that it originated in a land dispute involving Sorezaru, where two chiefs described these *sarube* as actual chiefs of Miqa in order to legitimize their rights to land in the area. He heard this story from his adopted grandfather, likely around the late 1940s (Rimu was born in 1934, Apo died in 1952). He went on to tell me the meaning of the names of these chiefs/devol, which were more indicative of trouble–making spirits than the departed chiefs of a founding Vella lineage.

Regardless of its origin and interpretations, the story illustrates how the ambiguity of spirits and ancestors makes them useful media for illustrating belonging, land rights or moral ideologies. However, they can also be employed as a means of social control. Stories of ancestors and spirits can perpetuate ideas of physical, social and moral boundaries and be employed in situations such as land claims disputes, the sanctioning of foreigners to safely work in traditionally sacred areas such as shrine sites, or explaining the cause of natural disasters, such as the earthquake. The intervention (or non-intervention)

[21] This is consistent with other testimonies that describe the inability to talk as one of the most consistent qualities of devol. In rare cases where devol talk is heard, it is disembodied and appears to come out of the air. Often devol take their names from their ability to make noise to attract attention (by banging tree trunks, their chests, etc.).

of supernatural beings transforms these scenarios into meaning-making events. As with the four Miqa chiefs, quite often these spirits are embedded in the landscape, which becomes a memory marker for the creation of sacred spaces and moral ideologies.

The Bush

The relationships and oppositions represented in the analysis of ancestors and spirits carry relevance across Melanesia, echoing those between foreign and local, change and stability, and perceptions of malevolence and benevolence. Their associations with 'place' are frequently reflective of the relationships between bush and coastal communities, a common representation of the changes and different ways of life that are inherent in Melanesian communities, particularly since the contact period, symbolically the heathen and those who have embraced Christianity (Hviding 1996; McDougall 2004; Akin 1996).[22] These geographical distinctions of difference are characteristic of most of the Solomon Islands where all major islands consist of a mountainous interior and thin coastal plain (Miller 1980: 461), with villages directed outwards towards the sea. People residing in the bush (*siqo*), such as the Kwaio of Malaita, have a reputation of being "backward, violent and dangerous" among other Malaitans and Solomon Islanders (Akin 1996). Frequently without education, western medical care or economic development, they are depicted as resistant to modernization, favouring traditional medicines and ancestral beliefs. In contrast, many coastal communities have embraced Christianity and established relationships with foreign traders and missionaries, becoming more adaptable to change and the incorporation of foreign food, economy and ideas. Within New Georgia, Hviding notes that despite the village transition to the coast throughout Marovo Lagoon, the

[22] In her investigation of the Indo-Fijian communities of Suva, Trnka (2010) describes a similar distinction between the civilization and development of the city and the constant threat of a wild and encroaching jungle.

dichotomy between ‘people of the coast’ and ‘people of the bush’ is based on land ownership, generating a social and cultural divide on which is founded the basis for intermarriage and exchange (1996: 50). Hocart also comments on this, remarking on the ‘contempt’ with which salt water people regarded bush people, who had a reputation for laziness, adultery and tendency not to wash (ms. n.d.c: 1). These outlooks find expression in local stories in which bushmen are represented in the stupidity of the ogre and salt-water people by the quick wit and resourcefulness of the coast-dwelling *kezoko.*[23]

In Bilua, which has long been composed of outward-looking communities actively engaged in travel, trade and foreign raiding, the coast/bush dichotomy has a historical context, representative of the coming of Christianity, when people came down from the bush settlements to create coastal communities often centred around the Church. Paradoxically, the bush has alternated between being a place of safety and danger at different points in Bilua history. Prior to pacification in 1899, most communities lived deep in the bush, keeping a watchful eye on the coast and fearful of the sea-faring raiders approaching by canoe. The tremendous display of British power represented in the destruction of 200 war canoes in Vella Gulf symbolized the end of the intense period of headhunting and raiding that had flourished since the 1880s, paving the way for the arrival of missionaries in Roviana in 1902 and in Bilua two years later. However, it is the missionary arrival, not pacification, that is remembered throughout New Georgia as the catalyst for the end of headhunting and the end of the ‘time of darkness’ and beginning of the ‘time of light’ (see Dureau 2001). While the alleviated fear of attack encouraged people to descend to the coast, as local missionaries made their way to settlements, communities began to form around the centring of the Church.

[23]*Kezoko* are spirits that have the body of a person and the head of a frigate bird. They are often appealed to for assistance in fishing**.**

This cycle reappeared when the Japanese landed on Vella in 1943, with many people again retreating into the bush to hide from the Japanese and staying for up to two years before returning to the coast (the only missionary to remain, Rev. Silvester, was hidden in a cave in the bush against discovery by the Japanese until he could be rescued by American troops.) The presence of American troops during World War II and the good relations Bilua people developed with them also increased interest in foreign goods. This was also a time of increased coastal development, with American soldiers building the airfield in Barakoma, bridges across rivers, and a long road extending from Vonunu all the way to Lambu Lambu in the north. While the airfield has fallen out of use and the bridges have been destroyed by typhoons, the World War II road is still the strongest feature of the Bilua and Sirubae coastline, distinguishing it from northern villages of Dovele and Iriqila, which still rely on bush paths and canoe as the main avenues of transportation. Consequently, the coast carries associations with development and modernization; the bush, with antiquity and backwardness.

Today, the absence of people makes the bush a prime place for hiding misdeeds. To 'run away to the bush' (*siqokale*) is synonymous with 'to go crazy,' lose all sense of responsibility to kin and community and abandon the civility and rules associated with village communities. Young people frequently use the bush to meet for sexual liaisons, to drink or to smoke pot. People who have been caught in illicit activity in the village will frequently ranawae (to run away; to escape) to the safety of the bush to escape repercussions from relatives and chiefs, staying there until anger dies down or following the elaborate web of bush paths to another community to stay with *tamania* or other kin who will offer them protection.

Although most people have a good knowledge of bush paths, sometimes 'losing the way' carried more sinister implications. The bush behind Maravari was supposed to be the

home of *sarube*: spirits who made people ‘mental,’ causing them to forget their way in the bush and leading them astray. Some said that people were known to wander aimlessly without their wits until they eventually came out at the Oula River on the other side.

Other ‘Socially Uncolonized Spaces’

Although understandings of the bush as the home of spirits are prevalent throughout much of New Georgia (e.g. McDougall 2004; Hviding 1996), perhaps it is more correct to say that spirits inhabit liminal areas, or the “socially uncolonized spaces” around and between communities (Levy, Mageo and Howard 1996: 20). While the bush factors largely into this and is a common Vella metaphor for uncivilized and immoral behaviour, it can also include long stretches of the Bilua coastline. Appeals to ancestors and spirits frequently occurred along coastal reefs and shorelines, themselves bordering liminal spaces, with many spirits said to inhabit the water, such as *paro*, a luminescent jellyfish-type spirit,[24] and water *sarube*, which made the seaside a dangerous place to visit at nighttime.

Many coastal spirits are the remnants of warfare and conflict as the coast was also the meeting point between seaborne raiders from the sea and inland inhabitants. Even when attacking from elsewhere on Vella, raiders usually came by canoe, making the coast the location of first sighting and attack. As such, spirits were frequently ‘placed’ in trees, rocks and inlets along the shoreline to warn local settlements and help scare off intruders, such as the instance of a tree at the mouth of the Maravari river (Chapter Four). When the Japanese invaded Vella Lavella in 1943, the coast once again became the site of violence and bloodshed. The coastline between Kuava and Niaravae north of Maravari became the

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[24] Hocart gives an account of *paro* on Simbo which illustrates the multiplicitious identity of *tomate* / *ziolo*. As he notes, "[A *paro*] was said to be a *tomate*, yet he was once said not to be a *tomate*; he was also said not to be the spirit of a dead man. He has long teeth; he may be seen as a light [...] that comes over the sea, lands, and goes inland" (1922: 270). In Bilua, *paro* were generally associated with the sea, but their lights could travel, luring people to the water from inland.

site of battle when a Japanese warship was bombed in Vella Gulf and dozens of Japanese soldiers swam for land. Many elders describe how some men waded into the water with axes and knives, cutting them down before they reached the shore. The stretch of coastline between Kuava and Eleoteve was considered particularly dangerous for this reason, although the Kuava United Church exorcised spirits every few years through prayer.

Later in my fieldwork, I travelled this stretch of coastal road frequently, at one point spending a month in Kuava. When I returned to Maravari, I became quite ill with a prolonged high fever. I was told that the reason for this was that I had taken too many liberties on the road – travelling by myself, without 'a person of the place' or a tikit (ticket – a *tevalili* leaf) to protect me from local spirits. Being a 'different person,' I had been attacked by lingering spirits of those killed during warfare. I was then strongly encouraged to stay close to Maravari or at least within Bilua, where it was 'safe.'

As Fabian (1999) argued for the explorers in colonial Africa, the recognition of the past is often a projection reflecting the moral and emotional state of those who remember. However, in this case and in Kwon's (2006) account of Ha My, it is equally associated with memory fragments of the violent events associated with place. Liminal spaces become more dangerous because their history and meaning are only partially understood. Forgotten spirits become 'wild,' roaming in dark places, much as people who do not respect the boundaries of kin and community that have been set for them.

Thus, despite their intangibility, both spirits and ancestors have their own spatial and existential belonging alongside the living. In the process of remembering and forgetting, ancestors and spirits become mere traces of their living forms, becoming benevolent and godlike or mischievous and vengeful. While proper mourning rituals may afford people a means to transform the dead, ultimately these changed spirits cannot be

controlled so long as they continue to reflect the moral and social circumstances of the living.

When people perceive their own lives as being threatened by moral or physical crisis, misfortune is projected upon the equally intangible spirit entities which populate the boundaries of social life. As with the handling of ancestors and spirits, the maintenance of order in the community represents the delicate balance of order between different groups of people sharing spaces. The concern and guidance interpreted through the ancestral presence of Nathan Kalepitu after the earthquake represents a dissatisfaction with the ability of contemporary chiefs to govern and maintain the necessary order between different village groups. While it was their role to placate ancestral spirits of the past by mending disputes between local groups and ensuring rules were followed, the position of chief has frequently undergone different transitions, inconsistent with its symbolism as an avatar of *kastom* and ancestral continuity.

CHAPTER SEVEN – CONSTRUCTING CHIEFS: FOREIGN AND LOCAL RECOGNITION OF AUTHORITY

On October 25th, 2008, the night before I was about to depart at the end of my fieldwork, Lionel Alex was sworn in as the *Lekasa* of Wagina *toutou*. His *papu papu* (chiefly inauguration) was a momentous event, attended by people and chiefs from across Vella. Much of the village, consisting of his extended kin, had spent weeks in preparing for the ceremony and the feast that followed. By itself, the scale of the event was unusual. Wagina held no special status in the village, being neither one of the landholding lineages and only one of twelve lineages represented in the village House of Chiefs. Yet, on the day of Alex's inauguration, he was honoured by a wealth of shell money, given as tribute by village chiefs and leaders across Vella. This was only a stepping stone to Alex's rise to power; in 2010 he ran for Federal Parliament as an independent candidate, and was elected as the Member for Southeast Vella. Soon after, he was appointed to the position of Minister of Rural Development and Indigenous Affairs under the government of Prime Minister Danny Phillip. He was subsequently reappointed to this position under the government of Prime Minister Gordon Darcy Lilo.

As a leader imbued with the traditional knowledge of his ancestors, as well as being politically adept, an astute businessman and having a keen sense of development needs of the rural community, Alex's rise to power is emblematic of both the continuities and changes of the chiefly institution in the Solomon Islands and wider Melanesia. A young man, several decades junior to the other chiefs on the village council, he also exemplifies "the rise of indigenous moneyed elites" (Martin 2007: 111) and the paradoxes this presents in the rural village environment.

At different points in this thesis, I have asserted the idealization of chiefs as loving, both abstractly presented in the romanticization of chiefs of the past through their embracing of foreign lineages on the island (Chapter Two), and personified in the more recent figure of Chief Nathan Kalepitu, who allowed the construction of the Methodist Church on lineage land (Chapter Five and Six). As people of generosity and compassion, this has been one of the ways in which chiefs serve as “avatars of *kastom*,” simultaneously emblematic and constructive of perceived customary values (Feinburg 2002: 9). Because of this, chiefs in the present are frequently subjects of scrutiny, and the focus of envy, fear, resentment, and, at times, ambivalence.

In this chapter, my focus shifts from the idealized notion of chiefs to an examination of the changing ways in which leaders ascend to their positions through local and foreign acknowledgement of their status and authority. Firstly, I look at the different ways in which, throughout history, pre-Christian chiefs, colonial headmen, village councils and MPs have each negotiated different forms of recognition to augment their power, illustrating the diverse ways in which Melanesian leadership has adapted to address the changing faces of the state.

Secondly, within the changes of this 150 year span of Bilua leaders, there is continuity in that there have always been certain individuals who have been noted for their ambition, their abilities to challenge and demand recognition above their contemporaries documented both locally and in the historical record. As I shall show with regards to these select leaders, recognition is the acknowledgement of, if not clientship, then subordinate status. Such individuals demanded, and were given, the power to negotiate on behalf of other chiefs by virtue of their connections with traders, missionaries and (in the present) foreign developers. Here, I focus on the examples of two Bilua chiefs – pre-Christian chief, Maghratulo, and current MP for Southeast Vella, Lionel Alex to illustrate how select

leaders come to power by demanding and promising recognition, generating wealth and power external to their lineages by controlling access to wealth, and the use of coercion and promise.

What's in a Name?

Throughout Melanesia, the title of 'chief' has come to be applied loosely to any leader acknowledged through their association with tradition (White and Lindstrom 1997: 10). However, chiefs vary from place to place, and are at the same time the iconic representatives for the continuity of *kastom* and its agents for change, orchestrating significant ideologies of community and belonging, be it locally, regionally, or on the national stage.

Colonial fascination with locating chiefly authority has influenced the expansion of the term 'chief' in local usage (White and Lindstrom 1997). While leaders have always existed, the Euro-American conceptualization of 'tribal' polities led by a single, dominant, autocratic male has sometimes created a misapprehension of consistency in the role of a chief, and in the lineality of local chiefly descent. White (1991) argues that early traders, missionaries and colonial officers were inclined to label anyone who stepped forward and exhibited authority as 'chief.' Hocart notes that the title *mbangara* was frequently applied to a man "who is not really chief but is only a descendant of chiefs." However, he also included mention of the title extended to "an exalted elder," "a descendant of chiefs," "a commoner holding prestige with the white men," and "a man who had frightened some people into obedience by means of his 'devildevil'" (n.d.a: 1). In all cases, a chief is someone whose authority is recognized by and extends over some or many of those around him. In Bilua, chiefly systems vary from community to community and from village to

village, depending on the history of that territory, and the entanglements within and between its local lineages.

Despite Allan's (1957) assertion that 'traditional' leaders would fall into decline, local leaders still draw on the authority of customary titles and customary measures to legitimize their power. On Vella, there has been a marked increase in the number of leaders holding the title of *lekasa* since the 1950s (McKinnon 1972; Berg 2008). Chiefs achieve their status through the successful orchestration of inheritance, merit and coercion – the combination of which serve to establish their authority. Moreover, MPs and government officials increasingly exercise their influence and access to resources to legitimize their leadership through association with *kastom*, becoming lineage chiefs in their home communities. This suggests that the title of chief bestows a level of local validation that other official titles cannot supply.

Early anthropological analysis of Pacific traditional leaders emphasized two ideal types, distinguishing between Polynesian chieftainship as an ascribed status of a singular leader, defined by wealth and stature, and Melanesian big men as entrepreneurial individuals who secure influence over their kin and neighbours through astute management and economic generosity (Sahlins 1963; Lindstrom 1982). This oversimplification was found to downplay the crossover between the two models, and the ways in which chiefs negotiated their status in relation to changing circumstances, even "merg[ing] their traditionalist status with the legal bureaucratic authority of state office" (White and Lindstrom 1997: 9, 11).

In this regard, White and Lindstrom's 1997 edited volume investigates the role that foreign parties played in affecting island politics or the entwining of traditional and contemporary (often salaried) forms of leadership. In the mid 20th century, particularly ambitious individuals required both local and foreign acknowledgement of their authority

in order to act as middlemen of the state. During this time period, local leadership was influenced by a hierarchy of colonial titles such as headmen and district headmen, as well as police and judges carrying out a range of administrative functions, overseeing justice in the village and region (Jackson 1978; Bennett 1987; White and Lindstrom 1997; WPHC Archives). In many ways, these roles and titles are representations, both constitutive and advancing authority through association and access to foreign influence. As I show, some of the most remembered Bilua leaders have been individuals who have successfully negotiated the endorsement of foreign offices to further their traditional local standing, or vice versa.

Increasingly, scholars have emphasized the significance of recognition in creating and validating positions of authority, particularly in the face of changing and contemporary forms of 'traditional' leadership (Keesing 1968, 1997; White 1991; White and Lindstrom 1997). White and Lindstrom argue that in many places, chiefly status was "emergent, fashioned in transactions with outsiders who had come to trade, missionize, and otherwise, colonize" (1997: 8). They investigated discourses which constructed, validated and empowered chiefs as customary, looking at their status as subject to ongoing revision (1997: 6). Thus, in order to understand the continuity of their office, and the role that they play in Melanesian societies, I examine the ways in which Bilua chiefs emerge based on their recognition by others, and the ways in which people and chiefs assert and realize their responsibilities to one another in response to changing circumstances.

Local and Foreign Recognition – What is a Chief in Bilua?

The Bilua title of *lekasa* (chief) is used to describe a recognized lineage or community leader. However, occasionally, it is used informally, to describe a person of status who has been sanctioned by *kastom* or appointment. While all Bilua leaders are historically

situated, and frequently glossed as 'chiefs' in contemporary memory, the extent of their influence – whether over a hamlet, a region or an island – is often a source of disagreement and uncertainty, varying according to the motives, proximity and affiliation of the teller. Historically, chiefs tend to be remembered for their generosity in allowing people to settle on land, for their role in educating people on issues of *kastom*, for 'straightening' problems and restoring order in situations of conflict, for representing the personal and land interests of their lineage, and for helping to initiate development initiatives serving the broader community.

In present-day Bilua, 'big man' is more of a descriptor than a title, used in reference to a respected man of influence, who may or may not be an acknowledged chief. The two terms are not mutually exclusive. Oliver notes that, to be effective, a *lekasa* also had to be a big man (*raokoraeko*) whose position rested on his ability […] to "mobilize his relatives, friends and neighbours to help him give feasts" (Oliver 1953: 106 cited in 1972: 26).[1] Big men are recognizable by their tenacity, presenting little doubt of their superior status if simply by their awe-inspiring ability to demand and receive obedience, their influence and their potential to demand and accomplish change, usually in their extended family or community interests. Such individuals stand in contrast to many existing holders of the formal chiefly office, who were often locally described as "men who know nothing" (Chapter Three). The range of Bilua leadership terms are outlined in Table 4.

[1] The Bilua term *raokoraeko* has generally been replaced by the Pijin term bikman.

Tanala	Respect term for a married man, plausibly a Vella equivalent for Roviana *palambatu* (infrequent)
Lekasa	Chief, recognized leader of a lineage or community (used formally and sometimes informally, to describe a group leader who has been sanctioned by *kastom* or appointment)
Bigman or Bik man (Pij.)	A person of influence, such as a businessman, MP, or chief, able to command resources and obligations, yet whose status is not necessarily associated with the formal leadership of a particular group (informal- typically used to refer to people in the absence of another formal title, or in reference to their accomplishments).
Onorabol (Pij.)	Eng. root Honourable, from the formal term of address for a Member of Parliament in Westminister system governments (formal)
Aikovakova	This term serves as a contemporary Vella gloss of Paramansif (Pij. – Paramount Chief). Also translated as 'king' (Methodist Mission c1960) (dated, infrequent)
Sepele	Fighting man, second to the *aikovakova* (dated, infrequent)
Taiza meqora	A female chief or the daughter of a chief (has also been used to describe any child of a chief, regardless of gender, e.g. McKinnon 1972)
Matuma reko	A big woman, often distinguished by the wearing of shell armbands (*bokolo*)
(M)bangara	The Roviana, Marovo, Simbo, Kolombangara and Ranonggan word for 'chief;' the Bilua word for God

Table 4 - Bilua Terms of Leadership and Authority

McKinnon (1972: 26) describes Vella chiefs as similar to Roviana *palambatu*, or hamlet leaders, revealing an implicit comparison with the greatness of Roviana *mbangara*, as the model of New Georgian chieftainship (Chapter Two). [2] For archaeologists, the hierarchal Roviana chiefdom, evidenced in oral histories and the material record of the island, has presented a standard against which other leadership 'systems' in Western Solomons are gauged (Sheppard and Walter 2000; Sheppard, Walter and Nagaoka 2000).

[2] On Roviana, Hocart's informants insisted that a chief was always leader of a district, not of individual hamlets. However he observed that there was no 'supreme chief' in each district or lesser chiefs under his command: "there may exist among the chiefs inequalities of rank and influence, and prestige, but there is no hierarchy" (mss n.d.a: 3). *Palambatu* seems more akin to the Bilua word *tanala* 'married man.' This word is no longer used, except as a respect term for 'married man', however there is archival evidence that it was the title of hamlet leaders (who are now frequently remembered as early 'chiefs'), in pre-Christian settlements were small hamlets of 5-9 people based around the family unit**.**

This has been complicated by foreign fascination with headhunting, revealing the standard with which notorious headhunting chiefs such as Soga, Ingava and Gau captured the colonial imagination with their 'bigness' and the length of their reach (Nicholson 1924; Edge-Partington 1907). As contemporary chiefs often compared to these powerful predecessors, perhaps it is not surprising that locals and some academics (e.g. McKinnon 1972) describe the chieftainship as in decline, or at least comparatively 'less great' than it was believed in the past.

While the wealth of the headhunting era inflated the grandeur and status of chiefs, so too was it diminished by the Pax Britannica (Dureau 2001). Since pacification, local leaders have had to negotiate the muddying of local and external authority, learning to balance different systems which they often exploited to their own and their communities' advantage. Colonial and local authority titles were intermingled, and frequently exaggerated and confused, even when they were used to apply to a wide variation of statuses (Table 4). Rev. John Goldie's association as *aikovakova*, or 'paramount chief' in Bilua, indicated his status as protector of Vella people against the punitive colonial government. Even young people's jesting comments that they were not subject to customary prohibitions against intra-lineage sex because they belonged to the 'tribe of the Queen' (Chapter Eight) serves as a commentary on representations of authority and how they are adapted and modified in Bilua societies. The use of chiefly titles and language to reference powerful colonial figures and indicate their authority over local peoples reveals not so much a diminution of power as its redirection. When I asked Chief Rimu about the term *aikovakova*, my question was in an attempt to understand his higher status relative to other village chiefs. In this context, he readily identified himself as *aikovakova*. Chief Sariki, as Head of the House of Chiefs, often enforced chiefly decisions because of Rimu's infirmity, and was 'like' his *sepele*, he said, fighting with words rather than with violence.

For example, when a visiting Methodist mission group visited the village, Sariki, not Rimu was presented to them as village chief.[3] Articulate, strong and proficient in English, he presented a more publically impressive leader than the infirm and elderly Paramount chief.

While both *aikovakova* and *sepele* had fallen out of use, both Rimu and Sariki were more than happy to adopt them if it helped me to understand their own placement in the village hierarchy. The lack of clarity among foreigners as to who in fact was the recognized leader of a lineage or village caused some confusion for early traders. Given this, it was not difficult to imagine early traders seeking out a chief, or the inconsistency of representations describing Vella chieftainship – as patrilineal (McDougall 1997), matrilineal (Rivers 1914), or traditionally matrilineal but subject to Choiseulese influence (Allen 1957; Mackinnon 1972). Yet, even before Christianization, the presence of foreigners created an environment in which local men could exploit opportunities to establish their elevated status.

Physical and Social Mobility

While inter-island mobility has been a defining characteristic of New Georgian history, it was often only achieved through force or through the goodwill of those with local influence. Warfare made mobility between different places problematic, particularly along exposed coastal areas, leaving individuals open to attack not just from spirits but from members of different *toutou*. Hamlet 'chiefs' or *tanala*, may not have had extensive influence beyond their own families, but opportunities to accumulate wealth through raiding stimulated some ambitious personalities. War canoes were symbols of power, not just because they were a means to wealth, but because they represented the ability of

[3] I found this surprising, particularly as Rimu was also Methodist, yet was only introduced to the mission group as one of a number of names on a list of elderly shut-ins who the group was to visit and pray for.

powerful individuals to extend their reach to achieve wealth beyond their own means, due in part to having the local support to back it (White 1991). As one of Hocart's informants described on Munda,

> The black man's chief is not chief in a hamlet; but in the whole country: he goes to Vella Lavella and is there chief; he goes to Simbo, Ganongga and there again is chief (Hocart n.d.a 4-5).

This comment was not intended literally, suggesting chieftainship as an extensive and far-reaching position. Rather, beyond their own jurisdictions, chiefly status depended on *baere* relationships, the connections and alliances between chiefs. Bennett calls the chiefs of Simbo and New Georgia a "fellowship of equals," among themselves they gave mutual respect and respected each other's wishes (1987: 91). While a chief only had subjects who took orders directly from him in his own district, his wishes were generally complied with by other *mbangara* all over (Hocart n.d.a: 5). During the pre-Christian era, the ability of chiefs to command raids with the participation of people from different areas depended on the network of chiefly alliances of which he was a part. It was through these same networks that Christianity was spread, as indicated by local stories of the introduction of Methodism on Vella. The alliances between Ingava's nephews and Vonunu chiefs enabled the introduction of Christianity as a relatively peaceful process, because people followed 'wat sif hem talem' (what the chief told them) (Chapter Two). People obeyed chiefs because they offered protection against raiders, repaid labour through support in feasting and bridewealth and negotiated on behalf of their followers in times of difficulty (Jackson 1978; Bennett 1987),

The ability to travel widely and command tribute and resources from a wide group of people was as much a symbol of power historically as it is for contemporary big men who create obligations, using them to propel themselves into political positions in the provincial and national governments. The recognition of promising leaders can begin from

an early age, and it is quite common for scarce resources to be channelled towards the schooling costs of particular individuals who showe ambition and skill (Corbett and Wood 2013). Schooling elsewhere in the Solomons, as well as opportunities overseas often not only lead to educational advancement but the opportunity to improve English language skills, and develop insight into business and foreign affairs, skills that were very useful in local development and government.

Magharatulo – 'Man Wakabaot Nowan Save Holem'

This association of mobility, access and power is significant to understanding one of the best documented Vella chiefs in historical records. Both Jackson (1978) and Bennett (1987) draw on official correspondence from the WPHC Archives to describe the Bilua chief, Maghratulo (sometimes referred to as Maghara Tulo, or simply, Tulo). Maghratulo was a man of substantial influence and reknown in Bilua during the second half of the 19th century. A member of Liqe Liqe *toutou*, Tulo came to Bilua from Java as a young man, settling at Repasa, a small settlement between Maravari and Uzaba, currently home of his descendant, and present *Lekasa* Liqe Liqe, Lewis Aivekera. While his reasons for moving to Bilua are unknown, Tulo had already established significant wealth and status in Java, arriving at Repasa by canoe, as his followers came by land. This status was a likely product of an already established relationship with European traders, with whom he worked with from an early age (Jackson 1978: 108).[4] Certainly, Bilua was significantly more accessible to local trade routes than the comparatively isolated and less populated Northern Vella (Chapter Two).

[4] There is no archival record of Tulo before he came to Bilua, and it is outside the scope of Bilua local memory (which like lineage origin myths, begins with his arrival).

In the 1880s, Maghratulo gained substantial power in Bilua through extensive feasting, organizing expeditions for headhunting and to acquire tortoiseshell for traders – the profits from which were rechanneled into financing local feasts and increasing local support. He actively spoke on behalf of local elders in mediation with traders, who favoured him because of their established relationships with him and his fluency in Pijin (Jackson 1978; Bennett 1987: 88). Aivekera also called Magharatulo a paramansif (paramount chief), but was the only person I encountered who did so. Clearly, Tulo's local significance was above his local contemporaries, however as with *taiza meqora* these claims of elevated status were often made by their direct descendants. Consequently, there seems to be no way of knowing for certain the meaning these titles would have had in Bilua at the time of Magharatulo.

Although Bennett (1987: 88) says that Liqe Liqe had no land in Bilua, Aivekera maintains that Repasa was already Liqe Liqe territory, obtained through the marriage of a Liqe Liqe woman to a Kutakabai man. However, Repasa is comparatively small and insignificant in comparison to neighbouring settlements. Bennett argues that Tulo obtained usufructory privileges at Uzaba and the island of Liapari from Sikuni *toutou*. These would have been either accessed or solidified through intermarriage, as Tulo's second wife, Jaule, was a Sikuni woman from the inland settlement of Varase, and daughter of a local Sikuni chief. At Liapari, he co-ordinated the planting of coconuts with the help of slaves and his local followers, later permitting traders to use its sheltered bay as an anchorage. As testament to his influence, he also later sold the islet of Uzaba to traders, a transaction allowed by the 'real' landholders, because of the proximity of trading it ensured and the guns and trade goods they acquired in exchange (Bennett 1987: 88).

Tulo's first wife, Teborade, was *matuma reko* – a big woman of Java. Through her, Tulo bestowed title on their son, Maderega, establishing him as the founding chief of

Miduku Buru Sabe in Bilua, by gifting him with nine *bokolo* (shell rings), to symbolize the nine *bakisa* required by anyone who would challenge his chieftainship. Maderega married a woman from the landholding lineage of Kubonava, and the two *toutou* still maintain significant influence in the Uzaba and Sabora communities in the present day

Bennett (1987: 88) notes that in combination with feasting, Tulo garnered support for his raids by bolstering local supplies of arms obtained through his trading contacts. However, unlike several contemporary big men to the north, he directed his raids towards Santa Isabel and Choiseul, refusing to fight local groups on Vella – a logical strategy, given that Tulo's status was primarily founded on his abilities as a negotiator between foreign traders and local landowners. It is partly for this reason that Maghratulo is often remembered in local memory as 'man wakabaot nowan save holem' (a man who could walk about unhindered); his extra-lineage alliances and influence on the coast allowing him to travel freely at a time when the topography of warfare often made mobility by land problematic. While it is unknown to what extent he was able to deter raiders, the acquisition of arms allowed Tulo and his followers enough adequate security to plant copra on Liapari Island at a time when most settlements were confined to the relative safety of the bush (Bennett 1987: 88).

In surviving memory, there are no big men of comparable status earlier than Maghratulo. By establishing Maderega as the first Bilua chief of Miduku Buru Sabe, and most likely returning with many Choiseulese slaves during raiding, Tulo expanded migration to the Southeast coast, both from already established Choiseul lineages in Java and directly from Choiseul itself. Leadership before and after Tulo's trade monopoly in Bilua was described by Bilua people as primarily co-operative between big men. His

sister's son and successor, Soso, was one of the three local chiefs to welcome the first Fijian missionaries of the Methodist Mission, ten years after Tulo died (Chapter Two).[5]

Tulo, in this instance, appears an early representative of the external legitimation of power that was later to be extended to some local figures by the state. Martin outlines the conundrum of contemporary Big Men:

> To be 'traditional' Big Men, they have to become business or political leaders in a way that invalidates their Big-Manship, and to become business or political leaders, they have to build local patron-client relations in a way that corrupts their 'modern' leadership positions (Martin 2010: 18).

As Martin's comment suggests, a leader's recognition by the state (Chapter Four) subjects them to both local criticism of 'uncustomary' practices, but at the same time as it grants them the resources to fulfil obligations to their supporters as required by customary leadership. In this regard, chiefly authority is heavily intertwined with colonial and national identity, formative of local interpretations of each.

Colonial Headmen

For twenty years following British Pacification, the role of District Officers (DO) was largely punitive, suppressing local violence and maintaining a presence in the islands against competing missionary factions (Boutilier 1982). Then in 1922, the government established a native tax, establishing and employing a "Native Administration" of village constables and village and district headmen, who were charged with census taking and recording the movements of people in and out of the region (Bennett 1987: 210-212). The

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[5] During fieldwork, I heard very few details of Soso's abilities as a chief. However, drawing on BSIP correspondence, Jackson (1978: 296-297) describes Soso as being raised by and exhibiting many of the qualities of his "uncle Pulo [sic]." Like Tulo, Jackson says Soso was "not a *lekasa* but a big-man who had risen to prominence because of his exploitation of European contacts," and his name also appears on a number of deeds of sale of land, where he acted "as a middleman for others or simply [selling] land that was not his." In 1912, Soso was appointed as a District Headman in Bilua, which, Jackson surmises, was because Tulo was not part of the Mission (despite having welcomed the Methodists to Vella), and had "thus acquired the respect of the District Officer."

job of the District Headman was to tour the villages, ensuring cleanliness, tidiness of houses, inspecting and reporting on the prosperity or disease of gardens, reporting any sickness, recording births, deaths, and marriages, and even coordinating the planting of coconut and ivory-nut trees four days per year on lineage land (Vella Lavella Native Council, 9th November, 1950). Those who refused to clean up the 'interior hygiene of houses' were prosecuted in the Native Court. Unlike the DOs, who changed with some regularity, District Headmen frequently came to have long years of service, providing important sources of information for many of the officers who seldom managed to visit villages more than once or twice during their appointment (Boutilier 1982: 52-53).

The District Headmen of New Georgia were relatively unique in the Solomons in several respects. In most of the Solomons, headmen chosen by the District Officer had no formal standing in their own communities. This was in contrast with New Georgia, where almost all the District headmen were traditional chiefs, afforded respect by other chiefs and their followers (Bennett 1987: 212).[6] At least in the Methodist communities, this seems partially influenced by Mission endorsement, as chiefs worked alongside Goldie, and in return, he recognized their authority in the villages. In Bilua, the majority of chiefly headmen were young, literate Methodists (Bennett 1987), while in Malaita, Keesing emphasizes that Christian Kwaio chiefs employed as headmen were at a severe disadvantage to their pagan counterparts, having ceased customary feasting practices used to foster obligations and acknowledge their supporters (1997). Therein lay the regional colonial government's dilemma: while Christianization was a key part of the colonial model for civility, Goldie's longstanding support of traditionally recognized chiefs during

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[6] Bennett extends this categorization to the District Headmen of the Shortland Islands as well, but contrasts the District Headmen of New Georgia and the Shortland Islands to Guadalcanal, San Cristobal and Malaita, where "placing leaders in authority over other clans imposed an entirely foreign element" (1987: 212).

the punitive years fuelled the ongoing tensions between the Methodist Mission and the colonial government (Chapter Two).

However, the Methodists were not without competition, and while Bennett describes how a locally sanctioned leader was an advantage compared to one selected by the state, these figures were still subject to the regional and religious divides faced by District Headmen. Clashes soon developed internally as a rivalry surfaced between Seventh Day Adventist and Methodist communities, in the recognition of different headmen (Berg 2008).

The first District Headman of the Vella Lavella District Council was a Seventh Day Adventist Dovele man, named Barnabus Bambu, a police officer selected by the DO for his conciliatory and amicable nature and his ability to take direction. While he allegedly had some claim to traditional leadership in his home village among the SDA communities of North Vella, he faced considerable challenges in being accepted as an authority figure by local Methodists. Bambu's son, Abel, described his father as a mild-mannered and just man who took his position seriously; however, his diligence for upholding the DO's orders sometimes got in the way of amicable relationships with other chiefs on Vella.

Bambu was succeeded by Silas Lezutuni, a big chief of Paramata, and one of Nicholson's original followers schooled at the mission school in Roviana. In contrast to Bambu, Lezutuni was described as brash and opinionated. While initially, his nomination as District Headman was refused by the DO because he was "too combative," Lezutuni and his followers persisted, and he eventually acceded to the position shortly before WWII. His ambition soon became apparent, however. In 1946, Lezutuni, already District Headman, was declared the first Paramount Chief of Vella Lavella in a letter he drafted, endorsed by the "ten chiefs of Vella Lavella," who were specifically translated as '*palambatu*' to denote Lezutuni's own superior status (WPHC). He then listed the ten

'community chiefs' and thirteen headmen of Vella. Given that *Aikovakova* (or paramount chieftaincy) was a mission-sanctioned position, Lezutuni's appointment reveals his ability to take advantage of the continued tensions between the colonial government and the Methodist mission, using local support to augment and legitimize his leadership in both governmental and mission realms of power (Chapter Two).

District Councils and the Maravari House of Chiefs

Since WWII and Solomon Islands Independence in 1977, the position of chief has been transformed into a new form of leadership adapting what is accepted to be ancestral custom and the collaborative format of the colonial government. The colonial government brought new opportunities for some leaders to acquire status beyond their own villages by sitting on island and district councils (Simbo, Ranongga and Vella), accountable to the District Commissioner. In the Western Solomons, where colonial rule was more favourably received than elsewhere in the country, these councils evolved as a continuation of the state, as rural communities sought to appropriate state-like procedures and authorities in a bid to be recognized by Provincial and National governments.[7]

The island soon became saturated with village headmen, councillors, District and Associate District Headmen, and other individuals of varying political and policing authority. For those who had multiple leadership roles, understanding the responsibilities of these different posts sometimes created confusion. Titles of President, Vice-President

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[7] By comparison, Keesing (1968, 1997) describes the 'Tuesday's chiefs' of Kwaio, Malaita – lineage representatives who gathered weekly to discuss and 'straighten' principles of custom, which they demanded be legally acknowledged by the colonial state at the end of the Maasina Rule resistance movement. While these men had little jurisdiction outside the context of the meeting house, collectively, they signified opposition and a sign of strength against the colonial government – factors which contributed to much of their power locally (Keesing 1997: 255).

and councillors often overlapped with those of village headmen.[8] In some communities, village chiefs were also village headmen (Appendix III); in others, village headmen also served as councillors on the District council.

In some cases, local big men were assigned titles through the government that did not necessarily correspond to their locally recognized status. In others, the opposite occurred. For instance, while Paramansif Gideon Tolapitu served as a judge in the regional court, he only held the status of councillor on the Vella Lavella Local Council. Similarly, White notes that the instalment of 'Church chiefs' on Isabel was a title frequently conferred upon 'hereditary chiefs' who were ignored by the colonial system, thus enhancing their prestige, at the same time as reinforcing the influence of the mission in villages (1978: 220).

Pointing to the perceived corruption in far-off Honiara, McDougall (2011a) argues that, in the present, if the state is present at all, it is because people in rural villages seek to appropriate it through the perpetuation of chiefly councils. In the 1960s and 1970s, Bilua villages began moving away from single recognized chief and separate 'hamlet chiefs' to a village council of chiefs who served as lineage representatives. Like the colonial system it emulated, these councils had an appointed head, and an appointed secretary taking minutes.

The colonial-appointed title of Maravari 'village headman' was rotated and held by different men over a twenty-year history**.** However, these appointments also established continuity of leadership after Independence. Several village men who now hold the formal post of 'chief' for different lineages have in the past, held the position of village headman,

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[8] As the minutes of a 1970 Vella Lavella Local Council meeting reveal: "Duties for Council members and village headmen: Some members do not realise the duties of the Council members and the village headmen, because in some areas Council members act as village headmen. Clerk to explain their duties" (WPHC Archives).

suggesting extra-lineage positions of leadership were seen as contributing to their authority to lead within the lineage**.** In many ways, the legacy of colonial leadership evolved in a way few district officers could have expected.

While the collaborative format of colonial leadership was maintained in local councils, following Independence, the title of headman and councillor was abandoned at the local level, replaced by the all-encompassing title of 'chief.' This transition does not appear to have been a difficult one. With the end of a foreign-based government, the return to traditional titles such as 'chief' suggests the legitimizing of a *locally* established authority, representative of local kinship groups and grounded in ideologies of *kastom*.

The Maravari Council of Chiefs (now 'House of Chiefs') was first introduced in the 1970s by Tolapitu. Today, the majority of the village lineage chiefs are only the first or second to hold this position. Chiefly representatives of the twelve lineages formally recognized within Maravari village ascend to the position by means of the recognition accorded to them by the original landholders of Kutakabai (Chapter Two). Matrilineage *lekasa* have no hierarchical ranking among themselves, aside from a deputy or 'second' who represents them in absentia. Given that the majority of represented *toutou* hold territory in the island's interior, the primary role of *lekasa* is to represent their people rather than their territory.[9] The two *toutou* that share village land (Sabe and Makavore) have no visibly higher status than the others, except in cases where a direct conflict arises concerning that territory, such as the dispute over the church building (Chapter Five). In creating the village council, Tolapitu was influenced by United Church Rev. Leslie Boseto, who visited numerous villages around Bilua at the time, arguing in support of increased

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[9] Many matrilineage *lekasa* only had a vague understanding of their traditional land, able to point it out on a map and capable of reciting histories that had been passed down rather than being actively engaged with it. This of course changed quite quickly if the *toutou* became involved in logging or other industry where boundaries became symbolic with the exclusivity of revenue.

toutou representation at the village level. While providing increased representation to a large number of lineages represented in an increasing population, these local councils also continued to recognize the hierarchy of leadership initiated by the colonial government, by providing the initial step for negotiations and hearings on extra-lineage matters, before larger matters are brought towards a sub-district meeting of chiefs in the larger region.[10]

The continued authority of traditional chieftainship emphasizes the distinctions of individual *toutou* as social structures, which the colonial government emphasized in order to establish land ownership, registration and entitlement (Chapter Four). This also created new opportunities for capable leaders to emerge by drawing attention to cognatic linkages between them. For example, while his succession as paramansif from his father, Gideon Tolapitu, was described by many as unorthodox and controversial, *Lekasa* Rimu Baesovaki was able to draw on his kin ties to multiple village lineages to establish legitimacy (e.g. Sabe, Kolumbangara, Sikuni, Makavore, and Kaneporo) (Figure 11). His extensive knowledge of these lineage histories, coupled with the status afforded to him as a Court Justice made him a formidable candidate for village chief.

The move towards the establishment of chiefly councils appears to be part of a wider pattern across the Solomons, as individual lineages are moving to negotiate with foreigners for economic usage of their land. Peter Sheppard, who has continued working in rural communities in the Solomons, has commented on the increasing difficulties involved in negotiating permission to work on customary land (personal correspondence, November 2013). A greater number chiefs has meant a greater representation for local interests, but also a rise in the number of land disputes between competing factions over the ownership and control of resources (Chapter Four). Since Independence, these councils have adopted

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[10] For instance, seeking to cut back on the backlog of land dispute cases, the 1985 Local Court Amendment Act mandated a customary chief's hearing prior to being seen by the legal court (White 1997: 229).

a tiered system of addressing land claims and local disputes prior to them being seen by a court of law.

Figure 10 – Maravari House of Chiefs, 2006

While village councils take different forms, the principal is largely the same. McDougall notes that in Pienuna, Ranongga, this council takes the form of the Pienuna Chief's Trust Board. Each council is comprised of a chief and a deputy chief of each of the lineages recognized in the village. They assemble during meetings to discuss *kastom* and village matters, and meeting minutes are recorded by a secretary. While the Maravari House of Chiefs consists entirely of men, women gather on the sidelines to serve as witness to the proceedings, often coming forward with prepared food to share after the meeting is over.

These men are keepers of lineage genealogies, origin stories and other forms of customary knowledge. While it is plausible that proliferation of office holders has diminished its status and requirements, the nature of the office has seemingly changed, from educators to managers. The movement from chief to council has altered the role of leaders from educators to legislation and law enforcement, creating customary by-laws and presiding over hearings. In comparison, many people recalled Tolapitu, the last pre-council and overall village chief as gathering people together, to narrate stories and recite how they were related to one another – an important practice to deter *pikezato* (Chapter Three). The role of village councils and lineage chiefs in maintaining village discipline will be further discussed in Chapter Eight.

While the position of lineage chief is commonly described as being passed down to the sister's son, in practice, it often goes to the person deemed most qualified,[11] particularly one who has well-developed oratorical skills or an exceptional interest and capacity for *kastom* knowledge (Chapter Three). This creates opportunities for exceptional candidates to step forward, some taking on status and influence exemplified by Sahlins' (1963) description of the Melanesian big man. As he describes,

> Big-men do not come to office; they do not succeed to, nor are they installed in, existing positions of leadership over political groups. The attainment of big-man status is rather the outcome of a series of acts which elevate a person above the common herd and attract about him a coterie of loyal, lesser men. It is not accurate to speak of big-man as a political title, for it is but an acknowledged standing in interpersonal relations – [a big-man is] a prince among men…(Sahlins 1963: 289).

It is in this context that Lionel Alex emerged as a lineage, community and regional leader.

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[11] There are reported to have been three female *lekasa* in the history of the Bilua region. These were known as *taiza meqora*, (translating roughly as 'female chief' or somewhat differently, 'the high ranking child of a chief '). Some argue these women only became *lekasa* in the absence of an acceptable male candidate.

Lionel Alex – '<u>Alex Stadap Nowan Save Toko</u>'[12]

In 2006, when I first began familiarizing myself with the Maravari community and its system of chiefs, Alex was introduced to me as the 'spokesperson' for Wagina *toutou*. While each of the twelve village *toutou* was represented by a 'first' and 'second' chief, the position of 'spokesperson' was unique to Wagina. While he did not yet sit on the House of Chiefs, Alex represented Wagina at land hearings, doing the majority of the speaking for his *toutou* while his great uncle, then *Lekasa* Wagina, sat in attendance, marking his authority primarily through presence, despite being a significant local elder, highly knowledgeable in *kastom* in his own right.

Even at this early stage, tales ofAlex's oratorical skills and *kastom* knowledge possessed a mythical quality. Not yet a chief in the formal sense, he had nonetheless established a hero's following in the village, becoming what Sahlins (1963) called a 'man of reknown.' Young people, who are typically disinterested in such gatherings, following along for the purpose of socializing outside the main event, returned from a land hearing in the neighbouring village, exuberant that "<u>Alex stadap, nowan save toko</u>" (Alex stands up to speak and everyone is silenced),[13] referring to the leader's remarkable ability to effectively counter opposing testimonies of customary land ownership. Young and fit, Alex presented not only intimidating physical presence, but exuded confidence, a strong voice and the ability to make eye contact with everyone in the room. In the accounts related by local youth, Alex alone stood for Wagina against a line of elders from the

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[12] "Alex stands up to speak and everyone is silenced."

[13] Bilua people generally hold several names. Throughout this thesis, I have made use of names as they were used in the village (e.g. Granville Sariki was known as Sariki, while Rimu Baesovaki was always known as Rimu). During my fieldwork, Lionel Alex was always known to me as 'Alex,' 'Alex Lionel'or 'Alex Qora.' However, since achieving the status of MP, his extended family has referred him to me almost exclusively as <u>Onorabol</u> (Pijin – Honourable), and he has presented himself politically as 'the Honorable Lionel Alex.' I use this name in acknowledgement of this status.

disputing *toutou*, labelled by these youngsters as men "who don't know anything," and Wagina returned to Maravari successful.

This youthful hero status was significantly linked to Alex's role as the Director of Wagina Development Corporation (WDC). Despite a board of Wagina elders, the persona of Alex became symbolic of WDC, and, in turn, the incoming divelopman introduced by the influx of resources into Maravari village (Chapter Four). As with other big men, the mixed sentiment he inspired in the village ranged between envy, resentment, gratitude and awe, sometimes all at once.

At the age of 34, Alex was also a respected 'elder' of the Malaitan based Christian Revival Crusade (CRC) in the hamlet of Sieleju. He and his wife, Anna met at the CRC Church in Honiara, while Alex was at college. During this time, Alex met Pastor Ronny Asasai, and was influential in introducing the CRC to Maravari and helping to build the Lighthouse Centre Church in 2004. In this, he distinguished himself from the rest of his immediate family, who are dedicated members of the Methodist Church congregation. More significantly, in light of the longstanding local disputes between United and Methodist congregations in Maravari (Chapter Five), the acceptance of this church by local chiefs, already strongly divided by these tensions, is a significant indication of Alex's local influence, even prior to the beginning of logging revenue. Considering the general mistrust for Malaitans stemming from deep-seeded resentment during the colonial era (Dureau 1998a; Chapter Two), I considered it remarkable that the introduction of a so-called 'Malaitan Church' did not inspire greater objection. While Pastor Ronny commented on the 'quiet disapproval' he experienced when he arrived, the chiefs I spoke to were guarded, directing criticism towards different members of the small Maravari Malaitan population, rather than openly criticizing the Church itself.

While Alex's direction of WDC has been discussed elsewhere, it is notable that, like Maghratulo, he is singularly an agent of change. During my 18 months in Maravari, the redistribution of logging wealth was enabled by WDC, but channelled by Alex in his role as Director. WDC sponsored Christmas celebrations, feasts, soccer tournaments, and the rebuilding of the school following the earthquake. Alex himself chaired the School Rebuilding Committee, negotiating with the EU Development Fund to match local fundraising efforts.

When Wagina started receiving logging royalties, Alex began co-ordinating a series of feasts. The first, in 2005, was in honour of his maternal grandfather, Nathan Kalepitu, *Lekasa* Sabe; the second in 2007 was a combined *pikezato* feast for three of his relatives, including his younger brother, who had died of pneumonia three months earlier (Chapter Four); and the third in 2008, was in honour of his great uncle Donli Kaki, then *Lekasa* Wagina. These feasts preceded the feast for his *papu papu*, in which he succeeded Kaki as the new chief of the *toutou.*[14] By staging such an elaborate display of wealth and power in his inauguration as *Lekasa* Wagina, he conveyed remarkable ambition, leading people to suppose that he was establishing himself as the future paramount chief – a plausible assumption considering the then-current paramount was the only chief in the village who had held a formal *papu papu*. Yet, instead, he ran for political office as MP for Southeast Vella.

The authority invested in leaders follows not only lineage, but also laterally, in what has been described as paternal chiefly descent (McDougall 1997). As was with Magharatulo, the accumulation and prominent display of wealth is only possible through

[14] Donli's younger brother, Walter Semepitu was the 'second', and therefore supposed to be the successor to the chieftainship. However, after Donli made it known that he wanted the chieftainship to go to Alex, Semepitu stepped aside. Although, formally, the chief is 'elected' by members of the *toutou*, this is frequently a formality. The right of a chief to select his successor is taken quite seriously. Although his choice may be quietly protested for years after, it is hard for people to openly criticize once *kastom* money has been 'put down.'

the personal ability, skill and the rapport needed to access external resources to bolster local development. While Alex inherited the title of *Lekasa* Wagina from his mother's uncle, his father is *Lekasa* Sikuni, his paternal uncle, Rimu, and grandfather, Tolapitu were both paramount chiefs of the village, and his maternal grandfather, Nathan Kalepitu, was *Lekasa* Sabe. Alex grew up with access to an abundance of *kastom* and chiefly knowledge, towards which he demonstrated his affinity and ambition. Yet, in demonstrating his interest, he also inherited strong cognatic networks of support to help guide and enable his influence from a young age (Figure 11).

Following the pattern of chiefly authority in the village, Alex's authority in *kastom* is not the result of his line of Wagina so much as from the knowledge bestowed by particular male elders in his family. According to his aunt, Alex displayed an interest in *kastom* knowledge and family histories from a young age, spending long hours with Rimu and Kalepitu. Kalepitu, she explained, 'worked him' through *kazu kazua* (*kazu* – to chew, specifically to masticate betel nut), a customary process of mixing particular sacred flora with betel nut with to help him retain knowledge learned and giving him the confidence to 'speak *kastom*.' This constituted another example of the sensory metaphor of recognition: through this act, Kalepitu figuratively 'fed' him knowledge, symbolically recognizing Alex's right as an authority on his lineage's *kastom*, even though Alex was only part Sabe. According to Maravari elders, Alex's right to this sacred knowledge is indistinguishable from his physical ability to speak with authority and acumen – Kalepitu's blessing granting him an authority which translated to the ancestral recognition of leadership.

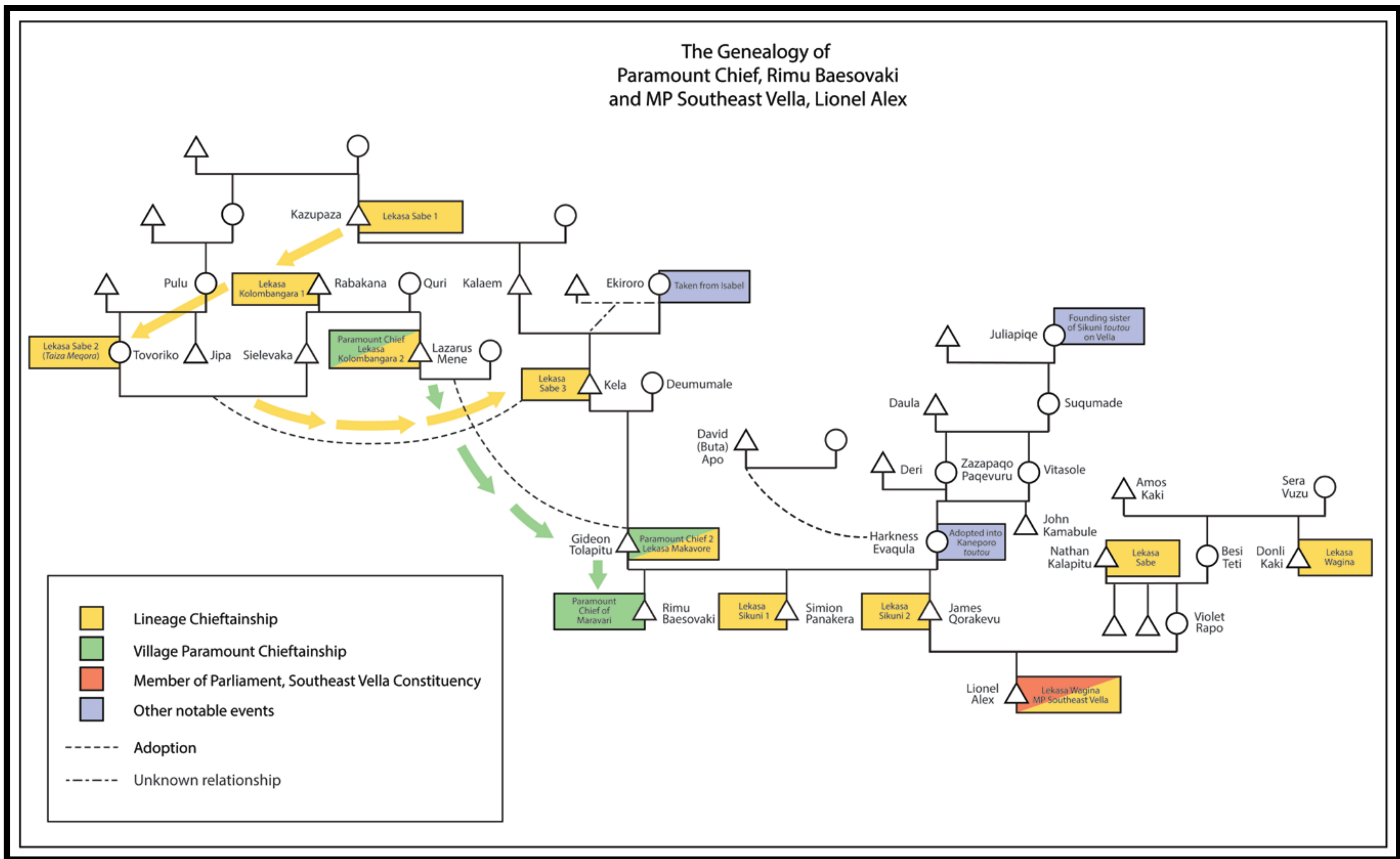

Figure 11 – The Genealogy of Rimu Baesovaki and Lionel Alex

The Chiefly Inauguration of Lionel Alex

Papu papu refers to a sitting down (*papi* - to sit), or the strengthening of an individual's rights to chieftainship symbolized by the public recognition of authority through the gifting of tribute wealth by surrounding families and fellow chiefs. It is most commonly translated as sitemdaon (Pij), or 'enthronement,' both in Bilua and elsewhere. Both words emphasize the ritual inauguration of a leader into a 'seat' of power, suggesting a legitimating of status analogous to the start of royal office. Hocart appears to suggest that this was once literal in meaning. As he describes in nearby Roviana, "Zhirumbule when little was seated on a shell ring and chiefs came from everywhere to make him *mbangara*; they also made a big feast" (Hocart n.d.d: 7). The gifting of *bakisa*, *maba takula* and *vaka takula* ('white people's money;' paper currency) to substantiate chieftainship, is an exchange, signifying the obligation of the chief to look after the interests of the people and groups who are pledging their support. Consequently, the more wealth a chief can accumulate at his inauguration, the 'stronger' his chieftainship is said to be.

Alex's *papu papu* was unprecedented in the history of community. Anger sprang up among Wagina lineage members when Alex demanded support in the form of *bakisa* from each of the four branches of Wagina. Aside from Paramount Chief, Rimu Baesovaki, none of the other village lineage chiefs had held a formal traditional ceremony to acknowledge their chieftainship. Alex said he demanded their public sign of support to ensure that there was no question of his chieftaincy – the public presentation of *bakisa* as the material symbol of his acknowledgement as chief by the four family branches and, by association, the ancestral founders of Maravari Wagina.

Further discord arose when he requested *bakisa* from each of the chiefs of Maravari. Not surprisingly, the chiefs in particular reacted publically in anger for similar, yet more direct reasons. The strengthening of Alex's chieftaincy through the gifting of

bakisa would essentially render the other village chiefs 'weak' by comparison, because they had been appointed by their lineage predecessor, without the public validation of *papu papu* or extra-lineage tribute. While I was not invited to the meeting in which he addressed members of Wagina and those married into the lineage, a friend told me that the women of Wagina expressed the most resistance to this unprecedented pledge of wealth and support. She expressed her surprise that it was the affines of Wagina who were the first to back the young chief by urging pledges of shell money and western currency, although this seems consistent with the relationships between landholders and settlers that I described in Chapter Two. As lineage outsiders, they had the most to gain by pledging their support to the young rising chief – their public declaration of support opening a line of reciprocity through which Alex became obliged to support them should they need his help. Despite the initial outrage in the face of Alex's demands for tribute, this pattern that was repeated again and again.

On the day of Alex's inauguration as *Lekasa* Wagina, all four *bakisa* were received from his lineage, and all but two Maravari chiefs committed to an equal amount of tribute. With the addition of *maba takula* pledged by chiefs in surrounding communities, in total, *Lekasa* Lionel Alex commanded a total of 41 shell valuables and over SBD$2,000. That Alex was able to command and receive such substantial tribute, not just from his own *toutou*, but from surrounding chiefs both within Maravari and throughout Bilua (and despite much initial protest) is a testament to his political acumen. Expressing my amazement to a friend afterwards, she shook her head, saying she did not envy him. "It is too big a burden to bear," she said. "How can he repay that type of gift from so many?"

The comment that Alex might be beholden to too many people is also reflective of contemporary criticisms levied against MPs and the state of political corruption in many Pacific nations. Alex's responsibility to the supporters of his chieftaincy cannot easily be

separated from his responsibility to these same individuals as constituents after he became MP for Southeast Vella. This reveals the inconsistency between the Westminster system with its capitalist models of ideal relationships between the individual, state and civil society and the indigenous socialities of kinship and community (Morgan 2005: 4). Frequently, an elected MP's support is based not on their record of governance, but on their patronage, as they are heavily entrenched in networks of social and financial obligation, which can weigh down their roles as supposedly impartial public servants. MPs beholden to their voters are often accused of buying votes, by selectively distributing their government subsidies among their supporters. This "bag rice and tobacco politics" presents a double-bind, as part of the legacy of statehood is the growing sense that independence has created wealthy urban elites at the expense of 'grassroots' Melanesians (Frankel 2004: 137; Morgan 2005: 4). In January 2013, a *Solomon Star* letter to the editor accused Alex of "promoting rural dependency" by distributing half a million Solomon dollars to keep his supporters happy.[15] This letter was discussed heatedly on the Vella Lavella Forum and Alex's cousin brother defended him, commenting on the double-bind created by this system, "if he pays out, they call him corrupt. If he does nothing, then he is in it for himself. How do you win?" Indeed, politicians are often accused of 'an economy of secretive consumption' overseas or in the capital, away from the watching eyes of their constituents. Much like Sahlins' big man system, since Independence, the Solomon Islands federal government has been highly susceptible to political turnovers, its 'coalition of patrons' characterized by continual renegotiation of agreements and alliances, challenges from new players and the on-going demands of the spoils of office (Cox 2009: 969).

[15] While the author himself had been the recipient of SBD$200 (which had been long spent), he pointed to the irony of Alex's role of Minister of Rural Development in light of the handout (Letter to the Editor, Oloqula Elopala, *Solomon Star*, January 16, 2013).

The parallels between Alex and Maghratulo, even a century apart, present an intriguing commentary on the role of foreign and local recognition in positions of Bilua leadership. Despite not being an acknowledged Bilua landowner, Maghratulo ascended to power by using his rapport to establish himself as a middleman in trade relationships between Bilua leaders and foreign traders. This influential position allowed him to marry into influential Bilua lineages, and he solidified the chieftainship of Maderega, through a 'traditional' form of acknowledgement by gifting *bokolo* and establishing a family and chiefly legacy which still exists today.

Alex, on the other hand, was raised with a legacy in traditional leadership, passed down through his chiefly elders. His education and ambition led him to become a trusted figure in his extended family, ascending to the WDC Directorship, a salaried and influential position in the local community which afforded him the wealth and network of obligations to secure chieftainship at a young age and eventually the role of federal MP. Through access to outside wealth, both Alex and Maghratulo served as middlemen in bringing development, commanding high status through their unique abilities to facilitate relationships both between lineages, and between local and foreign value systems.[16] Most notably, both Alex and Maghratulo were influential in the accumulation, negotiation and distribution of wealth that Sahlins (1963) first proclaimed as the foundation of power for Melanesian big men.

The historical progression from pre-Christian headhunting chiefs to colonial headmen, village councils and MPs illustrates the diverse ways in which Melanesian leadership has adapted to address the changing faces of the state. Throughout this transition, leaders have continued to draw on chiefly titles, engaging and redefining their

[16] By foreign value systems, I mean ways of thinking that are fundamentally different from locally constructed frameworks of meaning that shape everyday life experiences.

roles as icons of tradition and identity, both in their homelands and in negotiation with wider contexts of the foreign. However, it is their role as mediators on the local level in which they are most influential in instrumenting ideas of *kastom* towards the continuation of community and social reproduction.

In this short history of Bilua leadership, both Alex and Maghratulo achieved something extraordinary that set them apart as bigmen in Sahlins' classic sense of the term. Alex, in his unprecedented demand of by tribute from other chiefs, and Maghratulo, by taking his right to negotiate the sale of land that was not his own. Both demanded and received authoritative recognition beyond that of their contemporaries. However, as Feuchtwang (2003) notes, recognition is a mirror structure: "that which authorizes and recognizes itself demands recognition" (2003: 78). By recognizing these two individuals as possessing a superior status, their followers acknowledged them as individuals of potential and promise, uniquely qualified to represent the community and provide strong advocacy and leadership, as well as to become a dependable provider of social cohesion and material wealth.

CHAPTER EIGHT (CONCLUSION) - STOPPING TALK AND BUYING EARS: NEGOTIATING PEACEFUL RELATIONALITY

> Melanesian communities have always been on the verge of disintegration, even in precolonial times, and it has always taken special qualities of leadership, in each succeeding generation, to prevent them from splitting apart at the seams (Filer 1990, quoted in Schoeffel 1997: 2).

As I have argued throughout this thesis, Bilua ideas of *kastom* and morality are manifested in efforts towards the mutual recognition – and thus strengthening of relationships – between people and between groups. While chiefs rely on their followers to recognize their power, this is only part of the larger processes through which shared ideas of social order are formed.

The community, while projected as a place of Christian order and values, manifests difficulties of social order associated with a large number of people sharing spaces, many with conflicting affections, loyalties and responsibilities to kin, to church, and to themselves. Despite these realities, social orders also depend on the shared participation of members of the community. While Chapter Two considered how Biluans frame *kastom* through its associations with moral ideas and actions, in drawing to a close, I focus on the role of community in shaping and empowering common ideas of social order and on how reciprocity and exchange promote reconciliation and repair damaged or threatened relationships. I argue that mediations by senior lineage members serve as a form of guided recognition designed to navigate people through vulnerable stages of their relationships. Whether individuals are embarking on a new stage of life (such as marriage) or require reparations in the form of compensation or peace negotiation, through mediation, senior members of the community become invested in and responsible for the well-being of

others. Ultimately this returns me to my starting point, with Bilua concern for the need to acknowledge and foster shared values of mutuality and recognition on which their social belongings depend.

Drawing on the sociality of Melanesian personhood, Terry Brown (2006) proposes that the pursuit of 'peaceful relationality' is the ultimate objective of village affairs. Criticizing what he sees as the disenfranchised state of Anglican communion, Brown argues that Anglicans can learn from Oceanic ideas of relational personhood, which he sees as centripetal and focused on reconciliation and the restoration of solidarity above all else.[1]

Brown addresses the social significance of transgressions, which, while they may be committed by individuals, always impact upon relationships within and between committed groups and thus require negotiation and mediation. As he notes:

> ...there are very few offenses that cannot be atoned for; reconciliation and restoration of relationships are always the aim, no matter what has brought about the separation. 'Peaceful relationality' is the cultural 'default position' to which all separation reverts (2006: 175).

Rather than suggesting a utopian ideal of peace, the notion of a default position of peaceful relationality highlights the place of community processes through which disputes are resolved and through which people come to relate to one another as mutually invested parties. On a deeper level, it also offers insight into the priorities grounding Melanesian community life.

As I have argued, Bilua discourses of and concerns with recognition are most apparent when relationships are problematized and people fail to demonstrate culturally appropriate behaviours of respect. In its most basic manifestation, recognition is about

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[1] While Brown admits the inadequacy of polarized models of Euro-American individualism and Oceanic collectivity, he notes that "[i]nevitably, in one way or another all of us in Oceania are affected by, shaped by, attracted to, or repulsed by one or both of these two models of personhood" (2006: 178), a point which is strongly expressed in Bilua discussions of land claims and their effects on communities. Moreover, Brown's arguments are mirrored in others' analyses of the Melanesian 'dividual' and the Christian individual (e.g. Hess 2009).

reaching out to others with whom one is mutally invested (Fabian 1999: 59). Therefore, when people cease to reach out in culturally appropriate ways, community and lineage relationships are threatened. Risk of schism, real or imagined, motivates larger group efforts to focus on reconciling or at least compensating for wrongs done.

In this work, I have shown how themes of separation and unity are a prevalent part of community discourse, with social harmony projected as an underlying ideal of everyday life. Bilua people frame incest and adultery as acts of social division, voice concerns about morally diverging paths, and express the need for being of 'one mind' in community negotiations. The expressed need for people to 'see' and 'hear' their kin through respectful treatment conveys the extent to which respect relationships are projected as essential elements of basic social existence. While acts of adultery, *pitaso*, and witchcraft demonstrate a clear disregard for the boundaries of kin relationships, property and rights, they can also be more widely damaging, contributing to a sense of unease and disorder which is manifested through signs of ancestral displeasure or the continued weakening of the lineage – either through multiple deaths or in 'opening a path' for further transgressions. Separations resulting from unresolved disputes are episodic events in Bilua history, held up in memory as moral examples of the consequences of failing to recognize and reconcile relationships. Vella migration stories often describe how lineage ancestors ranawae from their home islands to escape warfare, *pitaso* and witchcraft – recounting larger historical processes ignited by denials of recognition and the failure to successfully reconcile disputes. Such metaphors, moral stories and beliefs reveal the underlying anxiety in Bilua discourses of recognition: left ill-managed, social transgressions can lead to moral dissolution and the threat of social dissolution.

In the context of these everyday discourses, group negotiation and reconciliation processes play vital roles in rebalancing community stability and social continuity and

reiterating the values of Bilua *kastom*. Mediation is imperfect, sometimes unsatisfactory and dependent on the actions of elders and chiefs, who are often criticized for taking corrective rather than preventative roles in straightening discord. Yet, at the heart of mediation is a collective engagement with idealized respect relationships, perceived rules of social order and customary values and processes. Given the relationship between knowledge and action in Bilua ideas of recognition, ritual processes of mediation and straightening are essential to the enactment and continual redefinition of relationships – part of the social processes that remain a fundamental part of village life. Brown's idea of peaceful relationality expresses the underlying desire to reconcile moral ideals with everyday practice.

In closing, I take a closer look at Bilua perceptions of moral order, building on the negotiation of kinship relationships and mutual recognition between individuals and lineage associations before moving to an investigation of understandings of amicable co-existence between groups to show how community social order is enacted. I address checks and balances in the wider community and suggest that social order is ideally, and sometimes practically, achieved in the form of mutual recognition between groups, and is enabled and repaired through reciprocity. Because reciprocity demonstrates recognition (Robbins 2003, 2009), exchange is a symbolically explicit and socially effective way of establishing or maintaining recognition between groups. I show this by offering examples of several kinds of social transactions involving shell money, witnesses and the inter-group negotiation of social reproduction and social norms. As a final step, I look beyond the community context to explore the lament for an imagined past which is addressed in Bilua ideas of recognition.

Discourses of recognition call attention to and remind people of their obligations to one another (Chapters One and Three). The achievement of peaceful relationality depends

upon the cooperation and willingness of all members of the community in meeting their mutual obligations and adhering to standards of socially acceptable behaviour. In return, they receive the support of kin and lineage in negotiating on their behalf in dispute resolution, harvesting and fundraising and other forms of financial assistance. The values deemed worthy of recognition are passed on through socialization and recounting genealogies. However, they are also enacted in peaceful negotiation between families and lineages through ritual exchanges of bridewealth, compensation and other transactions designed to forge, strengthen or repair relationships of mutuality.

In certain transactions, such as bridewealth, the mutual recognition expressed through exchange may be constitutive of relationships, joining two families together. However, Ricoeur (2005: 146-149, 176) also suggests an idea of recognition in which exchange serves to temper difference: even if it does not (re)establish unity, it restores peace. Like Fabian, he frames this recognition as *Anerkennen*, or an act of acknowledgement ("I give this person/object the recognition they ask for and deserve"). This particular expression of *Anerkennen* appears in the process of dispute mediation and reveals the role of compensation in restoring balance, with opposing parties returning to equal footing and their agency as people restored.

The presentation of compensation money to the injured party illustrates different aspects of the recognition of wrongdoing and the will to redress injured relationships. Smaller quarrels involving minor transgressions such as swearing, petty theft or gossip are often straightened amicably without the involvement of chiefs. When someone voices a grievance, compensation may be demanded and settled immediately. However, disputes are difficult to keep quiet, particularly since talking about unsettled grievances can come to involve more and more people, often exacerbating the dispute to include accusations of slander. This is why upon hearing of a conflict elders quickly advise their kin to offer

compensation, often advising on the amount.[2] In many cases, senior family members approach the injured party or their senior kin to discuss how to put a quarrel to rest. They then arrange a meeting at which each person is accompanied by one or two elders to witness the reconciliation and the compensation being given, after which the matter will be declared 'straight' and 'closed.'

Chiefs take on a mediating role when accountability cannot be easily determined, when the dispute involves negotiations across multiple lineages, or when it pertains to more serious matters of *pitaso*, witchcraft or bodily harm (usually extending beyond domestic disputes). While chiefs negotiate relationships between lineages, the multiple overlapping, shared identities and interests in the village provide a context where negotiation and consensus are often needed. To this end, the role of the village council is to redress bad feelings and reset the balance of good relationships in the village.

The closure achieved through successful mediation extends beyond the parties involved to the whole community. Although compensation does not return the disputed situation to its previous state, it neutralizes the situation by 'stopping talk' and preventing further retaliation. In Bilua, to <u>stap tok</u> seldom entails putting an end to gossip and conjecture; instead, it transforms community speculation and <u>tok</u> into a different and, for many, a less acceptable form by moving it from the public to the private sphere. The presentation of compensation, either shell money or cash, signifies that the matter has been addressed, and that to discuss it further, particularly in a way that aggravates or angers the injured parties, risks involving oneself in the conflict and becoming vulnerable to compensation claims. In such contexts, compensation creates the possibility that "the struggle for recognition can be separated from the vicious circle of vengeance, whereby I

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[2] Dureau says that on Simbo, the task of straightening mostly fell to senior women (personal communication).

demand recognition from you for the harms you have inflicted" (Connolly 2007: 143). Thus, at least theoretically, addressing problems through mediated disputes and the presentation of compensation promotes the return to convivial daily life.

Straightening and Covering

Following this goal of reconciliation, mediation is intended to straighten relationships between disputants rather than straightening or disentangling the 'talk' between them (Lindstrom 1990b: 376). The formal measures through which relationships are reconciled is a highly significant factor in the safeguarding or re-establishment of amity between the larger groups.

Metaphors of 'straightening' (*koroto*), 'covering' (*bouluko*) and 'closing' (klosem) are indicative of the principles that guide and organize mediative processes. To straighten is to suggest a reconciliation, a smoothing of tangles that have inhibited the relationship; to cover can suggest a resolution similar to straightening, but it can also suggest a covert resolution, rushing compensation before a problem can come to public attention; and to close is simply to bring about the resolution of a problem through negotiation. Both bridewealth and compensation employ valuables as symbolic substitutes for human bodies, persons or services (Filer 1997: 157). Relationships become tangible in the exchange of shell money and cash, symbols of the desire to make, strengthen or repair the relationship between the two groups. This discourse is common to marriage negotiations and conflict resolutions alike.

Straightening, which can be compared to 'disentangling' in other parts of the Pacific, describes the process of guiding relationships through a vulnerable state (White and Watson-Gegeo 1990; Lindstrom 1990b). Such relationships must be treated delicately in order to protect them from future distress. As White and Watson-Gegeo describe, "...the

image of a tangled net or a knotted line suggests a blockage or purposeful activity, reminding the members of a community that the problem at hand requires attention lest it impede 'normal' social life" (White and Watson-Gegeo 1990: 35–36, n. 1). Much like untangling rope, straightening has to be careful and methodical, an emphasis that places a focus on the process of reconciliation, and also on enacting and constituting *kastom* (Chapter Two). Like disentangling, the metaphor of straightening suggests a prior idealization of "an unmarked background state-of-affairs in which strands of people's lives do not become snarled and ineffective" (White and Watson-Gegeo 1990: 36, n.1) – an idea that is consistent with peaceful relationality and Bilua ideologies of the past. In straightening a conflict, mediators attempt to return disputing parties to an idealized state of peaceful relationality. The Bilua word *koroto* (straightening) means to make "satisfactory," "equal" or "suffic[ient]," emphasizing the restoration of equilibrium (Methodist Mission n.d.: 31). Indeed, because mediation and compensation are intended to achieve acknowledgement of and recompense for wrongdoing, individuals demanding compensation frequently do not specify an amount. In some cases, excessively high amounts are demanded, but the offended parties are generally satisfied with much less. As White and Watson-Gegeo note, "the engagement in moral negotiation itself may be more significant than specific decisions or outcomes" (1990: 35–36, n. 1).

In dispute resolutions, discourses of straightening and covering are part of the same sphere of exchange relationships negotiated between lineage groups. Despite much overlap, they frequently carry different connotations of openness and intent, raising questions about the underlying motivations behind reconciliation processes. Whether in regard to a dispute or to marriage, straightening suggests that senior representatives of the community are present as witnesses to the resolution to ensure that things are done properly. The involvement of multiple witnesses suggests that the resolution is sanctioned

by those who stand and offer their support to the proceedings. For this reason, straightening is as much about enacting and constituting *kastom* as it is about providing resolution – "whether spoken or implied, these conceptions of 'straight' or correct relations may themselves be transfigured in the disentangling process" (White and Watson-Gegeo 1990: 35–36, note 1). The straightening of conflicts takes place for three reasons. Firstly, the visibility of disputes expresses the value of shame and shaming as a vital part of the resolution process, one through which private emotions of anger and resentment are exposed and transformed through attention and contrition. Many people believe that conflicts that are covered over, as opposed to straightened, are more likely to recur because they are covered before people can experience shame. As I argued in my discussion of *pitaso*, shame and shaming reveal individual and community awareness of self in the breach of relationships and discourage reoffending (Chapter Three). Secondly, straightening prevents disputes from resurfacing by publicly declaring the matter 'closed' through resolution invested with the sanctity of *kastom*. And thirdly, by serving as an example of proper behaviour, mediation reinforces ideas of cultural process and of normative ideas of right and wrong. Therefore, recognition is not simply a matter between individuals but is reinforced by members of the community, who witness, acknowledge and incorporate this knowledge into their own understandings of social belonging and well-being.

In contrast to straightening, 'to cover' (*bouluko*) carries connotations of hiding, usually in reference to to the exchange of *seleni* (cash) or shell money over more serious transgressions like *pitaso*. It is the mediative, and often covert, damage control carried out by chiefs to resolve serious matters before they become public knowledge and cause more shame and damage to the families involved. While chiefs use discourses of 'covering' to describe an effective form of problem-solving, such measures are often viewed sceptically

by members of community, who see it as symbolic of the mishandling of these incidents by chiefs who 'throw money' at problems before they can come to light.

Negative reactions to covering can be explained by the deeper significance of mediation in Bilua communities. Because people are constantly negotiating what is and what is not *kastom*, the presence of witnesses illustrates the significance of mediation not only as restoring social order but also as providing a context in which people can debate and see what is classified as *kastom* (Chapter Three). Many feel that if such incidents were truly straightened, senior lineage members would use them as opportunities to educate young people about their relatedness to those around them and explain the importance of respect relationships. Thus, mediation is ultimately about recognizing, gauging and confronting one's own social ethos against an ideal, with the purpose of reconciling and reaffirming cultural ideas about Bilua identity and social values.

Participating in a Moral System: 'the Gift Exchange Without the Gift'

While mediation solidifies or repairs inter-lineage relationships, it also reinforces the relationship between the individual and their lineage, reminding them of their obligations through a ritualized demonstration of support. In both ways, mediation is a public reminder of the give and take required between *toutou* and between the individual and their lineage, demonstrating processes of mutual recognition and mutual need.

This relationship between an individual and their group indicates a person's participation in partibility (Chapters One and Three). As Strathern noted, participation in exchange is not constrained to material wealth: it is also enabled by a person's participation in a moral system – what she called the 'gift exchange without the gift' (1988: 179). In return for obeying village and lineage rules and participating in a moral system, a person is more likely to be helped by their kin. Therefore, in the rare instance of

multiple cases of *pitaso*, where a man is found guilty of of adultery or relationships with extended kin on both sides of his family, he risks considerable alienation if no one is willing to pay his compensation. Without lineage support, he would be vulnerable to ostracism and risk his rights to land being revoked by his family.

Because actors rarely negotiate on their own behalf, this exchange is multi-faceted, not only strengthening ties between adjoining groups but also reinforcing obligations between the individual and the lineage that represents them. Within this dynamic, all parties must take on roles of giver, recipient and reciprocator towards those to whom they are obligated in order for these ideals to be met, or else relationships become unstable. Mutual recognition in this sense becomes a key goal and product of reciprocal exchange (Robbins 2009: 47), and exchange, as an act of recognition, enables and reinforces the layered obligations between individuals and groups and between groups.

As an extension of these processes, Hagen (1999b) observes that social solidarity is not merely an effect of exchange, it is also necessary for it because it is intrinsic to the deliberation process. For this reason, "moral agency represents a vital dimension to exchange that, while shaped by its social effects, is also irreducible to them" (1999b: 361).

Mutual orientations are encouraged not only through kin support but also through social rules and village fines. In general breaches of social order, monetary compensation is a significant component to restoring balance. The violation of village rules, such as women failing to wear lavalavas in public, gossip, or drunken misconduct, all require that payment be made to the village chiefs. Members of communities and travellers passing through particular villages are expected to abide by village rules of dress,[3] behaviour and

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[3] Maravari is one of only a handful of villages on Vella that require women to wear lavalavas in public, fining them if they wear board shorts or other clothing that gives definition to their lower torso. This enforcement presented difficulties and led to the eventual withdrawal of Maravari teams from an island-wide female football league (although lavalavas proved a lesser impediment for female participation in netball competitions).

respect for property (Figure 12). There is significantly less emphasis on who receives compensation than on the symbolic nature of the transaction. I discovered this after a trip to Gizo to pick up supplies for the Christmas feast. Commonly, women wear long shorts and a lavalava, which is usually tucked away upon arrival in Gizo. Following this practice, I returned to find that my lavalava, which I had left in the front of the boat, had been hopelessly buried under eleven bags of rice, flour, and an array of grocery bags. As consequence, when I arrived in the village, I was forced to disembark without my lavalava and make a hasty retreat from the disapproving stares of those who had come to help unload the boat at the river. Shortly thereafter, I was visited by Sariki who had noted my mistake and come to remind me of village rules. Noting that it was typical to ask for compensation in such a matter, he asked me my thoughts. In response, I offered him SBD$50, an amount that satisfied him, and before he left, he declared that thereafter SBD$50 would be the standard requirement to straighten any further misbehaviour on my part.

Curious as to where this money went, I recounted the incident to Lekasa Rimu a day later, supposing that, as paramansif, perhaps he was the one entitled to compensation over violations of village rules. Rimu only laughed at Sariki's ruling and said that the only thing that mattered was that Sariki would be able to tell any inquisitive villagers that I had been straightened and was not above the laws of the village. The amount of compensation or to whom it was paid was irrelevant; the point of paying compensation was to ensure that *kastom* and chiefly authority were recognized and there was sufficient atonement for any wrongdoing.

Figure 12 – Sign posted outside Kuava village stating village rules

Shell Money and Public Displays of Power

This experience forced me to think about how wrongful behaviour is handled in other contexts – specifically, how wrong doing can be mediated and manipulated through the display of wealth as a sign of public power. For example, during land hearings, senior lineage members ideally 'put down' shell money in order to be able talk about boundaries, mediating the violation of taboo. Such displays serve as visible representations of power.

To put down shell money, that is, to publicly show *maba takula* or *bakisa* while making a declaration, is to visibly 'give weight' (*jujuna*) to a person's words. It is a show of wealth that presents a tangible challenge to those who might dispute that person's right to carry out a particular action. When Maravari village hosted a large island-wide soccer tournament, the village was busy hosting players and spectators for an entire week. To

enforce order and discourage drinking, fighting, theft and other forms of trouble that might ensue with a large group of visitors present, nine of the twelve chiefs or their representatives held up shell money at the opening ceremonies, providing a public statement that any misconduct would not be tolerated and would require an equal amount of compensation in return (Figure 13). The public display was a substantial statement of chiefly solidarity, and, by demanding shell money, the chiefs made it clear to all visitors and players present that misbehaviour would come at substantial financial cost. The display illustrated the potency of customary forms of currency that is weak or absent in *seleni*. While many of these young people would have been able to pay minor amounts of cash, for the most part, shell money was outside their personal reach and would have required them to place a significant burden on kin. As one of Akin's informants explained, "Shillings are easy. Shell money is hard" (1999: 111). As the medium of Melanesian prestige economies, shell money is drawn from a person's investments in kin and community and is not readily available for common use in the manner of cash. As Thomas suggests, shell rings enable a person to extend their agency and be evaluated in terms of the responses made to that agency (2003: 240). For this reason, the display of *maba takula* was a visual display of power presenting a warning that was to be heeded by all players and spectators, suppressing the chance of any animosity between teams spilling off the playing field.

Figure 13 – Maravari chiefs and chiefly representatives holding up shell money at the opening of the soccer tournament, to ensure order. From left to right: Nelson Vivio, Esoa Kadu, Edward Kavarisi, Livingstone Niaba, Denis Evapitu, James Qorakevu, Jonson Keleni and Granville Sariki

Bulezato – Making Peace

While public enforcements of authority, negotiations and hearings are regular parts of contemporary village life, ritualized mediation between disputing parties is part of the larger process of restoring peaceful relationships between groups. In Bilua, the protocol for public social exchanges, particularly when they involve shell money (but also food and other forms of assistance), is fairly regimented and reflects the purposes described earlier. There must be witnesses from the two lineages involved and a third non-partisan lineage, ideally *lekasa*, to speak on behalf of the parties involved. Hearings, compensation and the exchange of shell and paper currency are constantly carried out to mediate relationships, reinforce social obligation and solidify public moral practice. These practices are based on an idea of peace-keeping and moral order said to be grounded in the past.

During our discussion of early warfare (Chapter Two), Eli began to talk about pre-Christian peace-making (*bulezato*),[4] which was carried out through exchanging and sharing food to mark reconciliation. While *bulezato*, or reconciliation feasts, were commonly held to mark the end of fighting between different groups, Eli describes how the ritual exchange of food could sometimes have a symbolic value similar to that of shell money in the reconciliation process following *pitaso* or *pazokinio* (warfare).

EV [discussing *pitaso* and the ambivalence of young people] Eh, you all aren't different people, so you must be careful how you play together. Eh, we're all the Queen's tribe, they say. You see, I told you. It's disappearing a little bit now this one culture *pitaso* kind, yeah, because before, it was a very big something. Not only *takula*, but people would make taro too. Cooked taro. *Bibaso.* The side of the father would work it. The side of his *toutou* would also work taro. They would give food to the other one. He would give food to them too.
[…] Suppose one tribe fights with another tribe. To make peace between them, it's the same too. They will meet chief to chief. This chief here, that chief there. This one will bite taro. The other chief with bite another piece of taro. Then the two chiefs will give theirs to the other one.

SK So they exchange them? Like *bakisa*?

EV Yes, if a man wanted to make peace, he would prepare taro like that. Alright [...] Two chiefs are fighting, rowing. The one chief, he bites this one [taro, offered by his rival]. The other chief he bites that one [taro, offered by his rival]. After that, after the two of them [exchange back] – they share them. [...]

SK So they eat from the same taro.

EV Yes, that's *bibaso*.

SK So what is the meaning of them eating from the same taro?

EV The two men *become* peace this time.

SK So who is the man who makes peace between them? The man who hands the taro between them?

EV A chief. One chief negotiates between them. He's a man from another tribe. A middleman.

[4] *Bule* – peace, calm; to clean up or tidy a mess; *zato* – a suffix connoting action or process.

Several things are notable in this description. As I have noted, exchanging food is an act of recognition between groups (Chapter Four). Feasting (*nujolao*) can be held to fulfil social obligations or to create them. A middleman is described as one of the necessary components of a *kastom* transaction, a role which is carried through most formal exchanges. Eli's word choice is significant: through the transaction, the two men 'become peace' – they both become something they were not before, and by extension, so do the lineage factions they represent. However, this is dependent on the responsibilities of all parties to recognize the meaning of the pact and fulfil their obligations towards one another. For the previously warring groups, this means honouring their vow of peace and ceasing to raid one other; for the middleman, it means upholding his role as a negotiator between the two groups should they experience further problems later on.

Secondly, a lexical analysis of *bibaso* merits consideration. The Methodist Mission Bilua dictionary (c. 1960) defines *bibaso* as 1) to compare things; 2) to overlap, as two ends of wood overlap when making a house. By the time of my fieldwork, this word was no longer commonly used in the second context. Pike's 1980s Bilua dictionary translates 'compare' as *omadeuvo elo taka kelo*, literally 'to make one again,' reflecting the Bilua emphasis on reconciliation as opposed to issuing verdicts of guilt or innocence. It is significant that *bibaso* is also the term used to describe the exchange of bridewealth in the negotiation of a marriage. In both contexts, the word symbolizes the process of reconciling as much as the result. *Bibaso* demonstrates the significance of exchange as moral participation by demonstrating the processes of mutual obligations between different groups, cementing their dedication to uphold the ties which bind them.

Bridewealth (*Bau*) – The Rings that Bind and Protect

Shell money is also used to create social ties during a marriage ceremony (*rorotato*). Filer argues that bridewealth exchange is evidence of "the junction between the family and society, between the relations of personal reproduction and all the social relations which surround them" (1985: 182). Specifically, in Bilua, bridewealth (*bau*) sanctions the union between two people and fosters the social entanglement of their lineages by virtue of their participation in the exchange.

These transactions are marked by metaphors of sensory recognition, particularly with respect to the woman's family's acknowledgement and acceptance of the suitor. When a man declares his intention to marry a woman, he pays *taliṉa* to her brothers and to the first male cousin on each side, literally paying for their 'ears' (*taliṉa*) to acknowledge his intent (this can also be called *viqo viqolo*; *viqo* – 'to hear'). As with *pitaso*, failure to pay *taliṉa* in pre-Christian times was said have resulted in the man's murder by the women's family. While such manners of recourse are clearly no longer in practice, family approval still remains important for a couple's relationship, enabling the continued participation of kin in each other's lives. During a council meeting in 1956, District Headman Silas Lezutuni attempted to explain the importance of family support behind marriages to the District Commissioner, suggesting that the District Officer was impeding significant social practices by interfering.

> If a boy wants to marry a girl, then the parent of the girl will not allow their daughter to marry that boy, but if they loved so much, then the boy will go to the District Office at Gizo to report this matter, and after three weeks notice they will going to be married [*sic*]. But this is a very important custom of ours. If a boy marry [*sic*] a girl without the permission of her parent then they will have a big fight. And sometimes if anyone report the matter same as above and a big fight will be happen. So the Council discussed and agreed that if boys and girls want to married but if their parents disallow them to married, they should ask permission to their parents without ceasing until they married (WPHC Archives, Council Meeting held at Paramata on June 19, 1956).

As this passage demonstrates, a marriage involves many others beyond the husband and wife, and the proper permission and participation of the families in a couple's union is necessary to prevent any violence, ostracization or lingering discord.

While I witnessed and took part in a number of weddings during my fieldwork, I was most personally involved in the wedding of Emmee Niaba (Sarapito *toutou*) and Holton Koroi (Kazukuru *toutou*) on March 29, 2008. Emmee's bridewealth negotiation was held prior to the church ceremony. The cast of negotiators for this exchange was of great interest to me, as prior conversations had stressed that the senior members of the matrilineage should negotiate and 'hold' the bridewealth. However, the flexibility of *kastom* is revealed in the introduction of proxies into the bridewealth negotiations. Neither side was represented by a direct member of their respective lineage because both chiefs were away at another wedding in Honiara. Holton was straightened by Lekasa Leanabaku Sepi Luamboe from Sabora, Leanabaku being a related lineage to his father's *toutou* of Kolumbangara,[5] while Emmee's bridewealth was negotiated by Lekasa Wagina Donli Kaki,[6] Wagina having close ties with Sarapito. The discrepancy between who *should* negotiate the exchange and who *does* is the difference between the idealized boundaries of *toutou* (Chapter Four) and the wider parameters of 'same people' – members of the wider kinship spectrum bound by similar obligations and affections (Chapters One and Three). Kaki noted that ideally Emmee 'should' have been straightened by a Lekasa of Sarapito, but that he was born into Sarapito through his *taite*, he was able to take the role of straightening bridewealth for Emmee. On the other hand, considering that different chiefs are sometimes granted authority within other lineages (Chapter Two and Seven), it is also possible that the opportunity to involve outside lineages was seen not only as practical but

[5] Holton's mother was from Roviana. While his matri-kin were present, he was represented in the negotiations through the side of his Bilua father.
[6] Donli is also Emmee's uncle through his marriage to Emmee's father's sister.

also as favourable to the marriage negotiations, reinforcing ties with members of more distant lineages by allowing them to become invested in the couple's union. My observations with regard to the cast of negotiators are consistent with Brown's notion of peaceful relationality, which stresses process and purpose over structure and rules. The incorporation of related lineages as the principal negotiators in the exchange reveals a process governed by inclusion, not separation. While the negotiators belong to different *toutou* in name, they are simultaneously the 'same people' as the individuals they are chosen to represent.

For the exchange of bridewealth, members of both sides congregate in separate areas. In this case, Emmee's family gathered in Donli's house while Holton's family gathered on a veranda of a neighbouring house. Emmee's father, Livingstone Niaba, her uncle Abel Seina and her cousin-brother on her mother's side sat on floor behind Donli, who negotiated on their behalf. The rest of the family (myself included), and roughly two dozen relatives of the bride, gathered in a semi-circle around them as witnesses to the exchange. The bridewealth was negotiated on the floor with men sitting in front and women to the side of the transaction.

Bridewealth, or *bau*, is paid in three parts – *vilu*, *bau* and *vakere*. The bridewealth is opened by the presentation of *bau ko vilu* – the 'eyes' of the *bau* – from the man's lineage to the woman's. *Vilu*, as a *bakisa* (one of the more prized forms of shell money), is more valuable than the *bau* itself. Like *talin̲a*, *vilu* is necessary to 'lead the eyes' to the *kastom* exchange taking place, and consequently, to the change in obligations and responsibilities signified by the transaction. Both express the social importance of publicly recognizing and acknowledging relationships before further negotiations can proceed.

The *bau* itself, the second part of the payment, was described as the 'ring to bind the woman.' Reciprocally, it also binds the negotiator (in this case, Donli) in that he holds

the *bau*, reminding him of his responsibility to straighten them if the couple run into difficulties during their marriage.

The last shell ring to be gifted is the *vakare*, which is given to the woman's lineage. *Vakare* translates as 'the shoulders,' an acknowledgement of the supportive role that the matrilineage has played in the woman's life, as from birth, the responsibility for her care has rested upon the mother's shoulders and that of her lineage. Once again, while *vakare* was described as ideally being presented to the mother or the mother's brother, I was told that it made no difference if it was given to the bride's father (as Donli said, 'sem sem'). As with compensation, it does not appear to matter so much who is representing whom or who holds the shell money being negotiated, so long as the act of mediation occurs.

Each *takula* is held by a different person as a material symbol of their responsibility to acknowledge their newfound obligations to the woman and to the couple. It also serves as recognition of the woman's family for their role in raising her. The power to negotiate the full *bau* is not accepted lightly because it means accepting to negotiate the woman's new social identity and her status as a wife and future mother, as well as her continuing role as a daughter to maintain her right to care for her parents if they are ailing.[7] As Moore (1994) suggests, the ability to define a social identity and thus establish a person's rights and needs is a political act. In negotiating the woman's new and continuing roles and responsibilities of the woman as a wife and future mother, in relation to her role as daughter, the negotiator exercises their capacity to produce particular sorts of persons with specific attributes that are congruent with socially established patterns of power (Moore 1994: 92–93). This mediative role in a person's social identity is ongoing since the negotiators also assume the responsibility of 'straightening' the couple in future marital

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[7] While the marriage also signifies new roles for the husband, this does not appear to be a focus of the bridewealth exchange.

difficulties by speaking on their behalf, providing *takula* when required and generally smoothing things over.

When everyone was assembled, Lekasa Tianiakera, acting in the role of middleman, laid out the three shell valuables chosen by Holton's family as bridewealth. During the negotiations, the mood was upbeat, almost jocular, as Donli explained the meaning of each *takula*. Partly playing to the video camera, held my visiting husband, although the money seemed 'straight,' Donli said they would 'play' a little bit, clearly enjoying his role as negotiator and the attention of the crowd. He picked up each piece and examined it. While the *vilu* and *vakare* were declared fitting, Emmee's uncle suggested that the *bau* be sent back. Tianiakera put the *bau* in a pandanus basket and returned it to Holton's camp. He returned with another *bau*, significantly smaller than the last, and thinner, although its red markings were brighter. This time there was less deliberation, as Donli again asked Tianiakera to take it back. A third time, the *bau* came back, this time similar in size to the other two. Each piece was again held up and inspected, and then finally declared fitting for the exchange.

Next, the *vaka takula* (white people's money) was counted. Holton's camp had offered an envelope of SBD$900, which Donli proclaimed to be too high, explaining that it would give them the right to stop Emmee from returning home to care for her parents if one of them became ill. The incorporation of *vaka takula* presented a different dilemma to the shell money. As it was gathered from so many lineage members, it could not easily be returned fairly without causing problems. Thus to return it was considered taboo. To counter this, Donli put down SBD$50 and one *takula* as *jujuna* to be returned to Holton's family – 'to make weight' and balance the exchange. Satisfied, he pronounced the transaction complete, and the family filed out to begin preparations for the church wedding taking place later that day.

The obligations created and fulfilled through the presentation of bridewealth are evidence of kin participation in social reproduction. In this particular example, the rules of exchange appear less structured than many people describe. Specifically, the interchangeability of individuals mediating the transaction suggests that the specifics are less significant than the act, symbolized in the lineage and community acknowledgement of the union and the new status of the couple as husband and wife. The sensory metaphors of sight and sound, together with the visual and tangible significance of the bridewealth, exemplify the necessary public acknowledgement of the transaction that is demanded of participants and witnesses alike. By recognizing the exchange, the community gives their sanction to the union.

Reciprocity and Recognition

As a medium which elicits recognition between mutually invested parties, money, and particularly shell money, plays a significant role in the performance of *kastom* (Thomas 2003). While shell money continues to be a necessary component of social transactions, it is no longer manufactured, which means that people have to deal with a limited supply. Although chiefs are adamant that there is a difference between shell money that is transacted and shell money that is left at shrines in the bush, I heard many stories – and even direct claims (almost exclusively the part of young men) – of people taking shell money from shrines to bolster the funds for *kastom* exchanges such as bridewealth. While such individual incidents usually go unnoticed, a substantial problem exists in the form of people stealing shell money to take to Gizo and Honiara to sell to tourists. One chief said he feared that someday they would be forced to buy back shell money from Europeans in order to be able to continue with customary transactions.

Despite the assumptions of many NGO personnel who imagine Pacific villages as utopian societies based on cooperation and common purpose (Schoeffel 1997), communities are factionalized, imperfect unions between different groups. Connected by kinship, friendships, intermarriages and generations of social entanglements that have progressively resulted from people living in close proximity, some only by way of the fading memory of historical obligations towards one another, communities are in need of continual renewal (McDougall 2004).

In this respect, shell money provides a material record of transactions across generations, not only of land negotiations but also of marriages and obligations between members of different lineage groups. Thus, if, as I introduced in Chapter Three, knowingness (*nianio*) entails a willingness to engage in convivial practices based on of shared meanings and common goals (Goldhill 2006: 722), then shell money provides a material reminder of the obligations of that vow. Moreover, as Akin (1999: 126) suggests, it has become more potent as a symbol of social values and political identity as its scarcity has increased. Its continued use and value illustrates the symbolic continuity of practices associated with ancestral rights and sanctions, even while these practices are modified and reinterpreted. It is the restyling and resanctification of *kastom* in the face of development and contemporary change that I address in my final section.

Contemporary Reconsiderations of Development, *Kastom* and Well-being

Bilua concerns with recognition reflect local meaning-making practices, as Biluans try to 'find their place' and to resituate themselves in an ever-widening global community. More significant than simply a means of correction, concerns with recognition are rooted in a desire for cultural continuity and an underlying sense of unease in Bilua society. Throughout my fieldwork, I encountered a common theme: people are concerned for and

about their children, lest they might not have enough land to live on and grow gardens and that they might cease to 'recognize' and respect their relatives in the pursuit of personal ambition or individual wealth. The idea of *oluama saevo* – 'the weak life' – reflects an underlying anxiety and uncertainty in the lives of many people and their fear of the fallout of a rapidly changing and increasingly globalized world (see also Tole 1993).

Such social perceptions of decline and loss can be gauged as memory constructs rather than as necessarily representative of the past (Chapter Two). In contrast to McKinnon's (1972) depiction of Bilua people as having a very poor opinion of their pre-Christian ancestors, during my fieldwork, *lula saevo* was idealized as a time embodying the values of respect, love and obedience which people saw as waning in their present following a perceived shift in values triggered by the logging era. While people applied this idealization primarily to the pre-Christian past, it was not exclusive to it. Many senior lineage members looked back fondly to the post–World War II era of their childhoods, when colonially-appointed headmen organized and oversaw scheduled cleaning times for groups to clear, sweep and maintain roads and community spaces in order to keep villages tidy and free of disease. Such memories hearken back to an imagined past when people worked collectively towards common goals, seemingly unburdened by the problems that beset contemporary life. Bashkow describes such an ideal of community among the Orokaiva in Papua New Guinea:

> In an important way, what it means to be part of [a] community is to share in a set of culturally elaborated moral assumptions: the inherent virtue of generous hospitality; the importance of positive reciprocity in creating and maintaining relationships; the efficacy of compensation payments for effacing wrongs; the supreme importance of social harmony in producing material abundance and community well-being; the fear of jealousy and ill will as primary causes (via sorcery and criminal acts) of want, sickness, and death; the recognition of ongoing debt to one's ancestors for livelihood and prosperity; and the value of feasting as one of the highest manifestations of social good (2006: 211; see also Lerche 2008: 3).

Bashkow's description echoes Bilua understandings of *kastom* and Brown's notion of peaceful relationality explained at the beginning of this chapter. Both are suggestive of a idealized state in which everyone participates in the shared pursuit of a common good. Such idealizations reinforce ideas about which cultural values are worthy of carrying forward, and as such, they at least partially create those values. Contemporary Bilua concerns about recognition reflect the growing disparity between ideas of development and well-being and serve as reflections of the dynamic meaning-making activities that recreate, reaffirm and renew the values and experiences of previous generations.

Recognizing the Past, Shaping the Present

To Bilua people, everyday attachments such as relationships constituted through kin, land or church cannot be merely felt or known, but must be expressed if they are continue to exist at all: they must be recognized, a practice and value without which one cannot properly belong in Bilua. I began this thesis with a soccer game, an otherwise common event, which invoked a greater meaning for several spectators. I observed members of the Saeragi team looking upon their much younger, outmatched Maravari kin and acting not as competitors, but instead displaying the love and affection of older brothers, reflecting the history of their relationships as extended kin. Why did people celebrate this small moment of connection and kinship between competitors? Would the Saeragi team have acknowledged their Maravari kin in such a way if the other team had been equally matched in age and skill?

This display of recognition was perceived as meaningful by the onlookers because it manifested the ideas of love and respect that many Bilua people see as missing in the current context of social divisions. Land disputes (which emphasize exclusive land ownership in the pursuit of proprietary rights to resources and material wealth), incidents

of *pitaso*, and the perceived lack of acknowledgement by individuals who are supposed to treat one another as kin contextualize contemporary lament for an imagined past.

Although the recognition of the younger Maravari team by their Saeragi kin was laudable in its own right, this simple act of compassion towards a vulnerable group is reminiscent of the virtuous acts of their ancestors, who allowed fleeing migrants to settle, granted them land, allowed them to intermarry, and embraced them as kin. Recognition, as the act of acknowledging and fostering relationships according to the narratives and values of shared belongings, is part of the continual process of honouring the values of the ancestors in the everyday interactions of the present.

Bilua ideas of *kastom* stress processes of reconciliation and a return to unity. Through discourses of recognition, people seek to reconcile and remind one another of their connections and their obligations to each other through their shared belongings as kin, community and as Christians. Most importantly, such relationships are not seen as lost so much as neglected and in need of awareness and renewal. Recognition entails the promise of return to the cultural ideals of belonging which people imagine of the pre-Christian past.

NOTES ON LANGUAGE AND ORTHOGRAPHY

‘b’ is preceded by a prenasalized m. Thus, Bilua is pronounced Mbilua.

‘d’ is preceded by a prenasalized n. Thus, Dovele is pronounced Ndovele.

‘q’ is a voiced velar stop, as in ‘finger.’ Thus, qoqono is pronounced ngogono.

‘g’ is a voiced velar fricative (no English equivalent; a soft g that goes to h).

‘n’ is a velar nasal (as in English ‘sing’). Thus, nadale (‘afternoon’) is pronounced ngadale.

GLOSSARY

Throughout this thesis, vernacular and exotic words are italicized. This includes words in Bilua, but also, for example, in Simbo and Ranonggan. Solomon Islands Pijin words are underlined in order to distinguish Bilua's two languages. The one exception is the word '*kastom*,' a Pijin word that has been incorporated into the Bilua lexicon. As the *kastom* I am referring to is specific to Bilua, I treat it as a Bilua word through the use of italics.

Aikovakova	A contemporary Vella gloss of 'Paramansif'; also translated as 'king' (Methodist Mission c.1960)
Apakora	Niece or nephew
Aqea	To see
Auvana	The soul
Baere	Friend; can carry suggestions of sexual relationship; also a word to describe alliances between chiefs
Bakisa	A fossilized clamshell ring identified by a red band of colour; commonly used for marriage and land transactions; see *maba takula*
Bau	Bridewealth (in general); the second shell ring given in bridewealth transactions, described as the ring to bind the woman to her husband
Beku	A totem or idol
Bibaso	Reconciliation ceremony in which the two disputants eat from the same taro, usually involving a middleman; defined in the Methodist Mission dictionary as 1) to compare things; 2) to overlap, as two ends of wood overlapping when making a house
Bik man	Bigman (from Eng.); a person of influence, such as a businessman, MP or chief, able to command resources and obligations, yet whose status is not necessarily associated with the formal leadership of a particular group (informal – typically used to refer to people in the absence of another formal title, or in reference to their accomplishments)
Bilua mu ngela	Bilua people
Bisnis	Business (From Eng.)
Bouluko	To cover over or hide (as in a transgression)

Term	Definition
Bokolo	Fossilized shell arm bands, usually worn by women as a sign of status (although formerly associated with chiefs)
Buniobunio	The initial mourning ritual after a person has died, marked by singing, praying and visiting with the body of the deceased; similar to a wake
Bulezato	Reconciliation feast to restore peace between groups (*bule* – fine, peaceful, calm)
Bouluko	To resolve a problem quickly or covertly by means of compensation
Butubutu **(Roviana, Simbo, Ranongga)**	A lineage descent group or clan
Darabesi	Land rights based on participation in warfare; 'blood land' (*dara* – blood)
Developman	Development (from Eng.); an idea of progress and material wealth deriving from participation in and access to foreign resources
Devol	A spirit; a corpse
Edoloma maba	'Different people'; foreigners; people who are not related and can potentially marry (also known as *azaazama maba*)
Falom wat sif hem talem	Follow what the chief told you (From Eng.); to follow the chief's instructions
Ipu	Night; the final feast of the mourning process; the cooked meat of a whole pig that is given to the deceased's lineage during this feast
Jiku	Shell money (*bakisa* or *takula*) that represent land rights aquired through past land transactions; 'treasure.'
Jujuna	To make weight; a term referring to achieving balance in an exchange involving shell money or western currency
Kabani	A company (From Eng.); used in reference to any one of the foreign corporations harvesting Solomon Islands timber
Kabio	Incest (less commonly used than *pitaso*); see *pitaso*
Kaka	Older sibling (also *anggaka* – my older sibling)
Kalo	'Way'; disposition
Kale	Side
Kastom	Custom (From Eng.); values and practices described as 'traditional' and seen as representing the best of the ancestors
Kazu	To chew; usually used in reference to chewing betel nut

Kazu kazua	A ritual involving the incorporation of *kastom* medicine to be ingested with betel nut; said to aid in the retention of *kastom* knowledge
Kenjo	Taboo
Kezoko	A small mythical figure with the body of a man and the head of a bird; a guide for fishing
Kiadamelo	Everybody; everyone here
Kilikiniao	Loud prolonged wailing of women during mourning
-kinio	Suffix denoting action (*pazokinio* – fighting; *tupakinio* – soccer)
Kulumiduku	Land or land rights given in recompense for wrongs committed
Klosem	To close (From Eng.); to bring a problem to resolution through negotiation
Kobo	A log; an expression used to refer to a dead body
Komuniti	Community (From Eng.)
Koroto	To straighten, correct or make right, often through the exchange of shell money
Lado	Rock; an expression used to refer to a dead body
Lasive	Husband
Lekasa	Chief
Leveleveo	'Will' (inheritance); land or land rights based on a bequest
Liqomo	A spirit (and charms associated with that spirit) that bestows fighting prowess
Lolo	Friend; romantic friend
Lula madu	'The people before'; the ancestors
Lula saevo	'The time before'; refers to the time of the ancestors, typically before the arrival of Christianity
Lotu	Church; Christianity
Luk luk save	To see and to know; to recognize
Luluna **(Simbo, Ranongga)**	An opposite-sex sibling; the opposite-sex sibling relationship characterized by respect and shame; see *saqi* for Bilua equivalent
Maba	A person; an exclamation
Maba bakisa	See *bakisa*

Mabaku — A person captured during a raid who is taken as a slave or as adopted kin

Maba takula — The most common form of fossilized clamshell currency (see *takula)*

Mama — Father; father's brother

Mabuzu — Grandchild

Mabaku — A captive taken as a slave or adopted as kin

(M)bangara — The Roviana, Marovo, Simbo, Kolombangara and Ranonggan word for 'chief'; the Bilua word for God (Christian)

Mania — A kind of pudding made of canarium nut and root vegetable and prepared for important feasts

Matuma reko — A big woman

Memori — Legacy (from Eng. 'memory')

Meqora — Child

Miduku — Ground; soil

Miduku ko maulueka — 'To swear at the land' or 'to curse the land,' usually by violating an an ancestral taboo such as committing *pitaso*, laughing at the death of a chief or violating a skull shrine. Such offenses are believed to have fatal consequences for the offender and their descendants.

Miduku ko vaelo — Caretaker chief; literally 'keeper of the ground'

Muqe — Primary forest

Ndala — Shell ornament worn on the forehead

Niania — Mother; mother's sister

Nianio — Knowledge; specific lineage knowledge, including genealogical and migration histories and history of acquiring land and nut trees

Niuniu — A fish

Nujolao — A feast

Oluama — Soft; weak

Omadeu kerukeru — 'One mind'; to act together with purpose towards common goals

Omadeuma maba — 'One people'; 'same people'; can refer to people who are related or connected in some way (for example, part of the same congregation)

Onorabol — From the Eng. 'Honourable'; the formal term of address for a member of Parliament in Westminister-system governments

Pado meqora	An only child
***Pajuku* (Ranongga)**	'Land transaction'; ritual exchange and feast to secure land rights; the equivalent of Bilua *pikezato*
Pakepakeama maba	Migrants (from *pake*, 'to cross over')
Panao	Respect
Papa	Mother's brother; mother's mother's brother
Papupapu	The inauguration ceremony ('sitting down') of a chief
Paro	A luminescent jellyfish-type spirit
Paramansif	Paramount Chief (From Eng.); a chief who has acknowledged authority over other chiefs in a community, a region or on an island
Pauzuko	To adopt
Pauzuzato	Adoption; to feed
Pazokinio	Fighting; warfare
Pikezato	'Land registration'; ritual exchange and feast to secure land rights; see simen
Pinauzu	A person captured during a raid who is taken as a slave or as adopted kin; the equivalent to Bilua *mabaku*
Pitaso	Sex between classificatory kin; adultery; the payment used to compensate for these transgressions; literally 'division'
Puaro	Gift; a claim to land based on a gift
Qoqono	Everyone; community
Qurato	Shame
Ranawae	To run away (from Eng.); to flee
Raro	To cook
Ravasa	In-law
Reko	Woman; wife
Rispet	Respect (from Eng.); defined in terms of behaviour and action, rather than sentiment
Ronu	Compensation
Roquano	To love; to miss or to think fondly of someone who is absent
Rorotato	Marriage ceremony; bridewealth exchange

Rourao miduku	'Widow hanging' or 'Widow strangling'; in pre-Christian times, a process by which a foreign-born woman could obtain land rights for her children
Saevo	Life
Saqi	An opposite-sex sibling; the opposite-sex sibling relationship characterized by respect and shame
Saqimati	A form of malevolent spirit that inflicts sickness through sexual intercourse, commonly seen as female
Save	To know
Seda	Frangipani flower
Seleni	Paper currency; (from Eng. 'shilling')
Sem	Shame (from Eng.); the emotion of shame (n.); to admonish (v.)
Sem sem	Same (from Eng.); 'it is the same thing'; e.g. 'God hem sem sem nomoa' – despite denominational differences, Christian people worship the same God.
Sepele	Fighting man, second to the *aikovakova*
Siele	Dog
Siele meqora	A derogatory term for a child conceived through incest; literally, 'dog child'
Sif	Chief (from Eng.); the acknowledged leader of a lineage or a community
Sikiti	Arrow
Simen	Cement (from Eng.); pertaining to cementing a grave and/or to cementing land rights; see *pikezato*
Siqo	Bush
Sope	A skull shrine
Sore	To be sad; to miss someone or something; to sympathize (from Eng. 'sorry')
Stap tok	To 'stop talk' (from Eng.); to put an end to gossip
Taem bifoa	'The time before' (from Eng.); in reference to the time before Christianity
Taite	Grandparent
Taite lasive	Grandfather
Taite requama	Grandmother

Taite poso / Taite madu	The ancestors
Taiza meqora	A female chief; or sometimes thought to be the child of a chief
Takula	Money; the most common form of fossilized clamshell currency (see *maba takula*)
Talina	Ears; a suitor's payment to the brothers of his beloved to ensure that they will 'hear' his intention to marry her without responding violently against him (see *viqo viqolo*)
Tamania	Siblings and cousins of the same generation; a group of bilateral kin ideally characterized on mutually sustaining ties
Tamania ko meqora kidi	The *tamania* relationship between the children of two siblings or two cousins
***Tamatasi* (Simbo and Ranongga)**	Siblings and cousins of the same generation; a group of bilateral kin ideally characterized on mutually sustaining ties; see *tamania* for Bilua equivalent
Tanala	Husband; a respect term; may also describe a hamlet leader
Tanama	Wife; a respect term
Tanamu	A respected elder (usually in a church, a lineage or the community)
Tavoto	Ground oven, usually reserved for feasts; can also be used to describe a raised cone-shaped oven, formed by sticks wedged in the ground
Tevalili	A type of leaf used to disguise the smell of foreigners when passing through foreign territories; used to cleanse a house of the lingering spirit after a person has died
***Tomate* (Simbo, Ranongga)**	Ancestors; spirits; similar to the Bilua word *ziolo*
Toutou	A lineage descent group or clan
Teku	To lay down
Toni teku	Mourning feast marking the tenth day after a person has died (*toni* – ten; *teku* – to lay down)
Tubu tubu	Sores or boils; can also refer to burdens
Vaka	Ship
Vaka takula	Paper currency; 'white people's money'

Vakere	Shoulders; the third shell ring given during bridewealth, presented to the woman's lineage in acknowledgement of the supportive role they played throughout her life
Vavoulo	A sacrifice for a deceased chief, usually of captives or animals
Vatolo	Will or willpower; differs from the Protestant tenet of 'free will' in that Bilua ideas of will express hard work and common purpose in facing challenges
Vikuvikula	Genealogy (literally, 'to go down')
Vilu	Eyes; the first shell ring given as bridewealth, and the most valuable; sometimes known as *bau ko vilu*, because it 'leads the eyes' to the exchange taking place and to the change in obligations and responsibilities being signified
Viqo	To hear
Viqo viqolo	An alternate term for *talina;* a suitor's payment to the brothers of his beloved, ensuring that they will 'hear' his intention to marry her without responding violently against him (from *viqo*, 'to hear')
Visi	Younger sibling (also *avisi* – my younger sibling)
Wantok	Extended family members; a relative concept pertaining to people who speak the same language or who come from the same place, and are therefore called on to support one another; 'one talk' (from Eng.)
Ziolo	Ghost; dead body; a spirit, unnatural or human in origin
Zuzuku	Assassination; shell money that is given for assassination

APPENDIX I

History of Ijo *toutou* on Vella Lavella and the Bilua people of Saeragi Village, Gizo

Severely affected by warfare, by 1840, the people of Gizo Island were no longer able to defend themselves and fled to join allies in Bilua (Bennett 1987: 36). According to oral history, two sisters, Malileke and Riki, came ashore by a Vonunu stream they called Ijoqolekosivo ('waste water belonging to old woman of Ijo'). A Kutakabai man took Malileke to Maravari and Riki was taken to Dovele. Malileke's grandson, Qoravele, had a daughter, Pulaqoqe, who married Kubonava chief Gagara in Uzaba and gave birth to Ane and Dori.

On the Dovele side, Ivan Elopala descended from Riki and was born and raised in Supato. His father was of Sorezaru lineage from Lajaka and his mother was Ijo from Gizo Island. Prior to his birth, they had adopted Dori, daughter of Uzaba chief Gagara, who went on to become the mother of Moses Izapitu, the current Ijo chief in Maravari. Elopala married Rosi Keiqula, a woman from the Maravari hamlet of Kidoju.

The Ijo chief Geroi was recorded as the chief of Saeragi in 1946, married a Kolombangara woman, Doke, and changed her line to Ijo. Their descendants were raised in Saeragi and consisted solely of his one big family in 1946; they spoke Kolombangara language before they spoke Vella. Ivan Elopala took over as Ijo chief of Saeragi after Geroi's death and the families of his children with Keiqula still reside there today.

APPENDIX II

The Kutakabai Wars

According to oral accounts, the war broke out between members of Mudi and Kutakabai, two branches of the same lineage, in a dispute over Buni women brought back from a raid on Vona Vona, New Georgia Island. The fighting later expanded to include the larger Miqa *toutou*. In demonstration of their allegiance in return for usufructuary rights, numerous smaller lineages allied themselves with each side, some securing secondary rights through these means and inheriting the land from the previous inhabitants. Although the extent of this warfare is unknown and unrecorded, it must have been bloody since it is widely remembered as marking the end of the Viva, Mudi, Joinovilu, and Miqa lineages. As elders recount, in a major battle in the hills above present-day Barakoma, a Kaneporo warrior (a surviving branch of Miqa) fired two poison arrows (*sikiti*) over a valley where fighting was taking place, and as the arrows passed over, all of the Mudi side fell dead, no blood spilled and weapons in hand.

APPENDIX III

Madezavana,
Sub-District of Vella,
September 5th, 1946

The following are the Names of all Village Headmen and Community Cheifs [sic].

Name of Comm. Chiefs	Name of Villlage Headmen	Name of Village
Vaevo	Mark Pivo	Vonunu
Elobule	Levi Neina	Barokoma
Mene	Tolapitu Emosi Kaki (Asst. D.H.)	Maravari
Diki	Rotu	Eleoteve
Reriqueto	Tute	Niarovai
Poke	Dunio	Sirumbai
Qaqovari	Vuqa	Java
Mendana	Alepiasi	Rora?o?aokale
Ziotokana	Ziotokana	Iriqila
Silas Lezutuni	N. Luluku	Madezavana
	Maqu	Supato
	Sakegoto	Varesi
	Volosi	Sabora
Giroi	Bobi	Gizo

Dear Sir,

The above mentioned are the chiefs and V.H. of the Methodist villages ~~only~~ [sic] in Vella island only.

I have gone round to all the villages telling them about the visit of the Resident Commissioner and they were very pleased to hear of what he had said in his address. Mr. Allan had told me to fix up about all the cheifs [sic] in each village ~~when~~ and when I finished with it to send the list, so I am sending it now but I have not gone to Ganonnga and Simbo. You will find that three villages have no community cheifs [sic] so the V.H. is also acting as cheif [sic]. That is all.

I am

Silas Lezutuni

APPENDIX IV

Vella Lavella,
Methodist Mission,
Vonunu,
October 16th, 1946

The Government Headmen in conjunction with the Teachers and Village elders.

1. The Government Headmen shall attend to all Government duties and orders.
2. In conjunction with the teachers see that Lotu is held regularly morning & evening, also Sunday, and class meetings.
   Those unable to gather must take Lotu in their homes. Everyone must realise that it is the example, and witness that this will assist the young to follow Jesus Christ in all things.
3. See that every morning before or after Lotu, that the houses and villages are clean. Watch all ~~clean~~ places where fresh water is kept, so that mosquitos cannot breed.
4. With the leaders of the village draw up rules for the guidance of boys and girls. See that they are carried out. Discipline those who break them.
5. See that all have their particular work – divide the days of the week for gardening, building, canoe and copra making. ~~and native~~ The women also to have mat making, and native crafts.
6. Gather the leaders together to talk over village matters.
   (1) Sickness.
   (2) Failure to share in the work.
   (3) Discipline.
   (4) Know the reasons for failure to attend school, lotu and work.
   (5) Give discipline to those who have moral lapses, and see that there [sic] are taught the laws of God and Jesus Christ.
   (6) See that obedience is given to all in authority, and those with helping the Gospel message.

Yours Sincerely

Silas Lezutuni

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