

A HARD STONE PEOPLE:
SOCIAL RELATIONS AND THE NATION STATE
IN THE VATURANGA DISTRICT,
GUADALCANAL, SOLOMON ISLANDS

by

DAVID CRAIG RYNIKER

B.A., Wichita State University, 1985

M.A., Wichita State University, 1991

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

(Department of Anthropology and Sociology)

We accept this thesis as conforming
to the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

April 2001

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Department of Anthropology and Sociology

The University of British Columbia
Vancouver, Canada

Date 25 April 2001

ABSTRACT

Studies of nation-states have tended to emphasize how they form a common national culture and the systems and institutions involved. This has included notions about the past, territory, language, and popular culture, among others. Many such studies hypothesize the role of media and publishing in establishing the modern nation-state as a sort of "imagined community" or a "creolized culture." This study, which looks at a local people called the Vaturanga, who live in northwestern Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands, approaches the subject from the point of view of economic and communicative behaviours. It is my contention that the dynamic events and features frequently seen in modern and especially post-colonial nation-states can best be explained by reference to a constellation of relationships or associations: the divergent social networks to which people have access. The Vaturanga and their neighbours in rural Guadalcanal and their distant kin in town, illustrate these divergent social networks in such matters as economic change, ethnic relations, language and communication, and the mass media. Economic behaviours must be maintained by communication. This includes both the avenues of communication, and the meanings and symbols employed. This study especially focuses on the latter as a means to understand and comprehend the lives of the Vaturanga.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This work is dedicated to the memory of Arthur Wolff, Ph.D. (1931 - 1998), a friend who took a passionate interest in my work and in the people of the Solomon Islands, who wrote me almost every single day while I was in the field, and encouraged me with his good advice for many years. We miss you, Art!

I would also like to gratefully acknowledge the following organizations and groups: the brothers of the Society of Saint Francis, Solomon Islands Region, for their incalculable advice, assistance and help with transportation and other resources; the people of Maravovo village, who took me in, saw to my daily needs, and shared their lives with me in every way—*e utu kau padale*; and the Vancouver Crew of KSC, whose knowledge of how to relax have a good time saved my sanity during the writing of this dissertation.

The following individuals merit special mention: Arsad Baria, LL.B., my partner of seven years, who showed much patience and understanding during many delays both before and after the fieldwork and helped with the proofreading; William H. McKellin, Ph.D., my supervisor, for his Job-like patience and excellent advice; Br. Gabriel Maelasi, SSF, for his unfailing friendship and joyous demeanor; Br. Giles, SSF, for his kind assistance and good advice; Hiroshi Aoyagi, Ph.D., for his comments and critiques of my many drafts and for sharing his unique aethos with me; Elvi Whittaker, Ph.D., for her calmness and clarity; Martin Silverman, Ph.D., who gave me the privilege of working with him; Patricia Kachuk, Ph.D., who encouraged me more times than I can count; George Middle, who kept me humble with his sense of humour, and who listened when I was down; Carolyn Ryniker, my mother, who never gave up on me. To all of you, and many others, my sincerest thanks.

PREFACE

In early June 2000, Guadalcanal and the Solomon Islands were thrust into the world's consciousness when a group calling themselves the Malaita Eagle Forces, claiming to represent ethnic Malaitans in Guadalcanal, took the Prime Minister hostage and demanded his resignation and millions of dollars in compensation for displaced plantation workers. The news of this coup, coming close on the heels of a similar crisis in neighbouring Fiji, was received in some quarters as an ominous sign of the Pacific "going the way" of the rest of the Third World, i.e., down the path of instability and open ethnic conflict.

This crisis really began eighteen months earlier, in late November 1998 when Guadalcanal Provincial Premier Ezekiel Alebua made a speech demanding compensation on behalf of indigenous Guadalcanal peoples for the loss of customary lands to plantations and other developments, the town of Honiara, and the murder of twenty-five indigenous Guadalcanal islanders by outsiders. Reports of road blocks and violence and fleeing refugees followed month upon month, interspersed with the occasional report of peace negotiations. Villages were burned, "militants" were arrested and charged, riots and battles ensued. By June of 2000, just before the coup, some 60 people were known dead from the violence, many were missing, and Amnesty International estimated that there were 20,000 refugees in Honiara and a total of 32,000 people had been displaced.

I knew this much: for Vaturanga it was dangerous to travel to Honiara, they couldn't go to market, buy rice or kerosene or basic necessities. People were afraid. And they had good reason to be. The Isatambu Freedom Movement was enforcing a dress code in rural Guadalcanal, requiring the men to wear large shell necklaces, and the women to wear grass

skirts. One young man from Lambukulila village died in a mob attack near Central Market in Honiara when it was discovered that he was indigenous to Guadalcanal. Malaitan men who had married Vaturanga women were being forced to renounce their identity, to pay enormous customary fees to join Vaturanga clans and lineages, and in some cases had money extorted from them, just to be allowed to remain with their wives and children, or even to live. There were roadblocks in various places, “no go zones” patrolled by “warriors,” and an economy collapsing all around them.

Frankly, I did not expect these events when I left the Solomon Islands in May 1997. I knew that many Malaitans and Guadalcanal islanders expressed negative opinions of each other, and that there were serious concerns about customary land and development which had not been addressed to the satisfaction of those indigenous to Guadalcanal. But I also saw Malaitans and Guadalcanal islanders who were best friends, who joked, drank, chewed betel nut, and played sports with each other. I knew of Vaturanga who took in and housed Malaitan secondary school students. And I knew Malaitans who had served as village clergy in rural Guadalcanal, who sought to serve their congregations well and honourably. Around me, while I lived in Guadalcanal, were all the signs of animosity, and equally many signs of cooperation and harmony.

This study was intended to be an examination of the presence and influence of the Solomon Islands’ nation-state in the Vaturanga District, a small local area in northwest Guadalcanal, about 50 km west of Honiara, the national capital. My intent was to look at institutions and systems which have had a major impact on social relations in the local area. And from the beginning I intended to examine the emergence of ethnic consciousness,

especially as played out between Vaturanga and the migrant plantation worker population, largely of Malaitan backgrounds. This, along with many other issues incorporated into my original study plan (e.g., economic change, development, the mass media, and ideas about traditions or customs), must now be seen as the “backdrop” to a crisis. If any anthropological study may be said to lack an “ethnographic present,” this is one.

From my perspective the “relevance” and “timeliness” of this study is an unfortunate coincidence. I know and have befriended not only individuals who are indigenous to Guadalcanal, but members of the Malaitan community there. I have worried and at times agonized about their well-being. It is my only hope that this study can make some small contribution towards our greater understanding of the origins and historical conditions which channel forces and energy in the direction of conflict and violence.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

POST-COLONIAL NATION-STATES

Social Networks

This is a study of a local and rural people, the Vaturanga of Guadalcanal, Solomon Islands, and how they relate to a set of institutions and systems which, for want of a better term, has been widely referred to as a post-colonial nation-state. The nation-state in question--the Solomon Islands--is, like other post-colonial entities, the recent product of a particular dynamic that is widespread: the “colonial situation” which involved the economic and cultural subjugation of non-European peoples (Balandier 1966:54-55). This study examines the complex economic and communicative relations in a post-colonial situation from the point of view of a local community rather than the nation-state.

Nation-states, in general, are an ideological construction created in late-eighteenth century Europe (and North and South America) predicated upon new technologies of communication which allowed people not living face-to-face to “imagine” themselves as a single “nation” (see Anderson 1991). Most studies of nation-states, including the post-colonial kind, have focused on how they achieve and maintain this “imagined community” or common national culture via publishing, literature, language standardization, mass media, etc. In a sense, they are studies of a “creolized” or syncretized culture, one which synthesizes and borrows different aspects from various parts, localities, ethnicities and histories, to create a brand new whole. This new whole is given legitimacy by reference to some historical event (or set of events) which is interpreted as pivotal or defining (see Barth 1992; Hannerz 1992b; Jourdan 1995b, 1996; Foster 1995b).

This study is different. In this work, I look at how a local people are enmeshed in a set of institutions and systems, some of which are locally derived, some of which come from the nation-state. Like other studies of nation-states, I am interested in the networks of social relations. But unlike other studies, my focus here is on how those networks vary, both within that local community and between it and other identified groups. I argue that this variation is key to understanding the dynamics of post-colonial nation-states. It helps to explain the generation of internal conflict within the local community arising out of the intersection of traditional economic practices with those of the market system. Variation in social relations and networks also helps us to understand ethnic tensions as a diversity of connections to systems and institutions, local and more widespread. And it can explain relations between elites and non-elites, and urban and rural dwellers. It can even assist us in understanding how a people interpret their past and relate to their ancestors, for those are also distinctive connections. Overall, this approach is conducive to understanding how people maintain and even create new differences in the face of the synthesizing and homogenizing forces of the nation.

Thus, the Vaturanga, who live in northwestern Guadalcanal, have their own social network or constellation of social connections. These link the Vaturanga to persons, institutions, systems and even other networks. But their set of connections (their network) is unique and distinguishes them from other communities. Their network (and all such social networks, for that matter) are defined by two parameters: 1) economic behaviours, by which I mean the way people make their living day-to-day, and 2) communicative behaviours, by which I mean the way people convey information about their lives, especially as it pertains to maintaining their economic behaviours and interpreting those behaviours (see Innis (1930)

1999).

These two parameters, which I have observed during fieldwork in the Vaturanga District, form the basis for my analysis of their relationship with the Solomon Islands' nation-state. I argue that it is the varying sets of social connections and networks which can explain features which we see so commonly in post-colonial situations: conflicts over economic change, ethnic tension and violence, the role of elites (especially professionals), the subordination of certain languages and dialects, the rise of popular cultural forms, and ideologies about the past.

The Post-Colonial Situation

Post-colonial nation-states are derived from colonial entities. There are few cases in which the lines drawn on the map by Europeans in the nineteenth century have been erased or redrawn in any significant way. The nation-states in question are, almost entirely, the descendants of entities which the European powers parceled out to themselves.¹ Thus, to understand the post-colonial situation, we need to begin with the colonial situation, for which Balandier (1966) gives a concise outline:

(1) the domination imposed by a foreign minority, racially (or ethnically) and culturally different, acting in the name of a racial (or ethnic) and cultural superiority dogmatically affirmed, and imposing itself on an indigenous population constituting a numerical majority but inferior to the dominant group from a material point of view; (2) this domination linking radically different civilizations into some form of relationship; (3) a mechanized, industrialized society with a powerful economy, a fast tempo of life, and a Christian background, imposing itself on a nonindustrialized, "backward" society in which the pace of living is much slower and religious institutions are most definitely "non-Christian"; (4) the fundamentally antagonistic character of the relationship between these two societies resulting from the subservient role to which the colonial people are subjected as "instruments" of the colonial power; (5) the need, in maintaining this domination, not only to resort to "force," but also to a

system of pseudo-justification and stereotyped behaviours, etc. (Balandier 1966:54-55).

These features do not disappear when a colony becomes a post-colonial nation-state. Rather, they are given a new interpretation (Thomas 1994). These features form the basis for the post-colonial nation-state. The new entity simply has slightly different players or new names attached to them. Rather than “foreigners” being the dominant group, a new indigenous elite emerges. While the state is free to form new economic associations, it remains by and large dependent upon relationships forged during the colonial period. The priorities of this state continue to be “imposed” upon the inhabitants from the centre or capital. Antagonism continues, now between different identified groups or populations within the nation-state. Force is necessary to maintain the order of the state, and justifications for the legitimacy of the state and its power are generated by reference to indigenous histories or cultural features (see Thomas 1994; Roseberry 1989; Gledhill 1994; Comaroff and Comaroff 1992).

The Solomon Islands had all these experiences (see Bennett 1987), and its salient features as a nation-state today include markets, economic centres and peripheries, transportation systems, schools, religious institutions, mass media and various other systems which are involved in political, economic and social control. This study examines, from the point of view of the Vaturanga, the forms of interaction and communication that are central features of these systems. I focus in particular on economic change, population movement, the role of schools and missions in language and communication, and the dissemination of ideas and symbols via the mass media.

I present a progression of issues which build upon each other. Economic change and

development generate internal conflicts within the Vaturanga community, as different individuals and kin groups experience different degrees of success and market-oriented practices come into conflict with kin-based subsistence. Population movement comes with development, new groups come into the district and environs, groups with distinctive cultures, languages and practices as well as ideologies. Further contact is created by schools and missions. As national institutions, they bring people from various groups, then select among their cultural resources for particular activities: the ways they use languages, by assigning some greater status than others, and allowing some greater access to information by virtue of communicative competencies such as the ability to speak English and read and write. The mass media compounds the language situation, depending upon these new communicative competencies, and also presenting ideas about the world beyond. The Vaturanga take these ideas and use them to reassess their own social relations, especially their position relative to others in the economic and development situation, and also differences between village and town. Finally, we come full circle by returning to traditional or customary practices, which are given new significance by the mass media which disseminates ideas about the past and its relationship to the organization of space.

Vaturanga Social Relations

How is the nation-state understood by the Vaturanga and what impact has it had? I will look at six different sets of overlapping social relations, none of which are completely autonomous: 1) kin-based social relations, which are altered significantly by economic (as well as other kinds of) changes; 2) inter-ethnic relations, which are intensified by the nation-state

itself via plantation development and population movement; 3) distinctions based on linguistic and communicative competencies, generated largely by schools and religious institutions; 4) social relations with the centre of the nation-state (e.g., Honiara, the capital city), which are contextualized by mass media presentations of the outside world; and 5) relations with their own past, with the ancestors, with customary practices which are derived from ideas presented in the mass media, but which the Vaturanga use to organize local space.

Let me briefly sketch out the issues that will be developed in more detail in succeeding chapters. The market system, money, and development schemes of the Solomon Islands have served to generate not only new economic practices and strategies among the Vaturanga, but have increasingly brought them into conflict with each other. Social relations within kin groups--matrilineages and clans--have involved increasing conflict, as some groups see benefits (real or potential) while others do not. The Vaturanga are constantly facing issues of land ownership, land value, and conflicts between subsistence and market economic practices.

They find themselves in an on-going and sometimes dangerous debate over these matters that uses magic and accusations about magic. Magic has become the rhetorical idiom, a symbol utilized for arguing about what is appropriate behaviour living in the world of the nation-state, where market needs conflict with kin relations, and relationships between kin groups (as well as within) are constrained by the possibility of market gain.

The Vaturanga live in an area of considerable development that is about 50 km west of Honiara, the capital city, along one of the few goods roads in the country. This proximity to the centre of the nation-state itself has had important economic consequences. Approximately one-third to one-half of Vaturanga lands have been alienated, for either plantations or religious

institutions (see Map 5). West Guadalcanal, in general, saw a high degree of plantation development during the colonial period (Bennett 1985). With these plantations came plantation workers from a neighbouring island, Malaita. These workers, many of whom have been in Guadalcanal for decades, and some of whom were born there, form a distinct population with different cultural practices, different languages, and their own ideology about themselves and the Vaturanga. These two groups occupy distinctive economic niches within the Solomon Islands nation-state. Not surprisingly, they find themselves in conflict with each other, conflicts which are based on social relationships arising out of the nation-state, but also contexted by barriers of traditional customary practices.²

There are also social relations with their neighbours in other Guadalcanal districts-- Ghari, Savulei, Nggae, Tambulivu, Saghalu (see Map 4)--with whom the Vaturanga have a traditional relationship based on kin affiliation and reciprocity. One important feature of this post-colonial change in relation is the role schools and religious institutions have played in language and communication. The Vaturanga, along with other indigenous peoples in West Guadalcanal, speak a language which I will term Hoko.³ Increasingly one dialect of Hoko, called Ghari, is coming to dominate the others and is becoming a kind of standardized version. The Vaturanga find the words of their own dialect, Ndi, gradually being replaced by Ghari words, and increasingly find themselves needing to speak Ghari. But there are other languages in the mix too. Both English and Pijin (Solomon Islands Pidgin) are increasingly impacting and reflecting social relations. English takes on the status of "educated" and is highly valued especially in the market-oriented world of the nation-state. Competency in English allows greater access to information and institutions involved in the nation-state, while those who only

speaking Pijin or (in a few cases) only the local dialect, are disadvantaged. Newspaper, radio, and the government do not utilize indigenous languages, only Pijin and Standard English. Therefore, the ability of an individual to engage with these systems is (to some degree) related to their communicative competencies.

The mass media, which in the Solomon Islands means newspapers, radio and a nascent recording industry, also involves access to and production of social relations for the Vaturanga. First, they connect the Vaturanga beyond the borders of the local, even the national, with peoples and events and places far removed. One of the most prominent issues in the media during the course of my field work was the Bougainville Crisis in neighbouring Papua New Guinea. For the Vaturanga, the events in Bougainville, which they followed closely, became reflections of their own relations with the national. They conceived of themselves as having a role to play in the crisis, ultimately one which some Vaturanga believed helped to bring down the P.N.G. government.

Popular music, especially reggae, has become a potent symbol for Vaturanga youth about the differences between town-dwellers and villagers. Through adopting values and concepts associated with Rastafarianism, which they have learned about in reggae songs, many Vaturanga youth state ideals about village life in contradistinction with youths living in Honiara, the capital of the Solomon Islands, which is only about fifty kilometers away from the district. Reggae, which also connects them to other oppressed peoples throughout the world, provides a means of both being savvy about the world around them, and maintaining traditional values based locally in kin groups and obligations. As such, they connect with anti-colonial ideas which are world-wide in scope, and give them a local flavour.

The mass media also present to the Vaturanga ideas about their own past, and ideas of space. The mass media reflect social relations through time, and connect time to space in very concrete ways. Particularly potent is the idea of *kastom* or traditional culture, which the media presents in several ways: 1) as something in the past, 2) as a basis for economic and political claims, and 3) as a legitimation of the nation-state itself. The Vaturanga, however, have taken conceptions from the media (and from other systems and institutions) and applied them to their conceptualization of space. As such, they conceive of different directions as representing different social relations: in the bush or *longa* is the ancestors, the past, customs and traditions which live in tension with modern life. Modern life, as part of Solomon Islands, is coastal or *tasi*, where they live now and engage in many non-customary practices, and where much of the land is alienated.

COLONIALISM AND POST-COLONIALISM IN THE SOLOMON ISLANDS

Social relations can only be understood in relation to the nation-state, and the nation-state is itself a product of colonial and post-colonial processes. As such, an appropriate study begins with reference to the history of colonialism as experienced in the Solomon Islands generally, and the Vaturanga District especially.

Background/Early Contact

The Solomon Islands were named by the Spanish explorer Alvaro de Mendana who made an initial sighting in 1568. He named them so because he believed they were the location of King Solomon's mines. The archipelago, which is located about 1800 km northeast of

Australia, stretches some 1600 kilometers from Bougainville in the northwest, southeastward to the Santa Cruz and Reef Islands . The major islands are Guadalcanal, Malaita, Makira (San Cristobal), Santa Isabel, Choiseul, Bougainville and New Georgia (see Map 1). The Solomon Islands as a whole consists of an archipelago of some fifty islands and island groups with a total land area of 29,785 km² (Ernst 1994:117).

Islanders typically lived inland, in small hamlets consisting of a few households. Warfare between different groups and even different islands was not uncommon. As such, inland and preferably mountainous locations were preferred as a defensive strategy. The Vaturanga tell stories of warfare with Russell Islanders (Lavukal). Other anthropologists have reported inter-island warfare (see White 1991; Oliver 1989).

After Mendana there were only sporadic visits by European explorers to the Solomon Islands for the next two hundred years (Bennett 1987:14).⁴ Around 1800, traders began to regularly visit the archipelago. Contact was uneven, favouring certain islands over others, thus advantaging some groups over others in terms of trade goods. This precipitated some migration, mainly from Malaita (Bennett 1987:xvii-xviii). This was followed eventually by labour recruiters and missionaries (Bennett 1987:xviii; Keesing 1982a:2; Oliver 1989:65-69; Hilliard 1978:xi; Laracy 1976).

Coastal Guadalcanal peoples (including the Vaturanga) were among those "favoured" in terms of trading and contact, with few from the area choosing to migrate for economic reasons (Bennett 1987:82-83).

Beginning in 1877, the Solomon Islands were declared to be "within the loose jurisdiction of the British high commissioner in Fiji" (Bennett 1987:104). The race for colonies

by various European powers led to the establishment of the British Solomon Islands Protectorate (B.S.I.P.) in 1893 over all islands in the archipelago except for Bougainville and Buka in the extreme west (Bennett 1987:103; White 1991:98; Hookey 1969:229).⁵ The capital was established at Tulagi in the Florida Islands (now part of Central Province), to the north of Guadalcanal.⁶

The first resident commissioner, Charles Woodford, arrived a few years later, and began to implement policies and practices aimed at generating revenue and developing the area economically. These included land alienation, plantation development, labour conscription, a police force and punitive expeditions (Bennett 1987:103ff; White 1991:98). Along with these policies came increased missionization, migration and education.

Development and Land Alienation

The Solomon Islands have seen several kinds of development projects since the establishment of the B.S.I.P. in 1893. The earliest and most common were plantations which mainly grew palms for copra or oil. Plantation and subsistence agriculture still account for one-third of the gross domestic product (World Bank 1991:203). The manufacturing sector accounts for only four-percent, and employment wages for six percent (World Bank 1991:203). The largest parts of the economy are forestry and fisheries (O'Collins 1992:147; World Bank 1991:213). Mining has not become a significant part of the economy until recently (Howard 1991:119). The tourist industry has been established primarily in the Western Province, due to natural features there, such as coral reefs and lagoons. The most substantial development was initiated by Levers Pacific Plantations Limited, which had acquired 300,000 acres by 1907,

mainly through freehold purchases and certificates of occupation (Hookey 1969:236-237; Scheffler and Larmour 1987:312-313).

A number of projects have come and gone, including a prawn farming operation, a button factory, and a textile mill. There is a large cannery (Japanese owned) in Western Province, and an air courier service which flies fresh Solomon Islands fish to Japan.

As we can see, development tends to be concentrated in two provinces: Guadalcanal and Western Province. Other areas, especially Malaita, have seen little in the way of development apart from logging. Today the largest operator of plantations is Solomon Islands Plantations Limited, which operates in Guadalcanal, Central Province and Western Province.

Development has resulted in land alienation and population movement. Land alienation policies were relatively inconsistent during the colonial period, due mainly to the ambiguous status of the territory as a "protectorate" (Hookey 1969:231-232). Eventually, policies were implemented that did not grant outright "concessions" but tended to favour freehold purchases. Lands that were deemed "unoccupied" were available to development on the basis of "Certificates of Occupation" but were retained by the colonial authorities in trust (Hookey 1969:230). Land commissions in the 1920's, 1950's and 1960's attempted to encourage the registration of traditional lands, and implement other reforms (Scheffler and Larmour 1987; Allan 1957). Prior to independence in 1978, a prohibition was placed on foreign ownership of land, transferring such land to seventy-five year leases (Scheffler and Larmour 1987:315-317).

Coastal Guadalcanal, including the Vaturanga area, saw a great deal of plantation development (see Map 5). Much of the land was acquired freehold by developers mainly from Britain, and in the Vaturanga, Nggae and Ngeri districts (which are contiguous) "more than half

of the land... was sold before 1912" (Bennett 1987:119). Bathgate (1985) indicates that in the 1970's and 1980's, most coastal area of these districts remained defined as "alienated land" (Bathgate 1985:89). Almost the entire southwestern portion of the Vaturanga District was taken up by the Taitai Plantation, and the even larger Lavuro Plantation was close by in the neighbouring Ngeri District (see Map 5).

The establishment of such plantations has also entailed the migration of workers, who predominately come from Malaita, where there has been considerably less development than in other provinces. Malaitans still account for the vast majority of plantation workers, and also town-dwellers (Connell 1990:13-14; Keesing 1978:188-189; Bennett 1987:266ff). Keesing (1992) has noted that "(n)owadays, Solomon Islander are sharply stratified by class, education and mode of life..." with the Kwaio (and other Malaitan peoples) "at the very bottom" working for wages (Keesing 1992:174). Whether Keesing's analysis here is correct or not, the Malaitan plantation workers in West Guadalcanal are a distinct population with their own mode of making a living which sets them apart from the local indigenous peoples there, such as the Vaturanga.

Labour Recruitment/Migration

Unlike colonies such as Fiji, there was no large-scale importation of labour into the Solomon Islands, mainly due to the demise of the indenture system in the late nineteenth century (Bennett 1987:152). This meant that Solomon Islanders were themselves the main sources of labour to work on plantations and to fulfill certain civil functions.

From about 1800, Malaita was a source of labour for plantations in Queensland, and

blackbirders frequently called there. There was some violence associated with this, and Malaita was frequently passed over for development during the colonial period because of this (Keesing 1978). This history is still a significant factor in understanding differences between Malaitans and people from Guadalcanal: the lack of development in Malaita forms a part of their identity, but also necessitates migration to other areas, since jobs are scarce in Malaita.

Differential patterns of development have produced specific patterns of social and economic stratification. Peoples from Malaita (Kwaio, Kwara'ae, Toambaita, Are'are, Lau, and others) tend to be wage-earners and small entrepreneurs. People from Guadalcanal and Western Province, where most of the economic development is concentrated, are regarded as "landowners." Since services and institutions are concentrated in these areas, the people who live in them have greater access to education, markets, information, etc. They are also places that attract migrants. Malaitans make up the majority of migrants, and Malaitans as a whole are approximately one-third of the population of the Solomon Islands.

Language/Communication

There are approximately eighty languages in the Solomon, most spoken by only a few thousand people (Grimes 1974:367). The Vaturanga speak a dialect called Ndi, which is one of six dialects (the others being Nggae, Ngeri, Nginia, Nggaria and Ghari) of the principle language of West Guadalcanal (Grimes 1974:364; Grimes 2000). This language, which I am calling "Hoko" after the phrase *hoko ni hita* or "our language," is estimated to have approximately 6000 speakers (Grimes 1974:364).⁷ The language as a whole belongs to the Austronesian family and is classified as follows: Austronesian, Malayo-Polynesian, Central-

Eastern, Eastern Malayo-Polynesian, Oceanic, Central-Eastern Oceanic, Southeast Solomonian, Gela-Guadalcanal, Guadalcanal (Grimes 2000).

Because there are so many languages in the Solomon Islands, a lingua franca has arisen for use when encountering outsiders. Pidgin English (spelled "Pijin" in the Solomon), took on this role, allowing persons who, prior to its development, were not able to understand each other a means to converse and learn about each other (Bennett 1987:190). Pacific pidgins appear to have arisen first as trade languages in the early contact and recruitment period beginning around 1800 and following (Romaine 1988:98; Bennett 1987:79). Solomon Islands Pijin resembles Tok Pisin in Papua New Guinea, and is also grouped with Bislama, the pidgin of Vanuatu, as a Melanesian Pidgin, descended from Early Melanesian Pidgin which arose out of South Seas Jargon between 1840 and 1860 (Romaine 1988:97-99).

Pijin is spoken by roughly half the population (Tryon 1982:273), and has developed a literature of song lyrics and dramas, and also a translation of the New Testament (Solomon Islands Christian Association 1988). It is used in radio broadcasts (S.I.B.C.) and public signs, and there have been attempts to use it in newspapers in Honiara (Tryon 1982:274). It is also used as a sort of transitional language in primary education throughout the country.

Missionization

The vast majority of Solomon Islanders identify themselves as Christians. Missionaries arrived in the middle of the nineteenth century, with the Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Methodists and South Seas Evangelical Mission predominating the scene until quite recently (Bennett 1987:16, 57; Hilliard 1969:41-42; Hilliard 1978:xi). The largest presence was the

Anglican Melanesian Mission, and Anglicans outnumber other Christian groups in the islands (Hilliard 1974, 1978; White 1991; Ross 1978). Other groups include the Seventh-Day Adventists, Jehovahs Witnesses, Latter-Day Saints, and Bahai (Ernst 1994:117). Approximately 1.5% of Solomon Islanders continue to follow "traditional religions," mainly in Malaita (Ernst 1994:117).

Missions have been important in establishing schools and training centres, and ultimately changed ideas about the past, about power and social relations. They also helped to reinterpret important cultural symbols, most notably the form and extent of customary practices such as bride price, feasting exchanges, and ceremonies concerned with ancestors (Fox 1962; Hilliard 1978; Burt 1982, 1983, 1993; Whiteman 1983; White 1991; Ryniker 1991).

Guadalcanal was mainly impacted by Roman Catholic Marists and Anglican missionaries. The Vaturanga, Nggae and Ngeri districts are fairly evenly divided between these two groups (Ryniker 1991:21). The founder of the Melanesian Brotherhood, a large and influential indigenous Anglican religious and missionary order, was a Vaturanga from Maravovo village (Ryniker 1991:74; Whiteman 1983:198). The Anglican mission was headquartered near Maravovo for most of the twentieth century. The Roman Catholics established a primary mission station nearby in the Nggae district at Visale. Anglican and Roman Catholic institutions of various kinds are still prominent in this area (Ryniker 1991) which saw major competition between them during the early years of the B.S.I.P. (Larcy 1976:44).

Education/Literacy

Prior to World War II, most education took place under the auspices of missionaries, and was largely unregulated. After the war, the B.S.I.P. began to regulate and support education with public funds (Laracy 1976:146ff). Today, there are three kinds of schools: 1) national schools, 2) provincial schools, and 3) church-related schools. All are required to follow a curriculum set by the Ministry of Education in Honiara, and teachers are paid by the Ministry. Only a small percentage of Solomon Islanders attend high school (or equivalent), approximately ten percent. There is also today the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education (SICHE), which is affiliated with the University of the South Pacific. Secondary schools are located in most of the provinces.

Education has created elites "who tend to be held in exaggerated esteem by the islanders for the rewards and status it (schooling) can confer--white collar employment" (Laracy 1976:156). It has also facilitated the emergence of leaders who articulate "new means for the expression and furtherance of Melanesian interests and identity" (Laracy 1976:157).

Missions have played a major role in establishing schools in the area. Prior to 1969, the nearest primary school to the district was at Verahue. Then, a school was established at Maravovo, which was later turned into an adult training centre and a new primary school established at Vura in the 1970s. Today, this school continues as Vaturanga Primary School and in 1990 a residential secondary school (Selwyn College) moved from the Tasemboko District (in north central Guadalcanal) to the Vaturanga District near Maravovo. Both are run by the Church of Melanesia (Anglican). There are also primary schools in the Nggae and Ngeri Districts, and a residential secondary school in the Ghari District at Tangarere.

Government

The Solomon Islands, which became an independent member of the British Commonwealth in 1978, has a parliamentary type government with the British Monarch as head of state, represented by a Governor-General. The nation is divided into eight provinces: Guadalcanal, Malaita, Central Province (Ngela, Savo, Russell Islands), Renell and Bellona, Makira (San Cristobal), Isabel (Santa Isabel), Temotu (Reef, Santa Cruz, Tikopia, Anuta), Western Province (New Georgia, Ghizo), and Choiseul (see Map 1). Honiara, the capital, is administered separately. The total population of the Solomon Islands is estimated (1992) at 365,000 (Ernst 1994:117).

Prior to independence, the Solomon Islands were divided into a series of largely defunct "area councils" which have now been replaced with wards and districts. These are run by local councils, and there are also Councils of Chiefs, which elect a Paramount Chief for each ward. The Vaturanga have their own district, which is incorporated (along with several other districts to the east) into the Saghalu Ward.⁸ For parliamentary purposes, the Saghalu and neighbouring Tandai wards are combined to form the Saghalu-Tandai Constituency, but this is not an administrative category.

NATIONALISM IN MELANESIA

Anthropologists have focused on nationalism and post-colonialism in Melanesia in a number of different ways. For convenience, I divide such studies up into five categories: 1) resistance movements (e.g., cargo cults, movements); 2) the invention of tradition (e.g., *kastom* or *kastam*); 3) identity (ethnic and class distinctions); 4) development; and 5) post-colonial

approaches .

The majority of these studies present local peoples enmeshed in larger systems resulting from colonial and post-colonial processes. Often they focus on "flash points" or conflicts, or at least contentious matters of some dispute. Nation-states "appear" in these studies in various guises: as bureaucrats, agents of development, negligent (or indifferent) authorities, missionaries, political ideologues, markets, roads, schools, etc.

Resistance Movements

National identities often have their genesis in resistance movements during the colonial period. "Cargo cults" were one of the earliest responses to colonialism in Melanesia. BurrIDGE describes them as "movements of positive protest and dynamic aspiration" (BurrIDGE 1960:xvi). Melanesians generally were unused to extreme forms of social stratification, and often took great umbrage at colonial inequalities (Chowning 1977:82). Such cults have been variously described in the anthropological literature, as "religious" and "millenarian" but also have a distinctively political aspect, seeking to redress perceived wrongs. As such, they can correctly be understood as resistance movements with religious overtones (see BurrIDGE 1960; Worsley 1957; Mead 1956; Lawrence 1964; Billings 1969, 1983).

More elaborate and often longer lived movements included the Maasina Rule or Marching Rule in Malaita, which began after World War II and was active throughout much of the 1950's. It was in some ways a full-scale revolution against the colonial authorities, encompassing most of the island of Malaita, regardless of linguistic, cultural or religious affiliation (Laracy 1983).

Another similar movement occurred in southeastern Guadalcanal in the 1960's. Like Maasina Rule, the "Moro Movement" also attempted to establish a quasi-governmental system in an area regarded as receiving little or no attention from colonial authorities. This included the collection of taxes, defined offices and limits of authority for officials, and the promotion of trade and economic development (Davenport and Coker 1967). Guadalcanal islanders as recently as 1997 referred me to "Moro's village" if I wanted to learn about Guadalcanal customary practices and traditions.

Other similar movements include the "Society for the Development of Native Races" in northwestern Guadalcanal in the 1950's, and the John Frum Movement on the island of Tanna in Vanuatu during the 1930's (see Bennett 1987:299; Brunton 1981).

Invention of Tradition

Many of the movements described above involved new ideas about Melanesian traditions, even the development of completely new creation stories and ritual forms. Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983) were among the first to systematically analyze the "invention of tradition" as an important aspect of political ideology in the context of emerging states. In Melanesia, this has usually been glossed under the term *kastom* (or sometimes *kastam*) which is Melanesian pidgin for "custom" and means generally customary practices or traditions which are regarded as "Melanesian" as opposed to "Western" or "European" practices.

In parts of Melanesia, political, economic and religious change has meant that "people today have little detailed knowledge of what their own cultures were like prior to European invasion" (Tonkinson 1982:304). As such, the past is frequently interpreted in a way which

serves political and ideological necessities of the present. *Kastom*, as an ideology, has been put to diverse uses: sometimes to bring disparate groups together under a presumed "common" culture, and at others times to separate or divide one group from another (either positively or negatively), sometimes it is used in service of nationalism, and at others to resist the nation-state (see Keesing 1982a; Lindstrom 1982). Other institutions which have also played a significant role in how traditional cultures are perceived include schools (see Jolly 1982) and missions/churches (see Whiteman 1983; White 1991).

Ethnicity and Class

Studies examining ethnicity and class embody several different themes, but all relate the emergence of such distinctions to the nation-state, seeing their systems and institutions and constitutive of new social boundaries.

Among these are a group of studies that have focused on how identity is itself constituted in nation-states. The main argument in this genre is that the structure and institutions of nation-states cause identity to become more fixed, rigid, less flexible and mutable (Linnekin and Poyer 1990:2; Howard 1990:253-264). For example, in Vanuatu, the establishment of island courts has served to define culture in terms of "authenticity," making decisions which define personal and cultural identity for individuals (Larcom 1990:175ff). Increasingly in Melanesia, it is argued, identity is a matter of biology, language, race and other ascribed factors which take on cultural associations (A. Howard 1990). This is held in contrast to "Oceanic" ways of establishing identity (i.e., those which have nothing to do with nation-states), which are viewed as flexible, mutable and open (see A. Howard 1990:267-267; Watson

1990:17-18; Pomponio 1990:43).

Gewertz and Errington (1999) have looked at the emergence of class consciousness in Wewak, the major town in the East Sepik region of Papua New Guinea. Here we see how education and bureaucracy (as well as other factors) have led to the development of an urban elite in P.N.G., which disparages "bushy" non-elites, and adopts values and attitudes designed to preserve their own status, and exclude others. Ideas of custom come into play here as well, as the elites are able, via their access to information, courts, and the like, to define for others what is authentic and reasonable (Gewertz and Errington 1999).

Development

Studies on development issues in Melanesia have often emphasized the issue of identity as well. Pomponio (1992) has written extensively on Mandok islanders in P.N.G. and their experience with development and identity noting that the islanders engaged in the market economy but with their own particular goals in mind (Pomponio 1992:186ff). Development programmes which emphasize land and wealth accumulation generated social and political tensions which made success in the market-oriented system less likely (Pomponio 1992:187).

Foster, in his study of social reproduction in Tangan society (an island near New Ireland in P.N.G.) notes the role of commoditization in the emergence of concepts like *kastam*, which the Tangan contrast with *bisnis* (business) (Foster 1995a:26). One significant aspect of Tangan society in response to the introduction of a market-oriented economy is that it causes the society to "internally (differentiate)... along previously undrawn lines": in this case, according to the type of commodity production, whether it be wage earning or cash cropping (Foster 1995a:27).

This has importantly altered certain relationships, emphasizing "the household as the locus of commodity relations" and relegating kin-based systems (matrilineages) to customary practices such as feasting exchanges (Foster 1995a:28). Rather than being a matter of ideological confrontation, he sees *kastam* as an "externalization" of culture which emerged out of the necessity of engaging in two different realms of economic behaviour (Foster 1995a:28).

Post-Colonial Approaches

Post-colonial approaches have emphasized primarily the role of indigenous elites and systems and institutions involved in cultural production. Many of these studies focus on the weakness or failure of Melanesian nation-states in the face of their own vulnerability in terms of global systems and capitalism. They include studies looking at the role of violence in P.N.G. politics (Strathern 1993), population movement (Strathern and Sturzenhofecker 1994), resource development (Knauff 1995) and leadership (White and Lindstrom 1997).

Other studies have looked at the notion of national "narratives" in Fiji (Rutz 1995), and the ritual forms such narratives take (Kaplan 1995). Jourdan (1995b) has looked at how the Solomon Islands nation-state uses schooling and language (especially Pijin) to disseminate ideas about the state itself (and even to legitimate it). Furthermore, she sees the urban population of Honiara as adopting certain popular cultural forms as a means of establishing "neutral" symbols around which people from diverse ethnic backgrounds can converge (Jourdan 1995b).

Foster (1995b) similarly looks at the role of commercial advertising in Port Moresby, the capital of Papua New Guinea. He sees advertising as allowing diverse populations there to

adopt and share identities with others on the basis of consumption rather than other factors (like place of origin, language, etc.) (Foster 1995b).

Still others focus on the penetration (or lack thereof) of state institutions in more rural settings, noting how local groups are able to appropriate, even re-imagine state narratives and ideas to suit themselves, or even resist the nation-state as a whole (see Hirsch 1995; Facey 1995; Jacobsen 1995).

RESEARCH AMONG THE VATURANGA

The present study has much in common with many of the studies cited above. I focus on ideological notions of the past, and tensions generated by market-oriented economic practices. This study will also look at the emergence of ethnic relations, the role of schools, religious institutions, and the mass media. What is unique about this study is that it does not focus on a group of elites, nor on town-dwellers, or leaders, but on a local group living not far removed from the centres of power in the Solomon Islands, but also not **at** the centre.

Most of the previous studies emphasized a particular aspect of the nation-state: ideologies, national narratives, resistance movements, etc. The present study attempts to look at the pervasiveness of the state and its associated institutions in terms of social relations: that is, the means by which the Vaturanga are and are not incorporated into the nation-state, and their own perspective. The nation-state is the paradigm, but not from the perspective of a "national culture" or society, but from a small local area. I recognize, by necessity, that the processes involved are on-going, incomplete, and negotiable. There are all kinds of imaginings going on in this local area, some contested, some widely accepted, some widely rejected.

The Vaturanga are something of a unique case for an anthropologist: until recently, they were not "resisting" the post-colonial system, nor have they been left out of its many economic benefits. By anthropological standards, the Vaturanga District was not (at least during the tenure of my field work) one of those flash points of resistance, nor a case of a subaltern community.

In order to discern the experiences, circumstances, and responses of the Vaturanga, I conducted field research in the district in 1996 and 1997. This area has not seen much in the way of anthropological study, but was an area in which I had situated a previous study (Ryniker 1991). The area is an appropriate one in which to look at issues relating to nation-states, because it has been heavily impacted by various systems and institutions.

Prior Research

There have been few anthropological investigations focusing on Guadalcanal, and in West Guadalcanal only Rivers (1914) has apparently visited the area. Hogbin has written about it, but based his conclusions on reports from teachers and missionaries, rather than doing on-site data collection (see Hogbin 1937, 1938a,b). There are only a few published works on Guadalcanal by anthropologists on communities outside of Honiara, the capital (see Hogbin 1937, 1938a,b, 1964; Davenport and Coker 1967). However, geographers and historians have found the area of some interest (see Bathgate 1975, 1978, 1985; Chapman 1969, 1985; Chapman and Pirie 1974; Hilliard 1974, 1978; Laracy 1976).

Whether this paucity of anthropological interest in Guadalcanal, especially West Guadalcanal, is due to the "traditional" anthropological emphasis on "remote" locations, or to

some other factor, can only be surmised. It is clear, however, that Guadalcanal has not been a favoured place for anthropological studies, even in recent decades.

West Guadalcanal, however, is an area ripe for data collection on issues of cultural, political and social complexity. As has already been noted, it is an area with marked development, migratory patterns, religious change, language and communicative diversity, and many other factors which are contributive to the explication of issues in post-colonial nation-states.

The Researcher in the Field

In order to explore issues of local relations to national systems, I undertook fieldwork for a period of six months, from November 1996 to May 1997, living in the Vaturanga District, in a village called Maravovo (see Map 2). I had previously resided in the district during fieldwork in 1989 for my master's degree. Those circumstances fortuitously made possible many contacts with individuals belonging to all the main groups residing in and around the district.

The initial fieldwork focused on a church-run training centre at Hautambu (Ryniker 1991). During this time, I got to know many young men who were seeking vocations in the Anglican Church as Franciscan friars. That study had focused on how Anglicans in the Solomon Islands used stories and storytelling to create a "fit" between their religion (Christianity) and *kastom* (i.e., idealized traditional culture and practices) (see Ryniker 1991). The young men undertaking this training at Hautambu were from other areas, outside of Guadalcanal. Many were from Malaita and had regular interactions with other Malaitans

residing in the area. I also was introduced to many Vaturanga and made important contacts.

One of those contacts was Kesa (not real name), who lived in Maravovo village. I spoke to Kesa in 1989 about doing a study of the Vaturanga people and culture, and over the intervening years, we maintained contact. When I returned to the district on a short visit in 1995, Kesa remembered me, and at that time, we discussed plans for the actual fieldwork, and to live in the village of Maravovo.

During those three weeks in 1995 I also collected a basic file on the Vaturanga language, Ndi, and hence was able to begin the process of learning words and terms, if not grammar and parole. My previously acquired competency in Pijin would have to suffice for communication in most instances, at least in the first few months of the second field experience. It proved to be utilitarian in many contexts, however, and on occasion its very use elicited data.

An agreement was reached to build a house for me, and the processes involved in obtaining the research permits were initiated. Permission of the local chiefs in the Vaturanga District was obtained, and ultimately, the necessary research permits, from the Province of Guadalcanal and the Ministry of Education, were granted.

The Field Site

The Vaturanga District is one of the smaller subdivisions of the Province of Guadalcanal. The official definition of the district is from the village of Paru to the *isu* (point of land) at Hautambu (see Map 2). This area begins approximately 50 kilometers west of Honiara, going along the main road called the Tandai highway. The district is bordered on the east/northeast by the Nggae District, and on the west/southwest by the Ngeri District.

In this small area, only about ten kilometers from end to end, are approximately a dozen villages and hamlets, an Anglican Church-run residential secondary school, the headquarters of the Anglican Sisters of Melanesia (at Veranaaso), and the training friary of the Anglican Society of Saint Francis (at Hautambu). The latter three institutions are situated on land which, until the 1980's, formed the Taitai Plantation.

Adjacent to the western/southwestern border of the district is the quite large Lavuro Plantation. While this is officially in the Ngeri District, the people who live in the surrounding areas of this plantation speak the same dialect (Ndi) as the Vaturanga, and call themselves Vaturanga as well (the government defined border, as with borders in many places, does not precisely correspond to local usage).

Gender Issues

In this study I have not specifically addressed issues of gender and gender inequality. I have looked at the division of labour, the roles of women, and interviewed women about their points of view, but not as "women" so much as simply as members of the community. This is not to imply that the relations between the sexes in the Vaturanga community are characterized by equality, indeed they are not. It is rather that the focus of this study does not incorporate the issue of gender.

Although Vaturanga women customarily are confined to the "domestic" sphere, this does not mean that their contributions are devalued (see Strathern 1984, 1987). They do the bulk of the gardening, some fishing, most of the cooking, and child-rearing, etc. Public roles, which are often the focus of this study, tend to be reserved for men. Although the Vaturanga

maintain matrilineal descent groups, the practice of patrilocality tends to limit the political involvement of women, who are often separated from their lineage and lineage resources (see Nash 1974).

While in terms of such customary aspects of culture this division continues, in modern life women are making inroads outside of traditional domains. Women serve as teachers, and in community organizations such as the Mother's Union (whose head is a member of the local Church Committee). The Sisters of Melanesia, who have their headquarters at Veranaaso in the Vaturanga District, are an example of women receiving an education and setting their own standards. All Vaturanga children today, regardless of gender, attend primary school, and a few girls attend secondary school, although not at the rate of boys. Certainly the impacts of the nation-state and its systems and institutions on gender relations would form an important and valuable follow-up study to the present case. Women do play a large role in market selling and buying. Gender however plays a very limited part in their roles as merchants.

In terms of practicality for the present study, I was also restricted in terms of my ability to engage with women. There are traditional taboos limiting male-female interaction, and almost always when I was speaking with a woman, a male relative was present. Women were also less likely to know Pijin or English, which made it more difficult for me to interview them, given my initially limited knowledge of the local language.

A few women did take a strong interest in my research, and form an important, if small, part of this study. They especially had much to say about ethnicity, and often took a stronger tone about plantation workers than males. They also frequently commented about magic, and were often seen as victims of it. Women also used the Vaturanga "character" of being "hard

stone" or "stubborn" to their advantage, as a means of resisting male domination with humour: I know of cases in which women formed "gangs" that were allowed to "harass" unmarried males, especially on New Years Day.⁹

Rationales and Strategies

I returned to this district in November 1996 and commenced formal field research that month. My research plan focused on looking for explicit instances in which the local people encountered the nation-state and its systems. But what are such instances? How are they to be discerned? How are they to be defined?

The definition of the cultural apparatus, those systems involved in "selecting, supporting, disseminating, interpreting" provided a clue (Hannerz 1992a:83-84). A conscious decision was made to direct my attention towards public events, which would likely be occasions upon which issues relating the local people to the nation would surface. This strategy involved attending weddings, church services, feasts, committee and board meetings, market days, sporting events, public entertainments, etc. Details of the events were recorded and followed-up by formal and informal interviews. Newspaper and radio accounts about events were also collected, as well as data on how local people utilized these as sources of information.

But it was also necessary to understand how the Vaturanga live their lives, day in and day out. Without a knowledge of their economic behaviour, language and communication styles, social organization, and traditions and beliefs (*kastomu*) there would be no means of determining the intersection between their daily lives and their use and interpretation of national symbols and systems. As such, a basic ethnography was collected, consisting of the

documentation of material relating to subsistence, exchange systems, language, kinship, leadership, sodalities, oral traditions, religious beliefs, magical practices, etc.

A third strategy consisted of conducting a survey which focused on three areas: 1) education, literacy, and use of the media; 2) ethnic background, identity, language knowledge and usage; and 3) use of money, participation in markets, population circulation between the district and Honiara (or other areas). This survey was intended to provide data on the pervasiveness of the cultural apparatus, of ethnic and linguistic diversity, and of participation in markets and money-oriented activities. I managed to survey all twenty-five households in Maravovo village. The raw survey and results are presented in the Appendix.

These three strategies allowed me to construct a reasonable picture of the relationship between the Vaturanga District and the Solomon Islands nation-state. Public events and occasions upon which the various media were prominent provided considerable insight into the specific kinds of interactions that take place with the cultural apparatus, how the local people perceive these interactions, their attitudes, moods, sense of purpose. Collecting the basic ethnography permitted me to observe in detail their regular activities and their connections with nation-state systems and institutions. The survey provided statistical evidence of activities or circumstances in which the nation-state is prominent.

COLONIAL AND POST-COLONIAL PRACTICE

Framework for Analysis

There are many theoretical models of how nation-states and post-colonial systems operate. I take as a point of departure Innis' (1930, 1999) study of the fur trade in the formation

of colonial and post-colonial Canada. Innis looked at how Canada was formed out a pattern of economic and communicative networks based on the fur trade, alliances with various groups, competition between other groups, and lines of communication which spanned not only Canada, but went back to Europe and became part of a global system. In so doing, he defined how Canada came to be as a nation.

Essentially, Canada exists as a unit because it has its own established patterns of communication in goods, people and ideas which lock people into a set of social relations with each other. Canada would not exist as a nation, and Canadians would not exist as a people, without this pattern.

Barth (1992) talks about such systems as “disordered” and “open” in that they consist of “events” and “acts.” Events are observable behaviours, while acts are “interpretations” or “intents” given to the “events” (Barth 1992:21). Economic (and other behaviours) are open to various interpretation, even argument and debate. Hannerz (1992b) also sees such systems as characterized by “openness” and adds “inclusiveness” in that all sorts of relationships, including very temporary ones, are accounted for and sometimes even significant (Hannerz 1992b:40-41).

All of this helps us to understand the nature of social relations in such systems. Various groups within the colonial situation had different experiences with it: some areas and groups were favoured for greater development than others, (see Roseberry 1989). Some indigenous people were educated and trained for positions in the colonial bureaucracy or the church. Populations were moved around to provide labour on alienated land. All of these are economic behaviours which continued in the post-colonial nation-state.

Equally important is the associated communication about those economic behaviours.

By this I mean the meanings people attach to them, the debates they have about them, and the symbols generated. The specific metaphoric and symbolic contents, that is, the “acts” associated with the “events” are changed in response to independence, as local peoples (or at least some of them) gain control over the institutions and systems of the nation-state (Gledhill 1994). The systems themselves are proclaiming legitimacy, by making reference to history, or shared cultural features or languages. Nation-states need a story (Anderson 1991). The centralization and regulation of economic activity, a practice which concentrates power in financial and political centres, requires standardization of language and communication. Those in power develop or foster associations of the nation-state with powerful and meaningful cultural symbols, either by invention or co-optation (Roseberry 1989).

Constellations of Association

The development of nation-states is often discussed as creolization, or sometimes syncretism. This is the amalgamation or synthesizing of various parts into a new whole, which is usually identified as a sort of “national culture.” Indeed, Hannerz (1992b) and Jourdan (1995b, 1996) postulate such creolization in Nigeria and the Solomon Islands respectively.

Hannerz, for instance, notes:

In my studies of contemporary Nigerian culture I have been impressed with the strong centre-periphery orientation which has in large part changed what use to be a mosaic of mostly locally oriented cultures into a national culture ordered by a somewhat ambiguous hierarchy of small, intermediate and large urban centres... Media, commoditized culture, the education system, and the movement of people all draw this hierarchy together in different constellations of linkages (Hannerz 1992b:50).

These studies focus on towns, rather than rural areas. Towns are places where populations

mix, and where people from diverse backgrounds must find common ground to engage in activities. Here, temporary associations may be more significant than in rural areas, where circumstances change less quickly and the tempo of life is slower. In towns, people have to find out what they share, have in common, and live together.

While there may be forces bringing about cultural creolization in such places, I contend in this study that there are many equally important forces which act against it. Hannerz (1992a) makes much of the fact that the “cultural apparatus” of a nation-state (i.e., those systems and institutions which are engaged in disseminating cultural symbols and their asymmetrical nature) are not uniformly and evenly distributed throughout any area. Roseberry (1989) makes a similar point in observing that they are uneven in nature, concentrated in some areas but almost absent in others. Furthermore, people have different social networks available to them via systems and institutions not derived from the nation-state: from kin groups, subsistence patterns, villages, local associations, sodalities, etc. Although there is discussion about this differential distribution, there is little examination of its significance outside of the political and economic centres.

Understanding and explaining the events, and meanings attached to events, within modern nation-states, requires that we pay attention to the constellation of associations which are available to people. These vary considerably according to such factors as place, language, customary practices, population movement, development history, education, and religious affiliation. In the next chapter we will look at the constellation of associations available to the Vaturanga, examining not only their traditional social relations and customs, but the institutions and systems of the Solomon Islands’ nation-state that is present and impacting their lives.

CHAPTER TWO: THE NATION-STATE IN THE DISTRICT

INTRODUCTION

The Solomon Islands as a set of institutions and systems (i.e., as a post-colonial nation-state) impacts the Vaturanga District in a number of ways. The colonial experience generally created new territorial units and with them a set of institutions and systems: bureaucracies, governments, courts, schools, markets, development projects, plantations, etc. Around these territorial units, histories, myths, stories--symbols--are generated (Gledhill 1994; Anderson 1991; Roseberry 1989). This is particularly important once the colony becomes an independent nation-state.

Hannerz (1992a) has termed the systems and institutions involved in generating such symbols the "cultural apparatus" which he sees as involving those systems which are "engaged in selecting, supporting, disseminating, interpreting" in relation to the nation-state (Hannerz 1992a:83-84). Our interest here is to identify such systems that are associated with the Solomon Islands nation-state and are present and have a significant impact upon the Vaturanga District, particularly in terms of social relations. These systems can be organized into five broad categories: 1) social groups, 2) economic systems, 3) governmental institutions, 4) other formal institutions, and 5) the mass media. Each of these categories represents different sorts of social relations for the Vaturanga.

The various systems and institutions of the post-colonial nation-state generate or redefine social categories or groups. These categories arise mainly out of two factors: migration and increased mobility (population movement/circulation) and divergent economic opportunities. In the Vaturanga District there are numerous categories which are contextualized

by these factors: 1) the Vaturanga themselves, 2) the returning descendants of Vaturanga who had migrated to other places in the early colonial period, 3) migrants from other West Guadalcanal districts, 4) temporary workers, students and trainees, and 5) plantation workers, who largely come from (or are descended from those who came from) Malaita.

Although all of these categories are illustrative of the impact of the post-colonial nation-state on the district, the first and fifth categories (Vaturanga and Malaitan plantation workers) experience a considerable degree of economic divergence, to the point that social boundaries are created between the two groups. Although often bridged, the effect of such boundaries is to generate a degree of tension between the two groups so that they negatively characterize each other. We see in this the emergence of ethnic tensions which have, in recent years, led to violence and conflict.

Economic systems in the Vaturanga District involve the intersection of market and development driven systems on the one hand with local subsistence practices and patterns based on matrilineal control of resources and reciprocity. Although the Vaturanga have experienced considerable land alienation and development, both within and nearby the district they continue to rely heavily on subsistence: growing food in the gardens, keeping pigs, fishing on the reef, and hunting in the bush. They also participate in markets, both as buyers and sellers, and there is much interest in development projects. Their participation in such systems has an impact upon their subsistence practices. The possibilities of making money, the opportunities to do so, mean that land takes on new values, market values. Thus, these market and development driven activities affect the non-market economic activities, especially how land is distributed and the associated "traditional" exchange system.

Governmental, political and judicial institutions also have an important impact. The system is set up so that "traditional" systems of authority intersect with the nation-state at several key points. Apart from levels of organization (e.g., provinces, districts, etc.) the major institution through which the government makes its influence felt locally is the Customary Land Courts, which consist of magistrates appointed by the government but qualified by their knowledge of local customary practices and traditions. Politically, the Vaturanga belong to constituencies in federal and provincial systems. They also share a Paramount Chief with neighbours in several adjacent West Guadalcanal districts. All of this enshrines, to some degree, the customary practices and authority structures of the Vaturanga, but it also gives them a new, formal aspect. Chiefs feel compelled, by the government's recognition of their authority, to interpret custom strictly, but they also seek to maintain harmony and resolve local conflicts (a customary role); many such conflicts arise, as we shall see, because the necessity of legally defining what is customary.

The other major formal institutions which are represented in the Vaturanga District are of two kinds: educational and religious. There are two schools located in the district, both controlled by the Church of Melanesia (Anglican). In addition, the Anglicans are present in the district in the form of three religious orders and three village churches, plus the headquarters of the district priest for all of Guadalcanal. The Roman Catholic Church is also present in the area.

Local schools and churches are part of larger national institutions and through them, the Vaturanga learn about other parts of the Solomon Islands, and these institutions bring to them issues, goals and values derived from the national level.

Schools and churches have a huge impact upon language and communication issues. They are important means by which Vaturanga encounter new languages (such as Pijin and Standard English) and literacy. The churches also utilize different dialects of the West Guadalcanal language, to varying effects. Both sets of institutions require attention to how you communicate, the effectiveness of communication, and the need for new communicative skills. They do this via educational priorities, weekly (and sometimes daily) services, special events (dramas, meetings, councils, festivals), and also publishing.

With education and missionization come new language competencies (literally new languages and new abilities like literacy). These give the Vaturanga access to other systems, like newspapers, radio and the recording industry.

These mass media bring attention to issues of many kinds: politics, government, health, lifestyle, development, business, and conflicts, within the Solomon Islands and beyond. The mass media also present ideas and notions about the nation-state itself. There is a degree of congruence between how the mass media (such as newspapers and radio) present an issue and how the Vaturanga think about themselves.

SOCIAL GROUPS

Vaturanga live in local villages. However they recognize others who are or have lived away from the area as members based on kinship. I have identified five groups living in or near the Vaturanga District: 1) the Vaturanga themselves, 2) the returning descendants of Vaturanga who had migrated elsewhere (mainly to Central Province), 3) migrants from other parts of Guadalcanal, many of whom they regard as kin (or can by some method incorporate into local

kin groups), 4) temporary workers, students, clergy, staff, teachers and trainees at various institutions in the district, and 5) plantation workers from Malaita.

The relations between these categories or groups need to be understood in relation to two contexts: 1) traditional West Guadalcanal social organization (i.e., kinship, marriage patterns and residence patterns), and 2) the divergent experiences of development within the Solomon Islands nation-state, especially the different histories of Malaita and Guadalcanal.

Vaturanga Social Organization

The Vaturanga see themselves as one part of a larger community of peoples who live in West Guadalcanal, including those who call themselves Nggae, Ngeri, Ghari, Tambulivu, and Kakabona. These peoples share the same language (although they speak different dialects) and have customary practices in common. The latter includes aspects of kinship, land tenure, feasting, and political authority. The implication of these shared practices is that there is a strong web of economic and social relationship established by long tradition throughout West Guadalcanal.

A particular case is illustrative of this web and the complex factors involved in group affiliation: Kesa (all names are pseudonyms) is the son of a Vaturanga. His father, Cheche, although Vaturanga, grew up in a Ngeri village further down the coast. When Cheche married, he took his wife, Alu, who is Ngeri, to the Vaturanga District, where he had never lived, but where his corporate descent group has land, and established his family there. His son, Kesa, belongs to a corporate descent group which has land in both the Ngeri and Ghari Districts further to the south, but no land in Vaturanga where he was raised. When there is an occasion

which calls for feasting, *kavo ome*, Kesa must call upon kin relations in the Ngeri and Ghari districts. When these relatives have such occasions, they call upon Kesa and his brothers and sisters as well. Thus, if Kesa were paying a bride price, he could call upon his kin in the Ngeri and Ghari Districts to not only come to the feast involved, but to contribute to it in a substantial way.

This complex web can be understood in part by reference to three rules: 1) matrilineal corporate descent groups, 2) marital exogamy, and 3) patrilocal residence. The far-ranging nature of this web is furthered by such aspects of the nation-state as roads, markets, and associated economic opportunities.

In West Guadalcanal, including the Vaturanga District, land is controlled corporately by matrilineal lineages and clans. There are six *duli* or matrilineal clans which exist throughout West Guadalcanal: *Kakau*, *Lakuili*, *Haubata*, *Kidipale*, *Kiki*, and *Simbo*. Only the first four of these have an important presence in the Vaturanga District, the last two having no land or much of any presence there (they do have presence and significance in other districts, however). These clans are divided into *puku* or lineages which actually own particular tracts of land. They are all grouped roughly into two moieties, although these moieties are not prominently featured in the social organization.¹⁰ This information is presented in Table 2.1.

Referring to the case of Kesa given above, we can identify a set of interrelationships between specific *puku* (lineages). Kesa, his mother Alu (and his siblings) all belong to the Lakuili clan, and within that to the Lakuili Sangavulu lineage. His father's clan is Kakau, and his lineage is Kakau Tina. When he married Alu, who is Lakuili Sangavulu, he and his kin established a relationship between their two clans through a kind of feasting exchange known as

vuvuti which recognized the marriage and any children which result as belonging to the Lakuili Sangavulu.

Table 2.1: Clans or *duli* in West Guadalcanal.

Kakau*	Lakuili
Kakau	Lakuili
Kidipale	Haubata
Kiki	Simbo

*Kakau and Lakuili are names of both clans and moieties.

For Kesa, the Lakuili Sangavulu are his closest kin and the source of his wealth (or potential wealth). His sisters and their children also belong to this lineage, and his relationship to them, as maternal uncle or *pupu* gives him authority over them and establishes certain customary *tambus*. His relationship with his own children (and those of his brothers) does not contain this corporate tie. Although these relationships, in which he is referred to as *kaka*, are important, they are qualitatively different because they do not share in his descent group.

The customary practice is that of clan exogamy, and all but one relationship that I encountered in the district exhibited this.¹¹ In maintaining this rule, the Vaturanga maintain a host of customary rules related to land distribution, exchange and economic practice.

The practice of patrilocality is also strongly indicated by the data. Table 2.2 presents the data for seventeen married couples from Maravovo, asking them in which area does their lineage own land. As indicated, husbands are more than twice as likely as wives to belong to lineages with land in the Vaturanga District, with a ratio of 13 to 6. Wives were almost three times as likely to belong to a lineage with land in a different area than husbands, with a ratio of

11 to 4. Patrilocality means that children grow up away from their lineage and associated lands. Men, when they marry, tend to move to the area where they have access to such land. Women effectively lack control over resources. They will, of course, use their husbands' land. This usually requires an additional arrangement termed *sui kokochi*, another kind of feasting exchange. This occurs because the children who are living off of that land do not belong to the lineage and the other members of the lineage must get some benefit out of this. Sometimes women will *sui* land from other lineages (i.e., not their husband's *puku*). The latter often occurs when the both the husband and wife belong to lineages with land elsewhere.¹²

Table 2.2: Location of lineage (*puku*) land for husbands and wives in Maravovo.

Land in:	Vaturanga	Other
Husbands	13	4
Wives	6	11

The matrilineal clans and lineages, rules of marital exogamy, and the practice of patrilocality are all strongly indicated in the data. These practices weave complex ties for the Vaturanga throughout West Guadalcanal, creating networks of affiliation throughout a widespread community with many economic and subsistence options available to them.

Ethnic Groups

The emergence of ethnicity in the Vaturanga District is related to the experience of the Solomon Islands as a whole during colonialism. This involved divergent histories in terms of

development policies and population movement.

The earliest contacts between Solomon Islanders and Europeans varied from island to island in significant ways. Guadalcanal tended to be favoured by European traders in the early contact period (1800 - 1850), whereas Malaita, during the same period, was an important source of labour for plantations in Queensland and Fiji (Bennett 1987:xvii-sviii; Keesing 1982:2). Once the B.S.I.P. was established in 1893, Guadalcanal, Central Province and areas to the west were strongly favoured for plantation development, which was accompanied by land alienation and direct contact by resident ex-patriot owners and managers (Hookey 1969; Scheffler and Larmour 1987). These plantations mainly produced copra and palm oil. Malaita was avoided, in large part because of a history of (sometimes violent) resistance to outsiders (see Keesing 1982). Even today, Malaita has only two plantations and when a logging concession was granted in West Kwara'ae in 1996, violence ensued and the company withdrew.

Many Malaitans, seeking sources of income unavailable on their home island, migrated to other parts of the Solomons to work on plantations. Simultaneously, Guadalcanal peoples saw a good portion of their land alienated and turned into plantations: as much as fifty percent of Vaturanga land (Bathgate 1978, 1985).

Alienation and labour migration redefined social groups. Table 2.3 presents data on the origins of people living in Maravovo village. I asked 120 people of Maravovo village the question "Who are your *wantoks*?" including all adults and children residing in the village.¹³ In this table we see nine group affiliations: Vaturanga, Ngeri, Ghari, Tambulivu, Tasemboko, Savo, Nggela, Russell Islanders, and Malaitans. Of these, Ngeri, Ghari and Tambulivu are West Guadalcanal peoples who share a common language and set of customary practices with

the Vaturanga. The Tasemboko come from a different part of Guadalcanal, while Savo, Nggela and the Russell Islands form Central Province to the north of Guadalcanal. A small group identifies Malaitan peoples as their *wantoks*.

Several of these groups can be combined or compacted. For instance, Ngeri, Ghari, and Tambulivu are West Guadalcanal peoples who are related (consanguineally and/or affinally) to the Vaturanga. Together, these groups make up 6.7% of the population (or 8 out of 120). But, their children, who claim both Vaturanga and another West Guadalcanal group, comprising the joint categories labeled Vaturanga/Ngeri and Vaturanga/Ghari groups, give us another 9.2% (or 11 out of 120) who can claim ties to other parts of West Guadalcanal and rely upon kin and resources there. This makes a total of 15.9% (or 19 out 120) of the population who can claim to be part of the complex kin ties described above.

Table 2.3: Who are your *wantoks*? Maravovo village, N=120.

Group	Number	Percentage
West Guadalcanal		
Vaturanga	73/120	60.8%
Ngeri	4/120	3.3%
Ghari	2/120	1.7%
Tambulivu	2/120	1.7%
Vaturanga/Ngeri	9/120	7.5%
Vaturanga/Ghari	2/120	1.7%
Other Areas		
Tasemboko	1/120	0.8%
Savo	5/120	4.2%
Vaturanga/Savo	13/120	10.8%
Russell Islands	3/120	2.5%
Vaturanga/Nggela	1/120	0.8%
Malaita	2/120	1.7%
Vaturanga/Malaita	3/120	2.5%

Those who claim Savo and joint Vaturanga/Savo are largely the descendants of Vaturanga who migrated to Savo decades earlier, and have now returned to the Vaturanga District. This combined group makes up 15% of the population (or 18 out of 120). They can claim land and resources in Vaturanga, and a few in Savo, but not elsewhere in West Guadalcanal, because they lack the intermarriage pattern with other areas of West Guadalcanal.

The small group (7.5% or 9 out of 120) from Tasemboko, Nggela and the Russell Islands are among those who have been allowed to *sahe* (that is join) Vaturanga clans. They make up 4.1% of the population, and in most cases have married Vaturanga. These tend to be the descendants of workers, officials or clergy who were assigned to the Vaturanga District and married locally.¹⁴

Two people (1.7%), both men, claim Malaitans as *wantoks*. In both cases, they married Vaturanga women. One has joined a Vaturanga lineage, the other has not. It is the latter who identified his children as Mixed Vaturanga/Malaita.¹⁵

These groups represent those who have been strongly incorporated into the Vaturanga community. Those who claim *wantoks* elsewhere are part of the community by virtue of their participation in the nation-state. Their experience has involved population movement related to development, access to markets, etc.

Two other groups also reside in or near the district in large numbers: 1) temporary workers, students, and trainees; and 2) Malaitan plantation workers. The first of these is a highly diverse group, its members belonging to various identity categories, including some Europeans, Australians, Indians and Americans. They also include people from all provinces in the Solomon Islands, including other parts of Guadalcanal, Malaita, etc. This group is defined

by education. They are teachers, missionaries, district priests, students, religious brothers and sisters in training. They have a distinctive economic life, mainly relying upon wages. They provide the dynamics of contact with peoples from elsewhere in the Solomon Islands. They live and work on land that has been alienated, primarily the former Taitai Plantation which has now been divided into several parts. The impact and participation of this group in Vaturanga life is discussed below under "Schools and Missions."

The second group, Malaitan plantation workers, are a large, identifiable group which lives apart from the Vaturanga, mainly at the large Lavuro Plantation which is adjacent to the Vaturanga District. They make their living by producing copra. There is limited interaction between the Malaitans and the Vaturanga. Although there is some intermarriage (as indicated in Table 2.3), this is not as important as other forms of intermarriage in the Vaturanga District.¹⁶ Thus, this group lacks close ties to local peoples. They do not participate in the complex kin ties which give those identified in Table 2.4 access to local land resources. Rather, they tend to rely upon wages to make their living.

Thus, how people are ethnically identified is related to their history and economic affiliation. Vaturanga themselves are able to not only claim land in their own district, but can rely upon kin ties in various parts of West Guadalcanal because of the traditional practices of clan exogamy, patrilocal residence, etc. To various degrees, these are accessible to others who are incorporated into the community either through marriage or *sahe*.

Those associated with schools and missions have yet another mode of living, but also participate (as will be seen below) in the local community in some significant ways, creating important and meaningful ties with Vaturanga.

The final group, Malaitan plantation workers tend to be very separate from the Vaturanga, their participation and contact often limited to their children's schooling and the need for certain resources and services such as water and transportation.¹⁷

THE ECONOMIC SYSTEM

The economic system in which the Vaturanga find themselves enmeshed consists of two strains--a subsistence pattern derived from local traditions, and a market-oriented pattern derived from the colonial and post-colonial experience (i.e., from the Solomon Islands nation-state). These two strains intersect frequently and affect each other. These intersections underlie many of the issues, problems and conflicts the Vaturanga face as part of the Solomon Islands nation-state.

Vaturanga Subsistence

The Vaturanga engage in many subsistence practices which provide for them: they have gardens and fruit groves, practice animal husbandry (pigs and chickens), and extensively fish and hunt. These skills are useful in the world of the marketplace, where one can sell fish or vegetables in town (see Bathgate 1978), but primarily are engaged in to provide a subsistence-based living. Many basic needs are met by the subsistence economy, but cash is increasingly important. Although they rely heavily upon subsistence practices, commercially produced foods (especially tinned fish, rice and dried noodles) are eaten daily.

The gardens are quite extensive and are primarily located in the bush, although many are quite close to the villages. The practice here is horticultural, emphasizing hand held tools.

There is also some swamp cultivation. In these gardens Vaturanga grow a variety of tubers--sweet potatoes, taro, yams, cassava, panna--which form the bulk of their diet. They also cultivate tomatoes, green beans, corn, eggplant, melons, pineapples, papaya, oranges, bananas, and betel nut, which they both consume and sell in markets.

A considerable amount of land is needed to grow these crops, and because that land is only fertile for about seven years, old gardens must be abandoned and new ones planted. Thus, the actual amount of land needed by each kin group is quite large, as much of it must go unused, allowed to lie fallow (generally for ten or more years) before it can be planted again.

Women and children spend much of the day in the gardens, but especially early mornings before it gets hot. They must regularly weed and cut brush. They must also harvest what is ripe before it spoils or is eaten by wild pigs or birds. They are also very careful to recycle seeds and to save roots for future propagation. Garden magic is called *biti* and is used by women.

Pigs and chickens are kept for food, and dogs are kept to help in hunting. Domestic pigs especially are a significant form of wealth and are not generally eaten except at feasts and special occasions. Thus, they do not form a part of the daily diet. Nonetheless, they involve a great deal of care. They must be penned (to keep them out of the gardens), fed, watered, and protected from the dogs.¹⁸ Chickens are allowed to roam freely, though the survival rate does not appear to be high. Sometimes they are cooped, which is more successful. Women and girls do most of the work associated with taking care of pigs and chickens.

Fish provide a major source of protein in the Vaturanga diet. The Vaturanga identify seventeen different kinds of fishing, covering both the ocean and rivers. Many of these are no

longer practiced, or are practiced only in preparation for feasts. Others are daily or nightly activities. Some fishing is engaged in only by women, others only by men. Still others require the whole community's involvement if they are to be successful: in these activities, thousands of fish can be caught at once.

Men especially will stay out all night on canoes with lamps which attract fish. This is usually fishing with a pole or line (*kedoha*). Women tend to fish from shore and less often than men. It is an especially popular activity among young men and boys.

Another primarily male activity is hunting, which is called *ruhu* if it involves wild pigs, and *kekena* if it is other animals. *Ruhu* can involve large hunting parties that last a week or more, or can involve shorter trips of only a day or night. Hunting is engaged in for various purposes, including supplementing the diet and preparations for feasting. It is usually engaged in by men related to each other, and the results shared according to kin affiliation.

Regardless of the purpose, dogs are an important part of the hunt. The night before you go out hunting you must feed the dogs ginger, after which you must *susui* them (drive them through a split bamboo). This is a kind of medicine or magic which will make the dogs want to hunt. You take up to eight dogs. In the morning, you will wake up early and bang your knife on your spear. This will excite the dogs and make them come to you.

The men in the party must be sure they want to hunt. If anyone is unsure, they must stay behind, as it will spoil the hunt if you are double-minded. Also, those who do not go out hunting are not allowed to talk about the hunters, as this also will spoil their luck. A small party will catch four or five pigs in a day or two. The dogs are used to corner the pigs and deliver the initial wound. Once the pig is wounded, the men will spear it. Sometimes they will keep the

pigs alive and carry them back to camp tied up on sticks. If it is a long hunt, they will establish a camp and women will stay there to help prepare the pigs to take them back to the village.

Hunting was a common activity, and some men seemed to specialize in it. A few could be paid to hunt for you. More often, it was used to supplement their daily diet, and the hunting parties lasted only a day and a night. Large and extensive hunting parties would go out in preparation for feasts. This meat would be eaten as one part of the feast, but not used in formal exchanges.

Kekena involves the hunting of possum, flying fox or iguana. I did not observe it nor hear of anyone actually doing it during my fieldwork. These were described as "ritual foods" and did not form a significant part of Vaturanga subsistence. Instead, individuals described them as significant in relating to their ancestors, as *tambu* in this sense.

Most Vaturanga have houses made from locally available materials. This requires different trees: some are good for posts and support, others you use to weave the roof and walls. These include sago palm, bamboo, and betel nut trees. Palm leaves are woven and sewed together to make the roof. Walls usually are made from bamboo, and ideally are woven into a pattern which is tight. Houses will have a verandah, which is the place most people spend when at home (indoors is mainly for sleeping and storing things, and some even sleep on the verandah).

There are three kinds of houses: *vale* which is the house of a married man and his family, *luma* which is the house of an unmarried man (sometimes many young unmarried men), and *valekuki* which is a kitchen house where the fire is built for cooking. All except the *valekuki* are raised off the ground.

Only a few Vaturanga build modern homes with cement floors, wood siding and tin roofs. However, two of the three Anglican Churches in the district are of this modern type. Since this costs a lot of money, and a traditional house mainly involves labour, the latter is preferred by most Vaturanga.

Vaturanga wear Western clothes exclusively. I saw no one wearing the traditional grass skirts or loin cloths.¹⁹ Some did wear shell necklaces and armbands.

Other subsistence activities include making baskets from palm branches. These are used primarily to carry things, and often at feasts for distributing items in the exchange system. Some knew how to make *tepe* or small fans which are used to keep a fire going in the *valekuki*. Vaturanga also know how to cook food using hot stones, with fish, pig meat, or chicken wrapped in banana leaves. They also make mats to sleep on.

Thus, the Vaturanga maintain a variety of traditional subsistence activities which play a large role in their day-to-day living. The cash economy is increasingly important in providing them with some food stuffs, clothes, building supplies and transportation. Garden produce intended for the market economy has become important and replaced some subsistence crops.

Exchanges

The Vaturanga engage in an exchange system that is shared throughout West Guadalcanal. These exchanges usually take place in connection with important life events or rites of passage. They refer to feasting and exchange as *kavo ome* (lit. "distribute things"). As with exchanges elsewhere in Melanesia, these involve political considerations, land use and distribution, social and family obligations. The four main forms of exchange are listed in Table

2.4 along with the principle exchanges involved.

There are two additional terms which apply to feasting exchange which are necessary to understand: *ventia* and *tuva vota tinoni*. *Ventia* and *tuva vota tinoni* occur at all feasts/exchanges. *Ventia* refers to the obligation the organizers have to feed everyone present, especially since the main distribution may take some time and people will be away from their homes and villages. This is distributed by family groups or by villages and usually involves sweet potatoes and fish. Sometimes, nowadays, it includes rice and tinned tuna.

Tuva vota tinoni means literally “share separate people” and involves a large-scale distribution to the whole community. Generally, there are three levels of distribution, varying only in terms of size. No one is supposed to be left out of this distribution,²⁰ but the amount received will depend upon your relationship to the group doing the distributing. This has political significance attached to it, and this is certainly an opportunity for individuals to attempt to establish new exchange relationships, as well as maintain or solidify old ones.

The principle mediums of exchange are pigs and *golo ni hita* (lit. “our money” as opposed to *golo ni manesere* or “white man’s money”). In the principle exchanges described in Table 2.4, the pigs will be alive. In *tuva vota tinoni* it will be a distribution of meat. In addition, yams, taro, puddings, betel nut, coconuts, and sugar cane will be included. Nowadays you will also see cloth, bags of sugar or rice, tobacco, and *golo ni manesere* (white man’s money). There are seven kinds of *golo ni hita* listed in Table 2.5, from most valuable to least. A single strand (two arms length) is called a *kesabaria*, and two such strands are required to make the least valuable string, the *torobuto*. As you move up the scale, two strands are added with each step.

Table 2.4: Types of Feasting and Exchange in West Guadalcanal.

Name	Main Exchanges Involved
<i>Hani Kokolu na Tinoni Mate</i> Mortuary Feast	<i>Sulukima</i> (payment made by relatives of deceased to widow's kin group) <i>Sui Lake</i> (payment made by relatives of widow to the deceased's kin group) <i>Tutula</i> (payment made by widow's immediate kin to her distant kin)*
<i>Vuvuti</i> Bride Price	<i>Vutichuchu</i> (payment of one <i>talina</i> to bride's mother) <i>Baelo</i> (payment of one <i>matabala</i> to bride's father) <i>Sesekulirorongo</i> (payment of one <i>kogana</i> or <i>malona</i> to the bride's eldest brother. <i>Matesi Golona Vuti Daki</i> (distribution made by the bride's family after the bride price has been accepted)
<i>Sui Kokochi</i> Share Land	One example given in which payment was made as follows: 25 <i>talina</i> , 7 <i>malona</i> , 12 <i>kogana</i> , 5 dogs teeth necklaces, 27 pigs, taro, panna, yams, sugar cane and bananas. <i>Sui kokochi</i> does not "sell" land but "rent" it. Those who rent are expected to provide <i>ngongoa</i> (they are obligated to contribute to the feasting of the landowners) on an on-going basis.
<i>Hana na Sahe Tana Duli</i> Join a Clan	One example given in which payment was made as follows: 20 pigs, 7 <i>talina</i> , 12 <i>kogana</i> , 1 <i>matepuka</i> , yams, taro, betelnut. Those who <i>sahe</i> (join) a clan are full members and attain all rights and obligations.

*This payment is contextualized by the practice of patrilocality, which moves women to their husband's village/territory. In this new area, she will have rights to land of distant kin who already live there, and this payment assures that those rights will continue.

You can purchase one *kesabaria* (single strand) for \$50 Solomon Dollars at markets in Honiara.

But this factor does not establish an exchange rate between *golo ni hita* and *golo ni manesere*.

For purposes of *kavo ome* (feasting/exchange) the established exchange rate is \$20 Solomon

Dollars for a *torobuto*, meaning that if you lack one *kogana* for the payment, you would substitute \$40 Solomon Dollars and so forth.²¹

Table 2.5: Customary money (*golo ni hita*).

Name	# of strands
<i>Matepuka</i> *	n/a
<i>Talina</i>	12
<i>Chaochehe</i>	10
<i>Matabala</i>	8
<i>Malona</i>	6
<i>Kogana</i>	4
<i>Torobuto</i>	2

*The *matepuka* is exchanged rarely and does not fit the pattern. It is highly *tambu* and held only by chiefs. Possession of one is a sign of authority. It is only exchanged in circumstances in which two lineages join together.

The traditional feasting practices have been affected by markets and church regulation, primarily limiting the number of pigs which can be given away. The Anglicans limit this to twenty-five pigs, whereas the Roman Catholics limit it to one-hundred.²²

It should be noted that individuals from many parts of West Guadalcanal travel long distances to attend feasts. In addition to those types described above, there are feasts associated with religious holidays, such as patronal festivals of parish churches, and for Anglicans Ini Kopuria Day (the feast day of the founder of the Melanesian Brotherhood). Weddings also are occasions of *kavo ome*. The difference is that these occasions will always involve *ventia* and sometimes even *tuva vota tinoni*, but I have never seen *golo ni hita* nor live pigs exchanged on such occasions.

The feasting/exchange system is important to the Vaturanga. It is closely related to their kin groups and land distribution patterns. The goals and aims of such exchanges solidify kin relations and establish duties, obligations and authority. Successful and appropriate distribution will maintain or establish an individual's place or position in the community and will be widely commented upon. That individual will be regarded as wise and capable and as having *mana*. On the other hand, mistakes or distributions which seem inappropriate will invite ridicule and may lead to serious conflict, even violence.²³

Market Activities

The Vaturanga also participate in the market economy in a variety of ways. They make and sell copra, and they sell some of their subsistence resources (e.g., vegetables, fruit and fish) in public markets. Many operate small businesses such as village stores, or transportation services. Copra making is primarily a male activity (although not exclusively), whereas selling in markets tends to be a female one. A few Vaturanga also have jobs, either working for developers, schools, or religious institutions, or commuting to Honiara. Table 2.6 lists the money making activities of Vaturanga in Maravovo village.

All households engaged in some money making activity. Most engaged in more than one. Certainly the most common activity was selling vegetables, fruit, coconuts or other items in the market, engaged in by 88% of households (22 out of 25). There were three markets available, two in Honiara (Rove Market and Central Market) and one in the Vaturanga District itself, held across the road from Selwyn College. The markets in Honiara can be attended daily, while the Selwyn market is held three times per week (Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays).

Table 2.6: Making Money in the Vaturanga District.
Households in Maravovo engaged in money making
activities. Total households surveyed = 25.

Activity	# Household
Copra Making	18
Market Selling	22
Job	5
In-House Store	4
Other*	7

*2 each, selling trochus shells (button factory), selling cocoa; 1 each, fishing, petrol station, canoe transportation service.

All households provided estimated monthly incomes from these activities. Incomes ranges for the 25 households in Maravovo are presented in Table 2.7. The mean income is \$463.20 per month, with a median of \$250.00, and a mode of \$200.00.²⁴ This indicates that the Vaturanga engage in a significant amount of money-making activity which provides them with cash which can be used to buy various goods. There are three possible sources of goods available: the Hautambu Store, stores in Honiara, and in-house village stores.

I asked households to estimate the number of trips made to each of these per month, the average amount spent per trip, and to list what items they bought at each location. This data is presented in Table 2.8. As this table suggests, the village stores are the most commonly visited. That is to be expected, they are close at hand and convenient. But relatively little is spent there per trip, the mean average being just under \$13 and the mode and median at \$10. Given the average number of trips taken there, with the majority of households reporting daily visits to such stores, the average spent per household per month in such stores would be \$347.86.

Table 2.7: Reported household incomes for Maravovo.*
Total households = 25. (Amounts in Solomon Dollars)

Monthly Income Range	# of households
more than \$1000	3
\$500 to \$999	4
\$250 to \$499	6
\$100 to \$249	11
less than \$100	1

*These amounts are self-reported by the subjects as to how much the household earns in an average month from all sources.

Honiara stores are visited less frequently, a mean average of only 2.45 times per month, with a mode one time per month and a median of twice per month. However, significantly larger amounts are spent on trips to Honiara, with a mean average of \$99.25, the mode at \$80 and the median at \$100. In terms of per month spending, the mean average works out to \$243.16 per household.

Hautambu Store, despite being in the Vaturanga District, does not fare much better in number of visits per month, with a mean average of 3.6, a median of four times, and a mode of 1 or 4. The average spent is lower than in Honiara, at \$26.74 for the mean, and a mode and median both at \$20.00 per visit. In terms of the mean, this averages out to \$96.26 spent on average at Hautambu Store per household per month.²⁵

Important items purchased include rice, clothing, Taiyo (tinned tuna), soap, biscuits, tobacco, sugar, dried noodles, bread and kerosene. Rice, tinned tuna, biscuits and dried noodles have become important parts of the Vaturanga daily diet. They are relatively inexpensive and are eaten on a daily basis. All can be bought locally as well as in Honiara. Thus, these items in

particular have become important supplements to Vaturanga subsistence.

In addition to these sorts of items, money is also spent on school fees, transportation, petrol (for boats, mainly) and non-staple items like notebooks, pencils, paper, cigarettes, and tobacco. Altogether, there is a significant amount of spending going on. This degree of spending indicates a strong integration into the market economy of the Solomon Islands nation-state, both as producers and consumers.

Development

In addition to the above, the Vaturanga also experience economic development issues, that is growth of the commercial, money-based economy in non-traditional products and services. Among these include logging and mining interests, neither of which have come to fruition (at least at this writing) but are potentialities. Vaturanga have seen income from logging concessions and gold prospecting among their relatives in neighbouring districts in West Guadalcanal. The potential income from these sources is considerable. These raise issues of territorial definition and non-traditional rights to resources. The process of development recasts traditional notions of property and rights.

At the time of my fieldwork, several clans in the Vaturanga District were debating and considering making logging concessions. There was also a public meeting held to discuss the interests of a Canadian mining company in prospecting in the district for gold. Such matters can have far-reaching effects upon land tenure, and are frequently the occasion for disputes. Such disputes will be detailed in the next chapter, but for now it is important to note that through development, the Solomon Islands nation-state significantly raises the stakes in terms

of land tenure. For the Vaturanga, this is experienced in changes in land usage, particularly in relation to *sui kokochi* where land is “rented.” With the stakes so high, some clans now limit the types of land that they will *sui* to other clans, primarily to land that would be less valuable should a development project become imminent. This can constrain the ability of some family groups in an area to participate in the *kavo ome* (feasting/exchange), or alter their contribution, thus limiting their economic, social and political positions (or potentials) within those communities.

Table 2.8: Visits to stores, trips per month, amount spent per trip, most common items purchased. (Amounts in Solomon Dollars)

Source	Trips/Month		Amount Spent		Items Purchased	
Hautambu Store	once	9	\$10	7	Rice	12
	twice	2	\$15	2	Soap	10
	3x	1	\$20	5	Noodles	7
	4x	9	\$25	1	Cloth	7
	8x	1	\$30	2	Taiyo	7
	30x	1	\$40	1	Kerosene	6
	0x	2	\$50	2	Biscuits	5
	Avg:	3.6	\$60	2	Fishing Equip.	5
			\$70	1	Sugar	4
			Avg: \$26.74		Tobacco	2
Honiara Stores	once	7	\$15	1	Cloth	16
	twice	6	\$20	2	Rice	15
	3x	2	\$30	2	Bread	7
	4x	2	\$40	1	Sugar	6
	8x	2	\$50	3	Eating Utensils	4
	0x	1	\$80	1	Soap	4
	Avg:	2.45	\$100	6	Noodles	3
			\$200	2	Biscuits	2
			\$300	2	Taiyo	2
			Avg: \$99.25			
Village Stores	4x	1	\$5	5	Sugar	12
	8x	1	\$10	12	Taiyo	10
	16x	1	\$20	1	Biscuits	9
	30x	18	\$30	1	Rice	9
	Avg:	27.05	\$35	1	Tobacco	9
			\$40	1	Cig. Paper	5
			Avg: \$12.86		Soap	4
					Candy	4
					Matches	2

GOVERNMENTAL SYSTEMS

Governmental and political structures provide venues that redefine and create new social forms. In the case of the Solomon Islands, there are "traditional" structures which intersect and connect with systems and structures promulgated by the nation-state. The governmental organizational structure recognizes villages, has reified the chief system and imposed new regional wards and national political structures.

The Provincial and National Governments

Under the B.S.I.P., the British established area councils, and the Vaturanga were incorporated as part of the Gheana Area Council, headquartered at Lambi, which encompassed practically all of West Guadalcanal. These councils are now defunct. Since independence, provinces have been divided into local districts, each with an elected council, of which the Vaturanga have their own. There are also constituencies for the federal parliament and provincial assembly. Local districts are combined into larger wards, which have a paramount chief. The Vaturanga are part of the Saghalu Ward, which also includes the Nggae and Tambulivu districts. During my field work, the national government attempted to reorganize local government into area assemblies, essentially bypassing the provincial structures. This scheme was overturned by the Supreme Court and was not implemented.

The principal government officials who have a regular and meaningful presence in the Vaturanga District are a provincially funded district nurse and a district police officer. Teachers and school administrators are paid by the province of Guadalcanal, even if they work for church-run schools, and hence may be said to represent government positions and policies in so

much as they are expected to teach the approved curriculum. Other local government offices/bodies include a water committee which oversees the new water system,²⁶ and the school committee, which sets tuition and organizes fundraisers for the Vaturanga Primary School at Vura. Each of these has a chair, vice-chair and treasurer. These kinds of officials often "hold important positions as brokers of information with the urban, administrative centres" (McKellin 1982:79).

The Role of Chiefs

The Vaturanga are organized into villages, and each village usually has two chiefs, one representing the Kakau moiety and one representing the Lakuili. At the head of each *puku* (lineage) is a *tauvia* (elder) who possesses the *matepuka* (a kind of customary shell money that is regarded as very *tambu*) for his lineage. These elders select the two men who will serve as chiefs for each village. Cheche, who has served as a village chief, and who is a *tauvia*, explained it to me this way:

You become a chief by being chosen by the village elders. You have to show an interest in custom, genealogy and know how to organize things. Your *puku* (lineage) is not too important in deciding, but they will try to have one Kakau and one Lakuili chief in each village.

The church (Anglican) stopped the *kavo ome* (feasting) for chiefs. Instead they are blessed by the *mama* (Anglican priests), but there is no exchange of pigs or anything like that.

These village chiefs organize community work and are responsible for adjudicating minor disputes between individuals. Just who is or is not a chief is often somewhat confusing, and it is not always clear. In part, this is because they use the term "chief" as a gloss for many different positions, including chairman of the church committee, chairman of the water

committee, chairman of the school committee, village chiefs and *tauvia* (lineage elders). All of these individuals are involved in organizing community work and exercise various degrees of community leadership, and hence are called "chiefs."

Chiefs have a somewhat ambiguous position. Lindstrom and White (1997) have noted that they are "(p)ositioned between local... constituencies and the apparatus of nation-states" and thereby "(stand) at the intersection of local, national, and global political cultures" (Lindstrom and White 1997:3; see also McKellin 1982:67-68).

The *tauvia* represent their various lineages and will present their concerns to all of the above organizations. The other types of "chiefs" are often chosen because they have particular skills, especially (mainly) education. They are not "real chiefs" but the title is often used in reference to them. Their authority, however, is limited to the institutions which they represent or lead. Nonetheless, they do possess considerable informal authority and high status within the community. They are listened to on a variety of issues, but have no formal authority to resolve disputes or settle claims (see McKellin 1982:79-80).

The traditional elders (*tauvia*), on the other hand, are charged locally to resolve disputes, meeting to hear arguments and cases, and rendering judgements which usually require someone to pay compensation in the form of *golo ni hita* (customary shell money) or pigs. Their authority is recognized locally but there are cases in which it is difficult to implement, since they have little in the way of enforcement powers. If it is a matter of custom the judgement will be enforced by community sanctions.²⁷ If it is a criminal matter, the chiefs may refer it to police officials if they are unsuccessful at resolving it.

The lineage elders for all Vaturanga lineages meet together regularly, and several times

per year they join with those from neighbouring districts which together form the Saghalu Ward, and there is a Paramount Chief for this region. The elders (*tauvia*) who form a part of this structure are formally recognized by the Solomon Islands and Guadalcanal provincial governments.

Courts

The *tauvia* (lineage elders) also play an important and official role in land claims and disputes. The government appoints them to sit on customary land courts, although no one hears a case that is from his own district or involving his own *duli* (clan) or *puku* (lineage). These courts base their judgements upon customary types of evidence, and when they meet certain customary practices are observed, such as *chachango*, which is the presentation of betel nut, leaf, lime and coconuts by both sides in the dispute.²⁸ These courts are the lowest in a hierarchy of courts formally constituted by the Solomon Islands nation-state. Table 2.9 details the court system from lowest to highest.

Table 2.9: Courts in the Solomon Islands.

Local Courts or Customary Land Courts*	Hear minor cases such as theft and local land disputes. Members of these courts are not trained in the law. They have an appointed President and use the local language of the area in which they are hearing cases.
Customary Land Appeal Courts	Located in each of the provinces, composed of individuals who understand local customs, plus one appointed magistrate. If disputants are unsatisfied with the decision of a Local Court in land disputes, they may appeal to this court.
Magistrates Court	Located in the main centres (towns). Consists of a magistrate who is trained in the law. They hear all but the most serious cases, plus appeals from the Local Courts.
High Court	Hears all serious cases of criminal and civil law. Composed of a Chief Judge and two or three other judges. This court will also hear appeals from all the lower courts.
Court of Appeal	Considers all appeals from the High Court. Composed of six judges from various countries in the Commonwealth.

*If they are meeting to deal with a land claim, this court will be differently constituted than if it is dealing with theft or violations of custom, etc.

SCHOOLS AND MISSIONS

There are two sets of formal institutions which exist in the Vaturanga District: schools and missions. These two sets of institutions overlap to some degree, with the two Vaturanga schools both being affiliated with the Church of Melanesia (Anglican). Both sets of institutions involve relatively high prestige for the professionals who are involved. They bring in a large number of people from outside who reside temporarily in the area, and who engage in some significant interactions with the Vaturanga villagers. These interactions are mainly formal,

public interactions, but are by no means rare or occasional. They present to the Vaturanga a host of issues and values and have had important effects upon many aspects of life, ranging from transportation to feasting exchanges. They also provide a form of relations and networking for Vaturanga with people outside of the area.

One major impact lies in the area of communications, particularly language competencies. Without these institutions, the Vaturanga would be limited in their ability to participate in the nation-state and its systems: it would hinder their ability to sell vegetables or copra, to buy goods in stores, to interact with Solomon Islanders from different areas or islands, to listen to the radio or read a newspaper.

Schools

There are two schools in the Vaturanga District: St. Francis Primary School (also called Vaturanga Primary School) at Vura, and Selwyn College near the village of Maravovo on the former Taitai Plantation. Both of these institutions are church-run, but follow government curricula and the teachers and staff are paid by the Ministry of Education in Honiara.

Selwyn College, which was moved to the Vaturanga District in 1989 (personal communication 1989) from the Tasemboko District, is a residential national secondary school with approximately 200 students enrolled. Most of these students, indeed all except one, come from other parts of the Solomon Islands and are not Vaturanga.

Vaturanga do interact to a limited degree with staff and students at Selwyn College. Many of the teachers come from overseas, although the support staff and administration are mainly Solomon Islanders. One principle interaction between Vaturanga and this institution

consist of a district nurse who is stationed at the school and available to villagers (as part of a Guadalcanal provincial health programme). Also important is the afore-mentioned thrice weekly market days held near the school in which villagers sell fruit, vegetables, puddings, etc. to students. The school also conveys mail to villagers at times, and has a bus which goes daily to Honiara which villagers can sometimes (if there is room) utilize, though priority is given to teachers, staff and students of the school.

While students and staff of Selwyn College do sometimes venture out into the villages, there is little in the way of any official interaction between the rather insular school and the local community.²⁹ The school participates in sports tournaments with other secondary schools, not with local teams, nor do students present dramas or other sorts of events in villages. Nor have I ever observed villagers attending events at the school or identifying with the school as somehow representing them to the outside world. Perhaps, given that most of the students come from outside the district, coupled with the location on long-alienated land associated with plantation work, Vaturanga have had little reason to be interested in the school beyond certain points of convenience (i.e., transport, clinic, market). The students and staff themselves, focused on studies and academic pursuits, likewise perhaps have had little interest in the villagers. Regardless, I did not observe any significant formal communicative interactions between the two groups beyond these few points of intersection.³⁰

As such, my attention turned towards the role of St. Francis Primary School at Vura, a school with almost entirely Vaturanga enrollment (some students from the neighbouring Nggae District also attend because it is closer to them than the Nggae Primary School, and also some children of plantation workers attend).

The history of primary education in the district is somewhat complicated. Prior to 1969 Vaturanga children went to two different primary schools: for Standard 1 through 4 they had to travel to Verahue (a Vaturanga village in the neighbouring Ngeri District), and for Standard 5 through 7 they went to Maravovo Senior Primary School which was at Veranaaso (in the Vaturanga District). According to Batada (pseudonym), a teacher at the current primary school who has taught in West Guadalcanal for several decades, in 1969 Vaturanga Primary School was founded at Laovavasa village. Later that same year, it was moved inland to land donated for this purpose. This is the present site at Vura, although there was no village there until the school was moved there. At this time, Maravovo Senior Primary School was replaced by the new Maravovo Training Centre, which was run by the Anglican church as a place of training for catechists and lay leaders until 1987.

At the time of its founding, Vaturanga Primary School was church-controlled (Anglican), but in 1975 (according to Batada) the province took over control. Provincial control continued until 1992 when the Church of Melanesia again took control and the school was given the name "St. Francis Primary School" in reference to the Anglican Franciscan brothers who had recently moved into the district at Hautambu. The school is still known officially, however, as Vaturanga Primary School, and is referred to as such by the Ministry of Education in Honiara.

I did not obtain exact enrollment figures for the school, but according to my survey of Maravovo village, which included all 25 households in the village (see Appendix), there were 33 students enrolled in the Vaturanga Primary School from that village. Extrapolating from this to the other two main villages in the district (Paru and Laovavasa) and assuming that they have

similar enrollments, plus enrollments from scattered smaller villages, I would estimate school enrollment at the time of my fieldwork at between 125 and 150 students. I did a careful count of the students present at the end-of-year school festival, and that number was 89 students.

Table 2.10 shows the educational attainment of adults in Maravovo village, one of the three main villages of the district. As this table indicates, a majority of Vaturanga have attended school to at least Standard 6 or higher. This table, derived from a survey of 25 households in Maravovo village, indicates that a majority, 51.6%, of adults have attained to Standard 6 or higher. Indeed, all but nine adults (15%) have completed at least Standard 1 in primary school.

This table indicates that a significant majority of adults, 85%, have some primary education. The school is a significant institution in the Vaturanga community, impacting a majority of the population.

Apart from daily classroom interactions, I also encountered four occasions upon which the Vaturanga interacted with the St. Francis Primary School as a community: two school committee meetings (including one in which elections were held), the annual school festival and a school fund-raiser.

Table 2.10: Educational attainment of adults in Maravovo (ages 18+).

Level of Attainment	Number	Percentage
None	9/60	15.00%
Kindergarten (Pre-Class)	0/60	0.00%
Standard 1	1/60	1.66%
Standard 2	5/60	8.33%
Standard 3	4/60	6.66%
Standard 4	7/60	11.66%
Standard 5	3/60	5.00%
Standard 6	17/60	28.33%
Standard 7	4/60	6.66%
Form 1	1/60	1.66%
Form 2	2/60	3.33%
Form 3+	6/60	10.00%
SICHE*	1/60	1.66%
Total Sample	60/60	100.00%

*Solomon Islands College of Higher Education

Missions

The Vaturanga, as a community, converted to Christianity a very long time ago. Among the first Solomon Islanders to travel to New Zealand under the auspices of the Anglican Melanesian Mission were two Vaturanga men, Hugo Gorovaka and George Basile, who were trained as Anglican Catechists in the late nineteenth century. Vaturanga Anglicans talk about these two individuals, and many men are named after them.

On the very day that I arrived in the Solomon Islands in November 1996, the last Vaturanga who had been born “pagan” died (I was greeted with this news at the airport). The two main denominations in Guadalcanal were Catholics and Anglicans (Bennett 1987; Laracy

1976; Hilliard 1974, 1978).

West Guadalcanal particularly was an area of intense missionary competition between these two denominations, with the Catholics headquartered at Visale (in the Nggae District) and the Anglicans centred at first at Verahue (in the Ngeri District) and later at Maravovo (in the Vaturanga District) (Laracy 1976; Hilliard 1974, 1978).

The Vaturanga are mostly Anglican, although they are related to many Catholics in neighbouring districts, and there are some Catholics in the Vaturanga District. Table 2.11 shows the religious affiliations of Maravovo village.

There are Anglican churches in three Vaturanga villages: Paru, Laovavasa and Maravovo. There are Roman Catholic churches in two villages: Lambukulila and Naro.³¹ Lambukulila village consists of a migrant population from the Ghari District (where Roman Catholicism predominates). Of the four Roman Catholics living in Maravovo, only one claims Vaturanga are his “wantoks” (a Pijin term meaning “my people”), the remaining three identified Savo, Ghari and Tambulivu as their places of origin (i.e., they are migrants).

**Table 2.11: Religious affiliation in Maravovo village
(children and adults).**

Denomination	Number	Percentage
Church of Melanesia (Anglican)	116/121	96%
Roman Catholic Church	4/121	3%
South Seas Evangelical Church	1/121	1%
Total Sample	121/121	100%

Although Anglicans predominate within the Vaturanga District, the presence of the Roman Catholic Church is felt, and both institutions have an impact on language and communication issues throughout West Guadalcanal.

The Church of Melanesia (Anglican) exists in the Vaturanga district in the form of many institutions and systems, forming a major part of the cultural apparatus in this region. As already noted, there are three village churches in Paru, Laovavasa and Maravovo. These are combined together to form a parish called "Palama" (an acronym taken from the first two letters of each village's name). This parish is linked with another parish in the Ngeri District which also consists of three village churches (in Verahue, Kombiloko, and Tabughu). There is one district priest assigned to these six churches.

Beyond village churches, the influence of the Anglican Church is rather pervasive. We have already noted above that both Vaturanga Primary School and Selwyn College are under Anglican control (although different bodies within the Anglican Church are responsible for each). In addition, the Senior Priest (Archdeacon) for all of Guadalcanal is stationed at Veranaaso, along with the headquarters of the Anglican Sisters of Melanesia, an indigenous religious order. Next door, at Hautambu (also in the Vaturanga District) is the training friary and other facilities of the Anglican Society of St. Francis (a world-wide Anglican religious order). In Maravovo village there is also a Tasu House, as at least one member of the Melanesian Brotherhood (an indigenous religious order of men) is assigned to live in Maravovo.³² There is also a district branch of the Mothers' Union. Table 2.12 lists the various Anglican institutions in the Vaturanga District, with the numbers of professionals stationed at each.

Table 2.12: Anglican institutions in the Vaturanga District (excepting schools)

Institution	Location	Number of Staff
Palama*	Paru, Laovavasa, Maravovo	1 priest 3 catechists
Sisters of Melanesia	Veranaaso	1 priest 60 sisters**
Society of St. Francis	Hautambu	2 priests 25 brothers***
Melanesian Brotherhood	Maravovo	1 or 2 brothers
Guadalcanal Archdeaconry	Veranaaso	1 priest

*Palama is an acronym standing for Paru, Laovavasa, and Maravovo villages.

**Number varies, these are the numbers given to me by the Head Sister.

***Number varies, these are numbers given to me by the Guardian.

The Roman Catholic Church maintains a mission station in the neighbouring Visale District, and several religious communities also are present in other parts of West Guadalcanal. They also bring in clergy, mainly from outside of the Solomon Islands (Italy, Ireland, the Philippines, U.S.A.). Many of these are Marist brothers who have a long association with missions in the Western Pacific.

Probably the most significant regular impact of these institutions (Anglican and Catholic) is the regular services they hold in village churches. Both churches hold services in the main West Guadalcanal language, *Hoko*³³ and both have translated service books and hymnals into *Hoko*.³⁴ But each chose a different dialect of *Hoko*—the Anglicans chose Ndi,

which they refer to as the “Language of the Vaturanga” whereas the Roman Catholics chose Ghari, the main dialect two districts to the south. Both use their respective vernacular service books, hymnals, etc. throughout Guadalcanal and beyond, thus bringing competency in these two dialects of *Hoko* (and in *Hoko* generally) to a wide area. Thus, this is a case of the cultural apparatus taking something local and using it in wider contexts. In doing this, the traditional relationship between the dialects of *Hoko*, of which there are five, is changed, giving priority to Ghari and (to a lesser degree) Ndi.³⁵

There are numerous public events which occur in the Vaturanga District associated with these church institutions. These include annual patronal festivals of village churches (i.e., St. Bartholomew’s Day, St. Matthias Day, St. Peter’s Day, etc.), the Feast Day of Ini Kopuria (in Maravovo), regular church committee meetings, Sunday School Festivals, and the like. The religious orders perform occasional dramas or hold fund-raisers for mission activities in various villages. Villagers also attend significant events in the life of the religious communities. All of these events will involve some aspects of *kavo ome* (feasting), although usually limited to *ventia* (feeding everyone) and *tuva vota tinoni* (separating and distributing pig meat, sweet potatoes, puddings, etc.) (see above). Thus, they are important occasions and points of intersection with customary practices.

One other impact, the Franciscan brothers at Hautambu run a store which is widely used by locals (including students at Selwyn College). They raise chickens and ducks which villagers often buy. They also have a truck which makes frequent (almost daily) trips to Honiara. Locals can use this truck as transportation, usually for a small donation.³⁶ Thus, the Franciscan brothers participate in the lives of Vaturanga villagers in ways the other religious

communities do not: they are part of the overall access to markets, buying and selling.

THE MASS MEDIA

Three forms of the mass media have a significant and regular presence in the Vaturanga District: newspapers, radio, and popular recordings. These media are engaged in cultural production about the nation-state, and present ideas, knowledge, information, opinions and frames for thinking about the nation-state itself.

One of these is the mapping of space, expressing or implying boundaries of many kinds. In reporting about parliament, sporting events, conflicts in other countries, or even just in providing a message service to far-flung islands, mass media set out a map of the world in which there are centres and edges, towns and villages, provinces and countries, regions and worlds. This symbolic system is part of how the Vaturanga encounter the world and think about their place in it.

Newspapers

All newspapers are published in Honiara, most three times per week, and some are irregular about publishing. Distribution emphasizes town as opposed to rural areas. In newspapers, the Vaturanga see photographs of places far off and near, learn about processes and conflicts and entertainments that they would be unlikely to experience in any other way. Although not all Vaturanga pay particular attention to newspapers individually, most pay attention to what newspapers report and write about.

How pervasive are newspapers in the district? Table 2.13 presents statistical

information from the village of Maravovo as to Vaturanga encounters with newspapers. As can be seen from this table, 52% of households have a newspaper at least once per month, and that newspaper is shared with an average of 4.38 persons. At a bare minimum, this means that forty-eight individuals read a newspaper once a month. Given that most households obtain newspapers more frequently, this would indicate that a significant portion of the population reads newspapers.

Table 2.13: Newspaper use in Maravovo village.

How often does a newspaper come into this household?

	Number
Never:	12
Once per month or less often	4
Two or three times per month	1
Four times per month:	5
More than four times per month:	3
TOTAL	25

With how many people do you share the newspaper usually?

(Asked only of those households which answered affirmatively above.)

Two:	2	Five:	3
Three:	2	More:	4
Four:	2		

Which newspaper do you prefer to read? (Asked of all households.)

	Number
Solomon Star:	13
Solomon Voice:	2
Solomon Citizen:	0
Grasrut:	0
N/A or no response:	10
TOTAL	25

Question three in Table 2.13 indicates that there are four newspapers available in the Vaturanga District: Solomon Star, Solomon Voice, Solomon Citizen and Solomon Grasrut. Of these, only Solomon Star and Solomon Voice were identified as “preferred” by respondents in the survey. Of these four newspapers, only Grasrut publishes primarily in Solomon Islands Pijin. The other newspapers use Standard English mainly, except for some advertisements in Pijin. This means that for an individual to comprehend the newspaper, he or she must be competent in Standard English, and (obviously) literate (i.e., able to read).

Newspapers are obtained in Honiara on the regular trips many Vaturanga make to town. The local stores (at Hautambu, Selwyn College, and in-house village stores) do not distribute newspapers, thus they can only be obtained via travel.

Newspapers ranged in cost from \$1.00 for Solomon Citizen to \$1.70 for Solomon Voice. They were typically distributed/sold at local stores such as the Friendship Market or Acor Book Centre. Some had very limited distribution points. The Solomon Star was the most easily obtained and widely distributed in Honiara. It was published on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, and sold in many general stores throughout the city. The other three newspapers were, in my experience looking for them, rather more sporadically available. Although purported to have a regular schedule of publishing (like the Solomon Star), I often found that I could not obtain a copy of the others. Grasrut was the most difficult to obtain, sold in only in a few stores, and if I was late getting to town that day, it was frequently sold out. There were several occasions in which it simply was not published on the scheduled days. With the exception of the Star, it was often difficult to find the newspapers, which probably accounts for the Star being regarded as the most popular (see Table 2.13).

Radio

At the time of my field work, there were two radio broadcasters in the Solomon Islands: Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation (from here on out SIBC) which is a publically owned broadcaster (national), and Island FM 101, a privately owned station.³⁷ Both are based in Honiara. Both require fairly powerful receivers in the Vaturanga District because of mountains in between the district and the transmitters.³⁸ This factor meant that small, inexpensive radios were virtually useless in the district (I initially bought one and it simply would not receive any signal at all, so I eventually gave it to a local who had a job in town).

Table 2.14 lists the distribution of radios and the habits of radio listening in Maravovo village as a representative sample of the listening habits of the Vaturanga District. Although clearly not as prevalent as newspapers, radios are still present in a significant minority of households (40%). And, unlike newspapers, radios are more frequently used (the majority listening everyday) and are shared with more individuals (an average of 6.6) than newspapers.

Although not necessitating literacy, radio does require competency in Pijin and/or English; and a significant outlay of cash for an initial receiver and, over time, for batteries. Receivers are available at stores in Honiara, but not in the district. Thus a trip to town is required. Inexpensive batteries can be obtained locally, even in the in-house village stores, although they last less than a week and thus the outlay of cash to listen daily is not insignificant.³⁹

In terms of programming, Island FM 101 had a music format with news bulletins several times per day. The evening schedule of programming for SIBC (weekdays) is contained in Table 2.15. This programming was primarily in Pijin, with some English (usually in the form

of rebroadcasts like the BBC World Service or Radio Australia).

Table 2.14: Radio Use in Maravovo Village.

Is there a radio in this house?

Yes:	10
No:	15

What type of radio is it? (Asked of those who answered "yes" above)

AM/FM/SW:	10
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How often do you listen to the radio?

3 times per week:	1
5 times per week:	1
Everyday:	8

How many people are present (on average) to listen to the radio?

two:	1	seven:	1
three:	1	ten:	1
four:	1	eleven:	2
six:	3		

What is your favourite programme on the radio?

Nius blong Pijin (SIBC)	4	Sports News (SIBC)	1
Radio Australia News (SIBC)	2	Reggae Music (Is.FM)	1
Family Programme (SIBC)	1	Message Service (SIBC)	1

Weekend schedules varied more, with some documentaries in English taken from various short-wave sources (such as Radio Netherlands or Voice of America). Two significant and popular programmes on Saturday evenings were Kastom Stori Taem at 2100 and the Top Ten Countdown at 2130.

Table 2.15: SIBC weekday programming (evenings)

1500	Music Programme
1700	BBC World Service (rebroadcast)
1730	Children's/Family Programme
1800	ESL Programme
1900	Nius blong Pijin (Pijin language News)
1930	Worl blong Iumi (Our World)
2000	Message Service
2030	School Programme or College blong Iumi (Our College)
2100	Health Programme or Documentary from SW service
2130	Agriculture/Fishing Programme
2200	Late News

Daytime schedules during the week would often including sports reports, music programmes, and several rebroadcasts of short-wave services (Radio Australia and the BBC, mainly), and when in session, debates from parliament.

In addition to SIBC and Island FM, it was not uncommon to find Vaturanga listening to short-wave services, including Radio Australia, Radio P.N.G. and Radio New Zealand International. These, however, required competency in Standard English or P.N.G. Tok Pisin.

Popular Recordings

The popular recording industry is fueled by two sections of the media: producers and radio stations like SIBC and Island FM (discussed above). Radio, especially SIBC, not only broadcasts local artists, but sometimes produces them.

In addition to SIBC, there are two privately owned commercial studio production companies in Honiara: Unisound Recordings and Kokosu Studio. These specialize in producing local Solomon Islands artists. They produce cassette tapes, rather than CD's or

records. These cassettes are available in music stores and some other outlets in Honiara.

During my field work I obtained copies of three such cassettes that were especially popular in the Vaturanga District: "Ti Roy and the Unisounds, Vol. 1," "Guale Hits" by Peter Chanel Morey (both Unisound productions) and "Trouble Long Paradise" by Toss and Babs with Friends (a Kokosu Studio production). Each of these cassette productions contains songs in various languages, and two of them include *hoko ni hita* (or Ghari), the main West Guadalcanal language. Table 2.18 gives a breakdown of the languages used in the songs on these cassettes.

These cassettes cost approximately \$25.00 Solomon Dollars to buy. The artists pay fees to produce the recordings and then receive ten percent of the sales as royalties. The songs are promoted mainly on SIBC, especially a weekly Saturday night countdown programme.

Buying such a cassette requires that you also possess a cassette player. These are often incorporated with the radio. Table 2.17 shows the distribution of cassette players in Maravovo village. This table indicates that, of the three kinds of media described in this chapter, popular recordings are the least pervasive and important in terms of actual consumption. This is surely due, in large measure, to the prohibitive cost of obtaining a stereo cassette player (which can range from \$200 to \$800 in Honiara shops). Despite their greater expense, the most popular form was the kind with speakers. Only one household had a small personal stereo (walkman type), even though these are relatively less expensive. The most common type were large boombox types with radios built in, and require many batteries (also a limiting factor).

Table 2.16: Solomon recordings (Languages of Songs)

Cassette	English	Pijin	Hoko	Other
“Guale Hits”	2		9	
“Sound of Drums”	3	2	2	6
“Trouble Long Paradise”	4	4		

Reggae was clearly the most popular music consumed in terms of cassette buying. But it is important to realize that consumption of popular music is not limited to those who own stereo players. Many people regularly listen to Island FM or SIBC music programmes. Whether or not they actually spend money on the media, the media still affects them. When an individual buys a cassette it is played for many, not just used personally. Kin relationships make possible the borrowing of such items, as the Vaturanga tend not to be selfish with personal property.

An important aspect of popular music, particularly of the local Solomon Islands artists/performers, is the re-performance of these popular songs by locals, especially teenage males who make up groups like the “Weket Gang.” They perform favourite songs, sometimes even going from house-to-house serenading people and often receiving small gifts in return (though it is not expected). These young men spend a lot of time memorizing the songs, there are older men who make home-made ukeleles and guitars which they use in these performances (musical instruments are prohibitively expensive for most of them). In this way, even those who do not have direct access to the popular music, nonetheless learn of it, hear it, even perform it.

Table 2.17: Stereo/Cassette use in Maravovo.

Is there a stereo/cassette player in this house?

Yes:	6
No:	19

Does it have speakers or headphones only?
(Asked only of those who answered "yes.")

Speakers:	5
Headphones:	1

What kind of music do you play?

Reggae:	3
Gospel:	1
Blues:	1
Pop:	1

Do you own any Solomon Islands recordings?

Yes:	5
No:	1

While there is special interest in songs in the local language, *hoko ni hita* (or Ghari), they also make a point to learn songs in other Solomon Islands languages, including those performed by groups from Isabel, Malaita and elsewhere. Some songs are also in Solomon Islands Pijin. Vaturanga also have opportunity to hear music in Honiara, at music shops and with wantoks in town or at residential secondary schools, who may have greater (or more regular) access to such material.

DISCUSSION

I have attempted to demonstrate four sets of intersections between the Vaturanga District and the Solomon Islands nation-state. These include economic and subsistence behaviour, kinship and social categories, formal institutions, and the mass media. What all of these have in common is that they present to the Vaturanga a set of social relations which are contextualized by the fact that they are part of the Solomon Islands nation-state.

Market economic forces interact with subsistence patterns. These generate new social relations in the district, changing priorities, bringing groups into conflict, giving some greater access to consumer goods, commodities, even education. The possibility of wealth, via logging or mining concessions, and concerns about how one maintains proper kin ties and relationships are all important aspects of these social relations.

The Vaturanga deal with these issues by employing a kind of rhetoric focused on magic: magic or sorcery has become a means of talking about this situation, an expression of values, resentment, fear, and a need for control over the processes.

Development and economic change also involve population movement and migration. This has also meant new social relations for the Vaturanga, who now not only participate in a complex kinship system which ties them to others throughout West Guadalcanal, but encounter other social groups such as plantation workers and temporary residents associated with institutions and systems.

The intersection of Vaturanga kinship and subsistence with these new social categories generates a set of boundaries or markers which distinguish them most prominently from the plantation workers. Vaturanga and plantation workers' identities play off each other, and they

imagine themselves in relation to each other. This is the emergence of a classic ethnic conflict (see Barth 1969; Comaroff and Comaroff 1992).

Schools and churches, likewise, generate a set of expectations, present a series of public events, and highlight particular aspects of local culture and the nation-state, thus also forming an intersection between the two. Schools bring languages and literacy, skills which are important if one is going to participate in markets and nation-states. They highlight communicative skills, which we can also see as related to social relations: how people communicate, the languages that they use, and the means that they can access: English and Pijin.

Missions also play a role in this, both in their public events, and in their publishing in local vernacular dialects. For the Vaturanga, this intersects with their traditional notions of language, which see a series of dialects throughout West Guadalcanal: Ndi, Nggae, Ngeri, Ghari, and Nggaria. These dialects are changing because two of them--Ghari and Ndi--imply new social relations, the ability of individuals to understand these dialects throughout Guadalcanal and even beyond.⁴⁰

The mass media, in the forms of newspapers, radio and popular recordings, also affect social relations. They frame issues, systems, events, and ideas with space, a sort of mapping. In so doing, they create a set of boundaries or perhaps oppositions relating to space: the Solomon Islands as a bounded unit itself among nation-states, distinctions between villages and towns, and within localized areas, distinctions between customary lands or features and modern or market-oriented lands or features.

For the Vaturanga, this is expressed in ideas about space, particularly in relation to

customary practices and their traditional culture. They express their sense of “new” social relations--markets, population movement, plantation workers, schools, churches, languages--by mapping them onto the coast, and contrasting this with inland, which they see as a realm of “old” ways.

To borrow a theatrical metaphor, this chapter and the one prior, have attempted to present the stage, the setting, and the cast of characters in the lives of the Vaturanga. It is my contention that this setting and this cast of characters imply a set of social relations which are derived from the colonial and post-colonial experience of being part of the Solomon Islands nation-state. These social relations, in turn, are expressed in the forms of a rhetoric of magic, an emerging ethnic consciousness, the standardization of language, and the mapping of time onto space. These themes are explored in detail in the chapters which follow.

CHAPTER THREE: THE RHETORIC OF MAGIC

INTRODUCTION

An Encounter With Magic

While staying in a Vaturanga village one night, actually it was only a few hours before sunrise, I woke up and walked down towards the beach. There was a full moon out, lighting my way, but being *mane sere* (white man) and a city dweller who never felt quite safe with what might be lurking in the shadows of the rural night, I grabbed my torch.

As I was walking up the path I saw a light in the distance. It looked to me like someone had shined a torch in my direction. Half asleep, my only thought was that it must be one of my neighbours. I thought it odd on a moonlit night, but did not call out, but returned to my house and went back to sleep.

Later, after sunrise, I was drinking coffee when Dadao (not his real name), a young man, came by and greeted me. I asked him "Was that you shining your torch at me last night?" He came closer and asked me to repeat the question. I did so, and explained what I had seen. I joked with him, "You surely didn't need a torch on such a moonlit night did you? Even I didn't need one, the moon was so bright I could see the path quite well." He replied that it was not he and that he had no idea who it might have been. I thought little more of it and went about my day as usual. Later on, however, I was visited by two elders. One said to me, "Dadao tells us you saw something on the path coming up from the beach last night."

I answered that coming up from the beach I had seen only a light shining in my direction for a second or so. I could not make out any person or even if a person was there, only the light of their torch. I told them I had thought it strange that anyone would need a torch with a full

moon like that. They wanted to know exactly where I had seen this light. We went out to the path and I pointed to the place as best I could remember. They investigated closely and continued to ask questions. Then, one of the elders left and the other joined me on my verandah.

I asked him, "Why are you so interested in this light?" He hesitated, then came closer to me and, lowering his voice, said "There is *didila* (protective magic) there along that path and around that house. We have had trouble, someone tried to *vele* (a form of harmful magic) this woman before. So we planted ginger with *tambu* stones in many places in and around the village. When someone with *vele* comes along, there will be a warning."

The flash of light I had seen had, within reason, coincided with one of these *didila*, and it also occurred at a time of day (just before sunrise) when Vaturanga assume that *vele* practitioners are active. It was clear: the light I had seen was being interpreted as a warning of the presence of a *vele* practitioner nearby. This was being taken extremely seriously, as *vele* causes death and is the most dangerous form of magic. Their interest and questioning of me was understandable. My seeing a light, far from being a trivial matter, was cause for grave concern.

Interpreting this Encounter

This was one of hundreds of encounters I had with Vaturanga in which magic became an important theme. Magic, or perhaps more technically sorcery⁴¹ was a daily topic of conversation in Vaturanga villages. It was usually, however, whispered about, not talked about openly, but nervously, hesitantly.

As I explored and attempted to comprehend the episode above, I learned that there were a number of factors which played a role in the Vaturanga interpretation of my seeing this light. Chief among them was the nearness of this event to the *vale* (house) of a man who had run a successful business, who had held jobs in town and locally. He was successful in the market-dominated world of the Solomon Islands, someone with more money and means than your average villager.

This, I was told, had inspired someone to be *masuhu* (jealous) of him. When I asked what would make someone jealous, individuals would only speculate, but the answers had a regularity about them: Maybe he had not shared with others? Maybe he had behaved proudly or selfishly? Maybe he had been in a dispute with someone? The man in question told me directly: "Vaturanga are not supposed to be too successful. If you are, they will spoil you."

He told me that whoever it was had not succeeded in "spoiling" him, so the individual had instead turned on his wife, who had become sick with what a *tatali* (healer) had diagnosed as *vele* sickness. She was cured and did not die. But the fear remained that he or his children would be victims again. So they planted *didila* about the house and along the path. This will protect his family while he is away working at his job in town. But it will only work if they are within the compound. So they must be careful. His wife must not go about at sunrise or sunset, at least not alone. And they must be faithful in attending church, in tithing and doing good works.

When magic came into a conversation with the Vaturanga, it usually involved the market economy or disputes arising out of development pressures such as potential logging or mining concessions. These themes were nearly universal.⁴² In the forms of accusations, threats,

healing and protection, magic constitutes a way of speaking, an idiom for talking about economic changes and their effects upon social relations.

The Rhetoric of Magic

In this chapter we will look at how the Vaturanga employ a rhetoric of magic to make sense of their world and argue about the changes they experience in terms of economic and social life. Vaturanga magic today leaps across a void in which social rules and social relationships are rapidly changing, a world in which people do not agree about what constitutes proper exchange, in which customary practices are economically inconvenient, in which relatives do not share equally in development potential or participation in the market economy. Magic is an attempt at persuasion, of forming opinions, of encouraging outcomes which are far from certain. The Vaturanga talk about magic as a means of talking and debating about social and economic change.

As we have seen in Chapter Two, the Vaturanga are heavily impacted by systems and institutions of the Solomon Islands nation-state. Central to this impact is a set of economic forces which the Vaturanga encounter daily: market systems, development pressures, and a host of "expenses" which necessitate money (school fees, kerosene, transportation, etc.). Having money is a benefit. But, as the story above suggests, not everyone obtains it in equal amounts.

Simultaneously, the Vaturanga maintain a traditional subsistence way of life: they continue to obtain the bulk of what they consume from gardens (or from fishing or hunting). They also participate and maintain an elaborate exchange system known as *kavo ome*. This

system generates basically symmetrical relationships between different *puku* (matrilineages).

This intersection of subsistence/exchange with markets and development pressures produces conflicts between different lineages and between individuals. As some lineages and individuals benefit more from participation in the nation-state, and others less so, the Vaturanga as a whole find themselves engaged in a debate about their traditions and about what constitutes appropriate social relations.

The form or idiom in which this debate takes place is magic. For the Vaturanga, magic has become a kind of rhetoric. Here I take my lead from Kenneth Burke:

Magic, verbal coercion, establishment or management by decree, says, in effect: "'Let there be'--and there was." And men share in the magical resources of some power by speaking "in the name of" that power...

The magical decree is implicit in all language; for the mere act of naming an object or situation decrees that it is to be singled out as such-and-such rather than something other... to *eliminate* magic, in this sense, would involve us in the elimination of vocabulary itself as a way of sizing up reality. Rather, what we may need is *correct* magic, magic whose decrees about the naming of real situations is the closest possible approximation to the situation named (with the greater accuracy of approximation being supplied by the "collective revelation" of testing and discussing) (Burke 1967:3-4; emphasis in original).

Burke does not, by "coercion" mean, I presume, one person *forcing* another, but rather the idea that by naming something you *coerce* a context, you establish a way of thinking about it. And indeed, this is what rhetoric is designed to do.

I particularly note Burke's comments about "correct" magic or "accuracy" here. Although he is employing the concept of magic in a very general sense (i.e., I speak something, and in so doing I attempt to establish a truth or a reality about it), this basic and general sense is how the Vaturanga use magic.

Via magic, the Vaturanga attempt to "establish" or "coerce" a reality, or better yet, they

are "sizing up reality." This takes a number of forms: 1) the actual use or threat to use magic against someone; 2) the accusation that someone has used magic against you or another; 3) curing or healing the negative effects of magic; and 4) protecting yourself from magic.

We will first look briefly at the economic and social changes themselves, showing how development and market systems have introduced asymmetry into the traditional symmetrical relationships which the Vaturanga perceive as *kastomu* or customary. The implications of these asymmetries are often experienced in conflicts over *kavo ome* (feasting exchanges) and in expected behaviour towards ones kin (affinal and consanguineal).

Then we will turn to how they employ magic as a kind of rhetoric, an ongoing cultural debate or argument in which no single conclusion is drawn, but in which magic plays the role of a powerful force or idiom for making sense of change and conflict in the Vaturanga world.

ECONOMIC CHANGE AND SOCIAL RELATIONS

The Economic Setting

The Vaturanga engage in "simple commodity production" (see Wolf 1966), that is they participate to a high degree in the market-oriented economy of the Solomon Islands nation-state while maintaining and primarily living from their many subsistence practices--gardening, fishing, hunting, keeping pigs, etc. Subsistence is part of their market strategy: they sell fruit and vegetables and fish in markets. They use money so earned to pay for goods, transportation, school fees, etc. They also make copra to sell in Honiara. Some Vaturanga have jobs, run small-in house stores, and a few attempt to live entirely by selling.

In addition, the Vaturanga face issues associated with development. Approximately

fifty percent of their land was alienated in the early twentieth century for plantations (Bennett 1985; Bathgate 1978). Today, however, the most prominent development issues are potential logging and mining concessions. Much of Guadalcanal has been extensively logged. Logging concessions, paid to lineages, are substantial. Mining concessions are also an on-going concern, with prospecting occurring throughout West Guadalcanal and a gold mine recently opened in Central Guadalcanal.

The Vaturanga themselves, thus far, have not experienced logging or mining. But their neighbours in other Guadalcanal districts have. For the Vaturanga, there is a certain amount of pressure to bring in the loggers: they see around them lineages getting rich from logging concessions. These are their relatives to whom they are tied both by blood and by feasting/exchange. If they lack funds, will they lag behind their relatives, be disadvantaged in exchanges, etc.?

Feasting/exchange, which is termed *kavo ome*, is involved in redistribution of land and subsistence resources along kin lines. Individuals belong to different *puku* (matrilineages) which control land and resources of all kinds--gardens, reefs, and *golo ni hita* (customary shell money). Your subsistence is tightly entwined with this exchange system: success in one involves success in the other. They are not separate realms. In order to have land and resources available for subsistence, you must be part of a lineage which engages in successful *kavo ome* (feasting). In order to be successful at *kavo ome*, you must belong to a lineage with sufficient land and resources.

Development pressures, the potential for vast wealth from a logging concession especially, alter the value of the land. They give it a market value unrelated to feasting or

subsistence. The Vaturanga say themselves that their community is divided about development. Some want the loggers and the money it brings. Others are deeply opposed to this, and have, so far, successfully prevented it. But everyone knows there is much money to be gained. Some see feasting and lineages as "inconvenient" and "in the way." Others emphasize their ongoing importance.

Obviously such a situation is going to create tensions and strains in social relations. This occurs in two ways: 1) relations which focus on individual market participation and how those gains are to be redistributed; 2) relations between matrilineages (*puku*) when one makes substantial gains from a logging or other development concession.

Asymmetry Between Individuals or Nuclear Families

The participation of individuals or family units in the market economy has brought about two distinctive groups in the Vaturanga District: 1) those who engage *only* in market selling and/or copra selling, and 2) those who engage in additional activities such as running small businesses or who have jobs. These different degrees of participation in the market economy are one source of conflict in Vaturanga social relations.

The majority of Vaturanga participate in the market-economy as individuals or family units, with the idea of either making a portion of their living, supplementing their subsistence, meeting certain fee requirements, or getting ahead in life. They make money in a variety of ways, but the principle ones are selling items (vegetables, coconuts, bananas, fish, puddings, etc.) in markets and making and then selling copra at the docks in Honiara. As Table 2.4 indicates, the vast majority of Vaturanga households engage in one or the other of these

activities (most engage in both).

There are three markets available for them to sell in: two daily markets in Honiara-- Central Market and Rove Market--and one thrice weekly market (Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays) held in the Vaturanga District itself across the road from Selwyn College. The two markets in Honiara require that you find an available truck and ride for four hours (or so). Market trucks run between West Guadalcanal and Honiara almost constantly, day and night. They cost from five to fifteen dollars each way (depending upon how much you have to take with you). The Vaturanga also have an additional transportation source in the form of the Hautambu truck: the Franciscan brothers go almost daily to Honiara, and are willing to transport Vaturanga, if they have room, including those going to market, for an "optional" donation.

The thrice weekly local market also gives the Vaturanga a distinct advantage over their neighbours in other districts. This market, held in a specially constructed shelter across from Selwyn College, allows Vaturanga to make some cash without leaving the district.. This market involves minimal outlay and inconvenience compared with getting to markets in Honiara, but the potential earnings are comparatively diminished as well.

Making and selling copra is likewise an almost universal activity among Vaturanga households, requiring you to gather coconuts, build a copra dryer, tend the fire, bag it, etc. This takes from three to five days (usually). Then you must hire a copra truck, pay a per bag charge, ride with it to the docks and sell for the going price. Copra trucks, like market trucks, run almost constantly along the road leading to the capital.⁴³

Sixty percent of Vaturanga surveyed participate in the market economy by selling in

markets or making and selling copra only (see Table 3.1). These households have a mean income of \$203 per month.

A large minority of Vaturanga, forty percent, engage in additional activities to provide income. A number of households have individuals who have jobs. Some operate small in-house stores or canteens. I know of two Vaturanga-operated transportation services (one is a market truck, the other a motorized canoe which transports people and goods to areas inaccessible by road). There are also two petrol stations in the district. This group has considerably higher incomes per household, with a mean average of \$965 per month.

Table 3.1: Income variation according to source, per household, Maravovo village. (N = 25)

Sources	# of households	percentage	income
Market Selling and/or Copra Only	15/25	60%	\$203 mean \$200 median \$200 mode \$60-370 range
Other Sources* (jobs, in-house stores, petrol station, transport service, etc.)	10/25	40%	\$965 mean \$900 median \$900-920 mode** \$100-2400 range

*These households will also engage in market selling or copra making, but they are not the only activities, and usually not the most significant source of income.

**There was no identifiable mode here, however, two households reported monthly incomes very close as \$900 and \$920 respectively. These two were the closest to each other, and thus this range may reasonably be identified as a mode, for what it is worth.

These two groups also consume differently. Table 3.2 compares consumption behaviours of these two groups in terms of purchasing newspapers, and radio or cassette player

ownership. Not surprisingly, we see that households with "Other" sources of income are far more likely to purchase a newspaper at least once per month, and to own a radio or cassette player.

There are essentially two groups among the Vaturanga, each of which access the market-economy and the nation-state systems differently. One group, approximately 60%, has a limited involvement in the market-economy, only selling things in markets or selling copra. These activities are lineage-dependent activities: they cannot be accomplished without the cooperation of your lineage in gathering the necessary resources.

Those in the "Other" category, however, make money more or less independently of their lineage. For them, lineages and feasting are increasingly inconvenient and bothersome. Obligations towards kin hinder their market participation. Feasting does not provide cash, but rather large outlays and giving away. The demands of success in the market economy are that you earn and consume.

Table 3.2: Mass media access by sources of income, Maravovo village.
(Market/Copra N = 15, Other Sources N = 10)

Source of Income	Newspaper Purchase	Radio Ownership	Cassette Player Ownership
Market/Copra Only	7/15 (46%)	4/15 (26%)	1/15 (6%)
Other Sources	6/10 (60%)	6/10 (60%)	5/10 (50%)

Development Issues

Development issues such as potential logging and mining concessions tend to create tensions between *puku* (matrilineages) and have had effects upon *kavo ome* (feasting/exchange) and notions of descent. Development potential means that established relationships between lineages which are essentially symmetrical (i.e., balanced, roughly equal, based on *kavo ome*) have increased potential for asymmetry (i.e., the members of one lineage have the potential for considerable market gain, while others do not). This tension in social relations is observable in two related ways: *sui kokochi* (a form of feasting), and land claims disputes. The former tend to focus on relations between different lineages, while land claims often focus on reckoning descent, and may be seen as a form of challenge to traditional matriliney.

Sui Kokochi: *Sui kokochi* is the practice in which one lineage "rents" land from another. This practice is necessitated by the social organization prevalent in West Guadalcanal: matrilineages combined with patrilocality. This combination of features means that women and their offspring are frequently separated from the land and resources of their own lineage. In order to provide gardens and fruit groves for these people, the lineages enter into an exchange relationship in which the "outsiders" or "affines" are able to use local land.

This is a form of feasting/exchange which includes payment of customary shell money, pigs and other prescribed items (see Tables 2.2 and 2.3). The two lineages establish an ongoing reciprocal obligation which may last for several generations. Besides the initial payment, the "renters" are expected to contribute to the "landowners" successful feasting in other situations (e.g., should the landowners have a mortuary feast, the renters will be expected to make a contribution towards the success of this feast as part of their obligation). Thus, one group's

obligations "nest" into associated groups.

There are two types of *sui kokochi* land: that used for gardens (sweet potatoes, yams, panna, pineapples, etc.) and that used for fruit groves (coconuts, betel nut, bananas, etc.). The latter is called *sui niu* and is important to any "renting" group as they prepare for their own feasting, as well as to basic subsistence. To lack *sui niu* would mean that you are essentially "poor" in subsistence and exchange terms. Your group would find it difficult to prepare a feast, to establish additional appropriate relationships with other lineages, etc. In terms of markets, it would also limit your ability to make copra or to have surplus to sell in markets.

Conversely, if you belong to the landowning lineage, granting another lineage this kind of land would mean selling away that land's market value. Should loggers come seeking a concession, your income potential would be diminished since this land has been cleared and given over to another group. Although you would continue to benefit in the *kavo ome* (feasting/exchange) system, you would experienced a diminished benefit in the market system.

These tensions have altered the relationship between some lineages. I explored five cases of *sui kokochi* and found in three of them evidence of development issues: 1) in one case a lineage refused to "rent" land appropriate to *sui niu*; 2) in another case, at a mortuary feast, the landowning lineage attempted to abrogate or negate the entire *sui kokochi* relationship with another lineage; and 3) a case in which *sui kokochi* formed the basis of a land dispute generated by a potential logging contract.⁴⁴

The first cased involved a recent *sui kokochi* relationship. A man who had grown up in a neighbouring district had married and brought his wife to the Vaturanga District (patrilocality). His children grew up and married and began to establish their own nuclear

families. They needed land to support their families. These children, who belong to a lineage with land in a neighbouring district, attempted to establish a *sui kokochi* relationship with a local *lineage*. But no local *lineage* would agree to *sui niu*. They were only allowed lands for gardens, no fruit groves.

This group found itself economically disadvantaged by the lack of resources. They had no coconuts or betel nut of their own, important items in feasting. Thus, this group would be disadvantaged in terms of the ability to pay bride price or conduct a mortuary feast. They would also be disadvantaged in terms of the market-place, limiting their participation to market-selling, since opportunities for making copra would be limited if not non-existent. Market considerations by the landowners significantly altered the traditional feasting/exchange and ongoing relationship to one in which considerable asymmetry is introduced (i.e., the landowners have a clear advantage over the renters in every way).

The second case involved a situation in which a Vaturanga man had married a woman from another district and brought his wife to the Vaturanga District to raise his family. Eventually the wife and her lineage entered into a *sui kokochi* relationship with the husband's own lineage, giving the children right of access to land. This relationship did include *sui niu*.

After the husband died, his matrilineal kin attempted to abrogate the *sui kokochi* through the strategic overpayment of another form of feasting called *sulukima*.⁴⁵ I witnessed this occasion, a payment consisting of three large mounds of sweet potatoes, bananas, sugarcane, betel nut, mustard leaves, coconuts and store-bought items (bags of sugar, salt, bars of soap, notebooks, cloth, etc.). Included also were customary money and Solomon Islands Dollars, a very large live pig and additional pig meat.

The widow and her children were represented by an elder from their own lineage. This elder disputed the payment, but instead of arguing that it was too little, he said over and over the word *danga* meaning "a lot" or "too much." Hundreds of people were looking on. It was a very tense and emotional situation. If the widow and her lineage accepted the payment as offered, they would be evicted from their gardens and fruit groves.

The elder, however, refused to accept the payment as offered, declining the live pig and the customary money, but accepting most of the rest. In so doing, the *sui kokochi* relationship was maintained.

The reason behind such a desire to rescind the relationship is illustrated in the third case, that of a land dispute. Here a *sui kokochi* relationship had been established generations earlier. The landowning lineage had made a contract with a logging company. But the "renters" challenged their right to do this on the basis of the *sui kokochi* relationship.

This was taken to a customary land court, which heard evidence of the initial payment made four generations earlier. Two generations later, they heard, a second smaller payment had been made. Furthermore, the court heard evidence that the "renters" had continued in their obligation to contribute towards the landowners feasting whenever called upon.

Because of this evidence, the land court ruled that the landowners did not have the right to sell a logging concession, as *sui kokochi* had established the right of the "renters" to use this land. Thus, the landowning lineage was unable to fulfill the logging contract and had no monetary gain.

Other Land Claims: In addition to that described above, I investigated two additional land claims cases. These focused on the issue of descent, particularly how land ownership is

reckoned, and involved disputes over resources which have market potential or value. One of these cases was resolved during the period of my fieldwork, the other remained unresolved, but is nonetheless illustrative of how market systems influence social relations.

As noted in Chapter Two, the government recognizes Customary Land Courts which have authority to resolve disputes according to regional custom. These courts are expected to rule according to customary rules. The magistrates, which are appointed by the government, consist of elders who are well-versed in such matters and are so recognized by the community. They have no legal training and the tendency for these courts is to rule conservatively in favour of established local custom. Their rulings can be appealed to a higher court.

I was assisted in my investigation of land claims cases by Kesa (not his real name), a Vaturanga man who often served as a sort of court reporter because he was reasonably well-educated and took an interest in such matters. In one case I was able to interview actual disputants. Kesa described the first case, which had been resolved at the time of my field work, as follows:

Before missionaries came there was an attack on a village near Paru by Russell Islanders. This village was called Vaturangalilihi, and the people living there were (members of a) Haubata (*puku* or lineage). In the attack, many villagers were killed.

Three men, Gola, Chinoho, and Bolidato, all brothers, heard the screams of the villagers. These brothers were the sons of a Haubata chief, but were (members of the) Lakuili tina (*puku*).

After they heard the screaming they went down and met the Russell Islanders at a place now called Chobolau. These brothers fought and killed the warriors, and cut off the head of their leader, then took it to Sunivuho, who was their father, the Haubata chief. Their mother was named Kimanitoro.

Sunivuho took the head to the Haubata elders, specifically to Hanideke. The (Haubata) elders agreed to give half of their land to the Lakuili tina because they couldn't afford to pay them in custom money. So the land from Vevera to the sea was given to the Lakuili tina.

Later, another Lakuili *puku* from another place married into the area. When loggers came and wanted a concession, these new Lakuili also claimed they were the owners.

The court sat for three days. The Lakuili tina paid (members of a) Kakau (*puku*) a pig, sweet potatoes, betel nut, leaf, lime, bananas, talina and dollars to speak on their behalf. The other Lakuili paid some Haubata to speak on their behalf.

The issue was which Lakuili *puku* were the descendants of Gola, Chinoho and Bolidato's sisters. Some of the Lakuili were direct descendants from one or another of the brothers, but that is not how Vaturanga own land. It was determined that the Lakuili tina were the descendants of the three brothers' sisters, and therefore the rightful owners of the land.

Although part of this involves an element of confusion--the presence of more than one Lakuili matrilineage among the descendants of the three brothers--the primary issue here is how to reckon descent and a challenge of ownership by the relatives of the landowners who do not belong to the Lakuili tina *puku*. These individuals are indeed all relatives of each other, with established and ongoing relationships including feasting of various kinds. The market-value of the land, however, means that the Lakuili tina stand to become quite wealthy from a logging concession, while their *eva* (cousins) will gain nothing. The two lineages, which had been essentially equal, would as a result find themselves very unequal. Resources (trees for house-building, land available for *sui kokochi*, etc.) which previously had been shared and redistributed between the two groups according to rules of feasting/exchange have become the exclusive property to be used for market gain by one group only.

The second dispute was described to me not only by Kesa but by Siu (not his real name), one of the disputants. This case involved land in a neighbouring district but involved Vaturanga relatives. Instead of logging, this one featured the discovery of oil and gas. As with the above land claim, the story of this claim points to historical events and the appropriate way

to reckon descent. Siu told it to me as follows:

Seven Lakuili sangavulu (a lineage) boys were swimming in the Kobau River. There was a very heavy rain up in the bush and suddenly they found themselves caught in a flood. The water was too strong for them, so they couldn't get to shore. They managed to grab onto a tree trunk, a log fallen in off a lobo tree. They held onto this and were taken out to sea. The currents took them to an island called Barukua (on maps called Mary Island in Isabel Province).

They discovered a *mumu* (a sort of trickster figure) with his daughter. The *mumu*'s wife had died already. This *mumu* called out to them: "How did you get here?" They told him what had happened. He said "Okay, I'll keep you safe," and "Don't worry, you'll be fine."

But this *mumu* wants to eat these seven boys and his daughter tries to talk him out of it. Every night she stays up all night to watch so her father doesn't eat them.

One day the boys go into the bush and fell a tree to make a canoe. They build the canoe and the *mumu* asks them, "What is that for?" They answer, "So we can go fishing."

But the seven boys make a plan. They know the *mumu* wants to eat them, so they decide to trick him. They have to make some puddings to take with them when they go fishing, they tell him they will make taro pudding with wild taro.

But there are two kinds of wild taro, *vila hahani* (which can be eaten) and *vila achi* (which is poisonous). So they make two ovens, one for good taro, one for bad taro. They take the puddings to the *mumu* and he says "smells good" and so they offer him some of the poisonous pudding. The *mumu* gets the pudding stuck in his throat and he can't swallow. They fetch him some water and wash it down. It makes his stomach very sick and he can't do anything.

Then they take his daughter in the canoe back to Kobau. One of the boys marries her. She *sahe* (joins) a Kidipale lineage and has two sons but no daughters. One son is still alive and he is one of those claiming this land. Because she had no daughters, there is no one to inherit her land.

The customary land court ruled in favour of Siu and his relatives, who are *eva* (cousins) to the son of the *mumu*'s daughter. However, he has appealed the case and it was unresolved when I departed from the Solomon Islands. This case is interesting because the landowning lineage has, for all practical purposes, died out, since the one remaining member is male and his descendants cannot inherit the land patrilineally. Here matriliney is inconvenient for all the

parties. Were there no market-value attached to the land in question, this land would available to both the surviving son of the *mumu*'s daughter and his children, as well as his cross-cousins via some form of feasting/exchange. But because of the considerable market potential, it becomes critical that landownership be clearly determined and defined.

In both of these cases the stakes are very high, not only in terms of market wealth, but in the traditional subsistence and exchange economy as well. Those with greater wealth can more easily pay a bride price, more easily be successful at feasting and hence have advantages in all arenas.

THE RHETORIC OF MAGIC

Economic and Social Change and Magic

The Vaturanga perceive magic as something which has changed in response to economic and social change. They say that magic has proliferated, that there are many new forms, and that old forms are used in "rubbish" ways today. When they gossip about magic, explain magic, express concerns about the negative effects of magic, they bring into it matters of social relations, kin obligations, disputes between lineages, market participation, and traditional customs.

In this way, magic is the Vaturanga way of talking about economic and social change. As in the interpretation of my encounter with the light at the beginning of this chapter, participation in the market-based economy and how that affects social relations (i.e., jealousy, obligations to kin, disputing) is the standard Vaturanga interpretation of the presence of magic.

After categorizing the various kinds and forms of magic among the Vaturanga, I will

turn to their overall notion of how magic has changed in response to the nation-state and its economic and social effects. Finally, I will look at specific instances of magic today, the threats, accusations, cures and protective devices, how they form or embody a rhetoric for talking about economic and social change.

Kinds and Forms of Magic Among the Vaturanga

I should note that although this focus is on the Vaturanga, the kinds and forms of magic described herein are not unique or proper to the Vaturanga themselves, but are known throughout West Guadalcanal and (so there are indications) the rest of the island. The Vaturanga themselves would never claim exclusive property over any of these forms, but indeed recognize that these practices are widespread. They would, however, assert that these forms are specifically Guadalcanal things, unique to that island as a whole, even characteristic of Guadalcanal peoples.

Patterson (1974) provides a typology of Melanesian magic which is a useful starting point for categorizing the various forms. She has a large division between sorcery and tabu, the latter referring to magic with "the specific motive... to protect property" (Patterson 1975:141). Sorcery she divides into four kinds: 1) personal leavings and food remains, 2) disease, 3) vele or vada, and 4) miscellany (Patterson 1975:141-144). The Vaturanga have forms which correspond to all of these. They have two additional categories, one which they term "lucky" which promotes an individuals own material well-being, and I will also include healing or curative forms, i.e., those designed to counteract or reverse harmful magic.

Table 3.3 lists the various types of magic I have identified according to this expanded

typology, with a brief explanation of the forms/actions and intended outcomes. According to this table, there are fourteen different kinds.⁴⁶ I have emphasized those forms which have especial economic or social aspects, which are indicated in the intended outcomes.

The Vaturanga suspect virtually everyone of having knowledge of some kind of magic. Indeed, to possess such knowledge is a kind of power or status. Certain forms, such as *poke sosolo* are believed to be widely disseminated, especially among men. Other forms, including the very dangerous or powerful ones such as *vele* or *pai tindao*, are presumed to be the domain of only a small minority. The healing forms have specialists known as *tatali*, and require years of training. The protective forms or *didila* are readily adopted and relatively easy to obtain. Regardless, the Vaturanga maintain a large repertoire of such practices which they find important, which are frequently remarked upon and which inform their daily behaviour.

I should also briefly remark upon the origins of such practices. Many of these forms are regarded as being customary practices, given to the peoples of Guadalcanal by *mumu* or other "devils." Such "devils" are an important component of magic and may take many forms, including animals or inanimate objects. Other forms were chanced upon accidentally or by experiment. This is especially true of some more recent forms, such as *poke sosolo*, but not exclusively so since *visuhaso* and *taho* are recent and are said to have been given to people by *mumu* (a trickster figure). This gives them a "customary" aspect in the minds of the Vaturanga, despite their recent origin.

Magic As Custom: Vaturanga Perceptions of How Magic Use to Be

One of the most prominent themes in the way Vaturanga talk about magic is that of

change. Magic is seen as an indicator or symbol of this change, particularly the negative aspects. Magic as a whole is regarded as something *kastomu* or customary. This is an ideological categorization used to contrast with modern life (see Keesing and Tonkinson 1982).

This notion that magic is not only customary, but use to have a positive role to play in society, was expounded upon by several informants. Hoana (pseudonym), a healer, told me:

These magics were what Guadalcanal has always been known for, a silent way to fight. *Pupuku*, *sosolo*, *susui* and *vele*, they were our protection before. Now they have been turned into rubbish things. These things use to be helpful, were used against marauders and invading warriors. Now it is brother against brother, it is jealousy, it is getting away with crime, it is not listening to the chiefs' decision in a land dispute. What used to be good has been turned against us. A *vele* (practitioner) is no longer feared and respected. He is feared and hated, beaten up, run off, not wanted.

Table 3.3: Vaturanga magic, types, forms, intended outcomes.

Category and Name	Form/Action	Outcomes
Personal Leavings/Food Remains		
<i>Porodula</i>	Using ginger, which must touch the victim somehow (rub on betel nut, put on ground where they will walk, put inside a torch and shine at them)	Individual will get a bruise wherever they come into contact, will fall ill.
<i>Tobatu</i>	Similar to <i>porodula</i> but with a different variety of ginger, and it is usually placed in the victims food (i.e., is consumed)	Causes burning sensations or stiffness of joints, weakness in the limbs.
<i>Kenjo</i>	Must obtain an article of clothing from the intended victim and also animal (pig or dog) manure. Bring together and speak to the devil in the manure.	Causes victim to act like the animal, even leave their house and live with the pigs.
Disease Sorcery		
<i>Hoko sivona aso</i>	Sometimes involves ginger, sometimes not. Requires you to speak into the sunset. Must be timed exactly, standing on the beach.	Variety of possible outcomes: sickness, bad luck, prevent something from happening.
<i>Sosolo</i>	Uttering a spell. Must know the correct words. Described as very powerful.	As with <i>hoko sivona aso</i> , can have several different possible outcomes.
<i>Soa na manu loki</i>	Calling the eagle. Must know the correct words.	Variety of outcomes, sickness, stealing.

Category and Name	Form/Action	Outcomes
Vele or Vada		
<i>Vele</i>	Considered the most dangerous form of magic throughout Guadalcanal. Practitioners are said to carry a small grass basket which contains bamboo root, poisonous leaves, grass clippings, dirt from a baby. Involves actual contact with the victim.*	Victim becomes <i>bule</i> (dumb or disoriented), gets sick and dies.
Miscellany		
<i>Pai tindao</i>	Means "devil dog." You cast a spell on a dog, and it will bite the intended victim. Sometimes the victim dreams of the dog bite. Usually requires the use of lime.	Victim gets sick and dies.
<i>Riana pupuku</i>	Means "tying ginger" involves casting a spell while tying a leaf of a living ginger plant, then placing a stone on the tied leaf. When it rots, the magic is effected.	Bad luck, stop a truck from running, a radio from playing, or from getting married. Can also get you out of trouble or prevent punishment for crimes.
<i>Poke sosolo</i>	Speaking/blowing in lime (powder made from coral) Once you blow the magic is effected	Puts victim to sleep or makes them <i>bule</i> (dumb, disoriented). Perpetrator then robs them, also associated with nightcrawling.

*Patterson (1975) describes this as "assault magic" and there are indications of this in Vaturanga accounts.

Category and Name	Form/Action	Outcomes
Tabu		
<i>Didila</i>	There are 7 kinds, some involve planting them in strategic locations (usually around the house or village), others are carried on your person. The specific items used can be dried ginger root, small sticks, or stones (sometimes with unusual shapes).	All are designed to protect from magic, usually <i>vele</i> . Those which are planted provide warning, or even harm the <i>vele</i> practitioner. If carried, the <i>didila</i> will warn you that a <i>vele</i> is ahead in your path (it does this by causing a tree branch to break or some other sign).
Lucky		
<i>Taho</i>	Means "take" and refers to a small basket which has a devil inside.	Get whatever you want, it will appear in the basket. Used to get money.
<i>Visuhaso</i>	A 5 cent coin kept in a small box. Carry it with you when you go shopping in market or stores. Must not take with you to toilet.	Causes money to "come back" after you have spent it.
Healing or Curative		
<i>Susui</i>	Involves several possible actions, including passing through split bamboo, or tying vines and then cutting them.	Counteracts bad luck or <i>riana pupuku</i> . Is often used when someone is lacking success.

Category and Name	Form/Action	Outcomes
<i>Sina hore</i>	Vaturanga word for “medicine” but includes curing illnesses caused by magic. Actions may including <i>taiko</i> (drinking an herbal mixture), <i>piti kaputi</i> (tying a vine around waste to stop sickness from spreading), <i>lolovi</i> (rubbing the body to move the sickness or devil out), or <i>pupusu</i> (spitting and blowing over joints and main body points).	Cure of sicknesses caused by magic or “devils.” Can cure <i>vele</i> sickness in the right combination.

Hoana provides an insight into how many Vaturanga perceive magic today versus in the past. And he specifically mentions economic changes as central factors: jealousy, crime, land disputes. This is not to say that Hoana is opposed to economic change or development, rather that he analyzes the social problems and social relations resulting through a rhetoric of magic.

Later on, in the same interview, I asked Hoana and Oli (pseudonym for another Vaturanga man knowledgeable of magic) about *vele* specifically. On this occasion they raised the issue of economic change very explicitly:

Hoana: “*Vele* have 12 or 30 powers, we say ‘horse power’... it depends upon how they do it. We say *sangavuluruka popono* or *tolusangavulu popono*.”

I asked about the origins of *vele*.

Oli: “We are great hunters and we have to move our gardens often. These powers *sangavuluruka popono* and *tolusangavulu popono* were used for hunting, so you could travel long distances in hunting and not get tired.”

Hoana: “But *vele* changed because the traders, missionaries came, brought a new kind of money, axes, cook pots.

“They started to get greedy, and then started to collect *moe* (hidden treasures). They would hide everything in caves, protect the caves with magic.”

Oli: “We almost lost all our custom money because of this *moe*. They would use snake devils to protect the caves.

“The sound of the *vele* is ‘koa koa koa’ like a bird.

“Now *vele* use the magic to kill people. The motive is always jealousy

and greed. They try to take away land, or just ruin someone who is doing well, making money.”

Hoana: “The *vele* will hide things behind their ear so if you see an old man with long hair he may be a *vele*.⁴⁷

“They use to go clear around Guadalcanal, four times in one night using *vele* magic to hunt. But now just used for rubbish.”

Here we see an interpretation of the movement from subsistence and feasting/exchange based economic life to market and development oriented economics expressed in how *vele* has changed. Traditional Guadalcanal magic is described in almost "heroic" terms: they were "great hunters" who could travel long distances, provide for and protect their people. But when the missionaries came, so did *moe* or "hidden treasures" which corrupted the people and made them greedy. It is clear that both Oli and Hoana see the introduction of western forms of wealth and commodities as precursors to significant changes in their society, changes which are rhetorically represented in how magic has changed.

In addition to such contrasts, Vaturanga often focus very specifically on particular aspects or details of modern life when talking about magic. The movement from a subsistence/exchange based economic system to a market and development based system entails debates about what is appropriate behaviour, social inequality and the meaning of *kastomu* (customs and traditions) in the modern world, and such social problems as crime, night crawling, and violence. These debates are frequently (if not always) couched in the rhetoric of magic.

Appropriate Behaviour

How does one share one's gains from market participation with kin? With allies with whom one has established a *kavo ome* (feasting) relationship? With the community as a whole? In the subsistence and exchanged based economy, the lines are clear since the benefits accrue generally equally, and require group cooperation. But in order to be successful in the market place, in the world of money-making activities, sharing is a detriment. Money is fleeting, commodities are consumed or wear out. Individual gain and self-promotion are highly valued. The social relations required in basic subsistence and balanced reciprocity are very different from those required for successful negotiation of the market economy.

The Vaturanga negatively characterize extreme individualism in the market-place with the term *molonaho*, which literally means "put in front" but is best translated as "prideful or selfish behaviour." In Pijin, this is popularly referred to as "Mista Mi" (lit. "Mister Me").

This theme arises in many accusation about magic. A typical example was provided to me by Oli, who on this occasion was telling me about *riana pupuku* when the concept of *molonaho* emerged:

Riana pupuku means "tying ginger"... you tie a ginger leaf in a knot while asking the devil inside to hold something up. After tying the knot, put a stone on the knot, holding the leaf to the ground. When that part of the leaf with the knot rots and falls off then the matter is finished now.

They use *riana pupuku* to interfere in people's lives, and also to prevent punishment for a crime.

These men in another village had a truck and were running copra to town everyday, but that truck broke down. It was *riana pupuku*. It can stop anything. Can prevent you from finding a wife, or from finishing a house. Whatever, you just ask the devil.

I asked why they would want to make the truck stop running, since it would be a useful service

for everyone to have a truck available to take copra to town. Oli hesitated, saying it was only speculation: "I don't know for sure. Some people do rubbish things." I assumed he meant those who had done *riana pupuku*, but he corrected me: "Some people get jealous of others, especially if they are making money, they want their share. So they spoil them (because they don't share)."

This statement embodies a rhetoric about the kind of behaviour the Vaturanga expect. Oli is not expressing approval of "rubbish magic" or of selfish behaviour, but almost fatalistically analyzing the situation: if you are making lots of money in the market, you would be very wise to not act selfishly and to share your gains with your kin and other appropriate persons; otherwise, you may become the victim of magic.

This was also the interpretation given to my seeing the light along the path, related at the beginning of this chapter: I was told, "Vaturanga are not supposed to be too successful. If you are, they will spoil you." They perceive this "spoilage" as a very real threat, sometimes to their lives, not just to their market success.

This also arose in threats to do magic, which were shared with me in a number of ways. Poha (not his real name) confessed to me that he knew how to do magic and had threatened a prominent politician who he perceived as being *molonaho*:

I am asking this man (the politician) for one-thousand dollars to buy four wheelbarrows for the village, so that the women can use them to go the market. I told him he will lose support in this village if he doesn't pay up. He asked me to *pupuku* his opponent in the election. I told him I will *pupuku* him (the politician himself) if he doesn't pay for these wheelbarrows.

Poha told me about another occasion in which he encountered a man in Honiara at an agency who he felt had behaved very selfishly, refusing to assist him in a project and acting "superior"

because he had a job:

I will *pupuku* this man. Yes. In three months he will lose his house, his job, everything. He made a fool out of me. I will make a fool out of him. I know how to do it. I know how to talk to the devil. I maybe *pupuku* him or maybe I will do a kind of *sosolo* where I just talk to the devil in the air.

Although these sorts of threats are rarely made openly, Poha is expressing a commonly held belief that magic is related to *molonaho* or selfish behaviours of those engaged in the market economy.

What is actually expected of such individuals in order to avoid becoming victims? This was most clearly expressed to me by Kesa (not his real name) when we were talking about a very successful and wealthy man named Bobo Detke (real name) who is from another West Guadalcanal district and who owns a prominent business in Honiara. At one point in the conversation, I brought up the issue of magic and asked if anybody had tried to "spoil" Bobo Detke. Kesa was unequivocal and his response was extremely revealing:

Nobody tries to *pupuku* Bobo Detke. Because he is very generous with his money. People ask him all the time and he gives them money. One time chiefs were meeting, he sent me to get a beer, handed me eight-hundred dollars. The beer only cost two-hundred. I tried to give back the six-hundred dollars but he said "keep it." Also, he wears shorts, tank top, t-shirts all the time, only dresses like a white man in a white country.

Kesa here reveals via the absence of magic the debate about appropriate behaviour and social relations in the modern economy. This successful and wealthy man is not *molonaho* at all: he dresses like a villager, he shares his wealth and is generous to those who ask, even those from neighbouring communities. He is seen as an example of someone who behaves appropriately.

Also revealing of the benefits of generosity and sharing are the stories of how two Vaturanga men encountered "lucky" forms of magic. The first of these, called *taho*, was

encountered by Kesa one day on a visit to Honiara:

An old man from the bush in East Guale kept staring at me one day in Honiara. Finally I went up to him and said "olo mane" and asked him what he wants.

The Olo said he wanted some fish and chips, that he was hungry. So I went and bought him some fish and chips and gave them to him.

Olo said he didn't have any money to pay me back, but said "take this bag and go stand outside the bank. Don't look inside."

I went and stood outside Wespac Bank and stood there for half an hour. Then went back to the old man. Olo opened the bag and inside was lots of money and from it I was given \$100.

So this olo knows Taho. He also told me if I want Taho magic, I can get it by paying one talina.

Here, Kesa was rewarded enormously just for sharing his money to buy an *olo* some fish and chips in town. *Taho* is perceived as a recent or new form of magic, but as a harmless kind.

A similar story was told to me by Lima (not his real name), who obtained the magic called *visuhaso* also on a trip to Honiara:

I got this magic when I met a man from East Guale one day in Honiara.

This man came up to me and said "give me \$10" but I said I didn't have any money (I lied because I didn't want to give it up).

The man insisted and said "You've got \$10 in your pocket." So I gave him \$10 and we went together to Chinatown.

I spent the \$10 on 3 packets of fish and chips (1 for me, 1 for his son, and 1 for him).

After we ate, man said to me he wants 6 beer but I said "I don't have any more money." But the man said "You've still got some money in your pocket."

I got cross but went and got 6 beers, we went to hide to drink them. After we finished them the man said "Oh I want another 6 beers."

So I went and got another 6 and told the man "I've got no money left in my pocket now. It is all finished so after we drink these beers I've got to go now."

We finished the beers, the man says "'thank you' but I don't have any money to pay you back, so I will give you this "lucky"--a 5 cent coin in a small box. If you go and pay now, your money will come back."

The only thing that is tambu is don't go to piss or toilet while carrying it in your pocket."

I tried it twice in a shop in Honiara and each time my money reappeared

in my pocket after coming out.

I wanted to test it to see if it was the same money or not. So I wrote my name on the \$10 bill and went and spent it in a shop. When I came out, that \$10 bill (with my name on it) was back in my pocket.

I eventually spoiled this by getting drunk and going to the toilet one day with the lucky in my pocket.

Again generosity, this time in sharing your money for fish and chips and beer in town, was rewarded via magic. The message in these sorts of stories is to be generous, to share, to **not** be *molonaho* or selfish.

In these last two examples, market participation is encouraged, but not individualistic behaviours. The Vaturanga are not saying, in any of these examples, that market participation is undesirable. Rather, they are concerned with the effects of such participation on social relations and behaviour. Accusations, threats and stories about magic form the rhetoric for expressing these issues.

Development, Inequality and Magic

One of the circumstances in which Vaturanga especially fear magic is when their lineage is engaged in a land dispute. Such disputes, as noted earlier, are almost always predicated by the potential for serious economic gain from development projects. *Vele* magic is especially seen as related to such disputes. Hoana (not his real name) who is a healer, told me:

People in a land dispute, if they don't get what they want from the customary court, they will hire someone to *vele* their opponent. Before *mane sere* (white man) came, *vele* only used their magic to travel. They could walk around the entire island of Guadalcanal in a single night. But now they use magic to make people sick and die. This is a rubbish thing that has happened because of the problems over land disputes. Back in the 1960's a *vele* wiped out an entire Poleo

village (weather coast, southwestern Guadalcanal) so it is very powerful.

There are two issues being stated in this rhetoric: 1) economic and social inequality, and 2) the appropriateness of customary rules and traditions in the context of development.

Logging or other development concession have the potential to make certain lineages very wealthy, while others contrastingly become very poor. This introduces asymmetry into Vaturanga society, not between individuals but between lineages. Development, by its very nature is uneven. Magic, under such circumstances, is a kind of rhetoric of inequality.

According to Hoana, magic is often seen as the last resort of the "loser" in a land dispute, as a sort of revenge. But it can also happen while the dispute is ongoing. Vongo (not his real name) belonged to a lineage engaged in a land dispute and told me that he had been attacked via magic:

This man (names him) sent *pai tindao* to me. In the night I first had a dream of a snake biting me under my left arm right here (points to his torso under the arm). I woke up shaking, fear. I fell back asleep and dreamed again and this time saw (name of the man). I woke up again, shaking all over. *Pai tindao* kills very fast so I made a *poke sosolo*, took the lime and applied it to my side in dots to cure myself. Then I reversed the *pai tindao*. This is called *sosolo pilo na poke*. To do this I said the words backwards. This means the *pai tindao* goes back into (name of the man).

There are different kinds of *pai tindao* and the dog devil can come as any animal, sometimes pig or cat or snake. Sometimes they bite near the heart, if that happens you will die quickly. Other times go inside and bite all around.

I was protected by *didila*: ginger and a vine. So I was warned. Most people don't have protection so they get no warning.

The stakes are clearly high, and talking about magic in this way indicates the seriousness with which the ensuing social inequality is regarded. Social relations are profoundly changed: lineages which had basically symmetrical interrelations with each other now find that one is distinctly advantaged over the other.

Kesa (not his real name) told me of a case in which magic was used by the losers to prevent the fulfillment of a logging contract:

A logging company signed a contract with (a lineage), but somehow the logging has never happened. I suspect it is due to magic called *hoko vani kalina esu na aso* (lit. "talk to the sunset") in which you watch the sunset on the beach, talking into a knot in a rope (vine). When the sun has gone down, you drop the knotted rope into the sea. When it rots away, the magic will come about. This can be done to prevent something from happening.

Magic here embodies the notion that those who are left out of development can interfere with it. Often the threats go further. One man told me that if he lost a dispute he would do *porodula* or *pai tindao* to an individual from the other side.

It is important to note, however, that such individuals are not prepared themselves to share their development gains with the losers. In a sense, such disputes also contain an element of challenging customary rules, or better the significance of customary rules. Here, the market value of land is seen as a mitigating factor. Disputants often seek to claim land that is clearly not theirs according to reckoning by matrilineal descent. Land disputes are, in many cases, a means of stating that customary rules ought not to apply.

This is sometimes expressed via a rhetoric of magic also. Cheche, a Vaturanga elder, told me about an attempt to influence a Customary Land Court:

There's a new magic called *togomi nina hoko* (lit. "swallow his talk") which you use in court and you slowly chew and swallow a certain kind of ginger root while your opponent is talking. Then the court will not hear his words, only your words. You will then win your case.

An assumption is made here that if you do not have *kastomu* on your side, then magic may work better. But this is a clear challenge to *kastomu*, seeing it as inconvenient. Tapiu (not his real name) told me: "We should forget *kastomu*. It just gets in the way of people succeeding. If

you want to get married, you have to raise a bride price, spend a lot of time trying to get customary money, raising pigs, put on a big feast. Takes up time could be spent making money."

This is not just the point of view of the losers in land disputes. Winners want to avoid customary rules which require them to share. They argue for a strict interpretation of descent rules, but forget about obligations to their kin in other lineages.

There is no clear answer contained in the rhetoric of magic and land disputes. Rather, it expresses concerns about inequality and customary practices. In this way, the Vaturanga are engaging in an ongoing debate about their traditions and where they fit in the modern world. Magic is one part of this debate, indeed it is widely feared in such contexts.

Magic and Social Problems

The Vaturanga also relate magic to a set of social problems which they connect with the nation-state, market-economy and modern life. In this context, magic often appears as part of a list of "problems" or "concerns" which the Vaturanga find vexing. In this way, magic constitutes a rhetoric about modern life in the nation-state. A typical example of employing such a rhetoric of magic came out in a conversation with Kesa (not his real name):

Some boys in (names another district in West Guadalcanal) used *riana pupuku* to prevent their punishment in a night crawling case. The court (a customary court) did not punish them.

Poke sosolo means "talking to the lime"... this magic can make people go to sleep, make a girl follow you to have sex.

Some boys used this to have sex with girls at (a high school in Honiara). Boys always use magic to get girls.

This kind of magic has only come recently. The (Anglican) Church cannot get rid of it.

The BRA (Bougainville Revolutionary Army) want to get hold of this magic and learn it so they can use it to fight the PNGDF.

In this conversation, Kesa portrays magic as playing a role in behaviours and social changes he sees going on around him: it is implicated in night crawling and rape, in getting away with crime, in social changes the church cannot control, and even in the Bougainville Crisis in P.N.G. As he indicates, much of this is perceived to be recent, and there are clear connections to the modern nation-state and its systems (i.e., Anglican Church, BRA, magics are recent).

This sort of "litany" of complaints involving magic was very common in my conversations with Vaturanga. Cheche (not his real name), another Vaturanga man, often paired magic with undesirable behaviours and modern life:

Some women had *poke sosolo* used against them last weekend. They ended up naked on their verandah, raped. These lived near (another Vaturanga village).

This man (names him) says he is going to kill his opponent in a land claim if he doesn't win. I talked him out of it. He knows all kinds of rubbish magic.

But this magic (*poke sosolo*) is powerful. The BRA has been taught how to do it. They used it to capture one PNGDF soldier. It's okay to use magic when fighting to win against your enemies, but not alright when used against your neighbours.

Using magic to do rubbish is not a new thing. Some people always doing that. But now we have so many different kinds.

For Cheche, magic has become a significant social problem itself. And he connects this with modern life, with land disputes and the Bougainville Crisis. He also explicitly comments on how magic has changed, noting that while it always had "rubbish" uses, now it has proliferated with many new forms.

This theme arose was when I was interviewing a group of Vaturanga women. Alu (not her real name) brought up the news of a robbery in a nearby district:

They used *poke sosolo* in (name of village) the other night. Somebody got in the house while everyone was asleep and stole all their money. It was several hundred dollars.

This statement was greeted by a chorus of disapproval about "rubbish magic" with no one disputing that magic had played a role in the robbery. Magic in all of these instances expresses a kind of vulnerability that people feel. Suli (not his real name) a young Vaturanga man, expressed this sense of vulnerability quite directly to me after he had refused to join his uncles on a visit to a village on the Weather Coast (where they all had relatives):

I'm not going to go visit those people. That place, they know lots of magic. Someone will try to *pupuku* me because I have been to school, or maybe just to take revenge because my *pupu* (maternal uncle) is disputing with them. If they see me, maybe they will want to do this, because they are angry.

Suli was very clear and emphatic that magic was the reason he did not want to go on this trip. Furthermore, he connected it to issues of modern life: his having attended school, and land disputes. Again, magic itself is seen as a "problem" but it also constitutes a rhetoric or way of talking about change.

Hindavi (not his real name) also saw magic as a social problem, even as a catalyst for violence and conflict. Again, this was part of the daily gossip:

Three days ago a *vele* man was beaten up near Verahue. He had made a man *bule* (lit. "drunk, dazed, confused"). This man, his brother came out and found him sitting on the ground. He caught sight of the *vele*, ran after him before he could do any more magic and beat him up. He is in *Nambanaen* (Central Hospital, Honiara).

Day before yesterday near Naro another man he did *vele* against this man who was swimming in the river, made him *bule*. This is (names the man he suspects of being the *vele*). This man (the victim), his wife is from (another district in West Guadalcanal) and her family is threatening to come up and beat up this *vele*.

You know a *vele* killed my father. They are rubbish people of Guadalcanal.

We had to plant *didila* there and there (he points to the places) to protect my daughter and her husband and family. If a *vele* comes near, a light will flash. If he stays around he will get sick and die. So we are safe here.

Hindavi brings in the issue of protection (*didila*) and the sense of vulnerability that people feel, and the violence that results from magic. While he did not speculate on the reasons someone engaged in *vele* magic on this occasion, he made it clear that magic is a social problem in Guadalcanal, identifying those who practice it as "rubbish people."

Magic was also connected with violence by Kesa, who talked about it in the following exchange:

Kesa: "Guadalcanal and Malaita people all fighting all the time, but now that we have *poke sosolo* and other kinds of magic, Malaita afraid of Guadalcanal."

I asked: "What do you mean fighting all the time? Do you mean before the missionaries came?"

Kesa: "No. After the missionaries came. *Poke sosolo* is recent."

I asked: "Who discovered it? Is there a story of how it was learned or who taught it?"

Kesa: "No, whoever discovered it, they did an experiment, but they didn't tell us how they learned it."

Here, Kesa related magic to ethnic tensions with Malaitan plantation workers, a clear change and a big part of modern life in West Guadalcanal. He also sees magic as proliferating. While he does not describe magic itself as a social problem, he clearly connects it to a social problem, and clearly connects it with changes related to the nation-state.

In all of these examples, the Vaturanga are expressing some concern about social problems and social relations they see around them. Magic was consistently brought into the conversation when a social problem was mentioned or discussed.

In this way of talking about social problems, the Vaturanga are using magic as a rhetoric

for explaining and trying to understand their lives in the nation-state. Magic is itself something which is traditional. But it has become a "rubbish" thing in recent times, something to worry about, something which is itself a social problem.

Again, as in the other cases presented here, the employment of a rhetoric of magic does not conclude or settle an argument, but is used as a device for discussing and making sense of life. Magic does not indicate that life is worse than it use to be, but it is a way of talking about how it has changed.

DISCUSSION

The interpretation of magic among anthropologists, in the Pacific and elsewhere, has involved several different approaches. These include interpretations of magic in terms of social structures and social reproduction, power relations, or practical issues such as success in life or subsistence (see Keesing 1982; White 1991; Whiteman 1983; White 1990; Oliver 1973; McKellin 1985; Patterson 1974, 1975; Marwick 1990; Epstein 1999).

Kinship and Marriage

Kinship, marriage and post-marital residence are acknowledged sources of potential social tension associated with accusations of magic and sorcery in this region. Fortune (1963) relates magic to conflict over lineage land, affinal exchange relations, suspicions between cross-cousins and non-matrilineally related kin, and residence patterns (Fortune 1963:9ff). Others have identified similar relationships (see Nash 1974).

I do not deny that there have been and are now such factors at work in magic among the

Vaturanga. The data presented in this chapter reveals that Vaturanga magic is clearly related to the nature of descent, to residency rules, and is also “a type of socially regulated conflict” (Patterson 1974:139). However, I argue that the way magic is currently employed, talked about and used as a form of social commentary reflects the complex contemporary social networks Vaturanga have in their constellation of relations in a nation-state. These include development and market forces associated with the Solomon Islands nation-state in addition to those of kinship and marriage.

Magic as Rhetoric

What is different about my approach, then, is that I see magic as a way of communicating about change, specifically change related to Vaturanga participation in the Solomon Islands nation-state. Magic, for the Vaturanga, has a strong ideological component. I could say that it is a symbol of that change. But that would not adequately cover what I mean, for the symbol does not work in one direction only: magic does not just represent the past (*kastomu*) or life in the market-economy of the nation-state. In fact it contradicts itself, signifying on some occasions an idealized past, and on other occasions a “rubbish” present, and still on other occasions the inconvenience of customary rules. It is not clearly one thing or another.

As with Barth’s (1992) notions about “events” and “acts,” magic is open to interpretation. Magic does not necessarily explain or settle any matter, but it is a powerful and meaningful form of discourse about social change and conflict (cf. White and Watson-Gegeo 1990). As economic life changes, we see the beginnings of the emergence of class distinctions

in West Guadalcanal: some individuals participate to a far higher degree in the market-system than others, and this leads to forms of conflict as well as exclusion, an asymmetry in access not only to markets, but to information, education, and social power (Gewertz and Errington 1999:2). Different lineages and different individuals have different sets of social networks by virtue both of their ties to market and development systems, and the way those intersect with kin groups and the traditional exchange system.

This leads me to conclude that magic is being employed as a rhetoric, a form of debating about economic and social relations. As such, its function as a "sign" is that it can point anywhere. We see above how it can express disapproval of *molonaho* (prideful, selfish) behaviour on the part of those experiencing success in the market-place. Yet, it can also be used to undermine customary rules and practices when they are inconvenient to one's market goals, as when it is employed by the losers in a land dispute. Magic can be used to get out of crime, or to commit a crime, or as a justification for beating someone. It is admired in some instances, and disdained in others. Sometimes it is neutral, and other times it is outright dangerous. In all cases, to the Vaturanga, it is interesting, it is cause for comment, it is what they talk about.

None of this is to suggest that the Vaturanga do not see magic as real. Quite the opposite, in fact, they give every indication that it is real and powerful. What I am arguing is that in doing so, magic has become a vehicle for the discussion of social and economic stresses. It does not resolve disputes, nor does it provide a clear answer or solution. It is used to explain outcomes, to debate those outcomes, to try and make sense of the world.

These experiences with economic and social change within their own community

(extended to encompass all of West Guadalcanal) are only one part of the picture. We have already noted that approximately half of Vaturanga land was alienated for plantations in the early colonial period. This was true throughout West Guadalcanal. And with the development of plantations came plantation workers, mainly from Malaita Island, who have a different social structure, a vastly different history, and strong ideological notions about themselves and about the people of Guadalcanal. The Vaturanga, of course, also have developed notions about these matters. In the next chapter I will explore the social relations between these two populations and the emerging ideological and ethnic tensions which have become a familiar theme in many post-colonial nation-states.

CHAPTER FOUR: ETHNIC TENSIONS

INTRODUCTION

Meeting a Kwaio Elder

“There’s someone in the dining hall you might want to meet” said Br. Giles one morning as I was visiting Hautambu Store to pick up supplies, “He’s a Kwaio elder. He knew Roger Keesing, and was one of those who accompanied his ashes to Malaita.”

I was introduced as an anthropologist to Arae (not his real name) and we spoke to each other in Pijin. After a short pause, Arae asked me (in Pijin) “Why are you speaking Pijin?” Not really comprehending why such a question would be asked I replied (in Pijin) “You spoke Pijin to me, so I spoke Pijin back. Did I use it incorrectly?”

This answer seemed very unsatisfying to him, and Arae shook his head in disapproval and gave me a look that suggested I was slightly ridiculous. His next statement (in Pijin again) also confused me: “David Akin doesn’t speak Pijin, he speaks language.” I said (in Pijin), “I am learning the Vaturanga language, but I don’t know it very well yet, so I rely on Pijin a lot.”

This statement also was greeted by a vigorous shaking of the head in apparent disapproval, and an audible sigh of frustration from Arae. He then asked me, “When are you going to Malaita?” Totally surprised by this, I replied that I was not going to Malaita at all, that I was learning about the customs of the Vaturanga.

This elicited the most disapproving shake of the head of all, accompanied this time with a dismissive sound. It was only a few seconds later when he said “Well, very nice to meet you” and I took this as my cue to leave this brief but frustrating and bewildering conversation.

Back in the Village

Back in Maravovo I relayed this conversation to several people. Kesa (not his real name) guessed who it was I had been talking to, and I shared with him the frustration I felt about my brief encounter. I had become a tad defensive, I thought, because he seemed to be questioning whether or not I was a “real anthropologist.” Kesa thought that would be a very strange thing for him to do. We talked a little while longer about it, but Kesa did not seem surprised by Arae’s behaviour, “They are difficult sometimes” he told me, referring to the Kwaio as a whole.

We puzzled about this for awhile, and then a smile erupted on Kesa’s face, and his eyes brightened: “I know” he said, “they call us ‘Solomon’s men.’ He doesn’t think Vaturanga have any custom. Only Malaita.” Now I was catching on very quickly: “He doesn’t think there’s anything for an anthropologist to study in Vaturanga.” “Yes” confirmed Kesa, “I think that must be it.”

Suddenly, this rather annoying encounter was pregnant with meaning. Indeed, a great deal had been expressed to me by Arae. He had managed in words and gestures to express an entire ideology in only a few minutes.

Arae, I learned eventually, was indeed a Kwaio elder, but had lived in West Guadalcanal for forty years. He had spent most of his adult life at Lavuro Plantation, which is adjacent to the Vaturanga District. In his world, the Kwaio and other Malaitan peoples follow *kastom*, and anthropologists like Roger Keesing and David Akin want to learn about that *kastom*. But the Vaturanga are “Solomon’s men” who have lost all their *kastom*. He could not comprehend why an anthropologist would want to study people who have no *kastom*. I failed to comprehend the

meaning of his questions, and to him, my answers made no sense. Anthropologists do not study the Vaturanga. Period.⁴⁸

Social Relations and Ethnicity

This chapter will focus on the relationship between the Vaturanga and the Malaitan plantation workers who live in the area. Each of these populations has created an ideology about themselves which plays off of ideas about the other. The Vaturanga see the Malaitans as *bobote* (lit. “fat men”), who are both comical and dangerous. The Malaitans see the Vaturanga (and other Guadalcanal peoples) as “Solomon’s men” who have lost their *kastom* and are basically lazy.

Interestingly, the Vaturanga agree with the assessment that they have lost much of their *kastom*. They say that they no longer remember how to dance, that no one builds a house the proper way anymore, that their culture and language are disappearing. Yet, they maintain traditional forms of land tenure, subsistence practices, feasting and exchange.

The Malaitans, on the other hand, see themselves as the very harbingers of authentic *kastom*, despite making their living by earning wages on plantations. They see their home island as an almost inviolate place, filled with tabus. They see themselves as resisters of modern life in the nation-state, and as economically, socially and politically disadvantaged in the Solomon Islands.

To understand these two contrasting perceptions we need to look briefly first at the disparate histories of the peoples of Malaita and Guadalcanal. Then we will explore how each population engages the nation-state in fundamentally different ways, so that each experiences

different sets of opportunities, possibilities, and advantages/disadvantages. These disparate experiences place them in essentially different economic, social and political worlds. These different worlds are expressed in the notions each group has about themselves and the other. This is expressed in many ways, including songs, stereotypes, and at times conflict.⁴⁹

The Solomon Islands as a political entity, both colonially and post-colonially, has created new categories of people, who occupy different economic niches. These categories generate identities and a set of social relations which often bring such groups into serious conflict. A local people like the Vaturanga encounter the nation-state, in part, through the experience of such categories.

To understand how the Vaturanga engage with the Solomon Islands nation-state, we must understand how they engage with these categories. For them, the most prominent set consists of themselves along with other West Guadalcanal peoples with whom they share a common *kastom*, and the Malaitans who have lived in the area for decades as plantation workers.

UNEVEN DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL RELATIONS

Guadalcanal and Malaita

The issue which most clearly shapes the social relations, identities and ideologies of peoples from Malaita and Guadalcanal is uneven development: the colonial enterprise (and later post-colonial practices) “favor(ed) certain regions, classes or projects” (Roseberry 1989:228). In so doing, these systems have placed different groups in different economic, social and political niches. Thus, different groups have different experiences of colonialism and later

independence.

The colonial experience found Guadalcanal, including the Vaturanga area, as one of the “favoured regions.” Coastal Guadalcanal saw significant plantation development, much of the land acquired freehold. In the Vaturanga and neighbouring districts, “more than half of the land... was sold before 1912” (Bennett 1987:119). Most of this land has remained alienated to the present time (Bathgate 1985:89).

The Vaturanga were impacted by two large plantations: the Taitai Plantation and the Lavuro Plantation. The Taitai Plantation, which was run by the (Anglican) Melanesian Mission (later Church of Melanesia) was dismantled in the late 1980's and divided into four parts: 1) a section was returned to the Vaturanga, 2) a section was acquired by the Society of St. Francis (at Hautambu), 3) a portion was acquired by the Sisters of Melanesia (an Anglican religious order), and 4) a portion was allotted as the new site for Selwyn College (an Anglican residential secondary school). For most of its history, however, it was a functioning plantation with a large population of “imported” workers.

In addition to the plantation functions, this site also contained such church-run institutions as the Maravovo Training Centre and Maravovo Primary School. It still houses the district priest for a portion of West Guadalcanal, and the Archdeacon for Guadalcanal.

The Lavuro Plantation was and is commercially run. At the time of my field work (1996-97) it maintained a large population of plantation workers.⁵⁰ This large plantation is technically in the Ngeri District, but the people who live in the villages surrounding it call themselves Vaturanga, and the plantation is geographically very close to the “official” Vaturanga District.

Malaita has had a very different experience with development. There is, for instance, only one plantation in all of Malaita Province. Malaita is relatively underdeveloped compared to such provinces as Guadalcanal and Western Province. It also has a history of resistance to colonial institutions (Laracy 1983; Keesing 1982c, 1992).

Beginning with contacts in the pre-colonial period (ca. 1800 to 1893) Malaita was used as a source of plantation labour (Bennett 1987:xviii; Keesing 1982a:2; Oliver 1989:65-69). Lacking significant development during the colonial period, Malaita peoples were heavily recruited to work on the plantations in Guadalcanal and elsewhere.⁵¹ Today, people of Malaitan backgrounds make up a sizeable proportion of the population of Guadalcanal Province, and of Honiara, the capital city. They also live and work in other provinces. Migration out of Malaita has continued, driven by a lack of job opportunities and a high birthrate.

Social Relations and History

These disparate experiences with development have implications for how the Vaturanga (as a Guadalcanal people) and the plantation workers (as Malaitan people) see themselves, each other, and relate to each other.

The Vaturanga experience is one of land alienation, but burgeoning economic, educational and cultural opportunities. Although a large portion of their land has been alienated, they have managed (as we saw in the last chapter) to maintain a balance of traditional subsistence, feasting/exchange, and market participation which allows them some flexibility and autonomy in their encounters with the nation-state and its institutions and systems.

While this produces some conflict and stress, especially when new development

opportunities portend, by and large the Vaturanga do not see themselves as particularly vulnerable to the vagaries of the market-place. They debate development, take advantage of economic opportunities, and value the advancement afforded by education. Most importantly, they are not dependent upon the market-economy nor upon wages, although they do require some cash, which they obtain from market-selling, copra making, and other means (see previous chapter).

Migrants from Malaita, on the other hand, are cash-dependent. They have no lands in Guadalcanal upon which to grow gardens, which they can use as a resource in elaborate feasting/exchange cycles, upon which they can sell logging or other concessions.⁵² Their options are comparatively few, and their economic niche decidedly marked: they either work on plantations, or engage in small entrepreneurial enterprises (the latter mainly confined to towns).

The two groups--Vaturanga and Malaitan--encounter in each other radically different experiences, ways of making a living, economic and social possibilities. For the migrant population from Malaita, making a living means making money, spending money, finding new ways of making money. They see this as requiring a degree of assertiveness, an entrepreneurial spirit. The Vaturanga are not against making money, but their experience has emphasized group cooperation, kin relations--a balance between subsistence and feasting exchange, on the one hand, with limited but reasonably profitable forays into the market-economy.

Vaturanga often characterize the Malaitans as pushy, aggressive and bossy; The Malaitans tend to see the Vaturanga as lazy, rich and acculturated. The two groups do interact, but there is an undercurrent of distrust and dislike which is often barely concealed.

ETHNICITY

We are interested here in how the Vaturanga and the Malaitans characterize themselves and each other. For the Vaturanga, the emergence of an ethnic identity begins with myth: the story of how the people got their name. This story, which serves a sort of charter, connects the Vaturanga with the other peoples of West Guadalcanal and assigns them a special character or nature. This is signified in their name, "Vaturanga" which means "hard stone."

The Vaturanga further construct themselves as a people who have "lost *kastom*" or at least much of their *kastom*. They say this because they have witnessed many changes in their traditional culture: changes in language, subsistence, feasting, religion, dress, house-building, etc. They accept this, and ideologically construct *kastom* very narrowly as "old ways." They do not especially regret this, although some nostalgia is evident. Ideologically, the Vaturanga place *kastom* in a physically removed space, in the bush, away from where they live today (see Chapter Seven).

The Malaitans, on the other hand, construct themselves as culturally conservative, resisters of "new ways" and the virtual harbingers of authentic Solomon Islands' *kastom*. They do not say that they have lost their *kastom* or believe anything remotely like that. But for them too, *kastom* is physically removed, in Malaita, which is said to be a place with many *tambus* and *devils*. Like Arae who I encountered at Hautambu, there seems to be no sense of contradiction between their complete immersion in wage-earning or entrepreneurship in Guadalcanal and the idea that Malaitans embody "authentic *kastom*."⁵³

As noted, these two groups negatively characterize each other. For the Vaturanga, the Malaitans are *bobote*, comical "fat men" who live by making copra. In contrast, Vaturanga

refer to themselves as “landowners” or sometimes “lo” for short. These two concepts play off of each other: plantation workers are, by definition, not “landowners.” Furthermore, the term “landowner” implies complex kin relations and a feasting/exchange system operating throughout West Guadalcanal, with mythical aspects. The Malaitans are not part of this system.

The Malaitans see the Vaturanga and all Guadalcanal peoples as “Solomons men”: essentially acculturated people who have lost all their *kastom*. Their definition of themselves as a people who maintain *kastom* deliberately plays off this term for all Guadalcanal peoples. This notion is a way of rationalizing their presence in Guadalcanal in such large numbers. They also see themselves as hard-working and entrepreneurial, while seeing the “Solomons men” as lazy, unmotivated, living off development concessions.

A Hard Stone People

The Vaturanga see themselves not as a separate culture, but as one part of a larger community of people who live throughout West Guadalcanal. They are tied to these people by matrilineal clans and lineages (*duli* and *puku*), and the feasting/exchange system known as *kavo ome*. They also share other cultural features including the practice of magic.

This set of connections is expressed mythically in the story of how the people got their names. This story, told to me by a Vaturanga elder, Ruka (not his real name), and translated by Kesa (not his real name), connects all of West Guadalcanal together and also importantly describes the significance of the name “Vaturanga”:

The *Mumu* of Totoha (a sort of trickster figure⁵⁴) came out of his cave. He walked around and came to Visale and said “mmmm” in a low voice.

Then he took ginger⁵⁵ leaf and tied it in a knot (*riana pupuku*, a kind of magic) and said, "Doesn't matter you are chief and prepare feasts, you will not feed any people. You will get the food and take it into your house and close your door while you are eating your food."

So the people from Visale are selfish people and the *mumu* named the place Kusika.

Then the *mumu* walked to the next area down west and said in a low voice, "mmmmm."

Then he spoke and tied ginger: "for the Lakuili tribe here, doesn't matter you are strong to fight (a warrior) you will not marry a different clan. You will marry your own clan. And they will take you to court and put you to death for having sex with your same clan."

And he called the place "Paru" meaning "not sharp" or "dull."

Then the *mumu* walked further west and came to this area (Vaturanga). He said "mmmmm" in a low voice.

Then he said, while tying ginger: "People from Maravovo, doesn't matter you've got lots of *kastom* money and you become chief and prepare feasts, you won't do any good."

And he called the place "Vaturanga" which means "hard stone" because it will be hard to do any good, hard to teach.

Then the *mumu* went to Savulei and said in a low growl, "mmmmm."

Then he said, while tying ginger, "People from Verahue to Sumate you will perform feasts and when you see the people you will feed them and feed the people who come to the feasts and you can become a good leader to lead your people."

We see in this story an outline of customary practices: rules concerning feasting, incest, obeying chiefs, and the practice of magic. Importantly, this story covers a wide area, from the Visale District through to the Ghari District, encompassing much of West Guadalcanal, indicating shared origins, legitimacy, *kastom*, kinship, exchange, and landownership.

The designation of the people as "Vaturanga" or "hard stone" refers to a type of quartz-like rock which is useless for making tools, it simply shatters into many pieces. Thus, the Vaturanga cannot be shaped or ruled, they are a "stubborn" people who do not obey the chiefs nor "do any good." The Vaturanga themselves do not seem to resent this or deny it, and when asked say that it does indeed apply to them and is accurate. For instance, once when I asked

Kesa about it he told me:

... people they don't follow orders well. They may do what they are told for a few years, for a little while, then they will forget it. Everyone is "Mister Me."

While they do not admire this aspect, they accept it. Tolu (not his real name) on another occasion told me: "people here are called Vaturanga because they don't always do what they are told, they resent being ordered about." On another occasion, when Kesa and I were discussing an on-going dispute over school fees, he raised the issue himself:

The giant of Totoha said we are like hard stone and you have to do things slowly--we don't like big changes.

On another occasion, Vati (not his real name) was lamenting the poor showing of people for a church fund-raiser. When I asked why he thought people did not show up in greater numbers, he replied: "We are Vaturanga--hard stone, yes?"

Because the *mumu* did *riana pupuku* all these aspects are a sort of a *fait accompli*. The Vaturanga's claim to be "landowners" and thus to make their living from the land in this area, is legitimated by magic, made irreversible and unalterable. So is their stubbornness and independence. The *mumu* is a kind of *devil*, not ancestral, but regarded as representing the "real" landowners of Guadalcanal. Thus, when the *mumu* ties ginger and says these things, he is recognizing these people as landowners.⁵⁶ Furthermore, he is legitimating a way of encountering the world.

The Plantation Workers

The vast majority of plantation workers in Guadalcanal come from or identify themselves as descendants of people from Malaita. While my contacts with plantation workers

were limited compared to the Vaturanga, I was able to interview several from the plantations and several Malaitans who had married into the Vaturanga community.

These people have constructed an identity in which they see themselves as adept at making money and doing business, and paradoxically, as a people who maintain an authentic *kastom*. The industriousness of Malaitans is very much in evidence in Honiara, where most small businesses are owned either by ethnic Chinese or by Malaitans. You will be hard pressed to find a store or business owned by someone from Guadalcanal, although some do exist.

For Malaitans in and near the Vaturanga District, contrasting themselves with the Vaturanga is an integral part of the construction of their identity as entrepreneurial. Vulu (not his real name), a Malaitan who used to work on the Taitai plantation and now lives in Honiara told me that he tried to get some Vaturanga to start a chicken farming business. He could not find any who were interested. He eventually found some Malaitans to go into business with. Riha (not his real name), another Malaitan who was present during this same conversation said:

These people (the Vaturanga) are not eager to start a business... they just want money given to them. We are very eager and careful with our money. They (the Vaturanga) don't worry, just have their gardens. If they get money they spend it right away, on SB (Sol Brew beer), rice, but we (Malaitans) will eat sweet potatoes and vegetables even if we have one-hundred dollars. But they will buy Taiyo (tinned tuna) even if they only have ten dollars.

Here is a clear statement of difference. The Vaturanga, on the one hand, live in such a circumstance that they can rely upon their gardens and when they need money, their kin-based resources are available to them for market-selling or copra making. He clearly identifies them as a people who are not wage or cash dependent, but participate in the market as they please.

The Malaitans, on the other hand, are portrayed as industrious and responsible with

money. But what is unsaid is equally important: the Malaitans in Guadalcanal are not “landowners” who have gardens or reefs or clan-based resources upon which to rely: cash, obtained via wages or small enterprise, is their only option.

The Malaitans also view themselves as being more authentic in terms of keeping and following *kastom*. They do not see this as a paradox. For them, Malaita is a place with many *tambus*, almost inviolate. Sisiu (not his real name), a young man of Malaitan background but born in Guadalcanal, told me about visiting relatives in Malaita:

In Auki (the provincial capital of Malaita) and in the villages, we could talk and sing and laugh. But when we would go out into the bush or along the road, we could only speak language, no Pijin or English. And we were not allowed to sing or laugh. There were so many rules to follow I was very scared about breaking one. They told me that the *devils* of Malaita did not want to hear any other language but Malaita language. They would be angry to hear any language not from Malaita.

This idea that Malaita is special, a place where *kastom* is **more** important than elsewhere, was emphasized by several informants. Lafia (not his real name), a man who was of mixed Malaitan and Guadalcanal parentage, told me:

They don't allow any plantations in Malaita. There is only one. People don't have a lot of ways to make money there, because they won't allow development. So even if you run a shop in Auki, you can't make much money, because you have to keep the prices so low. If someone tries to bring in loggers or prospectors, there will be much fighting, so they just don't come.

Indeed, during my field work, a logging contract was signed by a Malaysian company to log an area of Malaita. Someone burned down the logging company's headquarters. The company shortly afterwards decided to withdraw from the concession.

As with Arae in the opening segment of this chapter, Malaita is portrayed and seen by the Malaitans themselves as a place where business and development and non-Malaita things do

not belong. Malaita is portrayed as a place with authentic *kastom*. The irony of this is that by viewing their native island this way, the Malaitans create the necessity of their own migration to islands such as Guadalcanal which they see as a place without *kastom* or *tambu*.

TENSIONS AND STEREOTYPES

The *Bobote* and “Solomons Men”

I first encountered the ethnic tensions between Vaturanga and Malaitans from the Malaitan side. In 1989, when I was researching the lives of the Franciscan brothers at Hautambu (see Ryniker 1991), I encountered numerous brothers from Malaita. I found them personable, friendly, and eager to talk to an anthropologist. One day, as I was walking along the road after visiting one of the Vaturanga villages with three brothers from Malaita, I casually remarked that Guadalcanal people spoke Pijin differently than they (Malaitans) did and I imitated how I had heard a particular word. This was greeted by howls of laughter. Thinking I had made one of those classic anthropological mistakes and said something embarrassing, I questioned why they were laughing. I was told that they thought the Guadalcanal people were very ignorant the way they spoke Pijin, and I had imitated it perfectly. Indeed it became a recurring and, for me, very uncomfortable running joke, as I was repeatedly asked to “talk like a Guale man” in front of various people that we would encounter. I finally put a stop to it by insisting that I was uncomfortable making fun of other people.⁵⁷

Later, during field work for the present study, I would experience the same exact set of circumstances from the Vaturanga side. I found it useful while learning the language to learn the songs the Vaturanga enjoyed singing. One such song always elicited howls of laughter,

especially when I sang it, and I was repeatedly asked to sing it for every audience, again a recurring and uncomfortable joke. This song, known as the *Bobote* song is very revealing of the disparities between the world of the Vaturanga and that of the Malaitan migrants:

Ndi Version

*Bobote ni Lavuro
E kalahai nina baeke
Me longa tana bariki na kavara
Me bare kesa wana niu
Me bote loki na tobana
Me bote loki na tobana*

Translation

Fat Man of Lavuro (plantation)
He carries his bag
And goes towards the bush on the
plantation to make copra
And he sees a coconut fruit
And his stomach gets big and fat
And his stomach gets big and fat

Here we see a world which is both alien and familiar to the Vaturanga. They do, after all, make copra themselves. But they do not do it for a living, they do it to supplement living or to pay school fees. The people of Lavuro Plantation, however, make copra for a living. They do nothing else, according to this song. What is not said is stark: the “fat man of Lavuro” does not keep pigs, go fishing, hunt wild pigs, or have gardens. He makes copra “and his stomach gets big and fat.” This is a comical figure, highly undesirable, foreign and odd.

There is also a song which the Malaitans quote when talking about Guadalcanal peoples, but the situation is somewhat different. While the Vaturanga comically stereotype the Malaitans as *bobote*,⁵⁸ the Malaitans call Guadalcanal peoples (all of them, corporately) “Solomons men.” This term designates the people of Guadalcanal as acculturated, conspicuously identifying them with the nation-state and its systems. When I asked Arae at a later point (my third interview with him, to be exact) he explained the term “Solomons men” by reference to a song in Pijin: “It’s like that song that says ‘Gualecanal hemi suitem evriwan’ (Guadalcanal is sweet to everyone).” He was not sure of the words to this song, but eventually I

found them with Kesa's help:

Pijin Words

Gualecanal aelan hemi suitem evriwan
Gualecanal aelan evri pipol save long hem
Gualecanal aelan capital siti stap long hem
Evri dola stop long hem

Translation

Guadalcanal Island is sweet to everyone
Guadalcanal Island is known by everyone
The capital city is on Guadalcanal
All the money is there

This song was written by someone from Central Guadalcanal and recorded by SIBC. It was written, so I was told, in response to a song which claimed that Malaita was "number one."⁵⁹

Arae explained the meaning of this song as follows:

It means people come from everywhere to Guadalcanal to make a living, they come to work on plantations or run a store or work for the government. Guadalcanal is good to everyone.

By implication, Guadalcanal and its people are different from other islands, especially from Malaita. This idea is so pervasive that Rahe (not his real name), a young Vaturanga man, told me he once heard a Malaita woman who was fishing in Guadalcanal say "Now I have caught a Solomons fish." Kesa described to me several occasions in which he was referred to as a "Solomons boy" or "Solomons man" by people from other islands:

This man, he pointed at me and said "There's a Solomons boy." I didn't know what he meant by that. I don't know why they say that about us. People from Makira are called Makira, people from Malaita are called Malaita, people from Isabel are called Isabel. But people from Guadalcanal they don't call us Guadalcanal, they call us "Solomons."

Kesa expressed here a sense that he was deprived of his identity or his status, that some sort of statement was being made that Guadalcanal people are different from other Solomon Islanders. This expresses the idea of having and of lacking: Guadalcanal **has** money, development, government, power, education, cultural facilities, media, etc.; but Guadalcanal, by this very fact, **lacks** identity (at least in the minds of outsiders, especially Malaitans) apart from this

association--it is "Solomons" (i.e., the nation-state), not just another island.⁶⁰

Vaturanga Characterizations of Malaitans

The song about the *bobote ni lavuro* portrays the Malaitan plantation workers as somewhat comical, and as having an economic life which is in marked contrast to that of the Vaturanga. Going along with this are a set of characterizations or stereotypes which the Vaturanga make about the Malaitans: that they are 1) unfortunate or unlucky, 2) aimless or purposeless, 3) dishonest, and 4) aggressive and violent. Each of these characterizations are made in a way that contrasts the Malaitans with the Vaturanga themselves. In so doing, they clearly mark themselves and the Malaitans as distinct communities.

The idea that Malaitans are "unlucky" was expressed to me by many Vaturanga, but was a theme of special interest to Rahe (not his real name), a young Vaturanga man who frequently expressed dislike of Malaitans. He once told me:

Malaita people are not a lucky people, but Guadalcanal people are lucky. Long ago the peoples of Malaita and Guadalcanal were fighting and the Guadalcanal people were afraid because the Malaitans are so good at fighting. So they asked the *mumu* (a trickster figure in Guadalcanal stories) to help them. The *mumu* own Guadalcanal and let the people live here. The *mumu* came down and ate the Malaitans. So the Guadalcanal people won.

This story harkens back to the story of how the Vaturanga got their name. In so doing, Rahe expresses the right of Guadalcanal people to be "landowners." The Malaitans are clearly not "landowners" and are thereby "not a lucky people." This story also expresses a supernatural sanction against the Malaitans because the *mumu* are a kind of *devil* who favours the Guadalcanal people.

Plantation workers are also viewed as unlucky in everyday and ordinary terms. When I was visiting Verahue village, a huge truckload of workers from Lavuro came to the village. I asked the people I was staying with in Verahue what that was. An unidentified Vaturanga woman present told me:

That's the *mane ni Mala* (people of Malaita) from Lavuro. Lavuro doesn't have any place to get water. So they have to come to the villages to get water. Plantations don't have proper things.

In following up this comment, it was noted that plantation workers do not have gardens, do not keep pigs, that copra prices are low and so wages are not good. When I visited another village, I mentioned seeing the plantation workers from Lavuro getting water. I was told by Alu (not her real name), a Vaturanga woman:

You saw the *bobote*? Yes, poor *mane ni Mala*, they don't have very much. No water. No land.

All of these comments sharply contrast the Malaitan plantation workers with Vaturanga, who do have land, water, resources, gardens, and are "landowners."

The Vaturanga also frequently describe the plantation workers' lives as unintelligible or pointless. Pono (not his real name), a Ngeri man related to Vaturanga, told me that:

Malaitans live in every island... they go places without a purpose, just to live. They come to our islands without permission and just move in. They have too many children, so there is not enough room for them in Malaita. Many live in Honiara, but don't have any job, just rely on their *wantoks*. Guadalcanal people don't move to other places unless there is a purpose, maybe to visit relatives or to work at a job, but not just to live.

Pono here portrays Malaitans in very negative terms. He indicates some frustration and confusion about their behaviour. He clearly contrasts them with Guadalcanal peoples, whom he sees as acting more rationally. He sees no point in Malaitan peoples leaving their home island,

leaving their gardens and resources, and coming to other peoples islands. In this, he also expresses considerable resentment.

Pono went on to say that the Malaitans are dishonest too:

They know how to steal. You would never sleep in a house by yourself all alone in Malaita for fear that someone would kill you. People there are too afraid to sleep alone.

That the Malaitans are dishonest and suspect was frequently expressed. I encountered this when some Malaitans wanted to hire a Vaturanga boat to check on a fishing net. Several Malaitan men and women came to the village, and I observed their interactions as they negotiated a price in Pijin, while the Vaturanga resorted to their own language to discuss strategy so that the Malaitans would not be able to understand. After a price was settled on, late in the evening, Kesa departed in the boat with the Malaitans to take them to their net.

Shortly after they left, Cheche, a Vaturanga elder who took a special interest in my welfare, came to me. He told me:

You must lock up all the pots and pans and not leave anything outside during the night, as these people will be back and would like to steal anything they could find.

He indeed insisted that I lock up everything, even taking the washing off the line. I had never bothered to do any of these before, and it had never been suggested at any other time.

Cheche later told me a story about how Malaitans can be dishonest:

This *olo* (old man) and his grandson, both come from Laovavasa (a Vaturanga village). They had gone to Honiara to sell some copra. The *olo* took the cheque to the ANZ Bank and cashed it. When he came out a young man met him and said he could get him a great deal--two bags of rice, a block of tobacco and a carton of Taiyo (tinned fish) for just ninety dollars. The *olo* agreed and gave the man ninety dollars. He told him to wait in front of the bank. The *olo* waited all day, when finally a bank employee came out and asked him what he was waiting

for. He explained, and the employee told him he had been cheated, that the young man was a *liu*.⁶¹ The bank employees, upon hearing the story, took up a collection and gave the *olo* eighty dollars. These *liu* from Malaita are rubbish.

This story had wide circulation and was related to me by several different informants. It was “current gossip” and the generosity of the bank employees was regarded as especially noteworthy, but it also clearly establishes Malaitans as dishonest.

The Vaturanga also describe the Malaitans as aggressive and violent. One occasion which elicited many comments about Malaitans was the Solomons Cup soccer tournament, held in late November, early December 1996. The final two teams, which played for the title, were teams representing Honiara and Malaita. Vaturanga young men took a keen interest in this tournament, and I invited a group of them to listen to the final game on my radio. Honiara defeated Malaita by a score of 2 to 1. As it became clear towards the end that Honiara would win, the radio reported that Malaita supporters were throwing coconuts onto the field, and had injured one of the officials. Although Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation cut away shortly after the game for other programming, we learned later (again via radio) that a full-scale riot had ensued in which twenty people had been arrested, and a branch of the National Bank had been burned down.

The young men and other Vaturanga found in this event an occasion to talk about the Malaitans. The most common accusation was made by Haba:

They are always ready to fight. They are *molonaho sosongo* (lit. “too proud”). They can’t accept that Malaita is not the best. So they are drinking and they want to fight anyone.

Being *molonaho*, as noted in the last chapter, is something the Vaturanga characterize very negatively. This unfortunate event was not the first of its kind, and led to a litany of

descriptions of other similar occasions. The previous year, it was noted, Malaita had been banned from the Solomons Cup because of rioting the year before that. In January 1996 there were two weeks of rioting by Malaitans and Reef Islanders because of a fight between a Malaitan and a Reef Islander (from Temotu Province). Rahe said about them:

We don't like them. We don't want them here. They always want to be the boss. Always telling people what to do, making trouble. They are "Mister Me" all the time.

The litanies continued for several days. Pono told me about a Malaitan who murdered the overseer at Lavuro Plantation years ago. Another person remarked about a time when Malaitans came in the night into a village in a neighbouring district and murdered an entire family.

When a few weeks later I met an official from the Guadalcanal team while attending a wedding, he told me that the coach of the Guadalcanal team (who was of Malaitan background) had been threatened. He told me the Malaitans "act like rascals."

In all these ways the Vaturanga not only characterize the Malaitans, but contrast themselves with them. While the Malaitans are seen as unlucky, aimless, dishonest and aggressively violent, the Vaturanga portray themselves as legitimate landowners, who stay on their own land, who do not rely so heavily upon money that they would need to steal or be dishonest, and who are not so proud or *molonaho* that they feel the need to fight or make trouble.

These characteristics also clearly place the two groups in different economic and social niches in the nation-state: the Vaturanga maintain a simple commodity production, combining subsistence with limited market-participation. This participation is clearly connected to kin-

based resources which belong to the Vaturanga by virtue of the *mumu* who named them.

Malaitan Characterizations of the Vaturanga

The Malaitans have a very different way of living. They also stereotype the Vaturanga, indeed all Guadalcanal peoples.⁶² The main ones are that Guadalcanal peoples are 1) acculturated, 2) privileged and 3) lazy or unmotivated.

The idea that Guadalcanal peoples have lost or forgotten *kastom* fits very well with the view of them as “Solomons men.” Riha, a former plantation worker who lives in West Guadalcanal told me:

Kastom is kept in Malaita, especially in Kwaio, but not as much in other parts of Malaita and not here (Guadalcanal). The chiefs don’t enforce the rules. It’s too easy to get to Honiara. You have a road, transportation, freedom here. In Malaita, many *tambus* are enforced, even outside of Kwaio.

While Riha talks about Guadalcanal, he is referring to both Guadalcanal peoples and Malaitans living in Guadalcanal. For him, *kastom* is not something associated with Guadalcanal at all. It is kept in Malaita, “not here.”

Interestingly, the Vaturanga themselves agree with this assessment. On the first occasion in which I asked a Vaturanga to tell me about *kastom*, Tolu (not his real name) said very bluntly: “We don’t have *kastom* here. If you want to see our *kastom* you should go to Moro’s village.”⁶³ One of the things Kesa said when I reported Arae’s comments to him (those recounted at the beginning of this chapter) was: “It is true. We don’t know how to do many *kastom* things anymore.” On another occasion in which some young men performed a *langa* dance, I asked them to explain the meaning. Tei (not his real name), one of the young men

replied: "We don't know, because it (the dance) is from the Gilberts (i.e., Kiribati). We don't know how to do any Guadalcanal dances anymore. We forgot them." On other occasions it was pointed out that Guadalcanal people do not make their houses the *kastom* way anymore, do not know how to make a *tepe* (a fan used to keep a fire burning), that they do not observe food *tambus* and many other rules.⁶⁴

So when Malaitans say that the Vaturanga do not have *kastom*, they are, to a degree, repeating something Vaturanga say about themselves. In part, this is a recognition that for Guadalcanal peoples *kastom* does not have the same priority of place in the Solomon Islands nation-state.

Along with this is the notion that Guadalcanal peoples are privileged or advantaged in the Solomon Islands. When I asked Riha why Malaita peoples migrate to other islands like Guadalcanal he said:

Not easy to get money in Malaita. Only a small market in Auki with low prices because people haven't got money to spend. No jobs like here in Guadalcanal. Everybody at Taitai was from Malaita. First settlers found Guadalcanal had good flat land suitable for plantations. Only one plantation in Malaita called Bauman Plantation in West Are'are. Money is hard to come by in Malaita, not like Guadalcanal and Western Province. Everything is easy here. You have roads, markets, capital city nearby, privileges not in Malaita. People here (Guadalcanal) don't care, they are taken care of.

Here Riha expresses a consciousness of difference arising out of uneven development. He has a ready explanation as to why the Malaitans migrate—"money is hard to come by in Malaita"—and he connects it to the colonial experience and development.

Finally, the Malaitans see Guadalcanal peoples as unmotivated, lazy, even stupid about money. Vati (not his real name) a Malaitan who had married into the Vaturanga community,

expressed his frustration about this to me one day:

I asked my in-laws to help me start a business. But they are not interested. In Auki, there is only one Chinese store. All the other stores are owned by Malaita people. But Guadalcanal people do not own stores in Honiara. They are owned by Chinese or Malaita. In Malaita, people have modern houses. But here, they just build huts. They don't have money to build a modern house.

Vati sees Malaitans as benefitting from entrepreneurial activities, but Guadalcanal peoples as uninterested and unmotivated. When I asked him why he thought the Vaturanga were so unmotivated, he told me: "Vaturanga are not supposed to be too successful, or someone will spoil them with magic."

Again, Guadalcanal people will often agree with this assessment. Kesa told me:

A Guadalcanal man may have a degree and a good job, he will keep it for a few years, quit, move back to the village and live for many years doing nothing. We like to live in the villages.

Guadalcanal people do not have the same set of economic priorities as migrants from Malaita. Pono, also from Guadalcanal, told me that when a logging concession came to one family he knew, the money was all invested in the "green bottle," i.e., Sol Brew or drinking beer. He lamented that three-hundred thousand Solomon Islands dollars had been gained, with nothing to show for it six months later.

Thus, we see again, that the Malaitans are, to a degree echoing ideas which Guadalcanal peoples have about themselves.

DISCUSSION

Ethnic groups develop ideologies of themselves which emphasize "cultural continuity and discreteness," i.e., that they are fixed, authentic, clearly defined entities with an equally

fixed, authentic and clearly defined history (Eller 1999:15). Ethnic groups also have “interests” in that they represent class issues and conflicts (Eller 1999:15; Aronson 1976:15).

The Vaturanga and the Malaitan plantation workers reflect different economic and social histories. The Vaturanga experience is one of land alienation, development, significant infrastructure (roads, water systems, transportation, media, markets, etc.), educational and economic opportunities balanced with traditional kin-based subsistence and exchange practices. Culturally, they define themselves with a particular history and mythical charter which expresses their ties and traditions and legitimates their landownership in the modern nation-state. They also see themselves as having abandoned or limiting many traditions and customs in favour of modern life. Thus, they both occupy a particular economic niche within the Solomon Islands, and have a developed ideology which contrasts themselves with others.

One of the most significant others, as we have seen, is the population of Malaitan plantation workers. Their experience is markedly different from that of the Vaturanga. Their history is one of labour recruitment, migration, wage-dependency, and a burgeoning interest in entrepreneurship. Their ideology of themselves is a “deterritorialized” one (see Apadurai 1990; Gledhill 1994), in which their home island is viewed in idealized terms: Malaita is the place of many *tambus* and *devils*, where there is little or no development, where the nation-state and modern life is resisted (at least in some parts, particularly Kwaio).

The tensions and ethnic stereotypes which each of these groups employ about the other are expressions of the different economic and ideological positions each holds. When a Vaturanga calls a plantation worker *bobote*, he or she is talking about ways of making a living, and ideologically contrasting one’s own status as “landowner” with the landless and migratory

plantation worker. Similarly, when the Malaitan plantation worker refers to Guadalcanal people as “Solomons men” he or she is talking about the experience of migration, as well as contrasting his or her own island (i.e., a place of *kastom*, *tambu*, *devils*, etc.) with the “assimilated” people of Guadalcanal who are “Solomons” men or women, not “Guadalcanal” men or women.

It is illuminating to compare this with situation in other post-colonial nation-states. Probably Fiji is one of the more interesting comparisons. Howard (1991) notes the role of “evolving patterns of privilege, inequality, and unequal development” in the conflicts which have marked Fiji since 1987 (Howard 1991:11). As with Guadalcanal, Fiji saw the importation of plantation workers during the colonial period, and has been struggling with this legacy.⁶⁵ Likewise, Fiji saw uneven development, which favoured certain regions over others, and created different economic, social and political opportunities (Howard 1991:4-5).

Although very complex, Howard describes the ideologies involved in generating ethnic conflict in Fiji as contrasts between the “Pacific Way” emphasizing communalism, stability and tradition (chiefly rule), versus the promotion of class interests (Howard 1991:5-8). The latter would tend to group Indo-Fijians with indigenous Fijians who have not experienced significant economic benefits. The explosive potential of these contrasting ideologies has been witnessed there both in 1987 and 2000.

The situation in Guadalcanal, as we have seen in recent months, has possessed equally explosive potential. Gledhill has noted that:

States restructure civil societies in order to secure the conditions for a particular kind of capitalist development, but the economic, social and cultural consequence of that development transcend conscious programmes of regulation.

This fosters the emergence of new groups of social and political actors pursuing distinct agendas and strategies... (Gledhill 1994:159).

In Guadalcanal, both indigenous peoples, such as the Vaturanga, and migrant plantation workers, such as those living at Lavuro and Taitai plantations, fit into an order of "capitalist development" which the Solomon Islands nation-state attempts to regulate and indeed promote. But the disparities of their experiences bring these groups into conflict: the Vaturanga have different economic interests than the Malaitan plantation workers, and vice versa.

Furthermore, the Malaitans have developed what has been called elsewhere "long-distance nationalism" (see Gledhill 1994:157-159). In this, the plantation workers idealize their connection to the island of Malaita, giving such notions as *kastom* and *tambu* increasing prominence. When the Malaita team lost the Solomons Cup in 1996, for example, riots ensued. But it was widely noted by many (including Vaturanga and Malaitans) that most of the members of the winning team--Honiara--were Malaitans too.⁶⁶ But the Honiara team did not resonate with their identity in the same way as the Malaita team. Gledhill notes:

Identification with homelands and their distinctive cultural practices can reinforce boundaries between different groups within metropolitan societies and promote new kinds of ethnicization of metropolitan politics... conflicts... tend to express themselves in increasingly sharp ways because the identities formed by the metropolitan-born are purged of any nuances which still exist in the regions of origin defined as the homelands. They are 'purified' into increasingly fundamentalist forms (Gledhill 1994:159).

Although not exactly "metropolitan," I see the situation of the Malaitans in Guadalcanal in similar terms: Malaitans outside of Malaita, living by wages or entrepreneurial enterprises, have increasingly distinguished themselves from others by reference to idealizations of Malaita, and simultaneously noting the acculturation or assimilation of other non-Malaitan peoples,

symbolized in the characterization of Guadalcanal peoples as “Solomons men.”

The Vaturanga, along with their cousins throughout West Guadalcanal, also tend to distinguish themselves, to mark themselves off from the Malaitan migrants. They are not deterritorialized, and hence cultural conservatism has not become an important feature of their ideology.⁶⁷ Instead, they refer to themselves as the “landowners” and legitimate this by reference to myth and magic: the *mumu* of Totoha tied ginger and established their customs, exchange system, and complex kin ties. The Malaitans are excluded both practically and ideologically from this: they have no lands, no pigs, no customary money with which to engage in an exchange, in which to establish kin relations.

In effect, the Solomon Islands nation-state has generated a set of social relations for each group which marks them off from each other, limiting interactions and predetermining disparate agendas and goals for each group. Vaturanga want to maintain their position as “landowners” and the balance between subsistence/exchange and market participation. Malaitans in Guadalcanal are largely immersed in the cash economy, being either plantation workers or entrepreneurs (or both). Their status is defined by comparatively limited opportunities because of a lack of land and other resources (as well as options). This has led some in this community to develop an intensified sense of attachment to Malaita, expressed in giving priority to notions of *kastom* and authenticity.

For Arae, who at the opening of this chapter, seemed so intent on my going to Malaita, this was expressed as the Vaturanga having no *kastom*. He could see no reason for an anthropologist to study Guadalcanal, since Malaita is the place where people keep *kastom*, have *tambus*, etc. The Vaturanga are just “Solomons men.”

For the Vaturanga themselves, *kastom* does not have the same priority or interest: it is legitimating in the sense of their landownership of Guadalcanal, but this is an economic opportunity as well as *kastom*. To the Vaturanga, *kastom* is something they themselves do not follow **as much as** in the past. In the next chapter, we will look at two institutions, churches and schools, which have played an important role in Vaturanga perceptions of *kastom*, particularly the notion of change and loss symbolized in language.

CHAPTER FIVE: SOCIAL RELATIONS, LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION

INTRODUCTION

A recurrent theme of Vaturanga talk about change in relation to the nation-state focuses on change in language and communication. The systems and institutions of any nation-state, including the Solomon Islands, have effects upon how people communicate with each other. Changing social relations require new communicative competencies and abilities, chief among them the learning of new languages and the ability to read and write.

Two institutions have played a significant role in the attainment of such communicative competencies in the Vaturanga District: schools and missions/churches. These institutions, which are formal and often conflated, not only generate such competencies, but help to establish and create new forms of social relations: teachers, staff, administrators, priests, members of religious orders, and the like are “professionals” living in the Vaturanga District, and are marked out and separated as much by the skills and abilities they possess as by economic or ethnic associations.

These institutions (schools and missions/churches) and their professionals are almost omnipresent in the Vaturanga District. There are two schools, both run by the Church of Melanesia (Anglican): a primary school at Vura, and a residential secondary school near Maravovo on one part of the former Taitai Plantation. Church institutions are also pervasive, with five Anglican agencies represented in the Vaturanga District alone (see Table 2.14). In addition, there are Roman Catholic churches in two Vaturanga villages--Naro and Lambukulila--and in the neighbouring Visale District there is a Roman Catholic mission.

In this chapter I will look at the role these institutions play in communication and

language. The Vaturanga increasingly find it necessary to attain new language and communicative competencies to successfully interact in the Solomon Islands nation-state. Their own language, which has been designated “Ghari” by the Summer Institute of Linguistics, has five dialects: Ndi, Ngeri, Nggae, Nggaria, and Ghari. Because the designation “Ghari” as the name of the language is **not** an accepted convention by the Vaturanga themselves, I will use their word for language, Hoko, when referring to the language as a whole, and the word Ghari to refer **only** to the dialect.⁶⁸

This is an important distinction. The fact that the Summer Institute of Linguistics has given the language a name which many of its speakers do not recognize as the name of their language is one small aspect of how communicative and language issues are significantly impacting the area. It is, in fact, a recognition of the increasing dominance of the Ghari dialect in the region. And this dominance, remarked upon frequently by the Vaturanga and others, has become a kind of symbol of change. The Roman Catholic and Anglican churches/missions have played a significant role in this matter, each choosing a different dialect of Hoko for purposes of publishing and worship.

Schools also raise issues of language and communication, emphasizing Pijin and English rather than local vernacular languages. The vast majority of Vaturanga have attained competency in Solomon Islands Pijin⁶⁹ and they have done this primarily through attendance at primary school. These two languages have different statuses. Pijin is often described as “broken English” and as an intermediary or business language. English, on the other hand, is seen as high-status, associated with professionals, including both teachers and religious leaders, and as a language of education.⁷⁰

One way in which we can look at how these languages are used is through their formal use in relation to the institutions: schools and churches. Thus, after introducing each language/communicative category, we will look at some examples of the use of languages in local public events: meetings, festivals, dramas, worship services, etc. We are also interested in how both the Vaturanga and the “professionals” (i.e., teachers, administrators, priests, members of religious orders) think about communication and language.

The overall purpose is to highlight some important social relationships which have been generated by the nation-state and which are reflected in language and communication. Formal institutions such as schools and missions/churches exist in asymmetrical relationships with local Vaturanga villagers: teachers, administrators, priests and members of religious orders are more educated, and are part of the cultural apparatus of the nation-state. They bring to the Vaturanga and present to them issues and concerns which connect them to the Solomon Islands as a whole, and often beyond the nation itself. This, then, will set the stage for the final two chapters in which we will look at social relationships which involve people whom the Vaturanga do not encounter physically, one-to-one in any sense, but primarily (if not exclusively) in the cultural apparatus: the various forms of media.

LANGUAGE CATEGORIES

The Vaturanga have three language categories: 1) Hoko and its associated dialects, the indigenous language of the area; 2) Pijin, an important lingua franca used in primary schools, commerce, and some parts of the media; and 3) English, which has the connotations of education, high-status and global connections. These categories reflect changing social

relations in West Guadalcanal, relations in which schools and missions/churches have played a significant role.

Table 5.1 lists the language competencies of individuals age 6 years or older in Maravovo village, Vaturanga District. This table gives us a preliminary picture of the linguistic and communicative terrain, indicating a wide knowledge of Pijin (83% of the population). It is also interesting to look at the number of people claiming multiple language competencies.

Table 5.2 presents this data.

Here we see that all but 15% of the population speaks Pijin and/or English in addition to a Solomon Islands language. What this indicates most strongly is the importance of multiple language competencies in order to be able to effectively and meaningfully communicate. The most useful such competency is Pijin.

Table 5.1: Languages in the Vaturanga District with number of speakers (ages 6+) (*=dialect of Hoko)

Language/Dialect	Number of Speakers	Percentage
Ndi*	98/99	98%
Pijin	83/99	83%
English	27/99	27%
Nggela	12/99	12%
Ngeri*	11/99	11%
Ghari*	7/99	7%
Savosavo	7/99	7%
Lavukal	6/99	6%
Tasemboko	5/99	5%
Nggae*	4/99	4%
Malaita languages	3/99	3%
Size of Sample	99/99	100%

Table 5.2: Individuals claiming various language competencies (ages 6+).

	Number Claiming Competency	Percentage
Hoko Only	9/99	9%
Hoko and Pijin Only	49/99	49%
Hoko, Pijin and English	17/99	17%
Hoko and Other* Only	6/99	6%
Hoko, Pijin and Other Only	9/99	9%
Hoko, Pijin, English and Other	9/99	9%
Total Sample	99/99	100%

*Other refers to Solomon Islands languages which are not dialects of Hoko.

Hoko

Hoko has five dialects: Ndi, Ngeri, Nggae, Nggaria and Ghari. All of these are consistently referred to by the Vaturanga and others as *hoko ni hita* (lit. “our language”). The names of each of these dialects means “there” in the respective dialect. Thus, incorporated into the names of the dialects is a notion of connection: when the Vaturanga say “We speak Ndi” (*Ami hoko Ndi*) the implications are “We speak (the language of the people who say) there (this way).” Thus, the names of the dialects reflect the interrelationships of the people of West Guadalcanal.⁷¹

The Vaturanga call their own dialect Ndi. The Anglican mission chose this dialect for its service book and refers to it as the “language of the Vaturana.” The Roman Catholic mission chose the Ghari dialect for use in its missions. These two dialects of Hoko--Ndi and Ghari--are widely known and understood throughout Guadalcanal as a whole (including eastern and central

portions of the island) because of their respective associations with the Anglican and Roman Catholic missions. As a result, these two languages are useful and comprehended beyond their local districts, even beyond West Guadalcanal.⁷²

But because of the different uses to which each denomination has put their respective chosen dialects, they are not equally useful in the context of the nation-state as a whole. The Roman Catholic Church has emphasized missionary priests brought in from other countries. Those who have been assigned to Guadalcanal and Central Provinces have had prior instruction in Ghari and use it consistently in their services. The Roman Catholic mission has published a newsletter, a service book, and most recently a Bible in the Ghari dialect of Hoko. The association of Ghari with such extensive publication and with educated priests has given it a relatively high status.

The Anglican mission, on the other hand, published only a service book and hymnal in Ndi. Furthermore, its priests tend to be indigenous persons coming from various parts of the Solomon Islands. These individuals tend not to be familiar with Ndi and often choose to use English and Pijin instead. Thus, we find in the Anglican Church an inconsistent usage of the vernacular language, mainly limited to the congregation, and no strong association of it with professionals. The Anglicans also tend to use a Pijin Bible, and do not have a Ndi translation.

One effect of this is that Ghari words are increasing in usage and replacing Ndi, Ngeri, Nggae and Ngaria words. Ghari is thus becoming a kind of “standard” for Hoko, even being used in the popular recording industry. This trend is very marked and so clear that when I asked for help in translating a portion of the Anglican service book in Ndi, it was necessary to find an “elder” who could remember what most of the words meant, as younger individuals in the

community simply said “We don’t know those words anymore.”

Thus, the relationship between the dialects of Hoko is rapidly changing in nature because of the missions/churches: the Ghari dialect is predominating, and the remaining dialects find that their words are disappearing. Table 5.3 lists ten common words in which the Ndi word has been replaced in common usage by the Ghari word. In all but one of these examples, the Ghari replacement has completely replaced the original Ndi term: only in one case--*jajaha*--does the Ndi term persist to any degree in my observation.⁷³

This situation may even be more pronounced in districts which have a large proportion of Roman Catholics, such as is the case where they speak Nggae and Ngeri. Overall, there is a strong perception that Ghari is becoming the “correct” way to speak Hoko, or at least the most useful dialect given that it is widely understood outside of West Guadalcanal. Conversely, the other dialects are becoming secondary, “only dialects” of Ghari, rather than equals.

Table 5.3: Word replacement, Ndi and Ghari.

English Equivalent	Ndi Word	Ghari Replacement
Good	Vesea	Dou
Lie Down	Ngora	Eno
Mind	Jajaha	Sasaga
Garden	Totota	Uta
Fan	Vuvulo	Tepe
Weed	Vavo	U’ure
Low Tide	Vanona konde	Vuru
Promise	Molo bongi	Veke
Don’t or Not	Jika	Tau
Give	Tusu	Sau

Pijin

Solomon Islands Pijin is a *lingua franca*, and as such is no one's native language.⁷⁴ Because of the linguistic diversity which has characterized Melanesia generally, some sort of business or common language became necessary during the colonial period. Pijin uses English words but a simplified grammar.

Pijin pronunciation varies slightly from island to island, and a distinctive Town Pijin appears to be emerging, but by and large it remains mutually comprehensible nation-wide. Pijin is used in schools as a sort of intermediary, as a step to Standard English. It has no official status in the Solomon Islands, but is widely used even in government offices and parliamentary debates. It is also heavily used in Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation programming, and one newspaper publishes in Pijin. It is used in advertising, on public signs, and in many popular songs. There is a widely-used translation of the Bible in Pijin also. As of yet, no widely disseminated literature (novels, poetry, stories) are published in Pijin. It is primarily spoken and such usage is usually one of convenience, rather than choice or desire.

Solomon Islanders do not speak highly of Pijin. It has low status, and many describe it as "broken English," often in unfavourable comparison to Tok Pisin and Bislama.⁷⁵ Pijin is colourful, accessible, but also limited: not everything can be said in Pijin. But it does importantly serve as a means of connecting the Vaturanga to Solomon Islanders who come from elsewhere. It makes possible communication with people from far away islands. It allows them to sell in markets, read signs, and listen to the radio.

Locally, aside from schools, leaders in the Anglican Church use Pijin as a way of communicating effectively with Vaturanga, since they do not know Hoko, and English is not as

widely understood.

English

Standard English is the language of the educated and the professional. It is the official language of the Solomon Islands, and both primary and secondary schools promote it as the most important language to learn. A person who speaks English well is regarded as intelligent and clever. But only 27% of the Vaturanga speak it, versus 83% for Pijin. Thus, only a tiny minority actually use English.

English is a written language: in newspapers, books, letters and documents. Because there is little in the way of a Solomon Islands literature in English, it serves to connect the Vaturanga beyond the nation-state. It is in English that you read news of far off places, or are educated in subjects (history, health, government, biology, etc.) which tell you about the rest of the world. English is **not** a Solomon Islands language, it is a global language.

In addition to schools, leaders in the Anglican Church use English, but primarily in formal ways: portions of the service on Sunday, for instance, will be in English, or some Bible readings. In both schools and churches, English symbolizes educational and professional status.

PUBLIC EVENTS

The linguistic categories above are played out in public ways in the Vaturanga District. The language choices made in public events reflects the social relations between the Vaturanga community and the institutions (schools and churches) of the cultural apparatus. Table 5.4 lists twelve public events I observed in Vaturanga villages and the languages which were used. We

can group these events into three categories: 1) four occasions in which only Hoko was used; 2) five events at which Hoko and Pijin and/or English were used; and 3) three events at which only Pijin and/or English were used.

Table 5.4: Public events in the Vaturanga District and languages used.

Type of Event	Hoko	Pijin	English
Anglican Church Service	*	*	*
Roman Catholic Funeral	*		
School Committee Meeting	*	*	
Drama (Melanesian Brothers)	*	*	
Drama (Franciscan Brothers)		*	*
Church Committee (Anglican)	*	*	*
School Festival		*	*
Meeting of Chiefs	*	*	
Customary Court	*		
Feast/Exchanges	*		
Community Meeting	*		
Sunday School Festival	*	*	*

With the exception of the Roman Catholic funeral, the occasions in which only Hoko was used were those which focused on social relations which are part of traditional customary practices: feasts, customary court, community meetings. A typical example of this is the meeting of the customary court. I recorded one such occasion in my field journal as follows:

Mauli (not his real name) was married and had many children. Mauli is Lakuili, his wife was Kidipale.⁷⁶ Another man did *madu* (a kind of magic to attract the opposite sex) on Mauli's wife and had an affair with her. Mauli discovered his wife in the bush with this other man. Since this time Mauli has not been living with his wife.

Madoa (not his real name), who is Mauli's father-in-law (and belongs to the Haubata) was very unhappy about his daughter's behaviour, but she refused to return to her husband or act properly.

One night, Mauli got drunk and took out his frustration in Madoa's

house. He broke plates, cups, and tore up the house. Then three male relatives of Madoa—his brother and two nephews threatened to run Maui out of the village.

The court was presided over by Cheche (not his real name), a Vaturanga chief of a neutral clan (the clans involved are Lakuili, Kidipale and Haubata). *Chachango* (offerings of betel nut, leaf, lime and coconuts) were presented to Cheche by the parties involved, as is customary. I would estimate fifty to sixty spectators were present for the proceedings in the village.

After listening to several hours of testimony, entirely in Ndi and Ghari (Maui's mother is from a different district, having married into the Vaturanga), Cheche rendered a verdict requiring that Maui pay twenty-four dollars to Madoa. Madoa's brothers were required to pay one talina (customary shell money), plus nineteen dollars to Maui and his mother for threatening them. Maui's mother, in turn, must pay six dollars to Madoa's relatives. Madoa is not required to pay anything, as he made no threats to anyone.

Furthermore, the parties involved were admonished to shake hands and reconcile with each other.

The underlying subtext for this was the reaffirmation and maintenance of customary social relationships (established by *kavo ome* or feasting/exchange) between *puku* (lineages). Madoa's kinsmen sought to punish Maui and his matrilineal kin for Maui's drunken behaviour. The court's verdict was designed to restore relationships between the lineages, as much as between the individuals involved. In this situation, English and Pijin are irrelevant, indeed perhaps even inadequate since they have no precise equivalents for the relationships involved. Furthermore, they are unnecessary: this is the Vaturanga community affirming and proclaiming their traditions, witnessed by the community as a whole. Although formal, it was not a situation requiring outside education or documentation. Or, indeed, the outside world at all.

The second category consists of events in which the Vaturanga were participating in the institutions (schools and churches) of the cultural apparatus, and so Pijin and English were used. With the exception of the Council of Chiefs, each of these events involved a professional (teacher, administrator, priest, members of religious order) representing the formal institution.

These occasions required feedback from the Vaturanga community, so Hoko was also used.

A typical example of such an occasion was the weekly Anglican church service at St. Bartholomew's Church in Maravovo village. My field journal described one such service as follows:

The *mama*⁷⁷ reads all his parts of the service in English, using the English prayerbook. But the people, when they respond, use the Vaturanga prayerbook. All the liturgical music, the *Gloria in excelsis*, *Sanctus*, *Agnus Dei*, etc. are sung in Ndi along with the Lord's Prayer. Hymns are also sung from a Ndi hymnal.

But the *mama* preaches in Pijin, and the Epistle and Gospel readings are in Pijin, taken from the SICA⁷⁸ translation. If there is an Old Testament reading, it is in English.

At the end of the service, the Church Committee Chairmen (the Wardens) make announcements, which are in Ndi. Today, they chastised the congregation for not paying proper attention during the service, and wearing inappropriate clothing in church. They also complained that someone's pigs had gotten loose and run through the cemetery where Ini Kopuria's grave was.⁷⁹

Here we see a set of social relations created by the institution of the Anglican Church and expressed in the languages used. The priest uses English for his portions of the formal liturgy, English being a sign of his education and status, but also reflecting the fact that he comes from another part of the Solomon Islands and he does not actually speak the Vaturanga language. When he preaches, however, he speaks Pijin, because in preaching it is important that the congregation be able to follow it. Readings from the Bible which are available in Pijin are given in Pijin, but otherwise in English. Thus, new communicative competencies are imposed upon the Vaturanga: Pijin and English. The people, however, are not just passive in such a service: there are hymns and responses for them to give. For these, they use Ndi, their dialect of Hoko, taken from a translation of the Anglican service book.

I observed three public events in the district at which only Pijin and/or English were

used: two occasions upon which members of religious orders presented dramas, and the end-of-term school festival. These occasions, unlike the above, were not characterized by interactions between the Vaturanga and the institutions involved, in the sense that some decision or act of participation was necessary. Instead, the Vaturanga were seen as occupying a fairly passive role. These were occasions in which the schools and churches were conveying cultural information to the Vaturanga.

The example of the end-of-term school festival at Vura highlights the social relations inherent in such occasions, in which communication is largely one-way and one-sided. I recorded this occasion in my field journal as follows:

An interesting day at Vura attending the school festival. First you wait. As with all public occasions here, you seem to spend more time waiting for things to start than the actual event takes up. We sat at the Headmaster's house on his verandah and had tea and biscuits while waiting. During that time, two Franciscan brothers showed up, as part of the representation of the Church. They of course came over to me because of my previous work in their community. One of these brothers was from Guadalcanal and I got a chance to practice Ndi with him and he taught me some new words and helped me with the grammar. He also helped me later with the speeches, because everyone speaks so softly sometimes I can barely hear...

Finally the bell rang a third time and the food was laid out for the feast. I was seated with the *mama's* and other assorted "big men", which included a Peace Corps worker from Michigan. People remarked at how we both liked cassava pudding, which another white man from Australia had refused to eat.

There was wild pig, taro, kumara, rice, fish and cassava pudding. After eating, I took some photos of the Maravovo contingent.

After some more waiting, the children gathered in their places wearing their uniforms and began singing school songs in Pijin. I took some photos of them, and when they saw me with the camera they began to wave and sing more loudly.

I eventually found a shady place to sit with the two Franciscan brothers. The ceremony began and many speeches were made, by the Senior Teacher, the Assistant Headmaster, each teacher, and the teacher trainees.

The Senior Teacher made a long speech in Pijin about the year which had begun last January with a new term. He lectured parents for delaying the start

one week by not sending their children on the right date because of a rumour. He loudly repeated the correct date when school will begin this coming January 1997 several times, and told parents to remember it...

Each speaker pointed out problems during the past year...

The most common themes were a lack of money, complaining that parents had not helped out enough with fund-raising, had not made certain their child went to school everyday, had not disciplined their child, etc.

The only exception to this was one speech made by a teacher-trainee who apologized for any mistakes he might have made because he is not from Guadalcanal and does not know the local customs and so he explained that the mistakes were not intentional. He did not name the mistakes.

After the speeches, prizes were handed out for each class, pre-class through Standard 6. As each teacher or trainee announced the names, they would hand the prize to a sort of "dignitary" who would actually hand the student the prize and shake his or her hand. Dignitaries included the Senior Anglican priest, the Peace Corps volunteer, and myself... Prizes included money, pencil sets, rulers, pens, crayons and the like.

After all the awards were handed out, the Assistant Headmaster made a speech in which he argued that the Vaturanga ought to provide money and land to build a junior secondary school (Forms 1-3), and noted that three such schools were being built in East Guadalcanal.

After this, gifts were given to the departing trainees, who sat on a bench. After they opened their gifts, all the students were required to line up and each shook the hand of the trainees.

Then one more speech about the need for money to keep the school going, a closing prayer, and it was all over.

This account contains numerous points and elements which draw our attention to the social relations involved in communication and language. First there is the use of language, which is almost exclusively Pijin. At no time did anyone make any announcement or speech in Hoko. Second, the nature of the speeches were important. Not only were they in Pijin, but they involved admonishments to the community about their duty to support the school financially, and the importance of enrolling and sending their children to school. This promotes the institution itself, its value and place in the community.

The speech by one trainee apologizing for not knowing the local customs served to

strengthen the notion that teachers come from outside and that schools are a connection to the Solomon Islands nation-state.⁸⁰ This confronts the Vaturanga community with experiences wider than their local area. Note also that the Deputy Headmaster brought up differences between West Guadalcanal and East Guadalcanal in terms of the number of secondary schools. Again, this is about communication which has wider implications than local concerns or needs.

The use of "dignitaries" to hand out awards stressed even larger circles of social relationship. The Peace Corps volunteer, the Anglican priest, and myself all symbolically associated with larger institutions and education generally.

Finally, this occasion was clearly one in which the cultural apparatus was making its priorities, issues, concerns and ideas known: the institution was conveying its idea of its position in society, how society ought to be.

Thus, I have identified three different types of public events in terms of their communication and social relations. The different language and communicative activities in these different occasions represent social realities faced by the Vaturanga and these institutions. Local people are expected to have some competency in Pijin, if not English. The institutions themselves concede that Hoko is useful in conveying information, but promote and encourage other languages.

SCHOOLS

In addition to observations of public events, we need to look at how the institutions themselves, and the individuals associated with them, view communication and language issues, as these also will be reflective of the social relations inherent. Here we will look at three

aspects of schools in the Vaturanga District: 1) the degree of participation in schools by the Vaturanga and how this correlates with language; 2) how school professionals (teachers and administrators) view matters of language and communication; and 3) how curricular materials represent such matters.

Interactions With the Vaturanga

There are two schools in the Vaturanga District: St. Francis Primary School (also called Vaturanga Primary School) at Vura, and Selwyn College near Maravovo on the former Taitai Plantation. Both of these institutions are church-run (Anglican), but follow government curricula and the staffs are paid by the Ministry of Education.

Selwyn College moved to the Vaturanga District in 1989 from the Tasemboko District (Central Guadalcanal) (personal communication 1989). It is defined as a residential, national secondary school and has approximately 200 students. The vast majority of these students come from other parts of the Solomon Islands.

The main interactions between Selwyn College and the local Vaturanga community do not involve communication of language issues, but rather are relatively limited to sharing a district nurse and the aforementioned market days (see Chapter Three).⁸¹ While students and staff do sometimes venture out into the villages, there is little in the way of any official relationship between the rather insular school and the local community.

St. Francis Primary School, however, has a very different relationship. Its enrollment is almost entirely Vaturanga, and the Vaturanga themselves have formal roles to play in its governance, fund-raising, etc.⁸² Vaturanga Primary School was founded in 1969 at Laovavasa

village, but moved to its present site inland at Vura later that same year.⁸³ Initially it was church-run, but in 1975 the province of Guadalcanal took control. Church-control was later restored in 1992, at which time the school was renamed St. Francis Primary School in honour of the Franciscan brothers who had moved into the district.

A majority of Vaturanga children (ages 6 to 17) and adults have attended primary school, as Tables 5.5 and 5.7 indicate, with 85% of adults having some primary education and 82% of children (ages 6-17). These figures indicate that the school is a significant institution, impacting the vast majority of the population.

Table 5.5: Educational attainment of adults in Maravovo (ages 18+).

Level of Attainment	Number	Percentage
None	9/60	15.00%
Kindergarten (Pre-Class)	0/60	0.00%
Standard 1	1/60	1.66%
Standard 2	5/60	8.33%
Standard 3	4/60	6.66%
Standard 4	7/60	11.66%
Standard 5	3/60	5.00%
Standard 6	17/60	28.33%
Standard 7	4/60	6.66%
Form 1	1/60	1.66%
Form 2	2/60	3.33%
Form 3+	6/60	10.00%
SICHE*	1/60	1.66%
Total Sample	60/60	100.00%

*Solomon Islands College of Higher Education.

Table 5.5 shows the educational attainment of adults in Maravovo village, one of the three main villages of the Vaturanga District. This table indicates that a majority of 51.6% of Vaturanga

adults have attained to Standard 6 or higher. Indeed, all but nine adults (15%) have completed at least Standard 1 in primary school.

How does educational attainment correlate with language competencies? Table 5.6 presents this data.

Table 5.6: Educational attainment and language competencies in Maravovo (adults 18+).

Level of Attainment	Ndi	Pijin	English	Other
None	9	8	0	5
Standard 1	1	1	0	0
Standard 2	5	5	1	5
Standard 3	4	4	2	3
Standard 4	7	7	1	3
Standard 5	3	2	1	1
Standard 6	17	15	7	7
Standard 7	4	4	3	3
Form 1	1	1	1	1
Form 2	2	2	2	1
Form 3+	6	6	3	2
SICHE	1	1	1	0
Total Sample	60	56	22	31
Percentage	100%	93.33%	36.66%	51.66%

Interestingly, this table indicates that Pijin competency is not dependent upon schooling, for all but one individual who had had no education at all could speak Pijin, a comparable percentage to those who had been to school (89% versus 88% respectively). While Pijin may be used in schools and school functions, schools are apparently not the only source of such competencies.

When we turn to looking at children's language competencies, we find a slightly stronger correlation between schooling and Pijin abilities, as Table 5.7 indicates. Like the table

for adults, this sample indicates a strong correlation between education and English language competency, but a less strong correlation for competency in Pijin: 71% competency in Pijin for children with no education, versus 88% competency for adults with no education.⁸⁴ Clearly then schools do play a significant role in Pijin competencies for children, but even without any formal education at all, a majority of adults will learn Pijin. This indicates that for Pijin schools are just one possible source among a range of sources of competency.

Table 5.7: Children's language competencies by educational attainment (Maravovo village, ages 6 to 17).

Level of Attainment	Ndi	Pijin	English
None	7	5	0
Kindergarten/Preclass	11	5	0
Standard 1	1	0	0
Standard 2	7	6	0
Standard 3	3	2	0
Standard 4	1	1	0
Standard 5	3	3	2
Standard 6	6	6	2
Form 2	1	1	1
Total Sample	40	29	5
Percentage	100%	72.5%	12.5%

English competency, on the other hand, is strongly correlated with educational attainment, indeed, there is a 100% correlation according to Tables 5.6 and 5.7, that is, all individuals who could speak English had some education, at a minimum of Standard 2 or higher. While those with little or no schooling will likely pick up Pijin from other sources (church, markets, radio, public events, songs, etc.), no one learns English without some schooling.

School Professionals

I had several chances to interview staff and teachers at St. Francis Primary School about language and communications issues. Batada (not his real name), a teaching member of the administrative staff, told me:

... the goal is to teach English, but Pijin and sometimes vernacular are used to explain things, especially unfamiliar terms. Pijin is used more often because the staff usually come from other areas and don't know the vernacular.

His emphasis here is on Pijin and Hoko as having practical uses but only in so much as attaining the goal of English competency. I followed up the idea of using the vernacular with a group of teachers. In response to my question, they expressed more idealized notions about language:

It (the vernacular) is not taught in the classroom.⁸⁵

We encourage them to learn English and discourage the (vernacular) language.

Clearly, from the perspective of teachers, Hoko is not used in any systematic way in the classroom: English is the goal.

Regarding Pijin, the range of comments from the group of teachers interviewed exhibited some ambiguity: some seemed to evaluate it positively, while others felt it was more a necessary evil than a desirable language. I present their comments about Pijin the order they were said:

Pijin is also our language.

Pijin is much easier to communicate with, easy to learn it and easy to understand it, easier to communicate with.

It can be taught informally.

Necessary tool, but an imperfect one.

Pijin can distract from English.

We aim to teach children to understand English well. We try to discourage Pijin and (vernacular) language.

Pijin has a vague and unclear status: on the one hand it is "our language" and something children ought to know, but almost immediately they moved towards a more equivocal position, emphasizing first the utility of Pijin (easy, informal, necessary) to a negative evaluation (distracting, discouraged). In contrast, comments about English were without such ambiguities:

English is our official language.

It is used in communication and the media.

It is important to obtain employment.

We have a British background.

English is a structured language.

These comments reflect the high status accorded to English and its value in connecting Vaturanga with the world beyond: a world of media, employment, and British institutions (the nation-state).

I also discussed with the staff whether or not they taught anything about the traditional cultures of the Solomon Islands. This elicited the following list:

We teach about using drums, conch shells to communicate in the old days.

Everyone chews betel nut.

Cooking is the same way, with hot stones and bamboo. Also everybody has feasts.

We talk about the barter system, before there was money.

Students learn about how houses were made.

Also the grass skirts.

And the loincloth for the men.

These items represent a sort of collective custom for the entire Solomon Islands. Talking about them emphasizes change: there are new forms of communication now, new ways of building houses, new ways of cooking, market systems instead of barter, and Western clothing.⁸⁶

Teaching about these practices points children towards a shared set of traditions common throughout the Solomon Islands, and also presents to them the idea of change, a movement away from such practices through education. One of the teachers, Lede (not real name) stated in Pijin: "Hemi mas hirem stori long hom" (They must hear stories at home), meaning that teaching customary rules and traditions which the people follow is not something for the school and not a school subject except insofar as it is useful to point out commonalities and change.

In their preferences for English and in their use of Pijin, over vernaculars, and in presenting ideas about shared traditions and experiences beyond the Vaturanga District, the teachers at St. Francis Primary School engage in communicative activities which foster and promote particular associations between languages and subjects, contexts, situations, histories, and the larger world. In this way, the school is an important component in the communicative and linguistic terrain which the Vaturanga occupy and negotiate as part of the Solomon Islands nation-state, communicating ideas not only about that nation-state and its place in the world, in history, but ideas about local cultures and about change.

The Curriculum

Curricular materials also play an important role in highlighting such issues. Of particular interest here are materials relating to Community Studies, a subject taught in Standard 3 and Standard 5. I focused on these materials because they were produced especially for the Solomon Islands (unlike other materials which were general), and thus exhibited ideas about the nation-state, how it came to be, how it works. Furthermore, these materials addressed communications issues in a social context, as opposed to the more formal grammar or vocabulary.

In Standard 3 the manual is entitled "Community Studies: Our Island" and is divided into six units: 1) communication, 2) social groups, 3) transportation, 4) industry, 5) community rules, and 6) environment. Its stated purpose is to introduce children "to the idea of an island as a community" (Ministry of Education et al. 1988a:1). Examples which focus on issues of communication include the following:

Ask the children to tell you how they think people communicated before the Solomon Islands had mail services. Try to get them to tell you that they may have used messengers; smoke signals; drums; conchshells. Tell them that some of those are still in use today. Tell them that those methods may be slow and some of them don't allow the sender and the receiver to share any information or ideas (Ministry of Education et al. 1988a:11).

This statement emphasizes ideas of change in communication and the positive aspects of such change. In the same lesson plan the teacher is advised to bring a radio to class and share with the students information about SIBC (Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation):

Make sure they understand that broadcasts go to many places in the Solomon Islands and many people hear the same things. In this way many people know what is going on in many different places. People learn to understand what happens in different places and learn more about each other. Tell the children

why the service messages on the radio are so important (Ministry of Education et al. 1988a:11-12).

SIBC broadcasts almost exclusively in Pijin. Its message service is listened to by large numbers of people everyday in villages and towns and those living on plantations. It is an important means of communication between islands, especially in the context of population movement. This programming emphasizes new contexts for old social relations and hence the need for new communicative structures and systems.

The unit on community rules focuses on such issues as safety and sign reading rather than customary rules or behaviours. New communicative hierarchies are emphasized as a means of moving beyond customary practices and being able to appropriately negotiate life in a complex nation-state. Planned outcomes are listed as follows:

1. To understand the reasons why rules are necessary within the community.
 2. To appreciate the need for rules to prevent injury and illness.
 3. To appreciate the need for rules to promote effective sporting activity.
 4. To appreciate the need for rules to protect individual rights.
- (Ministry of Education et al. 1988a:122).

These orient students towards concerns and issues of the cultural apparatus, emphasizing formal laws, codes, standards derived from the nation-state.

We see, therefore, that the Standard 3 curriculum on Community Studies emphasizes communication issues in three ways: 1) promoting the superiority of new forms of centralized communication, 2) orienting students towards the issues and concerns of the nation-state and new language competencies such as Pijin and English, and 3) rationalizing the need for such communication by reference to laws, codes, health issues, events, rights and responsibilities.

The Standard 5 manual is entitled "Community Studies: Our Region" and is intended to

introduce students to the wider context of communities in the Pacific Islands. It is divided into six units as follows: 1) regional and international trade, 2) peoples of the Pacific, 3) conservation and resource issues, 4) industries, 5) international laws, and 6) physical geography and climate (Ministry of Education et al. 1988b).

Of particular interest here is Unit 4, which focuses on new industries. Teachers are told to teach children about the possibilities for new development projects in the Solomon Islands beyond timber and fishing. Among other things, this section shows examples of advertisements of important goods, noting how expensive they are (Ministry of Education et al. 1988b:73-75). It compares this with items manufactured in the Solomon Islands, such as soap, snack foods and boats (Ministry of Education et al. 1988b:76-77).

In discussing advertisements, showing photos of manufactured goods, and the benefits of tourism, the manual brings communication issues into view. Advertisements are a specific form of communication, along with the packaging of manufactured goods like snacks and soap. In such lessons, students are oriented towards communicative skills and competencies related to such goods and to development. Thus, through such lessons, schools promote communicative competencies needed in modern market situations.

It is clear from the material presented here that St. Francis Primary School plays an important role in the attainment and promotion of communicative and linguistic competencies. Although the staff and teachers state that their primary aim (in terms of such issues) is competency in Standard English, Pijin is an important component, a useful and necessary "tool" in teaching, and an essential lingua franca in relations between the school and the larger community. Teachers communicate to students and to the whole community the importance of

attaining new communicative competencies.

MISSIONS AND CHURCHES

The Vaturanga were among the first peoples in the Solomon Islands to convert to Christianity.⁸⁷ Two Vaturanga men, Hugo Gorovaka and George Basile, traveled to New Zealand in the late nineteenth century under the auspices of the Melanesian Mission (Anglican). The mission set up its first headquarters near Verahue (a Vaturanga village, but in the present-day Ngeri District), and later moved to Maravovo in the present-day Vaturanga District.

West Guadalcanal generally was an area of early intense missionary activity, with the Roman Catholic Marists setting up their headquarters in the Visale District, immediately to the east of the Vaturanga District. Most peoples in West Guadalcanal are either Anglican or Roman Catholic (see Bennett 1987; Laracy 1976; Hilliard 1974, 1978).

The Vaturanga are overwhelmingly Anglican (see Table 2.13), although they are related to many Roman Catholics and there are two villages--Lambukulila and Naro--with Catholic churches. Despite the overwhelming number of Anglicans among the Vaturanga, the Catholic Church has influence, particularly on areas relating to language and communication.

The Church of Melanesia (Anglican) has a considerable presence in the Vaturanga District, and in other parts of West Guadalcanal. There are three village churches, at Paru, Laovavasa and Maravovo, and these are linked structurally as a parish and combined into a district with a parish consisting of churches in the villages of Verahue, Kombiloko and Tabughu (in the neighbouring Ngeri District). There is one district priest assigned to these six churches.

In addition, the Senior Priest (Archdeacon) for all of Guadalcanal is stationed at

Veranaaso, along with the headquarters of the Anglican Sisters of Melanesia (an indigenous religious order). At Hautambu is the main training friary of the Anglican Franciscan brothers. And in Maravovo village there is a Tasu House with one or two members of the Melanesian Brotherhood assigned to live there.⁸⁸ All of these institutions interact with the Vaturanga and form an important component of their experience with the cultural apparatus. These impacts are pervasive and important in many ways, but for our purposes here we will focus in on how they participate in the realms of communications and language.

I will divide this into two parts, which I will label “Palama” to represent parochial institutions, and “Monastic” to represent the impact of the religious orders.

Palama

The most significant way in which the local parish impacts communication and language is through the use of Anglican prayerbooks in worship. These are available in two languages (comprehended locally, at least by some): English and Ndi (the Vaturanga dialect of Hoko). The Ndi prayerbook,⁸⁹ first published in 1963 and reprinted in 1986, is used throughout Guadalcanal.⁹⁰ I have observed this book being used in Maravovo, Laovavasa, Paru, and Kombiloko (a Ngeri village). There is also a widely used hymnal in Ndi.

Other books used in Anglican worship include a translation of the New Testament in Solomons Pijin,⁹¹ and an English-language Bible. What we see then is that books in all three languages are used in the Anglican service: 1) prayerbooks in both English and Ndi; 2) Hymnals in Ndi; 3) Bibles in both Pijin and English.

In attendance at more than thirty Anglican services in this region I have never witnessed

a service which did not include all three languages: Ndi, Pijin and English.⁹² Table 5.8 list the various components or parts of the regular Sunday worship service in St. Bartholomew's Church in Maravovo, and the languages used for each part. This table indicates that the language used depends upon who is assigned that part of the service, and whether or not there is a translation available. Of the three languages, Pijin is the least prominent in terms of number of times used, mainly for New Testament readings, the sermon, and any announcements made by the priest. English and Ndi are used only in places where they are actually written down (prayerbooks, hymnals and bibles), except for announcements made by wardens which are in Ndi. Thus, both English and Ndi are used in very formal and official ways, rather than in informal communication (i.e., communication that is not rote). Thus, in reality, Pijin competency is emphasized since it is the most likely to vary in content from week to week.

One interesting outcome of this pattern is that many, especially younger Vaturanga, do not comprehend portions of the Ndi as written and used in the service book. In a sense, the Ndi as used in the church is becoming an archaic version. Kesa (not his real name), who is well educated and often reads one of the lessons, explained the situation as follows:

Young people don't know what all the words in the prayerbook mean. These words here [points to the words *molo bongi*] mean "promise" but we don't use that word anymore. We say *veke* not *molo bongi*. Only the old people know what some of these words mean.

Similarly, Tolu (not his real name), a young Vaturanga man who was helping me with learning the language told me:

I don't understand many words in the prayerbook. We just memorize them and say them. But we use different words. I know that the prayerbook says *vesea* for "good" but we don't know that word outside of church. Outside of church, we say *dou* when we mean "good," not *vesea*.

He went on to tell me that if I wanted to know what many of the words in the prayerbook meant, I would have to ask an older person. I did ask Cheche (not his real name), a Vaturanga elder. He confirmed the observations of Kesa and Tolu:

Our language has changed. We don't say *bulu* (lamp) anymore, but *laiti* and we don't say *voki* (room) but *rumu*; and we don't say *jika* (don't or not) but *tau*; and we don't say *tusu* (give) but *sau*. All these words have changed. I know what they mean, but I never use them now.

This archaic quality to prayerbook Ndi reflects the importance of English for professionals like priests and other educated persons: English is a valued competency, Ndi is an assumed competency unassociated with status or education. Because only 27% of Vaturanga claim competency in English, however, Pijin is used as an essential communicative tool, because the church leaders themselves do not comprehend Ndi. In the Church, Ndi is used in a formal and rote manner.

Thus, we see English competency encouraged by its association with high-status professionals, Pijin competency encouraged by virtue its usefulness, and Ndi (as used in the service) increasingly archaic because the prayerbook, being a static document, does not keep pace with changes in the local language.

I have also attended other events associated with the parishes: patronal festivals in Laovavasa and Kombiloko, Ini Kopuria Day in Maravovo, Sunday School festivals, and Church Committee meetings. Again, because of the presence of professionals who do not speak the local dialect, Pijin and sometimes English were used on these occasions.

At a church committee meeting I observed that Pijin was used more than any other language, although all three languages were used. English was used formally, for the agenda,

for writing formal resolutions, for prayers. Debate took place in a combination of Pijin and Ndi, with Pijin preferred so that the *mama* could follow. The committee consisted of numerous lay persons. To effectively function as part of the committee and make a contribution, Pijin was necessary. Thus, to occupy a leadership role in this institution, communicative competencies beyond Ndi were seen as essential.

Monastic Communities

Three Anglican monastic communities (see Table 2.14) have a strong and active presence in the Vaturanga District, frequently participating in local events and sometimes organizing events and presentations. Of these three, the Sisters of Melanesia and the Society of St. Francis moved into the district after the closing of the church-owned Taitai Plantation in 1987. They occupy the furthest southwestern portion of the Vaturanga District, at Veranaaso and Hautambu respectively (see Map 2). There are approximately sixty sisters at Veranaaso, and twenty-five brothers at Hautambu. There is a Tasu House accommodating one or two members of the Melanesian Brotherhood in Maravovo village because of that village's association with the founder of the brotherhood. The Melanesian Brotherhood has its headquarters in the Tambulivu District, another West Guadalcanal district.

All three of these monastic communities have presented dramas or organized events in Vaturanga villages. I will briefly outline three such occasions I have observed: 1) a drama presented by the Franciscan brothers at Laovavasa village at their patronal festival; 2) a drama performed by the Melanesian Brotherhood at Maravovo village as part of a day-long fair; 3) a Sunday School Festival organized by the Sisters of Melanesia.

Table 5.8: Anglican Eucharist service in Maravovo and the languages used (chronological from start to finish of the service).

Portion of the Service	Spoken (or Sung) By	Language
Invitatory/Introductory Sentences	Catechist	Ndi
Opening Hymn	Congregation	Ndi
Collect for Purity	Priest	English
Kyrie eleison or Gloria in excelsis	Congregation	Ndi
Collect of the Day	Priest	English
Epistle Reading	Member of the Congregation*	English
Gospel Acclamations	Member of Congregation Response by Congregation	Ndi
Gospel Reading	Member of Congregation	Pijin or English
Creed	Congregation	Ndi
Prayers of the People	Led by Member of Congregation*	English or Ndi
Hymn	Congregation	Ndi
Sursum Corda	Priest with responses from congregation	English (priest) Ndi (congregation)
Sanctus, Benedictus, Hosanna	Congregation	Ndi
Eucharistic Prayer	Priest	English
Lord's Prayer	Congregation	Ndi
Agnus Dei	Congregation	Ndi
Concluding Prayers	Congregation	Ndi
Blessing	Priest	English
Final Hymn	Congregation	Ndi
Announcements	Priest Wardens	Pijin Ndi

*Frequently the reader for lessons and leader of the prayers was the Tasu or Melanesian brother assigned to the village.

Members of the monastic communities often attend or send official representatives to village celebrations and feasting occasions. Patronal festivals (celebrations related to the saint for whom the local church is named) are not dissimilar to feasting, sharing many elements such

as distribution of goods, and additionally will include presentations and church services. The Franciscan community at Hautambu has always participated in such events. In 1989, while I was studying that community itself (see Ryniker 1991), I participated in and observed such occasions. On one such occasion, in Laovavasa village, I was a minor actor (part of the crowd) in a drama offered in celebration of that village's patronal festival. This drama involved a number of communicative elements: 1) the reenactment of a story intended to convey religious meaning, 2) comedic elements intended to entertain, 3) singing to convey mood or reinforce messages, and 4) the repetition of important themes or elements. The drama presented by the Franciscan brothers on this occasion contained all of these elements as follows:

1) It was taken from the biblical text of Luke 19:1-10, the story of Zaccheus, a tax collector who, because of his short stature, could not see over the crowd when Jesus was going by, so he climbed a tree. About a dozen brothers (and myself) played the part of the crowd greeting Jesus and which blocked Zaccheus' view.

2) Comic elements included a brother portraying Zaccheus attempting to jump up and look over the shoulders of those taller than himself, and finally in desperation climbing a nearby tree (the location of the drama was chosen to afford this element). When he did so, some members of the crowd taunted him in Pijin saying, "Iu rascal man! Iu kam doan" and then threatening to harm him because he is a tax-collector. At this point, the brother playing the role of Jesus speaks in English and calls the brother to come down from the tree (quoting the biblical text Luke 19:5). The story then proceeds with the Zaccheus character promising to give away his money to the poor, and then giving away some money to part of the crowd who are then happy and start to dance around, again generating laughter. Two children from the crowd are brought into the scene to join in the dancing, which is done to a Pijin song with no religious content ("hapi hapi hapi...").

3) The brothers state the theme "The Son of Man has come to save the lost." A song in Tok Pisin (New Guinea Pidgin) called "Long mari mari bilong God" is sung.

4) Then the whole cast gets quiet and the brother playing Jesus says "The Son of

Man has come to save the lost." This is repeated by all the brothers in unison. The drama is concluded.

This drama conveys the importance of particular communicative competencies: Pijin and English. At no point was the vernacular language used. English is associated with the central message: "The Son of Man has come to save the lost" and any biblical dialogue. Pijin is associated with more casual elements, such as singing or murmuring among the crowd.

A similar pattern emerged in a drama presented by the Melanesian Brotherhood in Maravovo in November 1996. This drama, depicting the life of John Coleridge Patteson, the first Anglican missionary bishop to the Solomon Islands, was part of a day-long fair/fund-raiser for the brotherhood. This presentation, which had three acts, many props, and coaching from a former drama teacher (now Anglican priest) from England, used English for spoken portions, and Pijin in songs. Some thirty tasu (brothers) acted out this drama, with over 100 villagers looking on. As with the Franciscan brothers, the tasu used elements of comedy, singing, and repetition. English was the main language, with Pijin used for some elements.

For the Vaturanga villagers, Pijin and English competency are important to comprehending such dramas. At the very least, these institutions convey in such performances the value of such competencies. The performance of dramas connects the Vaturanga to the outside world in an overtly imagined way, using English and Pijin, thus highlighting the association between these languages and the outside world.

A third example of monastic links in the Vaturanga District is the occasion when the Sisters of Melanesia (from Veranaaso) organized a Sunday School Festival in Maravovo in April 1997. This took several weeks of preparation with the children of the village, culminating

in an evening performance of singing and dancing of various Sunday School classes.

The festival utilized mainly English in the performance of religious songs and dancing. I tape-recorded four of the songs which were performed with dancing in the evening by the various age groups. Of these four, three were in English only, and one was in Ndi as follows:

- 1) The Joy of the Lord is my strength. (English)
- 2) Jesus is calling me. (English)
- 3) Peace in my soul peace in my soul. (English)
- 4) Jesus is calling me. (Ndi, same song as 2)

This programme, which took up about an hour on a Sunday evening, involved sisters and village children performing these songs with dancing and marching. English was emphasized in this public performance. When the Head Sister spoke, however, she used Pijin to introduce each class. Again, these language choices relate to the language competencies of the sisters themselves which emphasize English and Pijin over the local languages. As with the performances by the Franciscans and Melanesian brothers described above, Vaturanga are encouraged to make associations between the church and certain styles of communication which utilize English and Pijin, despite the fact that there is both a prayerbook and a hymnal in the Vaturanga dialect of *hoko ni hita*, which ought to provide ample source material in the vernacular.

From these examples it is clear that the Anglican Church of Melanesia, on its public occasions, encourages the Vaturanga towards competencies in Pijin and English, despite the presence of resource material in their own language. This is related to the linguistic competencies of the church leaders (i.e., priests, Franciscan brothers, *tasu*, and sisters)

themselves, who come from many different parts of the Solomon Islands to live, work or perform in the Vaturanga District. These examples indicate that the Anglican Church plays an important role in the communicative and linguistic situation of the district, a role which orients the Vaturanga, children and adults, towards obtaining and valuing facility in Pijin and English.

The Roman Catholic Church

This is in some contrast to the way in which the Roman Catholic Church in West Guadalcanal has approached and dealt with language issues. It is important to note that the Roman Catholic Church is the predominate denomination in both the Nggae and Ghari Districts of West Guadalcanal, and is also significant in the Ngeri District (where there are also many Anglicans). The paramount chief for the Saghalu Ward, who is Nggae and Roman Catholic, told me that the church is changing his language:

People start to mix up the languages because the Catholic Church uses Ghari. In Visale [in the Nggae District] many Ghari words have come in [to use] because everyone there is Catholic.

This comment, which was made in passing and not part of an interview or extensive discussion, encouraged me to explore the role that the Roman Catholic Church has played in the local language. I followed up this issue with three persons who seemed very keen to discuss it: 1) Pono, who is a Roman Catholic Catechist from the Ngeri District who has family ties in the Vaturanga District and is a frequent visitor; 2) Dato, who was raised in the Ngeri District as a Roman Catholic, but is of Vaturanga descent (matrilineally) and moved to Maravovo as a young man; and 3) Kesa, who is a Vaturanga Anglican, but with extensive family connections in the Ghari District who are Roman Catholic and who has spent much time in Roman Catholic

areas of West Guadalcanal.

These three individuals raised issues of language in relation to the church in different ways. Pono emphasized the official nature of the Ghari dialect in Roman Catholic use, including the training of foreign missionaries in Ghari and the translation of service books and the bible. Dato told me of growing up with a Roman Catholic priest in his village who wrote songs in Ghari, and sang these songs for me, and did so in order to contrast this with the Anglican missionaries who, he says, don't know the language. Kesa took a very different approach to the subject, decrying the dominance of the Ghari dialect because of Roman Catholic influences and vigorously defending his own dialect, Ndi, and its value as a *lingua franca*.

Pono (pseudonym) is a man in his 30's who has lived in the Ngeri District most of his life. He has many relatives in the Vaturanga District, and I had many occasions to see him visiting the district, and on one occasion I visited him in the Ngeri District. He is a Roman Catholic, a trained Catechist, and a native speaker of the Ngeri dialect of *hoko ni hita*. I had many occasions to talk with Pono about many issues facing people in West Guadalcanal, and on one of these we spoke at length about the Roman Catholic Church and language issues. He told me:

The *pateri*⁹³ come from France, Italy, Ireland, Phillippines. We don't have many native priests in the Catholic Church. A few nuns at Visale, but they can't keep them because they are educated and can get a good job.

It (Ghari) is an easy language for Guadalcanal people to learn. The *pateri* all learn it before coming here and preach in it. We are also working on a translation of the Bible. It will be launched in March 1998.

Ndi and Ngeri are almost the same, only different in how they tune it. Many people here [in Vaturanga] can speak Ghari, but they don't always speak it properly. Ghari is more singable, it has ways to say things you can't say in Ndi

or Ngeri. Like *sekoli* and *sekolia*. In Ndi, you just have *sekoli*, but in Ghari, we have two forms, one if only one person, another if two or more persons. Everything connects better in Ghari. [Referring to a popular song in Ghari] That's not proper Ghari. He [the singer] mixed it up with Ndi.

These comments consistently contrast Ghari with other dialects of *hoko ni hita* such as Ndi and Ngeri. Pono begins by noting that the *pateri* learn to speak Ghari, from there that they use it in preaching, and that there is a new translation of the Bible coming out in Ghari. He is somewhat dismissive of Ndi and Ngeri, saying that the only difference between them is a matter of accents and emphasis of syllables. Ghari, on the other hand, is more nuanced, can say things the other dialects cannot say. And there is "proper Ghari" which indicates that it is standardized and regularized, at least from Pono's perspective.

A number of other sources who I spoke to about language said similar things about Ghari. One, an Anglican priest, told me that Ghari is becoming the Pijin for Guadalcanal, that is, a medium for Guadalcanal peoples to talk to each other. He said this was because of the influence of the Roman Catholic Church, which uses Ghari throughout Guadalcanal and in parts of Central Province also.

When I had occasion to speak to a Guadalcanal provincial official one evening at the King Solomon Hotel in Honiara, I asked him about languages. He said: "Ghari is a language. All the rest are just dialects of Ghari."

These two comments, although made in passing, indicate that Ghari is regarded as a standard for *hoko ni hita* by some people in Guadalcanal. They certainly support Pono's notion that Ghari is more complete, more useful, etc.

Dato (pseudonym), who is Vaturanga but who was raised in a Roman Catholic area of

the Ngeri District (because of the rule of virilocality) talked to me about the *pateri* or Roman Catholic priests. I asked him about the *pateri* being able to speak Ghari. He said that they could speak it quite well. He then went on to tell me about one such priest who wrote songs in Ghari. One of these songs, about betel nut, he taught me. He offered this song as proof that the *pateri* speak Ghari well:

Kesa tamadei sau kusi na soana
One family given the name of cat
E vano a ilegai merei na vunguna bua
Went into the bush to check the betel nut
Echichichi dou mate na wana me pichua kesa
The fruit of the betel nut was very good and red
Me dami mi mi
He chews [betel nut]
Me chopa pa pa
He gets the lime
Me dami me chopa [repeats]
Me dami me choni paina
He chews, he throws away the skin [of the fruit]
Me mucha lakana
And he eats the meat [of the fruit]

The priest who wrote this song, according to Dato, came from France as a missionary. This song, which is very funny (in the second verse it describes how the man chewing the betel nut gets very drunk and goes into a stupor), is widely known in the Vaturanga District. I encountered it being sung on many occasions, even by children, and the mastery of it was considered to be a sign of cleverness (it is very hard to sing it properly, as I found out when I tried).

Although not an official usage of the Ghari dialect, this example illustrates not only the ability of Roman Catholic priests to speak it, but another avenue (a more informal one) for the spreading knowledge of Ghari. There are no such songs in Ndi. This is only one example of

such songs in Ghari. Dato could sing two others written by Roman Catholic priests, both also widely known and repeated in the Vaturanga District, and sung (always) in Ghari.

This raised an issue with Kesa (pseudonym), a Vaturanga Anglican who has had some training in the church (as a member of a religious order). Kesa discussed this with me at length on numerous occasions. He took a strong interest in defending Ndi and was very thoughtful and insightful. I interviewed him twice on language issues, on one occasion I brought it up, and on a second occasion he came to me wanting to talk about it. On both occasions he shared experiences of how he uses the two dialects, how they are perceived, and what he did not like about the language situation. On the first occasion we talked about how the local languages are getting mixed up because of the church and his experience with it:

People start to mix things up because the Catholics use Ghari. We use many Ghari words now. In the Ngeri District they mix up Ndi and Ghari sometimes.

The Anglicans use Ndi throughout Guadalcanal, but the Catholics use Ghari. I'm not sure why, but everybody picks up the Ghari words. But people all over Guadalcanal know Ndi too because of the Anglican prayerbook. So in Anglican villages, people can speak Ndi and you can talk to them in Ndi and they will understand you.

When I am speaking to an old man from another district, like in Nggae or Ngeri, I will speak Ndi to him. They can understand me because we can hear each other's languages. But when it is a younger guy, my age, I will try to speak Ghari. If I speak Ndi, they will laugh at me, so I speak Ghari when they are around.

Kesa says that 1) the mixing of languages involves mainly word borrowing from Ghari by other dialects of Hoko, 2) the church's influence is important in these changes, and 3) his own language choices are affected in contexts in which he is interacting with those who speak different dialects of Hoko.

Later on, Kesa wanted to follow up this subject with me and came to me to talk about it.

He had been present when the provincial official (described earlier) had said to me that Ghari was "the language" and the others were "just dialects of Ghari." Kesa wanted to talk about this:

That man was wrong. Ndi is a language too. Ndi and Ghari are both languages. Maybe the others (e.g., Ngeri, Nggae, etc.) Are dialects, but Ndi is a language. It has been published, just like Ghari.

[I mentioned what a local Anglican priest had said about Ghari being like Pijin for Guadalcanal.] That's not true. Ndi is also widely known because of the Anglican Church. But many people think just like him. Ndi has its own dialects. It is spoken in three districts: Vaturanga, Tambulivu and Kakabona. Each place speaks Ndi, but each is a little bit different.⁹⁴ The Vaturanga dialect is the one which is published by the church in the prayerbook. Ngeri and Nggae are not recognized languages.

[I asked him why a particular recording artist chose to use Ghari instead of Ndi.] I don't know why he did that. He should use Ndi because that's his language. I wish he wouldn't use Ghari.

[I asked him what he thought about the *pateri* being able to speak Ghari had to do with this.] I don't know. Maybe they make a difference. Maybe we should use Ndi in the Anglican Church more. I'm going to talk to the church committee. See if we can get some preaching in our language.⁹⁵

Kesa interestingly argues that being published is a critical feature of being a "language." He also seemed to recognize the role that leaders (particularly church leaders) play in such matters. Most interesting is the ideological concerns Kesa outlines, portraying Ndi as a language in its own right, with its own dialects. Combining these comments with the prior interview with Kesa, it is clear that he, at least, has encountered situations in which language use and choice reflects changing social relations: he has experienced ridicule for speaking Ndi by his peers; Ghari is published and associated with the an important institutions, and so is Ndi; Ghari is used in popular recordings because of these associations.

Although this is far from a complete picture of the Roman Catholic Church and its role in language and communication issues in West Guadalcanal, these interviews indicate an increasing consciousness of language change from a Vaturanga perspective.

DISCUSSION

The language terrain for the Vaturanga is strongly affected by schools and religious institutions. Schools orient students and adults towards attaining competency first in Pijin, which is necessary as a *lingua franca*, with an ultimate goal of Standard English.

Churches, on the other hand, have had important influences not only on Pijin and English competencies, but on Hoko. The Anglican Church uses three languages in its public worship and other events. With a significant presence not only in terms of local churches, but with three monastic communities, its language choices orient Vaturanga towards attaining and valuing Pijin and English, giving the latter particularly high status.

The Roman Catholic Church, which is not prevalent among the Vaturanga, but among their neighbours and relatives in other districts, plays a significant role in Hoko because of its use of the Ghari dialect. Evidence for the increasing pervasiveness of Ghari as an alternative *lingua franca* can be found by its increasing presence in popular songs.

In reordering communications and languages, these institutions make connections between the Vaturanga and the wider world. These communicative priorities become important means of experiencing social relations beyond the context of schools and churches. Accessing the mass media requires these competencies, and the media, in turn, play important roles in relating the Vaturanga to the Solomon Islands nation-state and even to their own history.

CHAPTER SIX: BEYOND BORDERS

INTRODUCTION

The Vaturanga conceptualize themselves as being in relationship with peoples and places they have never seen, that exist beyond the Solomon Islands nation-state itself. They do this primarily via forms of the mass media, especially newspapers, radio and popular recordings. These form an important component of the cultural apparatus.

Mass media are part of how people “imagine” themselves as part of a nation-state, find and develop and debate social roles. Hannerz (1992a), noting this, says that “media are machineries of meaning” (1992a:26-27):

The cultures of complex societies... make use of writing, print, radio, telephones, telegraph, photography, film, disk and tape recording, television, video, and computers...

The media... carry meanings... (t)hey entail a range of different modes of externalization, as technologies variously constrain and make possible particular symbol systems. Clearly, too, they have an impact on the distribution of meanings and meaningful forms over people and relationships (Hannerz 1992a:27).

The Vaturanga are part of a complex society, the Solomon Islands nation-state, that involves a variety of mass media. The mass media in the Solomon Islands, which includes not only newspapers, radio, and recording studios but a few other agencies (religious publishers, tourist bureaus, chambers of commerce, etc.), have their own agendas, goals and purposes. But the Vaturanga choose to use particular forms of the mass media, to take in specific content, and create images of themselves and think about their relationships with other groups.

While the Vaturanga do not experience a media “saturation” as Westerners might think of it, the mass media are important players in their lives, in how they have come to understand

who they are and their relationship to the Solomon Islands nation-state and the rest of the world: “meanings” are “carried” to the Vaturanga by newspapers, radio and the recording industry; and the Vaturanga take these meanings, discuss them, and employ ideas from them in making sense of their world.

The connections which the Vaturanga conceive to places and peoples beyond the Solomon Islands are intimately related to issues they face at home. They conceive a very close relationship between themselves and the people of Bougainville Island in neighbouring Papua New Guinea. They have taken elements from newspaper reporting about Bougainville and connected it with their own experience of economic change and magic, to the point that they conceive of themselves as having a role in the Bougainville situation.

Another interesting aspect of the media is the role of radio and popular recordings of reggae in especially young people’s conceptions of themselves. Reggae, which is international and strongly associated with the rights and concerns of oppressed peoples throughout the world, has many themes and ideas which Vaturanga have taken and connected to their own situation in the modern nation-state. Reggae connects one beyond borders, in this case a global connection. But reggae has become part of the issue about language and communication in West Guadalcanal, and is also important in how the Vaturanga conceptualize space as part of a nation-state.

These two themes--Bougainville and reggae--proved to be very prominent ones during my field experience with the Vaturanga. Both were daily topics of discussion and interest, for various reasons: 1) the almost constant reporting on Bougainville in newspapers and radio; 2) potential developments in West Guadalcanal that were not dissimilar to Bougainville; 3) a

“moment” in the Bougainville Crisis in which it became a prominent feature story in the media world-wide; 4) the presence in one Vaturanga village of a “gang” which specialized in singing reggae; and 5) the timely release of a reggae recording in Hoko by a Vaturanga man.

Thus, this chapter is really looking at some instances or moments in time, in which the Vaturanga found the mass media especially meaningful. I do not mean to imply that the particular symbols which became important in these moments are necessarily permanent or enduring, but they do represent patterns of interaction and roles which forms of the mass media play in social relations. It is rather that these were the issues which became prominent during the period of my fieldwork, and to which I had access.

I should also note that I was personally at times a catalyst for the Vaturanga to discuss themselves in relation to the mass media: my own personal interest in keeping abreast of news, for example, meant that I often had newspapers which people would stop by to borrow and read. I also owned a short-wave radio and a personal cassette player, and several cassette recordings which they noticed and which I often shared. But when they did take such interest, they were frequently careful to note what they themselves prefer and enjoy and find meaningful. And, as Tables 2.15, 2.16 and 2.19 indicate, a significant percentage of the Vaturanga engage with the three main forms of the mass media on a regular basis apart from any interactions with me.

Moments in Time: The Mass Media, Issues and Local Peoples

The Vaturanga have come to see themselves as sharing a predicament with the people of Bougainville. In mass media reports about the crisis they are confronted with their own history

of the post-colonial nation-state in which approximately half of their land has been alienated, in which thousands of migrant plantation workers have been brought in to work on that alienated land, in which new economic rules and orders dominated by money, financial institutions, government rules, market forces, and development interests exist along side and in some tension with traditional kin rules and subsistence patterns.

In another way, both radio and the popular recording industry present to the Vaturanga ideas about themselves and their place in the Solomon Islands nation-state. This is particularly prominent in how many Vaturanga think about one musical form: reggae. Reggae is produced and consumed locally in a variety of ways: reggae is played on radio, reggae cassettes are sold in stores in Honiara, and local people perform and even produce reggae.

Reggae is a world-wide phenomenon arising out of the Rastifarians⁹⁶ in Jamaica (Barrow and Dalton 1997). Its roots are anti-colonial and have sought to create a sense of unity centred on non-European peoples (especially those from Africa and the Caribbean) of the world expressing a shared experience and a set of shared values. These are highly ideological and political. Thurnton states that:

Modern day Rastafarianism is a resistance and freedom movement that found its roots in the colonial, post-slavery, war-ravaged world of the 1930s.

Born out of desire by a people to maintain control of their history, their religion and their culture, the movement imposed itself on western societies and remained a solid point of reference for its members (Thurnton 1998:17).

In addition to these ideological notions inherent in reggae, for the Vaturanga the genre has taken on some unique meanings and symbols which relate to their experience of being part of the Solomon Islands nation-state.

This came out in the way young men especially talk about reggae and rasta. For

members of the Weket Gang, an informal group of young men in the Vaturanga District, who both consume and (re)produce reggae, the meaning of this musical form is one which contrasts “village” with “town” and in so doing emphasizes the importance of certain particular *kastom* practices and values in the context of the nation-state. It was evident both in the content of the songs they sing, and in the symbolic associations they make with reggae and rasta. These include notions of how to dress, how to behave towards others, even the possession of certain articles like baskets or sacks for keeping or carrying things. For Vaturanga youth, reggae carries a set of identity markers that set them off, particularly in town or school contexts.

The local production of reggae in the Solomon Islands brings up another important issue (highlighted in Chapter Five)—that of language standardization. During my fieldwork, Unisound (a Solomon Islands recording studio) released a cassette of primarily reggae music produced by a Vaturanga man named Peter Chanel Morey. This cassette, titled “Guale Hits” became an occasion for Vaturanga to talk about their language and how it is changing, particularly moving towards the Ghari dialect of Hoko.

These two important themes which emerged in the mass media of the Solomon Islands--the Bougainville Crisis and reggae--occasioned much discussion, on the part of Vaturanga individuals, about their own situation and circumstances. Bougainville highlighted for them issues of economic change and development and their part in the nation-state. And it has also caused them to perceive themselves as having a role to play in the crisis, via magic, thus establishing a kind of social relationship beyond the Solomon Islands nation-state itself, but very relevant to the issues they themselves face.

We also see social relationships expressed in the Vaturanga response to reggae: 1)

notions of relation with other oppressed peoples throughout the world who share a common history of colonialism, economic and political subordination; 2) notions of difference between “town” and “village”; and 3) notions of change in relationships among the various speakers of Hoko, especially Ghari and Ndi speakers.

THE BOUGAINVILLE CRISIS

Background

The island of Bougainville is geographically defined as part of the Solomons archipelago (see Map 1), but because of the vagaries of colonial history, became part of a separate territory, first administered by Germany (along with the Bismark Archipelago and New Guinea), later turned over to Australia as a League of Nations Mandate, and finally included in the independent state of Papua New Guinea in 1973. The island, however, is extremely close geographically to islands in Western Province, Solomon Islands, and people in the province have relatives living in Bougainville (Oliver 1991).

Since 1969 an Australian company has operated a large copper mine called the Panguna Mine on Bougainville, and the control of this resource, as well as a host of other issues gradually came to the fore in the decades following (see Oliver 1991). The Bougainville Crisis has been dated to 1988 when protests on the island forced the shut down of the mine. Out of this action the Bougainville Revolutionary Army (here on out called the “BRA”) was formed and began an armed resistance to P.N.G. and Australian dominance of the island (Oliver 1991:149). At this time, an international peacekeeping force supervises a cease-fire on Bougainville, but during the tenure of my fieldwork (1996-1997), the crisis was ongoing.

In looking at this issue, I have three questions or problems to answer: 1) How did the Solomon Islands' media portray the crisis?; 2) What are the contexts (social, economic, political, etc.) for understanding how the Vaturanga perceive reporting about Bougainville; 3) What symbols do the Vaturanga employ in thinking about the Bougainville crisis as a result?

The Solomon Islands mass media, newspapers and radio in this case, portrayed the Bougainville Crisis with an emphasis on civilian victims of PNGDF activities, P.N.G. government and PNGDF incompetence and frustration, and BRA success.

The social contexts in which such newspaper and radio reports were received by Vaturanga include perceived differences between P.N.G. mainlanders and islanders, the experience of colonial and post-colonial practices and development in West Guadalcanal generally, and the tension (already discussed in Chapter Three) between new economic systems and traditional kin-based structures.

These contexts, I will show, caused the Vaturanga to evaluate their own experience being part of the Solomon Islands nation-state, especially in terms of economic development. And it has also been an occasion upon which they have re-imagined themselves, given themselves a connection to a place and a series of events physically removed. Rather than being an instance in which the media have facilitated a connection between a local people and the nation-state, this matter has caused the Vaturanga to feel some disconnection from the Solomon Islands state. The connection they have chosen to "imagine" is one of solidarity with the BRA, and the primary symbols that they employ focus on how their lives have changed, and specifically the transformation of West Guadalcanal magic, which many Vaturanga believe has played a role in the crisis.

Media Reporting About Bougainville

An analysis of newspaper reporting about Bougainville from November 1996 to April 1997 shows that there are essentially four categories or issues which newspapers have looked at: 1) political and governmental positions/statements on Bougainville (including the governments of P.N.G., Solomon Islands and Australia); 2) positive and sympathetic portrayals of the BRA through photos and stories; 3) negative portrayals of the PNGDF (Papua New Guinea Defense Force) and the P.N.G. government; 4) the experiences of Bougainvillean civilians and refugees during the crisis. Articles in all four categories, however, carry common themes of civilian victims, PNGDF atrocities and incompetence, and BRA success.

Table 6.1: Newspaper reporting about Bougainville, 11/96 - 04/97.

Newspaper (#issues)	Pol/Gov	BRA	PNGDF	People*
Star (10)	17	1	0	4
Voice (4)	1	0	0	0
Citizen (3)	1	3	3	6
Grasrut (3)	0	0	0	0
TOTALS (20)	19	4	3	10

*Pol/Gov=political and governmental statements or positions on the crisis; BRA=stories on the Bougainville Revolutionary Army; PNGDF=stories on the Papua New Guinea Defense Force; People=stories about the people of Bougainville during the crisis.

Table 6.1 consists of data from a sample of newspapers I was able to collect during the period between November 1996 to April 1997, the number of stories about Bougainville and the category to which they belong for each of the four newspapers.⁹⁷ In the twenty issues included

in this sample, thirty-six (36) articles, columns, opinion pieces and photographic essays (with legend or short commentary) were published. Solomon Star and Solomon Citizen took the greatest interest in reporting about Bougainville, but had different emphases--the Star reporting tending towards policy and governmental issues, whereas the Voice was far more likely to report about refugees, atrocities by the PNGDF, or successes of the BRA.

The remaining two newspapers, Solomons Voice and Solomons Grasrut, did not emphasize the Bougainville crisis at all, with only one article out of four issues of the Voice, and no articles found in Grasrut.

The articles presented in both the Solomon Star and Solomon Citizen illustrate certain goals or aims in the reporting of the two newspapers: one half of the "conversation" that goes on in the news media, with reporters and editors playing to certain assumptions about their audiences (see van Dijk 1988).

One of these assumption, very clearly inherent in the Solomon Citizen, is limited literacy skills on the part of the audience. The Citizen's reporting about Bougainville heavily emphasized photographs; indeed, in the thirteen instances of reporting about Bougainville there were seven photographs, three of which appeared in a full-page spread devoted to photographs of Bougainville. In three cases, the pictures with one or two line legends were the entire article. The pictures from the Solomon Citizen were of the following types: 1) demolished buildings on Bougainville, 2) BRA soldiers (in one case with a captured PNGDF soldier), 3) refugees lying in hospital in Honiara.

The Solomon Star also used pictures in reporting about Bougainville, including some very similar to that of the Voice, but also pictures of political figures such as General Singirok

(head of the PNGDF) and P.N.G. Prime Minister Sir Julius Chan. However, photos were less commonly used in the Solomon Star in reporting about Bougainville, than in the Citizen.

The Star also much more heavily emphasized political or governmental policies or statements, as opposed to refugees, PNGDF "atrocities" or BRA successes. The Star covered the politics and the policies, whereas the Citizen emphasized coverage of the crisis itself: the island of Bougainville, events happening there, and the people involved (BRA, PNGDF, civilians).

Examples of Newspaper Reporting on Bougainville

The Citizen's reporting on Bougainville, vis a vis the Star, is relatively straight-forward. As indicated in Table 6.1, the Voice emphasized reporting about what was happening on the island of Bougainville itself: acts or statements by the PNGDF, the BRA, or information/photos about civilians or refugees, in some cases all in the same story.

A story which appeared in the December 6, 1996 issue of the Citizen, with the headline "P.N.G.'S ARMY KILLS WOMEN AND CHILDREN" illustrates well this newspapers approach to reporting about the crisis: a straight-forward, listing of events which leave an unmistakable impression of PNGDF brutality and civilian suffering:

More than 20 Bougainvilleans, including women and children, have been killed by Papua New Guinea Security Forces and resistance fighters in South and Southwest Bougainville from November 26 to December 1...

...on Monday November 26, P.N.G. soldiers and their Bougainvillean supporters killed a three-year-old boy, Kenneth Ariku, and a six-year-old girl, Iroba Ariku, when they raided Bogisagu Village on South Bougainville...

In a separate incident on the same day, members of the P.N.G. Security Forces abducted a 32-year-old civilian... of Detosi Village... and executed him...

The BRA reported that on November 28, P.N.G. soldiers fired a motar

(sic) bomb on a group of worshippers at the Malabita Care Center in the Buin area, killing 14 people, including women and children...

And last Sunday, P.N.G. forces and resistance fighters struck again at Mokakuru Village in the Siwai area, South Bougainville, killing 11 people and wounding another 11 (Solomon Citizen 1996c:1).

Such reporting establishes (or attempts to establish) a discourse about a topic or issue (see van Dijk 1988:217). In so doing, the newspaper attempts to frame an issue for the readers. By listing a series of events in which civilians are portrayed as “victims” and PNGDF soldiers as perpetrators, audiences are directed towards particular elements or events, in this case those relating to violence and killing. The overall strategy in the Citizen’s reporting about Bougainville is one which consistently portrays the PNGDF (and their allies) as desperate and frustrated, and the BRA as almost miraculously successful.

Another article in the Citizen, this time from the November 22, 1996 issue, also focuses on civilian treatment by the PNGDF. Headlined “Bougainvilleans Abandon Care Centres Amidst Rising Hunger and Violations” the article has the following to say:

Bougainvillean civilians living in care centres... are now abandoning the centres...

This is a claim by BRA’s Operation Commander for Southern Bougainville, Paul Bobby.

Bobby claims the people are doing this because of a number of reasons, including shortage of food, but especially because of ill-treatment by Papua New Guinea soldiers. He says the people hold particular revulsion against frequent sexual violation against women and girls (Solomon Citizen 1996a:1).

Again, the P.N.G. forces and government programmes are portrayed as incompetent (shortages of food) and soldiers are seen as poorly trained or undisciplined.

Conversely, the Citizen portrays the BRA as having many successes. In the same issue, two other articles emphasize the success of the BRA. One headlined “BRA Dispenses with

Home-made Guns” is accompanied by two large black and white photos showing BRA fighters brandishing weapons captured from PNGDF soldiers. The same “Commander Bobby” quoted above is here quoted as saying “each operation engineered by Port Moresby against the BRA has resulted in better weapons being captured by the secessionist fighters” (Solomon Citizen 1996a:3).

At the bottom of the page, another article headlined “Resistance Forces Join BRA” describes how members of the indigenous Bougainvillean force recruited by the P.N.G. government to work in operations with PNGDF “are defecting in large numbers to the Bougainville Revolutionary Army in apparent loss of confidence in the PNGDF” (Solomon Citizen 1996a:3). Again, Commander Bobby of the BRA is quoted extensively, noting that “(t)he defections are a serious blow to the PNGDF... as jungle patrols are impossible without Bougainvilleans serving as guides for the P.N.G. soldiers.” The article concludes by quoting a prediction by Commander Bobby “that by early 1997 the PNGDF will be isolated and all the care centres will be deserted by Bougainvilleans” (Solomon Citizen 1996a:3).

The Solomon Star had a somewhat more complex approach to Bougainville. As indicated in Table 6.1, their emphasis was on policies and government statements about the crisis or situation. That does not mean, however, that the Star did not engage in the sort of reporting described above for the Citizen. In fact, in several instances, the Star adopted a very similar discourse as that of the Citizen. In the November 29, 1996 issue, for instance, we find an article headlined “Huge Task for General Singirok” (the head of the PNGDF). This article, although not about events on Bougainville itself, emphasizes a discourse in which the PNGDF is seen as incompetent and undisciplined, especially in their operations in Bougainville:

We now learn that members of the force are leaving and rejoining the force whenever they like without any disciplinary action against them. They refuse direct orders from their superior officers...

Soldiers claim they are going to Bougainville only because of comradeship. They do not want to let their friends go to the battlefield alone. There are no other reasons.

They are not paid their allowance. Their injuries are not compensated for. The next of kin of those who fall in battle have not yet been compensated. Even the bodies of the dead are not flown out on time, resulting in decomposition because of lack of transport support.

Listening to these soldiers, one gets the impression that sustaining the Bougainville operation is a miracle (Solomon Star 1996b:14).

This article, unlike those in the Citizen, establishes a discourse in which the soldiers of the PNGDF are seen as miserable, even pitiful. This almost sympathetic portrayal of the plight of PNGDF soldiers is again, a device which allows the audience to view the BRA in a far superior light.

Another article in the Star, this time an opinion piece by Pak Jo, reporting from the "Borderline" with the headline "Misleading reports on border incursions" describes Bougainvilleans as victims:

Continuous border incursion by P.N.G. forces and the resistance fighters to threaten the lives of people living at the border have been questioned as to why this is done.

At the first place you (PNGDF) have allowed the Bougainvilleans to enter our waters because they come through your so called waters using boats that can be easily seen above sea level, not submarines.

These poor people are only here bringing sick people, casualties both BRA's and Civilians (Women and Children) who have been victimised by your inhuman military operations (Solomon Star 1996c:6).

This article is a direct response to an SIBC radio report of October 10, 1996 "which carries the famous P.N.G. Commander, Brigadier Singirok denial on the recent border incursions" (Solomon Star 1996c:6). While talking about civilian victims from Bougainville, this article

represents a considerably more nuanced approach to the overall issue, as generally characterizes the Star. The theme of this piece, overall, is one of deception on the part of P.N.G. authorities, and also importantly attempts to establish a discourse about the vulnerability of Solomon Islands' nationals living in the border area. There is a sort of "on the frontlines" theme here, establishing that this crisis is not limited to the island of Bougainville itself, but encompasses wider loyalties and concerns. It contains a plea to the Solomon Islands' government to "listen to our cries for security" and "call for outside forces" to intervene (Solomon Star 1996c:6).

More typical of the Star's reporting were stories on policy or government. These stories looked at official statements by MP's or ministers or BRA spokespersons. In the December 13, 1996 issue of the Star, for example, there is a short article headlined "BTG allows Red Cross to Bougainville" which discusses a decision by the Bougainville Transitional Government (BTG, a P.N.G. supported government on the island) to allow the International Red Cross to return there. This tiny (four paragraph) article is surrounded by three large photographs of Bougainvilleans in Honiara's Central Hospital, with the caption, "Three victims of the Malabita mortar bomb attack on South Bougainville, lying in agony in the Central Hospital in Honiara" (Solomon Star 1996f:5). Thus, while reporting on policy and governments, the Star, in this instance at least, contextualizes it with images of suffering victims.

Other stories on policy and government relating to Bougainville include arguments over proposals (from Australia) to isolate the BRA with a blockade (January 15, 1997), meetings between the Prime Ministers of Solomon Islands and P.N.G. (January 8, 1997), denouncements of the meeting between the Prime Ministers by a former MP (January 10, 1997), or reports about relief supplies being flown into Bougainville (December 18, 1996).

These stories frequently also contained or expressed ideas about the PNGDF, BRA and the experiences of the people living on Bougainville. But they would be contained in official statements, thus giving them added credence. For instance, in the article in which a former MP denounces a meeting between the Prime Ministers of Solomon Islands and P.N.G., that former MP is quoted as saying "The real problem is the cry of the people of Bougainville for political independence" (Solomon Star 1997a:2). The former MP, Adrian Bataiofesi, was denouncing the meeting because it focused on a border incursion by the PNGDF, and not on the "real problem" of the suffering of the people on Bougainville and a permanent solution to the crisis.

Similarly an article in the December 18, 1996 issue on relief supplies being sent to Bougainville, although about the policies and actions of governments (in this case, that of Australia and P.N.G.), makes connections between Solomon Islanders and Bougainvilleans, by noting the "plight of villagers in the Solomon Islands' western border region temporarily displaced as a result of the conflict" (Solomon Star 1996e:3).

An article about the BRA appearing in the January 15, 1997 issue reports an official "call" by Francis Ona, President of the Bougainville Interim Government (a BRA backed body) for a withdrawal of PNGDF from Bougainville. This article also brings up the plight of victims:

The chiefs of Darenai, Central Bougainville, visited Mr. Ona last week and appealed to the BRA to "protect the civilian population" from heavily armed vigilante forces backed by the P.N.G. government known as "Resistance."

The BRA accuses the vigilantes--compared by some observers with the low intensity conflict (LIC) strategy used in the Philippines against guerilla forces--of harassing and executing civilians (Solomon Star 1997c:5).

Again, the focus here is on the suffering of civilians, and especially because of actions by the

PNGDF and their allies.

A large portion of the Star's reporting on Bougainville was in the context of the Sandlines Controversy, which arose out of a decision by Sir Julius Chan, P.N.G. Prime Minister, to hire foreign mercenaries⁹⁸ to conduct operations in Bougainville. This precipitated a crisis not in Bougainville itself, but in Port Moresby (the capital of P.N.G.) when General Singirok, the commander of the PNGDF, demanded that the Prime Minister resign. There were large demonstrations in the capital, and Sir Julius eventually resigned from office.

This crisis highlighted a sense of desperation on the part of P.N.G. and the PNGDF in dealing with Bougainville. First reported in the Star on February 25, 1997 in a front page headline "P.N.G. hires mercenaries to blast rebels" this controversy would escalate in the month to come, with the firing of the PNGDF chief, General Singirok, a threatened coup d'etat by Singirok, and the eventual resignation of Prime Minister Julius Chan.

These latter events were followed keenly in the Vaturanga District, mainly on the radio because they were happening so fast that newspapers could not keep up. I sat with more than a dozen people on my verandah listening to Radio NiuGini live short-wave broadcast of the debate in parliament. Radio Australia's service also heavily covered the situation in Port Moresby.

Newspaper accounts of the controversy highlighted the perception of the PNGDF as inept and incompetent. Many neighbouring countries, including Australia and New Zealand, strenuously objected to the hiring of mercenaries, with Australia threatening to withdraw tactical and other support for the PNGDF if the contract with Sandlines was not canceled (for more information on these events, see Solomon Star 1997a:1; Solomon Star 1997b:5; Solomon

Star 1997c:5).

Radio reporting played an important role for Vaturanga following these events. My hosts and I intently listened to updates several times a day on Radio Australia's short-wave service. SIBC "Nius blong Pijin" also covered the story nightly. Many Vaturanga talked openly about the situation and shared information they had heard from various sources (including rumours heard in Honiara). Radio reporting tended to focus heavily on rumours: of coup d'etat in Port Moresby, of hostage situations involving the mercenaries, of PNGDF soldiers rioting in Port Moresby, and of BRA threats against any non-Melanesians found on the island. One of the biggest rumours centred around the supposed citing of an American warship near the Shortland Islands, which led to much discussion and gossip in the Vaturanga District.

The Vaturanga Response to the Crisis

The main response of Vaturanga to the Bougainville Crisis has been to identify positively with the Bougainvilleans. This is exhibited in concerns with such matters as economic development, religion and morality, and magic.

Individual comments about Bougainville came out in many contexts. Sometimes they came out in completely unexpected circumstances. Other times, I specifically engaged individuals in discussions about it, especially when they had borrowed a newspaper or had shared listening to a radio report. I found no instances of Vaturanga siding with the P.N.G. government or defense forces, nor even attempts to justify or explain their actions.

Cheche's (not his real name) comments were typical. He had come to borrow a newspaper and when he brought it back, he sat down and I invited him to have a cup of coffee.

Having read an article about Bougainville and looked at photographs of BRA soldiers with captured PNGDF soldiers in The Solomon Citizen, he asked me (in Pijin) who I thought would win, BRA or P.N.G. I said (in Pijin) "Mi no save" (I don't know), and then asked him what he thought. He continued in Pijin:

"BRA will win" he said. I asked why he thought so. "Because P.N.G. steal from Bougainville, steal copper from the people there. P.N.G. rubbish."

This was followed by a dismissive sound which indicated disgust and strong disapproval, along with the shaking of his head. Cheche's comments on this occasion, brief as they are, highlight several issues: 1) a belief that the BRA is superior to PNGDF, 2) that economic matters justify BRA actions, and 3) that other P.N.G. peoples (i.e., not Bougainvilleans) are "rubbish" (i.e., not good people). There is a strong assumption here of a just cause on the part of the BRA, and that somehow, because the cause is just, the BRA will prevail in the conflict.

Kesa (not his real name), on a different occasion in which I was interviewing him about various subjects, spontaneously brought up the Bougainville Crisis:

"People here don't want Bougainville to join the Solomon Islands. It's okay to offer medical help and support the BRA, but they want Bougainville to be a separate country..."

"People on mainland P.N.G. all rascals but the island New Guinea people all good people, yes?"

When I asked why this was, he said it was because "many mainland P.N.G. people are not Christians. But all the island people, they are Christians."

He also added "P.N.G. Christians are not as good Christians as Solomons Christians. Everybody in Solomon Islands calls themselves Christians. Even the Kwaio of S. Malaita."

He went on to point out that, "P.N.G. has oil, copper and gold, Solomons does not have. Solomons has timber, natural gas and a gold mine is just beginning operations in central Guadalcanal."

"We now have a Solomon Islands Defense Force (because of the Bougainville situation). They are only about 500 men so far. The Israelis have sent 2 advisors."

These comments amplify and expand Cheche's earlier comments. Here we find explicit support for Bougainville independence, including an outright statement that it is "okay" to "support the BRA." Likewise, Kesa brings up economic matters, and in this case he specifically compares the Guadalcanal situation with Bougainville. He notes that development issues are at the core of the conflict, and hints that Guadalcanal may face similar issues in the future.

Most interestingly, he offers an explanation as to why Bougainvilleans are superior to P.N.G. He expresses a belief that Bougainvilleans along with Solomon Islanders and island P.N.G. peoples are better Christians than mainland P.N.G. peoples, many of whom (he says) are not Christian even nominally. Thus he unites his own community, the Vaturanga, with island Melanesians generally, defined using a religious parameter. He sees economic parallels between the situation on his own island and that on Bougainville, and he consciously supports the BRA.

Some West Guadalcanal peoples see themselves as even more closely aligned with the people of Bougainville and the BRA. Some see themselves as having an actual active role to play in the crisis. This arose on several occasions in talking with Kesa and others, with comments about supporting the BRA. In an interview about magic which I conducted at a time when Bougainville issues were quite prominent because of the Sandlines controversy, Veke (not his real name) told me:

“(Our) magics have unlimited reach--all the way around the world. Only have to know the name of the person. Guadalcanal supporting BRA with many magics.” I asked if Sir Julius had been *pupuku* (a kind of magic which causes bad fortune) he said “maybe.”

I followed up this comment with both Veke and Kesa together at a later point, at which time my

question about Julius Chan was explicitly answered. Kesa told me:

A man from (West Guadalcanal) sold *poke sosolo* to the BRA for 2000 Kina. Also paid same man to do *pupuku* against Chan, which is why his government is in crisis now.

Also, now the BRA say "Guadalcanal is part of Bougainville" and "Guadalcanal is silent fighting with the BRA" because of the magic from Guadalcanal. BRA have been taught *havu manga*.

Veke added: "BRA cannot lose now."

The belief that Guadalcanal people were participating in the Bougainville conflict via traditional magic was expressed in several ways. Most commonly, people referred to it as "silent missiles." Such comments were not infrequent in conversation about Bougainville or about magic. Even those who expressed a high degree of ambiguity about Guadalcanal magic, would point to this aspect almost with a sense of pride or accomplishment. It was especially common to hear such things during the Sandlines Controversy, in which many attributed (as Kesa and Veke did above) the P.N.G. Prime Minister's imminent downfall to such "silent missiles." It was also not uncommon to have such comments followed up by a repeating of rumours about how the BRA has captured certain PNGDF soldiers using *poke sosolo* or other Guadalcanal magics. For many Vaturanga, the whole Sandlines Controversy and attendant political crisis in Port Moresby was proof that the BRA is a superior force, and that Guadalcanal magic is powerful and has played a meaningful role in the crisis.

Here, therefore, is a clear instance of the Vaturanga taking media reports from various sources and coming to identify with a people and cause removed from their immediate daily lives. They see themselves as connected to Bougainville and the BRA based on shared (or potentially shared) economic circumstances, by religious and moral superiority, and by a perception of direct participation in the crisis, via magic, on behalf of the BRA.

Newspaper reporting about Bougainville, and some radio reports about it, during the period of November 1996 to April 1997, on numerous occasions caused the Vaturanga to think and ponder their own situation within the Solomon Islands nation-state. What they saw repeatedly was that central governments like those in Port Moresby and Honiara were ineffective at dealing with the issues at hand, and that the result or outcome of such inability was civilian suffering. Furthermore, they saw a revolutionary army, the BRA, as experiencing considerable success and forcing the agenda.

Given their own experience as part of a nation-state--of land alienation, the importation of migrant workers, development and economic change coupled with changes in Guadalcanal magic--the Vaturanga redeemed themselves and their traditional practices in stating that, via *riana pupuku*, *poke sosolo*, *vele* and other forms of magic, they were helping the BRA. Thus, they saw themselves as powerful and capable, like the BRA, and in vivid contrast with central governments and authorities, including their own.⁹⁹ Newspapers, especially, played an important role in this, for they consistently portrayed governments and governmental agencies as ineffective, leading to civilian suffering, and the BRA, in contrast, as effective, potent and successful.

REGGAE

In the popular musical form reggae a number of themes or issues are raised which the Vaturanga use to think about their lives in the Solomon Islands nation-state. Again, as with Bougainville, they are connecting ideas and events from outside with their own circumstances and experiences. Chief among these are notions of difference between village and town, anti-

colonial feelings, social change, land disputes, and magic. In addition to these, the issue of language change and standardization is also raised in this context.

The Vaturanga encounter with reggae--on radio, in the Solomon Islands recording industry, and in local performances--is meaningful because of these associations. Reggae expresses ideas about change (economic, social and linguistic) and is especially powerful for young men in constructing a meaningful identity within the Solomon Islands nation-state. That identity takes from reggae the concept of "rasta" and turns it into a potent symbol relating to *kastom* practices, especially how one ought to behave in situations inside and outside of the village.

My principle access to understanding the role and meaning of reggae in the district came through a group of young men and youth calling themselves the "Weket Gang." This informal group existed primarily in the village of Maravovo. They would perform reggae in the village, and they were somewhat renown, if not infamous, for their particular interest in reggae.

The group's name refers to the sound of an electric guitar in a reggae recording, which they interpret as "weket." Members of group, during performances, are assigned the task of producing this sound by saying "weket a-weket a-weket" in rhythmic imitation of the electric guitar. Other members of the group produce a syncopated rhythmic sound which can best be described as a glottal stop. Others sing lyrics and play instruments such as homemade ukeleles or drums. Their performances are often intentionally humorous, and are usually greeted by villagers as entertaining and fun. It is considered something young men do, and it is somewhat regarded as a "sign of the times." The group is not associated with "rascal" behaviour or social deviance, and the word "gang" does not seem to have the same implications as Westerners

would assume.

Members of the group also listen to other forms of music (rock and roll, country) but reggae is the style they get excited about, talk about, and go about performing. They sometimes, with great humour, turn traditional Guadalcanal songs into reggae by adding “wekets” and other elements.

A look at reggae in the mass media--radio, recording studios--and the content of reggae, highlights such themes as language, rasta, social and economic change, and ideas about village and town. These themes are central to how the Vaturanga themselves talk and think about reggae, especially members of the Weket Gang, but also others.

Reggae on the Radio

Radio programmes which included the playing of reggae music were popular in the Vaturanga District. On numerous occasions I sat and listened with locals to this programming and was able to note its content. Both SIBC and Island FM 101 included reggae content in their programming. However, each station had somewhat different emphases. Island FM 101, portraying itself as a “CD format” station, emphasized reggae from overseas, which was available in CD. SIBC, on the other hand, played both internationally produced reggae and locally produced reggae, the latter of which was not available in a CD format. Island FM operates primarily as a music station, and as such plays music most of the day. SIBC plays music only during certain hours of the day. Nonetheless, in terms of locally produced music, SIBC took the lead in presenting this, while Island FM 101 tended to play music from overseas.

On several occasions I noted the particular music presented in SIBC programming

which included reggae content. One programme aired daily at 1600 hours (4:00 p.m.) and included music produced by both international and Solomon Islands reggae performers. Table 6.2 presents this data

Table 6.2: Reggae performers presented on SIBC.

Internationally Produced (country of origin)	Solomons Produced (island of origin, if known)
Bob Marley & the Wailers (Jamaica)	Kojuku Eels (Isabel)
Ziggy Marley & the Melody Makers (Jamaica)	Pacific Junction (Malaita)
Lucky Dube & the Slaves (South Africa)	Francis & Lulu (n/a)
Free At Last (South Africa)	Village Enemy (Nggela)
The Slaves (on their own) (South Africa)	Jagads (Malaita)
UB40 (United Kingdom)	Peter Chanel Morey (Guadalcanal)

As this table suggests, SIBC presents not only a variety of reggae, but there are locally produced cassettes in the reggae genre made by performers from many parts of the Solomon Islands. Another SIBC programme, airing on Saturday evenings at 2030 hours (8:30 p.m.) heavily featured Solomons produced reggae.¹⁰⁰ This programme, the Top Ten Countdown, featured only Solomons produced music. Table 6.3 lists the groups presented in the Top Ten Countdown of April 5, 1997. All of these are described as reggae, and all are Solomons produced performers. Thus, there is a considerable emphasis in SIBC programming on locally produced reggae.

Island FM 101, on the other hand, plays not only reggae but country and rock and roll music as well. It's countdown programme is imported for rebroadcast, and features no Solomons produced performers. Although reggae is included in their general format, it is exclusively international reggae. This is still popular, however, with Vaturanga and other

Solomon Islanders, and many of these songs are actively consumed.

Table 6.3: Performers Featured in the Top Ten Countdown, SIBC, April 5, 1997.*

Francis and Lulu (1 song)
Pacific Junction (3 songs)
Peter Chanel Morey (2 songs)
Toss and Babs with Friends (1 song)
Ti Roy and the Unisounds (1 song)
UN Crew (1 song)
Village Enemy (1 song)

*In contrast to this, Island FM 101's weekly countdown programme was produced overseas and purchased for rebroadcast.

Production of Reggae in the Solomon Islands

Several studios produce reggae cassettes in Honiara. The principle ones I encountered were Unisound and Kokosu Studio.¹⁰¹ I collected three cassettes produced by these studios, two by Unisound and one by Kokosu. Table 2.16 lists the languages of the songs on these three cassettes. In addition to these cassettes, I have heard other Solomons produced reggae in such languages as Kwara'ae (Malaita), Savosavo (Central Province), Nggela (Central Province), Tasemboko (Guadalcanal), and Maringe (Isabel). Thus, artists from various islands are being produced and are themselves reproducing the reggae genre in a local context, using not only their own indigenous languages, but English and Pijin as well.

Content/Themes in Reggae

The themes in international and Solomons-produced reggae have some similarities, but there are also disparities between the two genres. International reggae, for instance, tends to be far more focused on anti-colonial sentiments, ideas of brotherhood or unity, ideological representations of oppressed communities, and an idealization of some anti-social behaviours (e.g., drinking). Some of these themes are also found in Solomons reggae, especially brotherhood/unity, but in addition, Solomons-produced reggae will include love songs, religious themes incorporating Christianity, and the experience of economic and social change.

A central feature of international reggae is Rastafarianism. Reggae, especially that performed by Bob Marley and the Wailers, took ideas from Rastafarianism to a world-wide audience beginning in the 1960s. The themes of anti-colonialism, resistance, freedom and brotherhood have persisted in reggae as it has spread world-wide (Barrow and Dalton 1997:136-137).

Explicit references to Rastafarianism can be found in the reggae of Lucky Dube and a group he founded, the Slaves/Free At Last¹⁰² who are from South Africa. These performers, whose popularity in the Solomon Islands was fueled by a personal appearance in the early 1990s in Honiara, sing about what it means to be a "Rasta man." One such song, by the Slaves, titled "Fly Dem Dreads" could be described as paean to the figure or idea of a "Rasta man". Its lyrics include the following:

This is a special dedication to the ja people
The people who don't speak
Don't cheat
Don't deal in violence
Fly dem dreads, fly dem dreads

This is the song for the rasta man
Fly dem dreads, fly dem dreads
Special dedication to the rasta man
Fly dem dreads, fly dem dreads
This is the I and I soul
Wherever you are whatever you do
I wanna see you fly dem dreads
I wanna sing my song for the rasta man
(Jabulani Mdluli, no date given)

“Dreds” here refers to the matted hairstyle of the Rastafarian. This hairstyle is popular, if not universal, among young men in Honiara. Indeed, it is a world-wide symbol of Rastafarian ideas, sported in many countries. Such songs are enormously popular, played on the radio (both SIBC and Island FM 101) and many own cassettes of these and similar artists.

In addition to the hairstyle, we see the exemplification of certain social ideals connected with rasta men: they don’t speak, they don’t cheat, they don’t deal in violence. These are conscious expressions of religious themes connected to the Rastifarians, representing “a core of spiritual, historical and social tenets” (Barrow and Dalton 1997:137). There is a specific code of behaviour expressed in these lyrics, that you are moral and that you are not a criminal. These themes are expressed in another song by The Slaves, “Hate Me For The Truth” which contains the following lyrics:

Somebody’s gonna hate you when you telling the truth...
What they gonna do
They’re gonna hate you
What they gonna do
They’re gonna destroy you
What they gonna do
They’re gonna kill you
But me I don’t care
I don’t care, hate me for the truth
I and I
I don’t care, hate me for the truth

Because I and I
I'll be saved by Almighty
(Thuthukani Cele, no date given)

These lyrics contain a number of elements which are common themes in reggae and Rastafarianism. One such theme is the "principles of One Love: I and I (one togetherness)" (Thurnton 1998:17). This idea expresses notions of a unity of black peoples throughout the world, who in many branches of Rastafarianism look to Ethiopia (or Africa as a whole) as a "spiritual home" (Barrow and Dalton 1997:137).

Rastafarianism and reggae, in its expression of similar ideas, have been vehicles for the generation of symbols in which many of the oppressed peoples of the world have made sense of their experience and found some kind of moral order and meaning in that experience (Barrow and Dalton 1997:136-137).

Solomons reggae (i.e., that which is produced by Solomon Islanders) embodies many similar themes, although it lacks many of the explicit references to Rastafarianism. These artists adopt themes that can easily be related to such ideas as "I and I" or "don't cheat, don't do violence" as seen above. Also, there is a greater emphasis in Solomons reggae on love songs. A comparison of Slaves "Talkin' Reggae" cassette (an example of international reggae, in this case from South Africa) with Peter Chanel Morey's "Guale Hits" demonstrates the difference in emphasis here.

"Talkin' Reggae" consists of ten songs, only three of which, "What Kind Of Man Are You," "Temperature" and "Help Me Now" adopt a theme of relationships.¹⁰³ This is thirty percent of the songs. In contrast, "Guale Hits" contains seven songs with this theme, out of a total of twelve, making it approximately fifty-eight percent of the songs (i.e., nearly twice the

percentage).

A song from “Guale Hits” which adopts themes which are similar to those found in international reggae is titled “Too Many Things” and contains the following lyrics:

What will be our future life be like?
Life is changing so fast
We couldn't even stop it now...
Too many things will happen too many worries
Too many change in life, we all gotta face these things...
In order to survive in this world of trial and temptation

Our future depends on what we do today
Brothers time to wake up and see for yourself
I don't know if we have a better life in the future
As many people ... disease and hunger
It's a sign of weakness in our life
Every race every nation have the right to survive
(Peter Chanel Morey 1996)

Here we see expressions of brotherhood and the need for a moral order to make sense out of experience, especially an experience of rapid change and the accumulation of new kinds of wealth in new economic activities. Although the themes are similar, there is no overt reference to “ja” (a Rastafarian word for God) or “I and I.” Nonetheless, a theme of non-violence, non-criminal behaviour and social responsibility is indicated. This is not dissimilar to Rastafarian themes found in international reggae such as that of Slaves discussed above.

Another song on the same cassette takes up the theme of social change, but in this case it is a story about the negative consequences of such change. “Ghoko Vani Au” included the following lyrics:

Ghari words:
Na majaraka ina bungiruka
Ara goko vani au
I launa na verade

Translation:
Tuesday morning
They spoke to me
Inside our village

Oh oh oh
Ara goko vani au

Seko na matadira...
Na kamagu na rei nau
Na rei au I verade
Oh oh oh
Ara goko vani au

Ngulavi na bonigivati
Au molole au verada
Mau vano tani gamu
I gamu na kamagu

E suire nigu linge
rei vani gamu na kamagu
au vano tani gamu
Ooh kiki noho inau
(Richard Tada, 1996)

Oh oh oh
They spoke to me

Their bad eyes
My relatives look at me
Look at me in our village
Oh oh oh
They spoke to me

Thursday evening
I leave our village
and I go to you all
To you all my relatives

My song is finished
Look to you my relatives
I go to you all
Oh all the same to me

This song is about the experience of a man in West Guadalcanal who is rejected by the community and forced to move to another village. In other words, the traditional social and economic structures in which people take care of their kin had broken down, and this man was forced to move in with kin living in a different village. Here we find an expected code of behaviour, how people ought to be treated, how people ought to act, and also ideas about the breakdown of traditional life, ways of behaving, and notions of change.

Still other songs were about love or relationships. One very popular song which was often performed by the Weket Gang was written by an anonymous man in Laovavasa village in the Vaturanga District. It contained the following verses and chorus:

Ghari words:
Eruka ina vula
Au tau rei na matamu
Eruka ina vula
Au tau rei na matamu

Translation:
For two months
I haven't seen your eyes
For two months
I haven't seen your eyes

Chorus:
Elau! Nigu niu eso
Esekolia nina sasagamu

Au dona noho inau
Na hua hini melu
Au dona noho inau
Na hua hini melu

Esuire nigu linge
Bakana Tete'ulu
Esuire nigu linge
Bakana Tete'ulu
(Composer unknown)

Chorus:
Oh! My yellow coconut
It spoils your mind

I already know
Why you are sad
I already know
Why you are sad

My song is finished
Children of Tete'ulu
My song is finished
Children of Tete'ulu

Although focused on love and relationships, the last line of the third verse, “bakana Tete’ulu” means “children (or sons) of Tete’ulu,” Tete’ulu being the name in Hoko for Guadalcanal.¹⁰⁴ This was one of the few references I found anywhere to Tete’ulu. The commonly used shorthand for Guadalcanal is “Guale” (as in “Guale Hits”), and it was exceedingly rare to hear anything else. Yet here is a reference to the children of Tete’ulu.

This expression can be interpreted as a way of talking about change and solidarity, themes not dissimilar from international reggae. Tete’ulu is a reference to pre-contact usage, and implies a connection between the people today and life before contact, life before the nation-state. It is a romanticization of a place and a time and a connection. Although it is not pursued or fleshed out in the song itself, the reference is evocative, bringing to mind notions of history, belonging, tradition, and *kastom*. It adds to the element of love and desire a new “atmosphere” or context, one of nostalgia, innocence, and life before.

Encountering Reggae in the Vaturanga District

Two aspects of reggae in the Vaturanga context will be discussed: 1) my observance of local performances of reggae, and 2) what Vaturanga have to say about reggae, rasta and issues raised in music.

My chief access and encounter with reggae in the field was through the “Weket Gang” which consisted of many young men and youths of Maravovo village.

One night, at approximately 1:00 a.m. I was awakened and treated to a personal performance of reggae by the Weket Gang. This occurred between Christmas and New Years, a time of year when it is not uncommon for groups of all ages to go about singing and performing in the villages, often receiving gifts (and interestingly, abuse in the form of being sprayed with oil or having water dumped on their heads) in return. I witnessed groups doing this all night, and could hear them singing and performing as late at 3:00 a.m. On this occasion, the Weket Gang sang two songs, both from Guadalcanal: “I goe na rosi laka” (You are like a rose) and “Elau nigu niu eso” (Oh! My yellow coconut), the words of which are discussed above. Both are love songs, but are performed in a reggae style. In this performance, they used homemade instruments, including a ukelele and pan pipes, while many of the dozen or so young men and youths produced the “weket” sound and other imitations of reggae instruments.

I also witnessed performances of the Weket Gang on several other occasions, and they performed a substantial repertoire of both Solomons and international reggae, although the majority of songs were Solomons, and were in many languages, not just Hoko. On one occasion I witnessed eleven songs performed and the performance took more than an hour. Although the performance appeared to me to be spontaneous, a large group from the village

gathered round and listened and made comments on the performances, such as “I really like this song” or “That guy (referring to a member of the Weket Gang) is so crazy” and the like. These performances were enjoyed and talked about by a wide variety of Vaturanga, of all ages and genders, although children seemed to take the greatest interest. Many songs were greeted with laughter and even loud comments. One such performance took place on Easter Day, 1997, and was deliberately done to be funny and amusing, with ridiculous costuming (meant to imitate an unsophisticated man living in the bush wearing garlands of leaves on their heads and around their wastes). They feigned drunkenness and general rascal behaviour, and were received with howls of laughter by the entire community.

Local performances, both spontaneous and more organized, by such groups as the Weket Gang, bring reggae into the local community, allow it to be commented upon, owned (to some degree) and are highly entertaining.

Vaturanga Interpretations of Reggae

The comments which Vaturanga make about reggae and its performance, both local performances and Solomon Islands’ produced albums or cassettes, reveal concerns with such matters as economic change, what is proper behaviour, the difference between village and town, and language standardization: themes which we have already seen, to some degree, in the music itself.

The first three of these can be discussed under the notion of “rasta” and what it means to Vaturanga, especially young men and youth such as members of the Weket Gang. I was able to get four members of the Weket Gang to sit down and talk to me about reggae for several hours

one afternoon. What emerged in the conversation was a whole series of associations that they made about reggae, or more specifically rasta, which can be listed as follows:

- live simply, die simply (motto)
- not proud, not after expensive things
- not like a white man
- no job
- girls will like you and admire you
- people will say you are clever without being like a white man
- doesn't need much money
- gangs
- oneness with other black peoples in Africa, W. Indies, P.N.G.

The overt and visible symbols of being "rasta" are:

- dreadlocks
- cut holes, often square, in clothes
- doesn't bathe everyday
- attitude of a rascal

These lists emerged in an interview that took several hours. They contain both elements of what could be termed "rasta" in an international sense, and elements of more local concerns. But clearly, they are a means of connecting outside of the Vaturanga District with other oppressed peoples throughout the world (especially those from Africa and the Caribbean). In the fast-paced changes which youth often encounter in the Third World (and elsewhere), this is often an important component of identity, constructing oneself as "in touch" and even "sophisticated" and "aware" of the world.

The motto, "live simply, die simply" expresses the set of contradictions between sophisticated/centres and backward/peripheries. In this one short phrase, these young men describe themselves as dedicated to a solidarity with black peoples around the world, and simultaneously to local values. Haba (not his real name), a young Vaturanga and member of the

Weket Gang, explained it to me this way:

It doesn't mean "don't do anything" it means "don't be selfish"... and "don't make any enemies." It's alright to be smart and clever, but it is not right to show off, to be proud. Rasta means that you're not supposed to let on that you are smart, or have anything. It means don't be like a white man.

This notion fits well with the overall Vaturanga value of not being *molonaho* or "too proud or selfish." But it also is explicitly anti-colonial--"don't be alike a white man"--and in so being, connects the Vaturanga to the experience of peoples under colonialism throughout the world.

Interestingly, they told me directly that "rasta" are always "village" people, not towns people. Tovu (not his real name), another member of the Weket Gang, expressed it this way:

Rasta is very good. But it is only the boys from villages who do this, not town boys. Boys who go away to secondary school want to be rasta.

In saying this, they clearly see the urban centre as more "white." Haba interjected his own experience of how the young men in his residential school divided themselves up and how the village boys maintained an identity with the village through "rasta":

We have many gangs, including the "Dirty Kids," the "Roots" and "Village Level." Also "olos" (who sleep all the time) and "Weeds of Wisdom."

Most of them are rasta. "Village Level" means that the elite are just like the villagers. "Weed" says that even though they are 'weeds' they contribute something. "Roots" are young men just beginning their "dreds." "Dirty Kids" are bad rasta, as they don't show respect to holy days and wear dirty clothes to church. They also smoke and chew betel nut.

What emerges out of all this is a strong sense of identity which young men and women construct, sometimes in the context of residential secondary schools, but more often in the context of simply being villagers who live in an area not far from an urban centre and who encounter urban life frequently. They both borrow from the centre and distinguish themselves from it simultaneously.

Members of the Weket Gang also consciously connected magic with being “rasta.” An important and powerful symbol of this was the carrying of a basket. Traditionally these would’ve been woven from grass. But this art has been largely forgotten. Now, the basket is an empty SolRice bag or other canvas bag, often with hand-made writing on it. This basket symbolically places one in opposition to *molonaho* or pride, and is seen as a distinguishing sign of “villager” particularly in residential school contexts. But the association with magic is potent as well: the traditional basket was (and is) used in the practice of *vele*, which is both *kastom* and “rascal” because of its recent associations with land disputes and revenge practices. To carry your things in such a basket is to imply about yourself the status of “villager” (and hence *kastom*) and simultaneously “rascal” because of the danger associated with such baskets.

This combination of associations was so important to members of the Weket Gang that I actually witnessed occasions in which such “baskets” (really SolRice bags or the like) became objects of contention between them and their elders. Haba’s *pupu* (maternal uncle) had such a “basket” and Haba very much wanted to take it with him to a residential school. So did other young men in the same kin group. But the maternal uncle and Haba’s parents expressed to me a concern about the “rascal” associations of such a “basket.” Ultimately Haba was not given the bag because of concerns over how this might affect his behaviour and his interactions at the school (i.e., it would so clearly mark him as “rasta” that he might in some way be at a disadvantage).

In all of this is a concern with how to deal appropriately with economic and social change. Strongly implied is a growing economic disparity in the Solomon Islands which has entered their consciousness. This disparity is often achieved via education, so there is not a

little irony in the fact that residential school students seem determined to maintain an identity as villagers.

In all of these we see evidence of a code of behaviour or set of expectations similar to that expressed about being a “rasta man” in such songs as “Fly Dem Dreads” and “Hate Me For The Truth” discussed earlier: that you will be non-violent, non-criminal, and proud of your (black) heritage/background in the face of a world which tends not to value that heritage. These concerns must seem especially relevant to young people who are encountering vast changes in the setting of a residential secondary school.

Reggae maps out the world by distinguishing between areas like village and town, and associated behaviours such as tambus, excessive pride, “rascal” behaviours (like smoking, not observing holy days, etc.). Reggae and rasta become components of identity, occasions for making distinctions between oneself and others. These distinctions apply not only to differences within the Solomon Islands, but beyond by connecting Solomon Islanders with peoples in Africa, the Caribbean and elsewhere.

Another important issue which arose in the context of reggae was language standardization. This came out initially in discussions with a member of the Weket Gang about his desire to produce his own album.

Peter Chanel Morey’s album “Guale Hits” was an occasion for Tolu (not his real name), a young Vaturanga man in his twenties, to talk to me about this desire and some of the connections with the cultural apparatus:

"I want to record a cassette. I wrote some (songs) in English, some in Pijin and some in language." I asked "What language? Ndi?" First he said "yes" ("eox" in weket-speak) but then when I said "barava?" ("really?" in Pijin)

corrected himself, "No, we write songs in Ghari."

"A Vaturanga just released the cassette last Friday. His name is Peter Chanel Morey and the cassette is titled 'Guale Hits.'"

I asked, "Why write in Ghari? Why not write in Ndi?" He said "Ghari has got the tune" and "Ghari is more tuneful, works better with the songs than Ndi."

I told him "Your *pupu* (maternal uncle) says it is terrible to sing every song in Ghari." He replied "Sometimes you will hear a Ghari man speaking Ndi, but very rarely. But most of us can speak Ghari. Ghari is used all over Guadalcanal, so if we write the song in Ghari, people will understand it. Even people in Marau or Tasemboko or Poleo know Ghari. But only Anglicans know Ndi and those in Vaturanga, Tabulivu and Kakabona."

I asked if people would think you are ignorant if you sang in Ndi, and laugh at you, he said "No. They will not laugh at you. But they won't understand the words."

As discussed in the last chapter, Hoko is rapidly being standardized to the Ghari dialect. The idea that the Ghari dialect is more musical, better suited or "got the tune" was expressed also by Lelavi (not his real name), a man in his thirties and a Roman Catholic:

Ghari is more complete, expresses nuances that Ndi and Ngeri don't have. Like difference between 'sekoli' and 'sekolia' in Ghari is that one is singular, other plural.¹⁰⁵

It is also more singable, everything connects better in Ghari... The main difference is how they tune it.

The Weket Gang, when they performed for me in language, always sang the songs in Ghari, never in Ndi. In fact, when a child sang one substituting the Ndi "jajaha"¹⁰⁶ in place of the Ghari "sasaga" he was corrected by a member of the gang. The usefulness and power of Ghari is, of course as Tolu says, because it is widely understood.¹⁰⁷ But this fact alone suggests that Ghari has connections to the outside world, as something more universal than Ndi. It is a matter of degree, of course (Pijin, for instance, is more universal still, and English beyond that), but nonetheless is an important consideration. For a Vaturanga to sing in Ghari is to bring, in a sense, his or her own language (but not his or her own dialect) into a new medium: popular

music and reggae. Although not explicitly urban, Ghari can be seen in this instance as importantly contexted by the cultural apparatus (i.e., it is used by institutions and systems in a standardized way). Thus, local performances of reggae, including compositions, are highly contexted by concerns deriving from the cultural apparatus: how many people will be able to understand the song, how wide will the audience be, which dialect will be more tuneful, etc.

DISCUSSION

Contacts and the exchange of cultural information between different places and groups is nothing new in the world, but in the "modern" world, such contacts are not only more frequent but different contexted. James Clifford (1997) notes that:

...instances of crossing reflect complex regional and transregional histories which, since 1900, have been powerfully inflected by three connected global forces: the continuing legacies of empire, the effects of unprecedented world wars, and the global consequences of industrial capitalism's disruptive, restructuring activity (Clifford 1997:6-7).

Unquestionably two (at least) of these factors are involved in the Vaturanga perceptions of themselves in relation to Bougainville and reggae. First and foremost, the distinction between Bougainville and the rest of the Solomon Islands is a colonial legacy. The maintenance of this distinction is part of a global restructuring of local and regional life centred on nation-states with clearly defined borders:

In the twentieth century, cultures and identities reckon with both local and transnational powers to an unprecedented degree. Indeed, the currency of culture and identity as performative acts can be traced to their articulation of homelands, safe spaces where the traffic across borders can be controlled. Such acts of control, maintaining coherent insides and outsides, are always tactical. Cultural action, the making and remaking of identities, takes place in the contact zones, along the policed and transgressive intercultural frontiers of nations, peoples,

locales (Clifford 1997:7).

The Vaturanga encounter Bougainville as a border area, as an edge or margin. It is not immediately present, nor ever-constant, but the conflict that has been ongoing there impacts them because of the restructuring of the world and especially because of the cultural apparatus in the form of the mass media:

The technologies of mobility have changed, and a growing range of media reach across borders to make claims on our sense. Our imagination has no difficulty with what happens to be far away. On the contrary, it can often feed on distances, and on the many ways in which the distant can suddenly be close (Hannerz 1996:4).

The Vaturanga “encounters” with the Bougainville Crisis have caused them to remake identity, but the contact zone is primarily the mass media (radio and newspapers).¹⁰⁸ They have remade their identity in relation to magic, giving themselves a role to play in the crisis, and thus establishing a positive value and prominence to a clearly identified set of cultural practices, i.e., those associated with magic.

This is also true with Vaturanga perceptions of reggae. Obviously, they would not have encountered reggae at all, were it not for the mass media (radio and popular recordings). But it would also not have its meanings, its symbolic values, if it were not for colonialism and the ongoing globalization which connects Melanesians with other peoples of the world in a common predicament as well as history.

For the Vaturanga, their encounter with the mass media indicates something else: a rethinking of space. We see hints of it in their thinking about Bougainville, where ideas of nation and boundary, the difference between island and mainland P.N.G. come to the fore. But it is even clearer in the youthful conceptions of reggae and rasta as distinguishing villager from

town-dweller, and identifying a set of values which they not only clearly mark, but positively regard in relation to their own culture and traditions.

Jourdan (1995a) notes how “town boys” or *masta liu* (in Pijin) clearly distinguish life there from the villages:

... what the *liu* are avoiding is the inescapability of *kastom* and the control that their kin and members of older generations have over the young ones: control over work, control over marriage through the payment of bride wealth, control over wealth through a system of reciprocal obligations, etc. Young people in the village are indulged in many ways, but are trained to take on social or marital responsibilities from a very young age. However congenial life in the village may be, young people acquire early on the sense that the community and the social ties are of overwhelming importance. In town, young people feel a sense of reprieve from the customary obligations... (Jourdan 1995a:211).

Members of the Weket gang, who are not “town boys,” make this distinction and connect reggae and rasta to ideas of village, giving their own traditions new meaning in the context of the nation-state itself.

This necessarily implicates time as well as a space, for when the Vaturanga speak of customary practices, they are making reference to the past and to the changes they have experienced. The Vaturanga as a whole, not just the Weket gang, now map out space by reference to history and change. This will be the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER SEVEN: SPACE AND TIME

INTRODUCTION

Nation-states, such as the Solomon Islands, employ ideas about space and time as a necessary condition of their existence. Nation-states are mapped, lines are drawn which distinguish one state from another, and internally they are divided into regions, provinces, and districts, some official, some not (Anderson 1992).

They also employ ideas of time: they make reference to the past, to a history which is supposedly shared and meaningful. This history is used to justify those lines on the map, those ways of thinking about space. They create museums and libraries to “archive” the history. All of these things form part of the ideology of the nation-state itself.

They are particularly critical and significant in post-colonial contexts, where the lines on the map are sometimes (if not always) arbitrary, even capricious. The colonial project showed little concern for local peoples own ideas of who they are and what it means (Gledhill 1994). Furthermore, such projects entailed population movement which needed to be rationalized and seen as ordered and understandable. Ideological notions about space and time are communicated to local peoples, like the Vaturanga, via the mass media.

Ideologies of the past have been termed the “invention of tradition” (see Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983), and in Melanesia generally the term *kastom* has arisen as a kind of gloss for an idealized set of traditions, things “Melanesian” as opposed to things “European” or “new.” In idealizing the past, the cultural apparatus takes certain aspects and uses them to justify or authenticate the nation-state itself. But the general idea, that pointing to the past is a way of rationalizing or thinking about space, is pervasive and powerful, because in the post-colonial

nation-state legitimacy of occupation or ownership of space is generated by reference to the past.

The Vaturanga have connected with this idea of space and time, and employ it in thinking about themselves in terms of where they live, how they think of local space, and its relation to the past. They use the four directions not only in the practical ways everyone does, but as symbols of the past and present, *kastom* versus life in the nation-state today.

Vaturanga *Kastom* and the Mass Media

Kastom is a topic which is frequently portrayed in newspapers and radio. *Kastom* or *kastomu* (in Ndi) has been widely discussed in the anthropological literature of Melanesia (see Keesing and Tonkinson 1982), and although it is somewhat out of “fashion” in academic circles, it remains an important topic for people living in the Vaturanga District. A sort of “idealized” tradition, *kastom* has been hotly debated in many contexts. It is sometimes used to support national governments or policies, and sometimes used to resist them. In the Solomon Islands, it has been used by the SIBC radio, in a program called “Kastom Stori Taem” (Custom Story Time), as a way of sharing the stories or folk traditions of the many peoples and cultures of the nation. On another level, newspapers have tended to portray *kastom* variously as a barrier to development, a set of commonly shared mores, and as things “Melanesian” as opposed to things “European” or “white.” Newspapers especially present ideas about *kastom* in advice columns, op-ed pages, letters to the editor, and in some cases news reporting about various events.

When it is presented in newspapers or on radio, the theme of *kastom* brings again to the

consciousness of the Vaturanga their history in the Solomon Islands nation-state, a history of land alienation, the introduction of migrant workers, the building of roads, the establishment of schools, and changes in their economic lives and daily practices. The Vaturanga express this in the way they symbolically think of space, particularly the land in relation to the four directions.

Towards the bush, or *longa* is “mapped” as the direction of *kastom*, because that is the direction of the neglected ancestor shrines, of the hamlets they occupied before the missionaries, where there are no roads, and (now) few people. On the other hand, the coast, or *tasi* is mapped as the opposite, a place where the Vaturanga confront economic and social changes, multiple ethnic and cultural traditions, busy roads taking people and commodities to markets in Honiara. Similarly, they also think of “east” as *kastom* and “west” as change, although this is less pronounced than in the usage of *longa* and *tasi*.

The Vaturanga perceive their *kastomu* as being alive or present today, rather than just in the past, but it is physically removed, tucked away in the bush. Thus, they divorce *kastomu* from their experience of the nation-state. For the Vaturanga, radio and newspaper attempts to idealize a common Solomon Islands’ *kastom* are constrained or limited by an ideology (discussed in Chapter Four) that the Vaturanga have lost or forgotten many of their traditional beliefs and practices, and that those which have survived, such as magic, have generally been tarnished in the context of change. Thus, the Vaturanga tend to place any “living” *kastom* in a space physically removed from themselves, because they do not see it in their daily lives.

This is vividly portrayed in one particular instance of mass media presentation of Vaturanga *kastom*, the story of how they learned to cure *vele* magic, which was presented on SIBC Kastom Stori Taem. While the SIBC presented this story as an instance of West

Guadalcanal *kastom*, for the Vaturanga listening to it, it had a very different meaning: not *kastom*, but rather the negative effects of the nation-state on their lives. This story, far from being traditional, is about how the Vaturanga learned to cope with a huge change in their *kastom* practices as a result of colonial and post-colonial systems. Thus, this instance of media presentation highlighted for them not common threads they share with other Solomon Islanders in other parts of the nation, but rather how much they have changed as part of the nation-state, and how their *kastomu* remains in the bush, alive and vitally relevant to their understanding of themselves, but physically removed from their daily practices.

KASTOM AND THE MASS MEDIA

Newspapers such as *Grasrut*, *Voice* and the *Star*, and SIBC radio are important mediums for presenting or portraying ideas about traditional culture in the context of the Solomon Islands nation-state. In Pijin it is generally referred to as *kastom*, modified in Ndi as *kastomu*. *Kastom* is an idealized traditional culture, incorporating ideologies which attempt to define certain practices, traditions, etc. as “Melanesian” and others as derived from the outside world. Thus, it is an oppositional concept. It is also somewhat ambiguous (i.e., some things which are not strictly *kastom* can be redefined as such), and often hotly debated.

We are interested here in understanding how newspapers and radio in the Solomon Islands presented or portrayed *kastom*, the social contexts in which the Vaturanga received such presentations, and the symbols they employ in making sense of *kastom* as part of the Solomon Islands’ nation-state.

Newspapers like the *Solomon Star* and *Grasrut* bring up *kastom* as an issue in certain

disputes (such as land claims or development), and sometimes bring it in to editorial or opinion pieces on a variety of topics. The issue also appeared frequently in letters to the editor. Sometimes these references were explicit, other times implicit in the reporting (i.e., sometimes *kastom* was not being named, but was nonetheless an important subtext in the article or letter). Table 5.8 lists the number of articles, opinion pieces, and letters to the editor which either explicitly concerned *kastom* (i.e., named it as an issue or matter being addressed), or had *kastom* as a subtext, strongly implied but not clearly labeled.

Table 7.1: Newspaper articles referencing *kastom*.

Newspaper (# of issues)	# Articles
Star (10)	15
Voice (4)	4
Citizen (3)	3
Grasrut (3)	2

SIBC radio also presented *kastom* in several ways, most prominently through a Saturday evening programme titled *Kastom Stori Taem* in which a traditional story from some part of the Solomon Islands would be told in Pijin. This programme was popular among Vaturanga, and regularly cited as a favourite. It was a programme which allowed them to learn about the *kastom* of other peoples from other parts of the Solomon Islands, including such themes as the *Kakamora* from Makira, why the Lau (of Malaita) hunt dolphins, and how people hunt the megapod bird in Savo. On one occasion, in March 1997, the programme presented a story from West Guadalcanal: how they learned to cure *vele* sickness.

The presentation of *kastom* in these various types of accounts (newspaper and radio) is a

kind of legitimization of tradition, a statement first and foremost, that these things matter and are not to be dispensed with lightly or easily. But rather than implying vast differences between the people's of the Solomon Islands, mass media presentations of *kastom* tend to look for common themes. A letter on land claims will make reference to kin groups, or a story about magic will emphasize the role of ancestors or "devils." Conversely, *kastom* is sometimes portrayed as a "problem" that makes life difficult, as in reporting about threats to a logging company made by those defending *kastom* practices in West Kwara'ae in Malaita.

In general, newspapers and radio present *kastom* as something powerful, generally shared, and as a way of contrasting Solomon Islands traditions with those derived from the colonial experience. The presentation of it attempts to legitimate it as an issue, that a land dispute or development dispute or even a sickness is not **just** what it purports to be, but that there is this other dimension present, an element that is shared and idealized. The very presentation of *kastom* implies that everyone has one, even if it is forgotten or not often practiced, and that **having** a *kastom* is an important part of life in the Solomon Islands nation-state.

For the Vaturanga, this is received in a social, political and economic context in which they think of themselves as not being very good at *kastom*, that is, they perceive themselves to have lost or forgotten much of their *kastom*.

Their experience of social and political and economic change has caused them place *kastom* in a symbolically removed space, inland or *longa*, from where they live, which is on the coast or *tasi*. This symbolic mapping of *kastom* and non-*kastom* onto the land or in the directions is part of how the Vaturanga receive portrayals of *kastom*, in the mass media and

otherwise. Notions about mapping *kastom* are also present in newspaper and radio presentations of the issue. For the Vaturanga, when *kastom* is not physically removed, it is somewhat tarnished, turned into rubbish magic which spoils individuals and makes life difficult. This context was particularly highlighted in the SIBC presentation of Guadalcanal magic on *Kastom Stori Taem* in March 1997.

NEWSPAPER ACCOUNTS OF *KASTOM*

Articles which either made direct reference to *kastom* or assumed it as a strong subtext included: 1) pieces about museums, exhibits or artistic productions, often involving formal state occasions or visits of dignitaries; 2) articles or letters concerned with development issues, especially logging or mining developments, i.e., cases in which ownership of land was of paramount concern; 3) advice columns in which personal problems came up which required reference to *kastom*; and 4) stories or short pieces of an entertainment nature (as opposed to information).

The Production of *Kastom*

When it is contextualized by museums, exhibits, shows or formal events, customary practices may be said to be “produced” with a goal or purpose in mind. Newspapers report on such events and participate in the inculcation of such notions regarding *kastom*.

Kastom was often portrayed in the press as being about a particular place or region, such as in an article in the January 8, 1997 issue of Solomon Star headlined “Choiseul organise own cultural show” in which cultural artifacts and practices were discussed in a very positive

manner. Such presentations of *kastom* highlight idealized notions, i.e., it is not especially problematic, but a positive symbol of tradition to which everyone can make reference:

Choiseul Province in its effort to preserve their own culture and identity has taken the initiative to organise their own cultural show.

The show which started Monday this week is the first of its kind to be organised in the province and is held at the provincial headquarters at Taro.

It will finish tomorrow...

(Allan) Arafoa (Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Employment) congratulated Choiseul Province for the initiative taken to organise their own cultural show.

He encouraged more provinces to consider having their own cultural shows as part of the preservation of their own culture and identity (Solomon Star 1997i:7).

This article, replete with photo of the Permanent Secretary, portrays not only *kastom* in the sense of cultural identity and preservation, but the central government in Honiara promoting such programmes, thus legitimating both the government (by association) and customary practices.

This is also encountered in the November 22, 1996 edition of Solomon Citizen: the headline, "Warriors and Tamure dancers welcome Governor-General at Beulah," played up customary practices in relation to the visit of the Governor General in Western Province, a visit which was actually about a secondary school. The newspaper put the *kastom* first, in the headline and in the article, illustrating the legitimating function customary practices have for the central government. These sorts of articles see customary practices and artifacts as conveying notions of commonality and national unity. The newspapers emphasize these positive notions of *kastom*.

These examples emphasize the role of *kastom* in a very formal sort of way: organized shows, performances for visiting dignitaries. A letter to the editor in the February 19, 1997

issue of Solomon Star, given the headline "Custom House in Honiara," also talks about *kastom* in this formal way by arguing that workers at the National Museum in Honiara should wear traditional clothing:

Now our National Museum is a traditional piece of culture and therefore it is very important how we can handle and put things right before it is too late because nowadays people are waiting to see the new Jerusalem. Employer and employee of the National Museum should and must wear traditional cloths.

Every day or during working hours, they should or must know something about the custom of the islands...

People will come to this place and know that truly the custom is still alive in places like Honiara rather than wasting money going out to Provinces or Islands looking for really traditional people or true custom houses.

The Honiara residents can and must do it now like brothers and sisters (Solomon Star 1997f:4).

Although letters to the editor come from individual readers and not the newspaper staff, the staff chooses which letters to run, and therefore they can be reasonably seen as a means by which the press attempts to convey certain ideas. This letter seeks to make over the National Museum as a Custom House, and implies an illegitimacy in the museum's practices because of a lack of emphasis on *kastom*. This function, furthermore, is seen as important by the writer because "nowadays people are waiting to see the new Jerusalem," a reference to the influence of Christianity in the Solomon Islands, which is often seen as opposed to customary practices, or at least constraining of them. This letter writer, interestingly, creates a sort of map in which the provinces or islands are where the "really traditional people" and "true custom houses" are, in contrast to Honiara.

Another piece which makes conscious reference to *kastom* in this formal and legitimating sense appeared in the same issue of the Solomon Star, this time an article headlined "Return of the nation's treasures." This article, a two-page spread with the label "History" at

the top and six large photos, hails the return of numerous artifacts which had been in the hands of missionaries. The reference to *kastom* is apparent in several ways. First, the article notes the rarity of the artifacts being returned, implying that these sorts of items (flints, umbrellas, wooden combs, tortoise shell ornaments, shell necklaces, string baskets) represent the past. A second reference to *kastom* notes how the artifacts ended up in the hands of missionaries:

They were given by the people of Vella Lavella. Rev. Nicholson went to Vella Lavella on a missionary work in 1907.

When these people decided to become Christians, they gave something of their own to show their decision (Solomon Star 1997g:8-9).

Again the role of Christianity is highlighted as an instance in which customary practices change or are lost, the idea that when people converted “they gave something of their own.”

An interesting article in the November 15, 1996 issue of Solomon Star illustrates very starkly the idea that *kastom* is radically different from introduced ways of living. This article, headlined “First drama film produced in SI” focuses in on the story being told in a dramatic film called “Kanaka Boy” at the time being produced by Island Image Enterprise. What is interesting here is not so much the story being portrayed in the film, but how the newspaper writer interprets the meaning and value of certain elements:

In the story, the main obstacle that the character faces is that his family cannot afford to send him to school.

Sadly, this is an all too common situation affecting children in Solomon Islands today, where the gradual transition from a subsistence to a monetary economy is taking place and population growth and unemployment are both rising problems.

Custom values and beliefs are often difficult to assimilate for a western audience, but in *Kanaka Boy*, bush medicine and religious taboos are integral dramatic devices driving the plot forward to its climax and thereby illustrating clearly their powerful connection between the culture and daily lives of the people.

Kanaka Boy neatly incorporates an issue of growing concern to the

international audience; destruction of the world's rainforests which are increasingly recognized as nature's own pharmacy.

The use of custom medicine in the daily lives of Solomon Islanders is authentic and perfectly illustrated in *Kanaka Boy*.

The main character is Masi—a boy in total harmony with his surroundings.

When he focusses his hearing in the rainforest, the surrounding creeps louder for us to share in his heightened perception, likewise he is sensitive to the highest movement of a forest creature.

Masi spends his days helping his mother in the vegetable garden in the mornings, playing alone on the beach in the afternoon and fishing with his father in the evening.

The drama unfolds as Masi's two best friends and only other boys of his age in the village return from school in Honiara.

Mana and Lomu are brothers, sons of a wealthy plantation owner in the village, a snobby and overbearing man who does not like his boys mixing with Masi, the boy from a poor family.

The next day the two boys take Masi on a long walk, they want to explore an area banned by taboo.

Masi refuses to go beyond the river which marks the boundary of the taboo area, he waits by a waterfall, absorbed in his surroundings.

At the terrifying climax of the dream, Masi wakes up to discover it is morning, the truth of preceding day's events came out fully at the elder's meeting and he has been proclaimed a village hero.

The final scene is a feast where the whole village gather to honour Masi.

The film will be in Pijin (Solomon Star 1996a:7).

Here are a whole set of assumptions about *kastom* and what it means. This includes notions about the transition of the economy from subsistence to monetary-based, a stark contrast between village and school, and notions that *kastom* involves being in harmony with nature, as opposed to developments and logging practices.

Here, *kastom* is a generic thing, common to all Solomon Islanders, with universal elements and universal appeal: it is about medicine, healing, working in the gardens, fishing, and not being snobbish. It doesn't matter which island or village Masi comes from. In fact, the article states that:

...the drama takes place in a typical, contemporary, Solomon Islands village, a pretty collection of leaf huts, on the edge of a beautiful blue lagoon where the subsistence lifestyle has remained largely unchanged for thousands of years (Solomon Star 1996a:7).

This is every village and no particular village. It is a theme, not a place. A device as much as reality. All the things that Masi experiences are presumed to be the experience of Solomon Islanders living in villages everywhere. It is also highly idealized.

Of particular interest again is the way *kastom* appears to be mapped out onto the landscape: schools in Honiara verses village, plantations verses traditional vegetable gardens, and Masi's refusal to cross a river, which is seen as the boundary of a taboo or *kastom* area, which in the end makes him a "hero." Although it is seen as a tragedy that Masi's family cannot afford to send him to school, Masi is redeemed by his adherence to *kastom* and customary practices, and thereby legitimated by it.

Land Tenure and *Kastom*

This theme of mapping comes out in other contexts in which *kastom* is an important part of the story. During my stay in the Solomons, several issues regarding land ownership and tenure were prominently presented in the press: disputes over logging concessions in Malaita and the imminent opening of a gold mine in Central Guadalcanal.

In writing about land disputes, the newspapers tended to portray a sort of universal *kastom*, a recognition or legitimation of traditional corporate ownership of land. An editorial in the December 6, 1996 issue of Solomon Citizen makes reference to numerous burgeoning disputes over crown land and the right of the government to sell it:

The government has (holds in trust) land only through subjective laws. In reality, it has no land.

Claiming ownership of land through subjective laws is in reality a usurpation and is a violation of property rights.

In Parliament this week it was revealed that the government had land in a number of provinces. It assumes to have power to sell those tracts of land to foreigners.

But such selling should not be done prior to a court decision on a challenge to government's purported ownership of land anywhere...

The independence of courts hearing such a challenge must be respected, but they would earn more respect if they acknowledged the flaws of subjective laws and prefer honesty oath to the truth oath. An honesty oath leaves no room for manipulative, subjective laws to prevail over original landowners.

Land, to Melanesians, is an extension of their own selves. For the Commissioner of Lands to hold title to a certain tract of land while a logging company fells trees should not entitle him or the cabinet to sell the land to foreigners. He'd be sewing seeds of war.

Here we find a reference to a specific kind of land, "crown land" which to some degree is unused by locals in various provinces. The editorial makes reference to the right of the government to grant logging concessions on such lands, but that the actual ownership or title of those lands resides with traditional landowners. The "subjective laws" are those of the modern nation-state, derived from the colonial experience, which allows land to be defined in such ways as "crown lands," etc. Though not explicitly stated, the writer leaves no doubt that subjective laws do not take precedence over customary ones in this regard.

Again, a kind of symbolic mapping is taking place, in which certain areas are within the domain of customary practices. In this case, the mapping is employed to argue for traditional ownership of certain lands, rather than proclaiming taboos or a sense of alienation from that land. Yet the alienation is there as a subtext, since the land is "crown land" and has had logging or other concessions. It is a slightly different alienation than that expressed in the interpretation of the film "Kanakanak Boy" but it is still a powerfully felt alienation. It is an alienation forced or

created by economic change. And again, there is a universal theme, that this land exists everywhere, in every province, and that *kastom* is relevant to its disposition: subjective laws are not as real as *kastom*.

A letter to the editor in the November 15, 1996 Solomons Voice brings out some similar themes in relation particularly to logging. The newspaper gave this letter the headline "Destroyer's of God's Creation and Human Environment" but the theme of *kastom* and economic changes is a strong subtext:

Today throughout our country Solomon Islands have many blind leaders. Many big overseas companies coming into our country and destroying God's creation and human environments, but yet many leaders, chiefs, men and women and the whole nation do not understand this.

Elders, chiefs and the owners of the environments in a community, villages and our island were blinded with the word Royalty.

However, my relatives, neighbours and the whole nation, that Royalty is for today only, not for tomorrow or your future. But your environment is your future. If you destroy them today you miss them forever. But if you keep them and manage them properly, they are your wealth forever (Solomon Voice 1996a:2).

This writer addresses the whole nation as "relatives, neighbours" thus proclaiming (again) a universal theme. This theme includes strong indications of *kastom* in the form of elders, chiefs and villages, which are contrasted with "big overseas companies."

As with "Kanaka Boy" this writer associates *kastom* and villages and traditional practices with ideas of purity, wholeness, eternal (as opposed to temporary) wealth. Logging and development, in turn, are associated with a whole series of problems:

In related to the stated matters, there are also some problems occurs. For example:

- Christian people not faithful to their blooded relatives
- fighting taking place between relatives
- many land disputes

- many land court cases
- division between blooded relatives because of unequal sharing of royalty
- damaging of rich top soil and river pollution, flood and so on
- damages of our fresh local foods etc. (Solomon Voice 1996a:2).

Again, alienation from land and *kastom* is a significant theme, a universal theme. And again, a symbolic mapping takes place, in which the preservation of *kastom* (i.e., good kin relations, traditional subsistence practices, traditional forms of wealth) are linked to particular land.

These themes arose in specific contexts as well. In the January 15, 1997 issue of Solomon Star, three articles appear on logging in the West Kwara'ae District in Malaita. Two of the articles focus on the burning down of the headquarters of the logging company, Golden Springs, in Honiara. The third focuses on a dispute between two groups of landowners in the area, specifically over the location of a log pond which some landowners claim is on land outside of the logging concession:

Golden Springs International entered west Kwarea'ae through several landowners in the area, but at the opposition of another group.

The situation has since created a lot of ill-feelings amongst the local land-owning groups in the area.

... a fight nearly broke out during the Christmas holiday when the landowners who owned the piece of land where the company built the log pond, went and confronted the landowners who allowed the company to enter the area.

... the anti-loggers went and put up a notice at the log pond, telling the company that it had illegally entered their land and must immediately close the pond.

But those supporting the operation went and pulled out the notice, which resulted in the verbal confrontation between the local people (Solomon Star 1997d:3).

Although *kastom* is not the explicit topic in this article, it is an important context and subtext to understanding the dispute. Here is presented a specific instance of disputes over Royalties, land tenure, and economic changes brought about by development. Such disputes are utilized as

examples to explain the tension between *kastom* and modern life in the Solomon Islands nation-state. Again, a map is also apparent, this time distinguishing between land held by “anti-loggers” and that given over to the logging concession. When the two meet in a disputed log pond, it is newsworthy.

Unlike in editorials or letters, these sorts of articles do not overtly interpret *kastom* elements. Indeed, to some extent, customary practices and concerns are portrayed somewhat negatively, as standing in the way of development and causing disputes.

The two other articles in the same issue which focus on logging in West Kwara’ae are both about a man from West Kwara’ae who burned down the Golden Springs International offices in Honiara (Solomon Star 1997c:1). Again, no explicit reference to *kastom* is made in these articles, yet such disputes and events form part of the interpretation of *kastom* in the modern nation-state of the Solomon Islands.

Similar disputes were reported for the Gold Ridge Mine in Central Guadalcanal, when some local landowners went to court to try and stop the mine, while other landowners vociferously objected to the interference in their right to grant concessions. *Kastom* is an important theme, because the nature of this dispute is about corporate ownership of land, and economic changes which have the potential to make some people wealthy, and leave others behind. Again, this is a specific instance of the universal themes brought out in editorials and letters such as those presented above.

A letter appearing in the March 21, 1997 issue of Solomon Star from a Gold Ridge landowner makes several points about land and *kastom*. In his letter, he is objecting to a group of people who have filed a claim for compensation over the mining development. In so doing,

the writer appeals to rules about *kastom*:

I am one of those citizens in this country who is sick and tired of hearing about political parties that exist only in name and nothing else...

Information from reliable sources confirm that the majority of the landowners who are being represented by the foreign legal firm concerned are actually landowners of Guadalcanal Plain land and have no customary land right to the Gold Ridge land. If that is the case, then those Guadalcanal Plain landowners ought rightly to go to SIPL to demand for better financial returns of compensation, since it is in SIPL where they own shares and not in Ross Mining.

The genuine landowners of Gold Ridge have their own political representatives. They do not need (others) to speak on their behalf on matters related to their own customary land affairs (Solomon Star 1997h:4).

What this letter actually brings out is the considerable confusion and contentiousness which exists around customary land ownership and control of land. SIPL refers to Solomon Islands Plantations Limited, which owns a significant portion of the Guadalcanal Plain. As in West Guadalcanal, Central Guadalcanal has experienced considerable migration and population circulation, to the point that it is sometimes unclear who owns what land and who has claims where.¹⁰⁹ Defining who is a genuine landowner in a specific area is problematic and fraught with tension, especially given the potential for vast economic change in terms of wealth accumulation and emerging disparities between haves and have-nots. Also note the writer's use of the term "foreign" in reference to the law firm being employed. This reference implies strongly that *kastom* is on **his** (i.e., the writer's) side, not the other.

On the other hand, those who brought the claim realize that the situation is sufficiently ambiguous that they figure they might as well try to get in on the deal and make a claim of their own. This is not as disingenuous as it might seem. Traditionally people would expect to be compensated or to be included in matters pertaining to neighbouring communities. As in West Guadalcanal, peoples in Central Guadalcanal are probably related to each other and share clans

and lineages in common as well as a common *kastom*.¹¹⁰ Modern monetary-based economies do not incorporate ideas of sharing along kin lines, therefore people resort to court cases in attempts to enforce more traditional notions of distribution. Unlike the writer above, many would not see the development of a gold mine in a neighbouring region as none of their concern, but rather in light of customary practices and traditions which call for compensation, sharing, and redistribution.

Again, we are confronted with a remapping of the land in response to economic change, as the writer of the letter above asserts a strict distinction, a clear and economically significant boundary, between neighbouring communities. *Kastom* is the issue here, for it is only in reference to customary land practices and customary kin relationships that claims about land and compensation can be made. In a sense, this is a dispute about how to properly map *kastom* onto the land.

Another letter on the Gold Ridge Mine, appearing in the December 18, 1996 issue of Solomon Star, takes a different point of view in arguing against the mine, again bringing *kastom* explicitly into the equation:

Please allow me a space in your newspaper to voice my concern over the mining which soon to be started at Gold Ridge...

...I as a concerned grassroot resident of Gold Ridge area wish to give an example and to elaborate a few... points that should be considered.

May be the olos¹¹¹ and some unfortunate illiterate landowners who “convincingly” signed the agreements relating to the mining have never read or heard of Nauru, an Island country rich with phosphate and once known as one of the richest in the Pacific.

You know what happened? The phosphate has gone because of mining, and now the people are scratching their heads with nothing to look forward to, but their gloomy future. That’s exactly what will happen to Gold Ridge after this proposed mining....

My Gold Ridge people, don’t be blind-folded by persuasive offers of

money and facilities. Because I think it's better to do sustainable harvesting of our resource that will meet our needs without jeopardising the welfare of our future generation, than going down to feed the mosquitoes at the Lungga area waiting for our resources to be harvested in a destructive way, by a foreigner.

Do you believe that money is a good promoter of your society's status and value? No, my landowners! In this case, it demotes you from being a proud landowner to a total stranger at Lungga.

A good society's status and value depends on how responsible and disciplined its members are. These includes keeping of customary land, promoting of culture and custom, and making wise decisions.

No livim SB and VB for mekem decision. Becos tu fala garem bele, neck and mouth nomoa bat no any head fo kipim brain for ting ting (Solomon Star 1996d:4).

Here we see a debate about the meaning of *kastom* and how it is related to land and land tenure taking place in newspapers in the letters section. On the one hand, some argue that *kastom* maps a set of distinctions between neighbouring communities, and on the other hand, we hear those stressing the importance of customary values, relationships, discipline and maintaining control over resources.¹¹²

This writer sees the concession to the Ross Mine in Gold Ridge as entailing a loss of status, to becoming "total stranger(s)" in a neighbouring area. The people of Gold Ridge, accordingly, would cease to be landowners, and their relationship to the land, which traditionally entails many customary practices and subsistence patterns, would be altered forever.

Also note again the use of the term "foreigner" being employed in a similar fashion as the previous writer, but in the opposite cause: both this writer and the first writer assign "foreign" as anti-*kastom*.

Other Examples of *Kastom* in Newspapers

In one newspaper, Solomons Voice, a regular advice column titled “At the Edge” appeared, written by “Granny” and addressing personal problems or concerns brought up by readers, similar to Dear Abby or Ann Landers. In one issue, that of November 22, 1996, the column featured two letters which addressed the issue of *kastom*.

The first of these letters is written by “Worried Mum” and addresses the issue of the “wantok system.” This is the customary practice of elder members of the family being expected to share their resources with their siblings. “Worried Mum” writes that this is “getting on my nerves, as I just don’t have enough to put on the table every lunch time...” and “What can I do, as I don’t want to create divisions between us?” (Solomon Voice 1996:11).

This is a common source of tension, as “Granny” points out in her reply:

The first thing to remember is that you are not alone in facing this problem. There are many, many other families suffering similar tensions.

The best you could do now is tell them that you have tried your best in looking after them, but that with limited finance you’ve got there is not enough to help everybody. Suggest to them that when they come to the house it would help if they brought something to contribute to the meals (Solomon Voice 1996b:11).

This is a situation that is apparently in town, in which people are not relying upon gardens but wages. But the expectation that your kin will take care of you is still there, even though the full kin resources are not available to you. This letter highlights a distinction between life in villages and life in towns and how *kastom* is not always well suited to the latter.

The second letter comes from “Downhearted Daughter” and concerns a woman who has fallen in love with a man who is a close relative. The relationship, on the surface, looks like a disaster because of alcoholism and manipulative behaviours, which Granny addresses in her

reply. But the first thing Granny addresses in the reply is *kastom*:

The most important thing for you to understand is this man is a close relative of yours and culturally it is not right for a girl to marry or fall in love with a close relative unless both parents have agreed on it (Solomon Voice 1996b:11).

Here, the columnist asserts a notion of universal *kastom*... she does not know the exact manner in which these two persons are related, nor does she know their particular cultural backgrounds or which island they come from. She assumes a universal *kastom* which entails marriage taboos (she interprets “close relative” to mean that they belong to the same clan or are parallel cousins). In doing this, Granny affirms the importance of customary kin structures and systems, even in town (it is apparent that they are in town because the woman writes that “he will ring everywhere looking for me”). Here the distinction between town and village is blurred, even unimportant. Thus, *kastom* is not always mapped out in the way I have described, although such a mapping might be inferred from the fact that this affair took place in town, where it is harder to enforce customary rules. Nonetheless, those customary rules are presumed to apply to town.

Stories About or Incorporating *Kastom*

The newspaper *Grasrut*, which is the only one of the four newspapers which publishes primarily in Pijin, featured a series of fifteen stories describing the adventures of a man named Pari'i from the Are'are region of Malaita. The side note to this series refers to these as “*kastom stori*” and in the November 20, 1996 issue of *Grasrut*, the story features Pari'i acting as a “konman” or con man. These stories explicitly incorporate ideas about *kastom* as a set of

expectations, prescribed behaviours, subsistence patterns and also uses it as a humorous element. These stories are intended to be funny or amusing, and describe *kastom* in a “folksy” way, as something in rural areas, villages, etc.

A summary of the story in the November 20, 1996 edition, titled “Pari’i hemi stilim fis blong tenfala man” (Pari’i steals ten men’s fish) is as follows:

This story happens at a village near where Pari’i stopped in the last week’s story.

Pari’i is the kind of man who doesn’t go work in the gardens very much. Much of his time he will go and stay in other villages in the area. And also he likes to go walk about in faraway places.

This story is about a time he goes around and confuses those (who live) in another village. When he visits this village everyone is preparing for a big feast. Pari’i goes around and sees and hears that when it comes nightfall ten men will go to a place in the sea for two or three days and they will camp and stay on an island at night. Pari’i is interested in hearing the plans of these men, so he asks two or three men about them and they tell Pari’i where they will go and what kind of island they will make camp. When this is finished, your man smiles to himself and heads round the village, telling everyone “hello” and asking for betel nut and story house to house. Pari’i stays in the village until the time for the ten men to take off on their fishing trip. They take many things to catch fish. They take nets of different sizes, spears, lines and traps. Pari’i really knows from this that they will catch many fish. He turns back and goes back to his own village Airapariki.

At home Pari’i finishes eating in the evening and quickly goes to bed. But he doesn’t fall asleep right away. He thinks about the group who are going on the fishing trip and he comes up with a plan while he is thinking. Pari’i figures it out and makes a decision that he will not go tonight, but the next night he will go out after them. He thinks they will catch plenty of fish and his plan will really be successful and he laughs to himself.

The group go fishing all night, some using net, some using line and some diving with spears, and during the night they really catch plenty fish of many sizes. They make their camp on an island and they make a big stone oven and keep all the fish nearby. Next day they go out to the sea more and go fishing. On this day too they catch many fish and in the evening everyone comes back and put all the fish in the oven with the fish from yesterday. Night fishing really provides plenty here and some of them go out to the sea and go fishing, but some stay at camp and watch the fish and the oven. Two or three are really very tired and they stay back in the camp to sleep a little before going in the early morning.

In the evening Pari'i eats quickly and tells his wife "My Darling! I will go fishing for the two of us." Pari'i finishes eating and he gets his things ready. His wife puts some extra food for him in a basket and when he is ready, he goes down to the place where he keeps his canoe. When he gets there the night has started so he hurries up and pushes out his canoe towards the shore. Then he cuts a long stick and gets a big coconut leaf. Pari'i ties up the dry coconut leaves. When he is finished, he makes a good fire inside his canoe in the back, and he sits down in the middle and starts his fishing trip.

Pari'i paddles straight now and goes down to the island where the group has their camp. When he reaches close to it, he stops and hides first time and waits for darkness. Pari'i sees a fire on the sand beach and also a fire along the reef. There he sees a man staying at the camp and a man out in the sea fishing. When it is the time of night one likes to sleep, Pari'i go out from the place he is hiding and paddles inside a passage that leads out to the open sea. There he finds a place to tie up his canoe on the shore and he takes his fire and lights the dry coconut leaf where he has tied them up on the stick. The dry leaf really very dry with a wind from the sea, he holds the stick and he quickly lights and your man Pari'i does not go slow steering his canoe inside the passage and heads toward the island.

Everyone out at sea and on the reef and in the camp look at the light and they cry out a lot "Haaaaaiiii!!!! No good devil of the sea coming here. We will die now." Another one shouts "Hurry up into the canoe... Hurry up! Hurry up!"

Everyone sees the light and everyone really afraid. They really think it is a devil from the sea called 'Wasi' and with much crying go to their families and wives. They don't worry about their fish. Everyone jumps inside their canoe and paddles and paddles fast to go home.

Pari'i sees them go and he goes ashore on the island. There he goes down the sand beach and his plan really works. Your man lies down on the beach and he really laughs hard. He laughs and laughs and he thinks about the fish and gets up to go look. All of their fish are still there... Pari'i sits down and eats until he is really full and then he really loads up his canoe and goes home. He is really happy to arrive home. News from the village is really big about people seeing Wasi, but Pari'i smiles in his house.

This story contains a number of *kastom* elements. It is set in an area where people live in villages, prepare large feasts (something not done in towns), and the men go out fishing for days as part of the preparations for the feast. Pari'i, when visiting the village where the feasting preparations are taking place, goes around asking for betel nut and he "story" (i.e., he chats and talks with people) and finds out about the plans for fishing. It is also noted that Pari'i is lazy

and doesn't like to go work in the gardens, another conspicuously village element.

Another important *kastom* element is the belief in "devils" or spirits such as Wasi. Pari'i is able to manipulate people's belief in spirits in order to scare off the fishers who abandon their catch.

This story is set in a customary world of villages, subsistence practices, and elaborate feasting exchanges. It is not a world where people have money, cars, trucks, or even make copra or go to market. Yet the use of the term "konman" or con man implies a cleverness which connects this world with the modern world of the Solomon Islands nation-state, where con men operate in places like Honiara in very clever ways.

Again, although this story is purported to be set in Are'are in Malaita, activities such as gardening, feasting, canoeing, chewing betel nut, etc. are universal elements for the Solomon Islands. So also is the belief in "devils" who can be either ancestors or other spirits.

This story presents *kastom* in a "folksy" and humourous sort of way, but clearly places it in a distinctive milieu: village life. That life is familiar to the audience, comfortable, and assumed. In this sense it is idealized, perhaps even nostalgic and romanticized. As with other representations of *kastom* presented in newspapers there is a kind of mapping here: no one tells such stories about life in Honiara or Auki, town life is not romanticized or represented as universal.

RADIO PRESENTATIONS OF *KASTOM*

There were few examples, in my experience, of direct reference to *kastom* on SIBC or Island FM 101. I was often able to catch such references, however, in the daily message

programming on SIBC. This is programming that provides a message service between towns and outlying (i.e., remote) villages and islands. Often, these messages incorporate certain assumptions about customary practices. For instance, when someone has died, a message will be broadcast about the death, telling those who are physically removed not only about the death, but about what they need to do in response (e.g., take the next boat home, but before you come, make you sure you bring a particular item or other with you).

This message service is an important means of communication in a context of population circulation, in which many people have left villages and islands to work on plantations, at jobs in towns, attend residential schools, or work in factories or ships. Such services are a means of maintaining ties, even exerting kin connections and obligations in a world in which people are not always together. As such, customary rules and practices are often a prominent feature of this programming, even though the programming itself is not about *kastom* (and often the messages have nothing to do with it). This service is, therefore, a means by which people recontextualize *kastom* and use the nation-state in order to maintain it.

In addition to this, there was a regular programme on SIBC called *Kastom Stori Taem*, which aired on Saturday evenings at 8:00 p.m. This programme presented stories from different islands and communities of the Solomon Islands. These were told in Pijin, with a narrator who would act out (give different voices) to each of the characters.

On one occasion this programme presented a story from Guadalcanal: the story of how the people learned to cure *vele* sickness, i.e., sickness caused by *vele* magic, the most powerful and dangerous magic (see Chapter Three for a discussion of *vele* and its practitioners). This story was well-known to the Vaturanga, who afterwards told me that it was a Vaturanga story.

Here is a brief summary of the story, with the main elements, as presented on SIBC:

A man who is the son of a chief, falls in love with a girl who lives in a nearby hamlet. He wants to marry this girl, but her parents will not allow it. This man knows how to *vele* and so he decides he will *vele* the parents of this girl. He does this and they die, first the father, and later the mother.

Then he goes and he asks this girl to marry him. But she has two younger brothers and she is worried about them and wants to take care of them. So she tells the man that she cannot marry him until her brothers are older and can take care of themselves.

So this man, he decides that he will have to *vele* the two brothers. He first *vele* the youngest brother. He gets sick with a fever.

Before he dies, however, a bird called *peno* comes to the girl. This bird is a devil and he can talk. The *peno* tells her that this man has made her brother sick with *vele*. He takes her to a place in the bush and gives her ginger (*papacho*) to cure her brother, and a *didila* to protect them all from *vele*.

She takes the ginger back and feeds it to her little brother, who recovers. And she plants the *didila* near the house to protect them.

The man who did the *vele* against her family comes to the house, and because of the *didila* he becomes very confused and disoriented. Later that day, he dies.

This story is presented as a *kastom* story, i.e., it is represented on the radio as an example of the *kastom* of a people in the Solomon Islands' nation-state. The primary *kastom* elements are the use of magic (*vele*, *didila* and *papacho*), and the presence of a devil in the form of a *peno* bird. The story is set in the bush, which for the Vaturanga is a significant element. For general audiences (i.e., non-Vaturanga) this element is a marker which distinguishes the events from being associated with towns or modern life, "bush" implying either "remoteness" or "earlier times." As with newspaper representations of *kastom*, this story has an element of mapping, in which *kastom* events and practices take place in particular places. This story, as well as the story about Pari'i presented above, introduces an explicit notion of time as well, for these events are not represented as current events, but as having taken place many years before, when life was different.

VATURANGA REPRESENTATIONS OF *KASTOM*

Vaturanga, as noted in Chapter Four, think of themselves as having lost much of their *kastom*. For them *kastom* has been changed in significant ways by their experience of the nation-state. They live in an area that is only a few hours ride from the capital city, there is a significant amount of land alienation in the district and in neighbouring districts. Their economic lives, although still retaining much that is traditional, have become increasingly focused on earning money, participating in markets, buying things in stores.

So when they see representations of *kastom* in newspapers or hear them on the radio, when they read about cultural shows in Choiseul, or learn about artifacts at the museum in Honiara, or about dancing for the Governor General, they do not see themselves as having such things to offer. Early in my fieldwork, I asked Tolu, a young man in his twenties from Maravovo, about Vaturanga *kastom* and his answer was quite stark and direct:

Vaturanga people don't keep too many *kastom* because we are so close to town and are influenced by town life. But the followers of Moro keep to their movement. They don't wear any clothes and have no modern conveniences. They have a real *kastom* house and they will kill those who do not respect them. If you want to know much about Guadalcanal *kastom* you should go to Moro's village.

The reference to Moro refers to a movement which rose up in the 1960's in southeastern Guadalcanal called the Moro Movement (see Davenport and Coker 1967).

This statement was my first encounter with a notion which I found repeated over and over: that in West Guadalcanal, especially the areas along the road, people have forgotten or ceased to practice many customary rules and practices. Conversely, East Guadalcanal is a place where the Vaturanga say customary practices and rules are still generally followed.

The idea that *kastom* was something “in the bush” was expressed in a number of contexts. It came up when Tapiu, a middle-aged Vaturanga man with a large family, took me to his gardens one day. I asked Tapiu if they did any magic or anything to help the garden. He said that they didn’t do anything like that, but:

If it is a new garden deep in the bush where the ancestors use to live, then when starting this new garden, we burn some pigs, make a sacrifice to ask the ancestors to help us, make the garden grow good and the people’s life good. We can tell if there use to be a garden in a place by the kinds of trees growing there.

Here Tapiu expresses a distinction between *tasi* (near the sea) and *longa* (in the bush), although at this point I had not begun to pick up on the distinction. In his comments, Tapiu expresses an idea that customary matters (e.g., sacrifices, burning pigs, ancestors) are matters that occur “in the bush where the ancestors use to live” but are not as significant where the Vaturanga live now.

On another occasion I learned about how many customary rules are no longer observed. This was a common theme. Tolu, a man in his twenties who had been to secondary school and was helping me learn the language, told me:

We no longer have a birthing hut... women give birth in the clinic or Number Nine (Central Hospital in Honiara), and men go with them.

We have some tambu rules about men and women, like if women are taking a shower, we cannot go for a shower, or look at them while they are taking a shower.

And in town, men and women can dance together, but that is tambu in the village.

These comments are very “matter-of-fact” expressions. There is no sense of nostalgia or notion that they ought to return to such practices as birthing huts, separating women during menses, or prohibitions on dancing together. Their main point is a mapping in which *kastom* practices are

increasingly less relevant in Vaturanga life along the coast. In fact, I found some Vaturanga were ready to dispense with *kastom* altogether. Tapiu, on another occasion, said as much:

Kastom costs a lot of money. Have to feed all your relatives when they come for a visit, or make a big feast for a dead man a year after he died. It is not sensible. We should keep *kastom* that doesn't cost any money, like rule that say I cannot touch my sister. But others we must give them up. Western ways and money are important now, *kastom* is not so important. Solomon Islands can go along with Western ways or have no money. *Kastom* keeps you from becoming rich.

Tapiu's frustration with customary rules and practices is evident in these comments, which express a tension between modern economic life in the Solomon Islands nation-state, and the strictures of *kastom*.

These economic changes would often be expressed in the distinction between East and West Guadalcanal. For instance, in discussions about magic, particularly "lucky" forms (see Table 3.3), which are recent, and about making money--white man's money--Kesa incorporated ideas about differences between East and West Guadalcanal:

An old man from the bush in East Guadalcanal, where people still live in the bush, kept stalling at me one day in Honiara. Finally I went up to him and said "olo" (old man) and asked him what he wanted.

The Olo said he wanted some fish and chips, that he was hungry.

So I went and bought him some fish and chips and gave them to him.

Olo said he didn't have any money to pay me back, but said "take this bag and go stand outside the bank. Don't look inside."

I went and stood outside Wespac Bank and stood there for one-half hour. Then I went back to the olo.

Olo opened the bag and inside was lots of money and from it I was given one-hundred dollars.

So this olo knows *taho*.

Kesa also described how a friend of his got *golo andi visu* magic, again from a man from East Guadalcanal whom he met in Honiara.

In pursuing this line, I eventually learned that the reason they see East Guadalcanal as

the place where magic and other customary practices survive is because people in East Guadalcanal continue to live in the bush, i.e., to live *longa*, whereas the Vaturanga (along with most of the people in West Guadalcanal) live *tasi* or near the coast.

Tasi, for the Vaturanga, has all sorts of associated meanings: road, town, missionaries, churches, schools, markets, religious institutions (SSF brothers, Sisters of Melanesia, Melanesian Brotherhood, Bishop Patteson Theological College are all along the coast in West Guadalcanal), etc. All the Vaturanga villages are close to the coast, except for two, and those are only a short walk inland.

Longa, on the other hand, is associated with the past, with ancestor shrines, with old ways of making a living, with devils and spirits, *mumu* and *vele*. These ideas were especially strongly expressed when talking about magic. Kesa again told me:

Vaturanga people we don't know how to do these *kastom* things. We forgot it.

The Vaturanga moved out of the bush to the coast when the missionaries came. But in East Guadalcanal the missionaries went into the bush, so the people stayed in the bush. They are lucky because they know how to do *kastom* things. But life in the bush has a bad side... no medicine, no services.

Moro is good thing. We Vaturanga left the bush and came down to the sea. But the shrines are still in the bush. The skulls and bones of our ancestors, the bones of pigs they sacrificed, the sacred groves and the old gardens.

People are afraid to go to them now. They have to take magic and they are forgetting the rules and the old magic and making new magic like *taho* and *golo andi visu* to get white man's money.

Thus, the reason Vaturanga have forgotten customary practices is that they no longer live in the bush, they moved down to the coast and gave up the ancestor shrines and the ancestors' ways of living.

Another Vaturanga man, this time an elder and chief named Cheche, when telling me

about *vele* magic, said very directly:

People who are living in the bush know how to make *vele*. People who live near the sea, they don't know. People in East Guadalcanal too, but not people in West Guadalcanal. We have forgotten these things.

There is also a strong element of fear and concern when *kastom* and magic and *longa* are brought up. The bush is seen as a *tambu* area, a place that you should not and cannot go.

Cheche told me:

You cannot visit your own shrine. If you do you will die because your ancestors will cause you to die if they see you.

This is because the shrines are no longer kept up. It is not that *kastom* has lost its power, it is that it has been relegated to a different space: *longa*. But *tasi* use to also be associated with *kastom*. Cheche, with Kesa (his son) translating, and Haba (his grandson) present, told me one day about the "devils" or spirits, and many of them are associated with the sea or the coast.

The shark devil of the Kakau clan is called Sovala and he also appears in the form of a conch shell, especially on land, and that form of Sovala he is called Tavuli Tete.

The Haubata shark devil is Bahea na Pobo and lives in this area.

In Tiaro Bay there is a shark devil called Buli.

Near Verahue the shark devil is called Kovatu and this is also a Kakau devil.

There is also a shark for each nuhu (point of land) and many of the momoru (small coral islands) are tambu.

The Lakuili and Haubata have eagle devils too. Kesa is Lakuili sangavulu which means that his devil has ten different eagles, but they are only one devil. There is also kakau sangavulu.

Back before, maybe 1960 and before, people knew how to worship the shark devils and the Bahea na Pobo near here was fed up there at Ngautu Tasi (a Vaturanga village).

Haba has seen Bahea na Pobo with his own eyes. This devil is not powerful anymore. But it will protect you from rubbish sharks, warn you by swimming back and forth. No one knows how to worship them anymore. One man can still call the eagle.

A few years ago, Australian woman who did not believe in the power of

Buli and Nuhu Kiki Tiaro, she wanted to dive near this coral island. She took a boat from Tambea¹³ and went to Tiaro Bay. The people there told her it was tambu for a woman to go to that island. But she didn't listen and even though the man who was piloting the boat did not want to take her there, she made him do it.

She dived down, came up excited about all the unusual shells and started to take them. The shells are Buli, who can change forms.

She went down again and this time saw a shark and started to get sick.

She came up to the boat and began to bleed heavily out of the mouth, nose, ears, eyes and vagina. The pilot rushed her back to Tambea, put her in a transport to Honiara, but she died on the way.

So Buli is powerful and women must not go to the small coral islands where devils live.

There are also snake devils in many hills. These are diamond snakes, they have a diamond in their heads. They are called Laka Tambu and we use to worship them.

There is conflict over Laka Tambu, who owns these devils. The Kakau and Kidipale say they are the traditional worshiper, but Lakuili and Haubata also say this.

Before you go to worship at a shrine you must eat ginger, wear tivi (loin cloth), chew betel nut, paint your face (totola) and wear butu (bracelets) on each arm. You offer taro, yams, traditional foods... not kumara (sweet potatoes) because the devil doesn't know kumara.

Worshipping a devil requires all these things and is called kondo pucha.

The Christian god, he is different kind of devil. He doesn't allow the other devils and he is worshipped differently. With these other devils, we can make things happen, use them for success in hunting or fishing. But the Christian god is not like that.

We can see in this outlining of the various devils of the Vaturanga, an understanding that those associated with the coast and the sea are significantly less powerful than they use to be.

Although Buli still had power to effect the Australian women who violated tambu, generally speaking, these devils are firmly in the past. No one remembers how to worship them, and there are even disputes over who worshipped which devils in the past. These disputes are related to land claims, for being able to claim a story about worshipping a devil is strong evidence of the features associated with that devil.

I asked Cheche how these devils lost their power, and he said:

The Church made us give up these ways, so we no longer have the things we need to visit the shrines. In 1983 the district priest (Anglican priest for Vaturanga and Ngeri Districts) went around to all the villages from Paru to Tabuhu and forced the people to throw out their ginger plants. He told them they could only keep good things. In Tabuhu when they pulled up a ginger plant a snake came out with it. They said that was the devil coming out.

Thus, with Christianity, peoples in this area have been forbidden to practice many of the customary things which permitted them to travel into the bush. Instead, these things have been turned into “rubbish” things, Cheche told me, used to to make others sick or out of jealousy (see Chapter Three for a discussion of how Vaturanga magic has changed).

So, when the SIBC programme *Kastom Stori Taem* presented the Vaturanga story of how to cure *vele* sickness, it was not seen by the Vaturanga as something folksy or nostalgic. In fact, quite the opposite. As we listened to this story, there were numerous humourous elements which the narrator inserted: funny voices, panicking people, etc. But the fifteen people who were present with me on this occasion did not laugh. They took this story very seriously.

I got Kesa to retell me the story a few days later and he added some comments into the story which again brought forward the *tasi* and *longa* distinction. He noted that the story took place near a “village which was called Vasakuricheka which later, after the people moved away from the bush to the sea was called Maravovo.” In Kesa’s version also, the girl marries the *vele* man but does not know about the magic. The *peno* bird instead goes to the oldest of the two brothers, now abandoned by their sister:

The girl went off to live in the big village, but in the night her husband wants to kill his brothers-in-law. The small boy gets sick from this *vele*, but he is not dead yet, just get fever.

When the older brother is cooking in the kitchen, the *peno* bird flew into

the kitchen. The bird flew in through the front door and went to the back door. The peno then lay there at the back door. The older brother said to the peno "Hey! What are you doing?"

The peno bird said "Your brother is sick from vele. I'll give you something that will cure that vele" and the boy just listen to what the peno is saying. Peno says, "Follow me and I will show you this magic, you can come and get it and give to your brother so he can recover from this vele."

So they went into the bush and the peno vomited the papacho (a kind of yellow ginger), then he instructed the boy: "Go, take this papacho and give to your brother to eat, then you eat some too and pupusu all the joints of his body. And this one you have to plant at the spareline of the house to protect from vele if he comes again to kill you.

After peno said this he left. The boy came home and followed all the instructions that the peno told him to do. When he did it, the boy recovered and they planted the didila at the spareline.

The peno had told him "If vele want to come again, this papacho will make him sick. If you leave him alone, he will die. Or you can release him."

After a month their brother-in-law came again to vele them. But the didila was sprouting. Vele came and the papacho worked. He came in the evening¹¹⁴ and stood in one place until morning. When the brothers came out of the house in the morning, they saw their brother-in-law standing there. They asked "Hey, in-law! What are you doing?" He could not talk because he is crazy in his head. These two brothers don't want to cook breakfast, so they go to the garden and work, coming back later, the vele is still standing there.

He stood there all day. The boys say to him in the evening: "Oh you have to go back home now." When they say this, he can move again. So when he arrives at his home, he step one foot in his door, fell down and died. His wife ran and cry. They threw water on him, tried magic to revive him, but it didn't work. The didila had killed him.

So in the morning the sister went to her brothers and said "My husband is dead now. You have to come and attend the burial and get some pig too." But the brothers answer "Oh no, we can't come. We found out he killed our mother and father and try to kill the little boy."

As they are talking the peno comes back and says "Your husband is the one who kill your family. When I saw these two little boys living alone, I felt sorry for them, so I gave them didila."

So the girl understands and says "tasol."¹¹⁵ So they didn't go to the burial. She went back to live with her brothers. She married another man and lived in the place.

So now everybody around Guadalcanal has this papacho and didila that protect and cure. So they all live together without fearing any vele anymore.

This story represents for the Vaturanga a transition in their *kastom*. Before, *vele* and other

magics were not used to harm their own people, to attack neighbours, but to protect the people from enemies and to assist in hunting. Kesa said it this way:

Pupuku, poke sosolo, susui, vele, they were our protection before. Now they have been turned into rubbish things. These things use to be helpful, were used against marauders and warriors invading. Now it is brother against brother, it is jealousy, it is getting away with crime, it is not listening the chiefs' decision in a land dispute.

Now you need ways to cure *vele*, or protect yourself from it, because people use such magics against each other. This is because there are so many land disputes, which come with issues of development. *Vele* and other magics were associated with hunting, and when Vaturanga go hunting today, magic is still an important element.

Talking about this elicited a rare expression of nostalgia about *kastom*. I was asking Kukuni (not his real name) about hunting. Kukuni is a man in his 40's who is considered a master at hunting. In the middle of the discussion about preparations for hunting, he began to talk about the wild animals they would hunt:

Kekena is hunting animals like possum, iguana and flying fox. We don't use dogs when we hunt these things.

When you see a popoko tree (a vine covered tree) you set the vines on fire and a possum or iguana will come out.

The flying foxes you take a whip made from vines and go in the daytime to their cave, disturb them so they call come out...

These are ritual things, flying fox, iguana, possum were main things our ancestors ate. See they lived in the bush and so didn't fish much.

This is called *hahani malobu* which means eating food which makes the body strong, willing to do jobs, not lazy. So boys want to eat these things. Gives them the fever of these things still in us, because our ancestors ate them. It is also *saheli habuna* which means to wear his blood.

So men like to go out on a hunting party because at that time they will also *hahani malobu*.

Here is an idealization of the past and of the ancestors. Yet it is something which is only

possible if you go hunting in the bush and capture these animals.

In all these ways, the Vaturanga have mapped *kastom* onto the land, not unlike that which has appeared frequently in newspapers where there is a perception of difference between town and village, or as in *Kanaka Boy*, there is a boundary between tambu areas which those who do not live in the village forget and do not observe. For the Vaturanga, *kastom* is mapped as *longa*--it is in the bush, and when it is not in the bush, it is changed, often less valued, partially forgotten, weakened or compromised.

Another aspect of *kastom* is that it is also being symbolized in very specific things. They do not really think of working in gardens or living a subsistence lifestyle as *kastom*. Chiefs, and feasting, and exchanges are, but these have all been altered and changed by the missionaries.

But in response to newspaper portrayals of customary practices and traditions, I found that some Vaturanga expressed ideas of *kastom* almost exclusively (or largely) in terms of artifacts, customary dancing, etc.

Tovohi, a chief and leader from a nearby district, said the following one day in a meeting with other chiefs from the Saghalu Ward (which includes the Nggae and Vaturanga Districts):

One day I want to set aside a day each week at primary schools where they will teach *kastom* things, like basketry, making bark cloth, carving, and dancing.

I also think we should have a cultural centre for Saghalu or Saghalu and Tandai (a neighbouring ward to the east).

(Taking hold of the fan I had laid down, called a *tepe*) These are used to fan the flames of fires used for cooking. But now everyone uses gas stoves, so *tepes* are not necessary.

Nobody has a grass basket here anymore. They use SolRice bags or

plastic bags to carry things in. No one makes the traditional baskets anymore.

Houses are not made right either... now they are lazy. Use to be they would have double the number of eaves in a roof, and the sago palm leaves in the wall here (points to the wall in my house) would not just be laid in a row, but carefully woven into a pattern. Such a house would last twenty years, but these only ten.

People just buy plates and dishes now, instead of carving bowls. Just buy dishes in the store.

No one knows how to dance.

This is an interesting representation of *kastom*, as artifacts and material culture or dancing. This conception, and the desire for a cultural centre, is clearly derived from mass media representations of *kastom* such as those reported earlier on the National Museum, or the cultural show in Choiseul. Indeed, it is very similar to the letter discussed above encouraging staff at the National Museum to wear customary clothes.

Also as in the newspapers, there is a close connection between *kastom* and land disputes. In the newspapers we saw *kastom* used to oppose and justify development, especially in the case of the gold mine at Gold Ridge in Central Guadalcanal. Tovohi also talked about *kastom* in this context:

Before the white man came people here did not think about money, except *kastom* shell money for bride price, feasts, things like that. When the white man came, he introduced coconuts, copra making, making money from buying and selling. This was a big change.

With self-government in 1976 and independence in 1978 the cost of living increased. And it continues to do so. So how will future generations survive? The world is changing and we must accept it. The people of Saghalu must stop with all these land disputes and start working together.

Boundaries matter, and local authorities must start setting guidelines for the local people's benefit.

Since before independence, a Canadian company and two Australian subcontractors have been prospecting for gold in this part of Guadalcanal. The government has authorized this, and they come every year. But they never seem to find anything. People are wondering if they have found any gold. They have never seen any report.

So I propose that we adopt a guideline which includes the payment of fees for access to customary lands, that those fees be shared equally between the 76 subtribes (lineages), and that a time limit of one year be placed on this prospecting with the requirement that a report be written and submitted.

Here we see many of the same elements present in the letters written to the newspapers. Ideas about preserving land for future generations, about change and greed and neighbours. We see a lamenting of the many land disputes that go on as a result of development prospects.

Here also, *kastom* is mapped onto the land as well as into time. People did not use to worry about boundaries, land disputes, making money, and the like. Now, customary lands are in the bush, where subcontractors go to prospect for gold. These lands require fees to gain access, must be controlled, are delineated and thought of in a separate way from the contiguous areas where the Vaturanga keep their gardens or make copra.

DISCUSSION

Vaturanga conceptions of space and time are influenced by many factors. Economic change since the colonial period has significantly altered local space in the district. Friedland and Boden (1994) note the transformative effects of modernity on space and time:

...the transformations of the past two hundred years have etched out this era as a distinct and discontinuous period of human history... modernity... as the intertwined emergence of capitalism, the bureaucratic nation-state, and industrialism, which, initiating in the West but now operating on a global scale, has also entailed extraordinary transformations of space and time (Friedland and Boden 1994:2).

This is unquestionably the case for the Vaturanga, who have seen their spaces transformed.

There are roads, markets, plantations, and other spaces which are no longer controlled by kin groups and which are used in ways which are clearly distinct from the ways kin groups would

have used them. The simple movement of the Vaturanga from inland (*longa*) to the coast (*tasi*) provides the most basic marker of space and time, and one which, as I have shown here, they have turned into a symbolic map of time.

Equally, the presence of new ethnic groups, especially plantation workers (mainly from Malaita) gives rise to a new consciousness of customary practices, and the Vaturanga relationship to the land and being landowners. The plantation workers have developed an ideology of their own past and present which is contrasted with Vaturanga circumstances and history. This contrast is, in reality, made by both groups, and for the Vaturanga has served to heighten their sense of change in relation to space.

Schools and religious institutions, likewise, present notions of space and time. Both are new, and both comment upon and take authoritative stances about the past. Schools, for instance, teach about *kastom* in a generalized and universal sense, and contrast it with what is offered by the modern world of the Solomon Islands nation-state. And we have seen how religious institutions have engaged in the symbolic overpowering of *kastom*, even forcing the removal of ginger plants and claiming authority over “devils” (see Ryniker 1991).

In the mass media we have seen some very clear ideas about the relationship between *kastom*, in a general and ideological sense, and the organization of space. These are indicated in the Bougainville Crisis, which for the Vaturanga heightened the awareness of land alienation, and even in the popular music of reggae, where youthful Vaturanga make explicit distinctions between village and town, and attempt to maintain some sense of local *kastom* in a sometimes ideologically charged set of circumstances in which they encounter the world of town or residential school.

The cultural apparatus, especially the mass media, makes explicit use of *kastom*, giving it an aura of authenticity, and clearly linking it to demarcated spaces. The mass media is concerned with space and time in a powerful way:

Modern systems of transportation, communication, and, above all, information have achieved a *separation* of time and space from the central, premodern preeminence of place... People, events, organizations, and whole societies are no longer simply tied to single places or particular times. Instead, the essence of modernity is its ability, indeed necessity, to connect local times, spaces and people with global agendas, standardized time horizons, and constantly shifting spatial arrangements (Friedland and Boden 1994:3-4; emphasis in original).

Giddens (1984) notes that the modern nation-state is legitimated by the “controlled use of reflection upon history as a means of changing history” (Giddens 1984:212). The mass media is a source of information as well as reflection upon the past. Boyarin (1994) refers to “technologies of memory” (Boyarin 1994:12). In so doing, he refers not only to communication and media, but to devices or means by which people maintain the past in the present.

The organization of space and time is one of the most profound and fundamental changes the Vaturanga have experienced as part of the Solomon Islands nation-state. It is reflected most prominently in the ways they use the terms for the four directions. At its core, this usage, especially of the terms *tasi* and *longa*, expresses Vaturanga social relations with their own past, with *kastom*, with their ancestors, and is a reflexive response to the changes they have experienced.

In so doing, they connect their own past with global markers and standards, claiming rights and legitimacy, while explaining change and socio-economic conflict. This ironic usage is a way of making sense of their participation in the nation-state, and their simultaneous alienation. It places both the ancestors and particular practices in a removed space, but a space

that is important in how the Vaturanga encounter and deal with the modern nation-state, where land alienation, ethnic conflict, economic change and increasing forms of hegemony require the strategic use of space and time as ideological symbols, employed both as part of the nation-state, and against it.

CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSION

NATION-STATES

This study has examined the constellation of social networks and relations of the Vaturanga in the context of their incorporation into the Solomon Islands' nation-state. In so doing, I have looked at their economic practices and behaviours, coupled with their communication about those behaviours. It is my contention that understanding how such social networks vary within and between groups (lineages, ethnicities, elites, professionals, etc.) is an important and essential component in explaining the dynamics of life in post-colonial nation-states.

Roseberry (1989) notes that "organizational and institutional forms" foster "cultural forms and symbols around which alternative images of community can be built" (Roseberry 1989:228). If anything, this study shows that this process is far from unidirectional. On the contrary, it is clear that Vaturanga not only receive ideas and symbols from these systems and institutions, but reshape them and utilize them in ways the systems and institutions would never imagine. This is an open-ended system, in which "events" or "behaviours" are subject to interpretation, which is a form of communication (see Barth 1992).

Social Relations/Signs and Symbols

Nation-states have profound effects upon peoples. They are powerful and dynamic and involve powerful institutions and systems: markets, transportation systems, investment banks, bureaucracies, enterprises, development schemes, population centres, schools, religious institutions, political parties, sporting leagues, mass media, etc. These engage people in new

ways of making a living, new ways of communicating, they foster new social groups, and new hierarchies of power.

Most significantly, all these factors are involved with determining and delimiting social relations. New sets of relations are formed, and old ones are recontextualized. In this study, we see this over and over again. These social relations involve a series of signs or symbols. It has been my purpose here to decipher and comprehend those signs, explain their underlying meanings and contexts, to see how they are read locally and how such local readings are connected to the nation-state.

We have seen how within the Vaturanga community itself, social relations are significantly altered by their participation in the market economy. So much so that traditional forms of obligation and reciprocity are strained, and people lament the “social problems” they encounter in their own neighbours.

The Vaturanga deal with this issue by making repeated reference to magic, which has become a sort of rhetorical device representing everything from nostalgia for (presumably) less complex times, to serious social problems and the breakdown of the social order. Magic as such has become a symbolic system which simultaneously represents the past and the present, ideals that might be, and problems which seem unsolvable.

Likewise, we have seen here the emergence of clear ethnic identities via plantation development and population movement. The Vaturanga (and other West Guadalcanal peoples) are distinguished from the Malaitan plantation workers, imported to work on local plantations, sometimes generations earlier. Rather than thinking of these ethnicities as having “boundaries” or “markers” they can also be understood as different sets of social relations which cause each

group to encounter the nation-state as a whole, and each other, in profoundly different ways.

Each has divergent social networks. The Vaturanga, by virtue of being "landowners" have a network of resources--land, kin groups, reciprocal obligations--which they can call upon and utilize in strategic ways. But also, a large portion of their land has been alienated. Conversely, the Malaitan plantation workers are physically separated from their own kin groups and their resources. They are dependent upon wages earned. Their social relations, which I have not delved into greatly here, involve bosses, networks of kin extending through other plantations, in town (Honiara) and back to Malaita. Although the two groups (Vaturanga and Malaitan) do interact, even intermarry, they encounter the world in very different ways, and must make sense of it differently.

These factors are enormously important in understanding why the Vaturanga call the Malaitans "*bobote*" and the Malaitans call the Vaturanga "Solomons people." Each characterizes the other as nearly incomprehensible, and in so doing disenfranchise each other. The Malaitans see the Vaturanga as "Solomons people" without a legitimate *kastom* and hence no real legitimate claim upon the land they occupy, which is available for alienation and subsequent development. But Malaita is off-limits to such activities, idealized as the place of *kastom* which anthropologists (ironically) seek to learn.

Vaturanga see the Malaitans as "*bobote*," comical "fat men" who do not live primarily by gardening, hunting or fishing, but gather coconuts and make copra and get fat. They do not comprehend a world in which one gives up land and resources for a paycheque, to "eat rice" they say derisively. To many Vaturanga, the Malaitans are seen as aggressive, somewhat dangerous, dishonest, and unwelcome.

Nation-states also require new communicative and linguistic competencies. These set up new social hierarchies and relations, as they imply differential access to information coming from the nation-state. For the Vaturanga, schools and religious institutions have utilized three languages—English, Pijin and Hoko—in profoundly different ways. Schools have emphasized English competency, and portray Pijin and especially Hoko as holding inferior positions in terms of success in the nation-state. You are not likely to get far in Honiara without at least some knowledge of English. Both teachers and religious leaders exhibit competency in English, which gives them (and English) relatively high status.

The Anglican Church has emphasized Pijin, not through any explicit desire to promote it, but as a matter of convenience in communication. This has served to de-emphasize the local dialect—Ndi—which is experiencing significant changes. Because the Roman Catholic Church has utilized another dialect of Hoko—Ghari—to a high degree (using it throughout the liturgy and even in publications), that dialect has become more dominant, and is widely understood throughout Guadalcanal, making it a useful *lingua franca* in other non-religious contexts.

The mass media in the Solomon Islands are a clear case of needing new linguistic competencies in all three languages. In order to read a newspaper, one must be reasonably fluent in English. In order to listen to SIBC radio, one must know Pijin. In order to get a popular recording or song listened to, it must be in the Ghari dialect, not the Ndi dialect, of Hoko.

And through the mass media the Vaturanga are presented with whole new ways of thinking about themselves and their social relations. They see people struggling with land alienation and development across national boundaries, in Bougainville in neighbouring Papua

New Guinea. In so doing they sense a relationship not only with the Bougainvilleans, but with their own nation-state, the Solomon Islands. They see themselves in a similar predicament, they feel an alienation which they identify with Bougainville. During a crisis in the P.N.G. government which is directly related to Bougainville, some Vaturanga proclaim that Guadalcanal magic had a role to play in this crisis, that in effect, people from West Guadalcanal brought down the government in a neighbouring country.

Through reggae and ideals connected to Rastafarianism, Vaturanga youth also relate themselves to the nation-state in the form of the capital, Honiara. They see values in reggae and “rasta,” which come from Jamaica and Africa, not only as a form of identity or solidarity with other formerly colonized peoples in the world, but as a way to distinguish themselves from youths living in Honiara. They see “rasta” as “village” and this is simultaneously a repudiation of the white colonizers’ ways and of the values of town life. As with some forms of magic, rasta encourages the maintenance of traditional kin-based behaviours and sets of obligations in a setting which values market-forces and making money.

Finally, we see how Vaturanga movement from inland to the sea in the early colonial period has become a representation of their relationship with their own ancestors. The ancestors play a highly significant role in Vaturanga social relations. It is they who legitimate their land claims, who constrain them to follow particular customary practices, who often “get in the way” of making money, who are feared and dangerous and hence relegated to the bush, to *longa*, while the Vaturanga live *tasi*, on the coast. With the ancestors in the bush the Vaturanga are relatively free to engage in the nation-state and act independently. But without the ancestors, they have no land, no gardens, no hunting or fishing grounds, and no *kastom*.

The nation-state, via the mass media helped place the ancestors in the bush. Newspapers especially have portrayed *kastom* in spatial terms, making explicit reference to traditions and practices as a legitimating factor for the nation-state, and for distinguishing developed from undeveloped areas. For the Vaturanga, this has often highlighted their own belief that they have “lost” or “forgotten” most of their *kastom*, but they can conceive of it as being *longa*, a place where they no longer live.

All of these are examples of how the Vaturanga engage in communication about their economic lives, and how that communication both reflects and maintains a specific set of social relations, a constellation of associations which is unique to them.

Creolization

Studies of post-colonial nation-states have tended to focus on the emergence of a common, synthesized national culture (see Hannerz 1992b, Jourdan 1995b, 1996; Foster 1995b). Generally, these focus on towns or cities, and on situations of flux. Jourdan (1996), when talking about creolisation says:

I am referring to a process whereby vernacular (usually local) and superstrate (usually foreign) influences, linguistic or cultural, come into play to give way to a third language or to new cultural forms. Culturally, the resulting new forms may appear very different from the substrate supplied by vernacular cultures. In fact, very often creolisation allows new shells to be filled with old meanings. It is because of the fast pace of change that appears concomitantly that creolisation is most dramatically associated with societies in rapid cultural flux. But it does not need to be so (Jourdan 1996:46).

Hannerz (1992b) likewise talks about a “global ecumene” (1992b:40ff) and notes that different individuals and groups will have different perspectives, due to differences in connections that

they have (Hannerz 1992b:44). The emphasis of both these studies has been on how social networks arise, their contexts, etc. And most importantly, on how they are syncretized or synthesized in the context of cultural complexity (e.g., nation-states).

I do not deny that such processes are ongoing in nation-states, including the Solomon Islands and including the Vaturanga District. Creolization as described suggests a greater degree of cohesion and integration or homogenization when viewed from the nation's centre than appears when understood from the periphery. Indeed, Hannerz (1992a) proposes this:

In creole cultures as I see them, as systems of meaning and expression mapped onto structures of social relations, there is also a continuous spectrum of interacting forms, along which the various contributing historical sources of the culture are differentially visible and active. At one end of the creolizing continuum there is the culture of the center, with its greater prestige, as in language the "Standard"; at the other end are the cultural forms of the farthest periphery, probably in greater parochial variety. Within the form of life framework, groups variously affected by world system constraints and impulses also arrange themselves along the continuum, mixing, observing each other, and commenting on each other; the boundaries between them perhaps more or less blurred depending, for one thing, on the extent to which the forms are also emblematic of group memberships. The asymmetries of cultural flow within market and state frameworks, taking their places within the spectrum, have different points of origin and different reach. Movements arise at different points, at different times. In relation to this, there is a built-in political economy of culture, as social power and material resources are matched with the spectrum of cultural forms (Hannerz 1992a:264-265).

This study is actually a case of doing this: I have looked at the Vaturanga as one group among those "variously affected by world system constraints and impulses" and who have "arrange(d) themselves" on just such a continuum. There are, of course, contexts in which individuals from diverse backgrounds come together and redefine cultural features, they "fill new shells with old meanings" to paraphrase Jourdan above. But to say this is not enough. People in Honiara may

share many predicaments, but they also have vastly different social networks depending upon such factors as: ethnic origin, level of education, religious affiliation, language and communicative abilities, etc.

Take the example of ethnic tensions in Honiara itself. During my field experience, a riot occurred in Honiara in response to the Malaita team losing to Honiara in the Solomons Cup Soccer tournament held in December 1996. Why should people in Honiara riot when their team has won? Newspaper reporting about this event emphasized the large population of ex-Malaitans living in Honiara, for whom the Malaita team was the important association, not Honiara. Now acknowledging that many Malaitans had come from their home province to attend the tournament, it was widely reported in the newspaper that many of those arrested were residents of Honiara.

The point here is simple: despite sharing a common urban predicament and even a creolized culture, many people living in Honiara who identified as Malaitans still found their connections to Malaita a powerful and meaningful set of social relations. And some communicated that in a powerful and even violent manner. In so doing, they set themselves off from other groups living in Honiara.

Different groups in the Solomon Islands have different constellations of associations, and we can understand the dynamics going on within that nation-state best by making appropriate reference to these associations. These associations arise from their economic behaviours (how they make their living, day-to-day) and their communication about that behaviour (in the form of meaningful symbols as well as channels or avenues of communication available to them).

This is especially important, I think, in interpreting the ethnic tensions which arose subsequent to this field work in December 1998 (see Epilogue for a chronology of events). This is a means to doing a political economy of the crisis itself. And this approach is applicable in other contexts. Identifying the economic behaviours and the communications about them is a means of concretizing the social relations, outlining the connections people have with systems and institutions of all kinds, whether originating in post-colonial institutions and systems, or in local or customary practices.

As with Hannerz (1992b) and Jourdan (1996) we need not then locate a culture in the sense of establishing it as a bounded, distinctive unit with a fixed territory, but rather as the representation of specific and observable connections which people have, and which are different than the connections others have.

I have demonstrated in this study how the varying social networks in which people are engaged are essential to understanding the culture and political economy of post-colonial nation-states. And that they cannot be understood or explained solely by reference to creolizing or syncretizing forces.

HARD STONE PEOPLE

The Vaturanga really do think of themselves as "hard stone," that is, "stubborn" and "difficult." They do not think of this as a negative or a positive, but simply a *fait accompli*. They accept it, neither bragging nor complaining: it is who they are. The *mumu* made it so, and who are they to change it or argue with it?

As I reflect upon my time with them, I can see and hear this stubbornness. And here, at

the end of this work, it seems fitting to go back to the *mumu* of Totoha. This idea, that of being "hard stone," is present in every chapter. It could symbolically represent the Vaturanga use of magic, to question the rulings of chiefs and the market economy alike. They keep their options open this way. Likewise, it is present in their maintenance of connections with their kin throughout West Guadalcanal, who all became "landowners" together in the same story in which the Vaturanga got their name. Equally, it is there in their relations with the Malaitans, who themselves even note that the Vaturanga are not very entrepreneurial for this reason.

It is there in the debates about language and communication, in the resentment of the dominance of Ghari over Ndi, and equally in the utilitarian use of the former. In so doing, the Vaturanga resist both the hegemonies of large institutions and systems, and simultaneously their complete submergence in an exclusively local identity.

Stubbornness is also there in how they have insisted upon linking themselves to the Bougainville Crisis, in their negative evaluation of town life in Honiara, and the central government. And it is there in the symbolic mapping of space, in which they keep the ancestors in the bush, near and far, present and past, not letting *kastom* or the nation-state take over completely.

The Vaturanga "resist" all domination, all control: they are stubbornly individualistic and just as equally stubbornly communal. Being "hard stone" is strategically valuable: it is a strategy for survival in a world in which they must negotiate so many changes, so many conflicting rules, so many dangerous possibilities. Perhaps that is why they feel the *mumu* of Totoha got it just right when he said "these people are difficult": in their world, being "difficult" makes sense.

EPILOGUE

CRISIS IN GUADALCANAL

Introduction

I left the Solomon Islands in May 1997. About eighteen months later, in November 1998, a group calling itself the Guadalcanal Revolutionary Army, responding to a speech made by the Premier of Guadalcanal Province, set up a roadblock along the main road in northwest Guadalcanal. This began a conflict which, to date, has lasted nearly two years, and escalated at one point to a coup d'état and nearly civil war.

I have not been able formally to study this conflict via field work or interviews. But I have maintained contact (sometimes sporadic) with members of both the Vaturanga community, and the Malaitan community living in Guadalcanal. They have written me, phoned, and even e-mailed me when possible. One person was able to send me copies of newspapers, until it became too dangerous to travel about. Apart from these sources, I have been able to access information about the ongoing situation via the internet.

Although much of my information is second-hand and I have not had the opportunity to do any kind of systematic study, we can see how the conflict is related to issues discussed in the present study. This conflict is firmly rooted in the colonial and post-colonial experience of Guadalcanal, and hence this study serves as relevant background information for any analysis.

That being the case, it is my intention to do only two things: 1) to give a chronology of events which occurred beginning in November/December 1998 up until the present time, and 2) to show how the signs and symbols indicated in reports of this crisis (whether news reports or personal communications with me) indicate issues which follow from the present study, and

might be indicators of appropriate and needed future inquiry.

Chronology

In early December 1998, a group calling itself the Guadalcanal Revolutionary Army (sometimes referred to as the Guadalcanal Republic Army or Guadalcanal Liberation Army) or GRA set up a road block in northwestern Guadalcanal. This action followed demands made by the Premier of Guadalcanal Province, Ezekiel Alebua, for compensation to be paid for the “murders” of indigenous Guadalcanal peoples in Honiara, the confiscation of lands belonging to Guadalcanal peoples, rent to be paid for the town of Honiara itself, and the implementation of a prohibition on land ownership by people from other provinces (Solomons Voice, December 11, 1998). The men who set up the road block, along the Bonege road, were “wearing only traditional costumes” and twenty-two were later arrested and charged with weapons violations and unlawful assembly (Solomons Voice, December 11, 1998).

Within a few weeks, the first refugees from rural areas of Guadalcanal began to arrive in Honiara (Solomon Star, December 23, 1998). There were also protests in Honiara, mainly by people of Malaitan backgrounds (Solomon Star, January 12, 1999). An exchange of gunfire between four Guadalcanal men and police in early January 1999 further heightened tensions and demands by the GRA (Solomon Star, January 21, 1999).

Also in January, the Prime Minister promised to address the demands of the GRA and Guadalcanal Premier (Solomon Star, January 12, 1999). As talks proceeded for several months, tensions eased somewhat until in June 1999 a group of GRA took over Kakabona on the western outskirts of Honiara. Police used tear gas to force them out and restore local authority

(Solomon Star, June 14 1999). Some sources reported that two men were killed in this incident. At around the same time, clashes between Guadalcanal groups and Malaitans in East Guadalcanal were reported. (Solomon Star June 14, 1999).

In an attempt to calm the situation, the Prime Minister promised to pay Guadalcanal Province \$500,000 as compensation for hosting the national capital and other factors. The GRA (now sometimes referred to as the Guadalcanal Liberation Army) began a full-scale blockade of the roads leading to and from the capital. Other road blocks were set up by Malaitans living in Honiara. Mobs in the capital were reported to be attacking anyone they could identify as being a native of Guadalcanal (Keith Perry, New Zealand Herald, June 15, 1999).

Solomon Islands Plantations Ltd. suspended operations in Guadalcanal plantations that same month as thousands of workers fled rural areas to escape threats of violence. On June 16th, SIBC reported that a State of Emergency had been declared, in response not only to the Kakabona incident, but also an attack on oil palm workers and the burning of houses in several villages (Reuters 16 June 1999). At this time, it was reported that there were 10,000 refugees, mainly of Malaitan background, in or coming to Honiara fleeing the violence under threats from the GRA (Sydney Morning Herald, 15 June 1999).

On June 21st the Solomon Star reported that negotiations held at Tamboko in northwestern Guadalcanal between church leaders and the "Guadalcanal militants" had led to a promise to "lay down their arms and prepare to go back to their respective villages" (Solomon Star, June 21, 1999). It was also reported at this point that the Solomon Islands government had paid the Guadalcanal Province 2.5 million dollars in compensation, as previously demanded

(Solomon Star, June 21, 1999).

Also in late June Sitiveni Rabuka, former Prime Minister of Fiji, at the behest of the Commonwealth Office in London agreed to act as mediator between the government and the Guadalcanal Liberation Army (Agence-France-Presse, 21 June 1999; Sydney Morning Herald, 21 June 1999). Shortly thereafter, Rabuka estimated that there were approximately "20,000 members of the indigenous Isatambu Freedom Fighters (IFF)" (Agence-France-Presse, 23 June 1999). This was the first instance in the press that the term "Isatambu Freedom Fighters" was used, "isatambu" meaning "holy ground" in Hoko. Rabuka also indicated that the movement was "well organized" (Agence-France-Presse, 23 June 1999; Sydney Morning Herald, 23 June 1999).

Meanwhile, the economy of the Solomon Islands suffered, as the government had spent S\$20 million Solomon Dollars in the crisis (National Business Review [NZ], 25 June 1999). By this point also, the official death toll from the crisis stood at six, but refugees were estimated in the thousands (Sydney Morning Herald, 26 June 1999). The same account gives a description of the Isatambu Freedom Fighters as follows:

Twenty or so young men dressed only in the traditional warrior dress of kabilato - most carrying shotguns and .22 rifles, some with bows and arrows - descend on our car. After a series of bird whistles, perhaps 150 more near-naked, heavily armed men emerge as if out of nowhere, from behind palm trees. They surround our car and point their weapons.

There is fury in the eyes of their leader, Andrew, who demands - in perfect English - to know who gave us permission to drive into the zone and what happened at the village talks between Mr Rabuka and his militia colleagues.

One of our group explains that George Gray, the secretary of the militia commonly known as the Guadalcanal Revolutionary Army (GRA), gave us permission. Andrew says Gray had no right; he confiscates our tapes while more of his men, some of whom are growing increasingly agitated, move closer to the

car and point their guns toward our heads.

After 10 minutes, Mr Rabuka, who was following us from the village, arrives. "They are not with us - we didn't bring them," he says. "But you should let them go. They are not here to hurt you."

They let us go. Mr Rabuka even gets our tapes back. But not before he holds separate talks to try to convince Andrew and his men - as he did George Gray - to lay down their arms to attend peace talks in Honiara yesterday.

Mr Rabuka helped diffuse the danger. But it is becoming increasingly apparent, in the short term at least, that he might not be able to save the Solomon Islands from its latest round of ethnic violence (Daley, Sydney Morning Herald, 26 June 1999).

The IFF was reported to threaten a "bloodbath" of Malaitans in Honiara if the peace talks fail (Sydney Morning Herald, 25 June 1999). IFF later agreed to give up their arms on the condition of amnesty and release of arrested militants (Solomon Star, 28 June 1999). On 28 June 1999 an accord was reached (Radio Australia, 28 June 1999; Agence-France-Presse, 29 June 1999). It was formally signed by all parties on 30 June 1999 (Solomon Star, 1 July 1999). Fiji and Vanuatu agreed to provide police for the purpose of supervising the hand over of weapons (Solomon Star, 5 July 1999).¹¹⁶

Problems continued, however, as random groups of "militants" took hostages or refused to cooperate with the peace accord (Solomon Star, 5 July 1999). Clashes with police, resulting in the death of four IFF members occurred in early August (Solomon Star, 2 August 1999). Despite requests and promises, Malaitan workers refused to return to positions at Solomon Islands Plantations Ltd. or the Ross Gold Mine (Solomon Star, 5 August 1999; Solomon Star, 21 July 1999). By August 3rd, Rabuka was suggesting that the accord had "broken down" (Radio Australia, 3 August 1999).

Clashes between IFF and police continued through early August as Rabuka returned and attempted to bring about new negotiations (Radio Australia, 5 August 1999; Radio Australia, 8

August 1999). A second accord, known as the Panatina agreement, was reached on August 13th but did not involve the IFF directly in negotiations (Radio Australia, 13 August 1999). Random clashes continued, including shootings of workers at the Ross Gold Mine in Central Guadalcanal (Solomon Star, 16 August 1999). Also in August, Selwyn College (in the Vaturanga District) became the first secondary school in Guadalcanal to shut down because of the violence (Radio Australia, 9 August 1999). Other schools would follow suit (personal communication, August 1999).

In late September, Amnesty International reported that:

At least 10 people are known to have been killed and 14 people have "disappeared", but the real figures may be much higher. Several hundred houses have either been burnt down or looted.

"Scared villagers and displaced families have given horrific accounts of indiscriminate police shooting and cruel killings by armed groups known as 'militants'", Dr Heinz Schürmann-Zeggel, Amnesty International's Australia-Pacific Researcher, said at a press conference in Honiara today.

Hundreds of armed men, calling themselves the Guadalcanal Revolutionary Army or Isatambu Freedom Movement, have been terrorizing mostly Malaitan settlers on Guadalcanal since September 1998. More than 32,000 people, predominantly from Malaita Province, have since left their homes and villages on Guadalcanal (Amnesty International, 30 September 1999).

In a serious escalation of tensions, in October Malaitans formed their own armed group, calling themselves the Malaita Eagle Forces (Radio Australia, 25 October 1999). Sporadic fighting and incidents continued through the remainder of the year, and early into 2000. Rabuka was again appointed as Special Commonwealth Envoy in February 2000. Talks however did not transpire because militants from both sides refused to attend, fearing arrest. In May, the Governor-General lifted an order banning the MEF and IFF, and talks were set to commence. However, the coup d'état in Fiji prevented Rabuka's arrival and the talks were postponed until June 2,

2000 (Australian Associated Press, 7 June 2000). At this point it was estimated that there were 20,000 refugees in Honiara, and that 55 people had been killed (including two beheadings) (Australian Associated Press, 7 June 2000; Amnesty International, 21 May 2000).

On June 5, 2000, the Malaita Eagle Forces took the Prime Minister, Bartholomew Ulufa'alu, hostage demanding his resignation and S\$150 million dollars in compensation for the Malaitans who have been forced out of their homes in Guadalcanal (Bohane, News Limited, 6 June 2000). The MEF maintained a communications blackout and closed the airport. The Prime Minister, who is Malaitan, offered to resign the next day, however parliament insisted that proper procedures be followed and the parliamentary caucus agreed to meet (Ricketts, Sydney Morning Herald, 7 June 2000). Australia and New Zealand began evacuating expatriots from Honiara (Clennell, Sydney Morning Herald, 7 June 2000). Shortly thereafter, full-scale fighting broke out near Henderson International Airport between IFF and MEF forces (Radio Australia, 7 June 2000; Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation, 7 June 2000). Parliament agreed to convene on June 15th to consider appointing a new Prime Minister (Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation, 7 June 2000). Malaita Eagle Forces were reported to control the streets of Honiara (Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation, 7 June 2000).

One-hundred casualties were reported in the fighting near Henderson Field, mainly IFF fighters who were out-gunned by the MEF which had weapons taken from police headquarters in Honiara and had also seized a government patrol boat (The National, P.N.G., 8 June 2000; Sydney Morning Herald, 8 June 2000). On June 8th, Mr. Andrew Nori, who led the coup, announced that the Malaita Eagle Forces have declared war on the Isatambu Freedom Fighters (Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation, 8 June 2000). On June 9th, militants (it is

unknown which group) fired on the plane of an EU delegation trying to leave Honiara (The Telegraph, 9 June 2000). On June 10th the MEF freed the Prime Minister and agreed to an orderly transfer of power (CNN, 10 June 2000).

In the next few weeks, tensions calmed as IFF and MEF forces withdrew from the Henderson airport area. However, roadblocks continued as well as sporadic violence, mainly in Honiara (personal communication, August 2000). On October 15th, Australian-brokered talks produced a peace accord. The agreement includes a renunciation of violent action:

The parties to this agreement hereby declare that they renounce, deplore and do solemnly give up violence ... and confirm their respect for human rights and rule of the law (BBC News, 15 October 2000).

In a phone call received October 24th from Honiara, I was informed that Australian and New Zealand peacekeepers were to arrive in one week's time.

Correlations/Indications

There are a number of features in the chronology above which show clear correlations between the study presented here and the later conflicts. I begin appropriately, I think, with the writings of a Guadalcanal Islander, identified as "Kukua" and published in the Solomon Star on 6 January 1999, a point early in the conflict. Kukua wrote:

The incidents in northwest Guadalcanal were symptoms of a wider public opinion. It was a mechanism (not a legal one though, and should not be condoned) for expressing dissatisfaction with having to carry the burdens of nation-building.

The underlying causes of tension have been around for years. And if you mix around with our Guadalcanal wantoks long enough you would realise that simmering under their generally quiet and passive personality is a deep sense of frustration waiting to erupt.

Much of this frustration emanates from the fact that Guadalcanal has become the magnetic centre for nation-building in Solomon Islands—it hosts the national capital, much of the economic activities and provides the state's political nerve centre. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Metapona stringband composed a song which says, "Guadalcanal, hemi suitim evriwan...."

Such a focus has its pros and cons. And while some Guadalcanal people have benefitted tremendously from this, there are many who have been pushed to the margins, especially those in areas around Honiara.

As the capital city grows at an average rate of about 6 per cent per annum, the town boundaries cannot contain the population. Consequently, it overflows into customary land, and along with it, other problems associated with the concentration of large population in a small geographical area....

(T)he establishment of Honiara itself is only part of the issue.

More important in Guadalcanal people's concern is the multitude of settlements that have mushroomed around Honiara. Many of these belong to people from other islands...

In many cases, the settlements have been established without the approval of customary landowners.

In other cases, however, Guadalcanal people are partly to be blamed. Many landowners have sold their birth right for peanuts. That is why there is a need for a law of some sort (a provincial ordinance maybe) banning the sale of customary land on Guadalcanal or any other province for that matter.

In other instances, people from other islands have acquired land ownership through custom feasts. Those feasts, however, in most cases, give the right of use, NOT the right of ownership. That right of use could be taken away anytime the customary owner wishes to do so.

The complexities of urbanisation and land issues have been exacerbated by what many Guadalcanal people feel is a general lack of respect for them as hosts...

The underlying causes of the current inter-island tensions are urbanisation, settlements, land and disrespect (Kukua, Solomon Star, 6 January 1999, p. 5).

Kukua clearly places the Solomon Islands' nation-state and the way it is structured (i.e., its institutions and systems) at the centre of the conflict, noting the effects of uneven development on Guadalcanal. Inherent in this are conflicts about the nature and uses of customary land, that is, land which is corporately own by clans and lineages and distributed according to customary rules which conflict with notions of property in modern market-oriented nation-states.

Kukua also touches on prior ethnic tensions in several ways. He notes, for instance, the song (discussed in Chapter Four) "Guadalcanal, hemi suitim evriwan" (Guadalcanal is sweet to everyone), not as a song of pride in the wealth of the island, but as a complaint, that everyone takes from Guadalcanal. Kukua also raises the issue of "respect" (or lack thereof) on the part of the migrants living in Guadalcanal. This includes the murder of twenty-five Guadalcanal islanders which the Premier sought compensation for, but also goes further into the idea of legitimacy of landownership and customary practices.

It is not insignificant that the men who set up that first roadblock in northwest Guadalcanal were wearing "traditional dress" and that later, when the reporters encountered 170 of them along the road, they were "near naked" and in "traditional warrior dress." Kombe (not his real name) wrote to me that the IFF was enforcing a strict customary dress code in the villages, requiring the men to wear large shell necklaces, and women to wear grass skirts (personal communication, September 1999). Clearly, the Isatambu Freedom Movement has sought a degree of legitimacy by reference to *kastom*, a *kastom* many Vaturanga had previously viewed as "lost" or "forgotten." They also required that those who had married into Guadalcanal communities to *sahe* into Guadalcanal lineages, or they would not be allowed to remain. I know of two instances of men who did this (personal communication, February 2000).

The issue of Bougainville is similarly relevant. Early in the conflict, Kombe informed me that the men at the centre of the roadblock had been in Western Province, part of the patrol force watching the border during the Bougainville Crisis. While I have no other evidence for this, it should form an important avenue of inquiry, since we know that the Bougainville

situation was prominent in the minds of people in West Guadalcanal in how they thought of themselves in relation to the nation-state. Individuals from the "front lines" of that conflict may have been able to claim legitimacy and authority from that association, and although I have not been able to find it in the news reports, may have made important references to it.¹¹⁷

It is clear that issues of land ownership, distribution, customary practice, and their convergence with the modern nation-state are at the core of this conflict. Major players include market-systems, development projects, population movement, communicative systems and technologies, and ideas about the past: all themes central to the study presented here.

Eller (1999), in commenting about problems in modern nation-states, notes:

Two things seem to be happening simultaneously and probably not coincidentally. Violent conflict between countries—or, to be precise, between "states"—has become less common in recent decades. Open conflict between smaller "nonstate" groups or against small nonstate groups by state governments has increased, however, in frequency and ferocity. According to one source, at least eighty times since World War II such conflict has escalated into war, and over two hundred such groups have organized themselves at one time or another... Not inconsequentially, a majority—though by no means all—of these problems have surfaced in non-Western postcolonial states in Asia, the Middle East and Africa (Eller 1999:1).

We now see such conflicts in the South Pacific. The roots of such conflicts go back into the colonial period. They are not found so much in "tribal" animosities as in the structures of nation-states themselves, which create new social categories, new economic priorities, new social relations, and with them new conflicts and new causes.

The present study attempts to contribute to our understanding of such social relations, the factors and antecedents involved, in one localized case. But that case is, as Eller notes, not unique, but all too common.

ENDNOTES

1. The only exceptions I can think of are Pakistan and Bangladesh, which were colonially part of India; Somalia seems to be an amalgamation of British and Italian Somaliland, but the borders were drawn by the British and Italians, not by Somalis; Tanzania is a union of two former colonies of Tanganyika and Zanzibar. These are the only instances in which the colonized altered or changed the borders or territories according to their own ideals.
2. These conflicts have, in recent months, turned violent, not just in the Vaturanga District, but throughout much of Guadalcanal. See Epilogue.
3. This language has been termed elsewhere in the literature as "Ghari" but this usage is not accepted by the Vaturanga, who see Ghari as a dialect of a common language. Because the designation of the language as Ghari is arbitrary (after the dialect with the largest number of speakers), I have chosen to use the Vaturanga term *hoko*, which simply means "talk" or "language."
4. Oliver (1991) notes that it took Mendana thirty some years to find them again.
5. Bougainville and Buka were incorporated with the Bismark Archipelago as a German colony.
6. Later, after World War II, the capital was moved to Honiara on Guadalcanal, where the Japanese began an airstrip, which the Americans captured and completed.
7. See Note 3 above.
8. It can be very confusing to attempt to find a definition of the Vaturanga District. The government defines it narrowly as the area between Paru and Hautambu. But Vaturanga themselves incorporate a much larger area stretching to Verahue. The Church of Melanesia (Anglican), adding to the confusion, has its own Vaturanga District which incorporates the entire Ngeri District.
9. I was myself, along with other hapless males, thrown into the ocean by such a "gang" on New Years Day. On other occasions, women were allowed to publically humiliate males by throwing water on them, or tricking them. These were accepted behaviours which were often attributed to the Vaturanga (in general) being "stubborn" or "hard stone." Males also sometimes engaged in such behaviours.
10. See Bathgate 1975:172ff for a slightly different analysis of West Guadalcanal kinship.
11. Most exhibited moiety exogamy too, although the Vaturanga do not emphasize this when talking about marriage rules.

12. Usually in such cases, the woman was raised in the Vaturanga District and the man has come from elsewhere. Even though the wife was raised in the Vaturanga District, her lineage may have land elsewhere. In such cases, the woman will *sui* land for herself and her children.
13. Parents answered for children.
14. There is a whole family from Tikopia who did this as well, living in a neighbouring village.
15. This person has subsequently joined (*sahe*) into a Vaturanga clan.
16. In fact, of the two Malaitans who are represented as marrying into the Vaturanga in Table 2.4, one is the descendant of a worker from the former Taitai Plantation, not Lavuro, the other came from Honiara. So, I have no evidence at all of intermarriage between Vaturanga and Lavuro Plantation workers.
17. Lavuro Plantation, significantly, lacks a source of clean water, thus the women are taken everyday to Verahue village to collect water from the pump there.
18. Often, they are badly neglected. Many people allow their pigs simply to roam freely about the villages and on the road. There they get into people's gardens, become a nuisance, and create some social tension. There were two gardens near my house which were invaded almost daily by pigs: we had to chase tje, away to keep them from digging up the sweet potatoes. Despite frequent complaints and even public lectures (and in one case a fine) from the chiefs, some people simply refuse to pen their pigs.
19. I am told that recently the Isatambu Freedom Movement has required villagers to wear these things as a kind of sign of their "Guadalcanalness" or "authenticity." This has also involved requiring the men to wear shell necklaces (personal communication 1999).
20. Even I was included in such distributions on every occasion, although only receiving the smallest share. I was told that this was done in deference to my hosts.
21. Although this looks like a "cheap" alternative, in practice you **must** have *golo ni hita* in the exchange. The exchange rate allows for a degree of flexibility and leeway, especially since *golo ni hita* is expensive, controlled, and hard to come by.
22. This has the effect of making Roman Catholic brides very expensive.
23. Even paying too much can generate tensions between the kin groups involved, particularly if some agenda is perceived to underlay the over-payment. Too much "generosity" might be interpreted as an attempt to abrogate or negate an established relationship, rather than maintain it.

24. Solomon Islands' Dollars, which at the time had an exchange rate which valued them at approximately 0.30 Canadian Dollars.

25. Altogether, it would appear that the average household spends approximately \$687 per month in stores. There is an obvious disparity here with income, which is reported as averaging only \$463 per month, more than \$200 less. There may be several explanations for this. Vaturanga may purposely under-estimate their incomes, or over-estimate spending. Rather than assuming such a pattern, it would be simpler to note that the trips per month are on average, that in numerous trips made in a single month, the same amount will not be spent each time, and so these figures are useful only in giving us an idea of where the Vaturanga tend to spend their money, and the relative amounts. Also, a few households with large incomes who make more frequent trips to Honiara may skew the average spent there.

26. Funded by an Australian aide programme.

27. That is, social disapproval, withdrawal of cooperation with individuals who do not comply. I witnessed one case in which someone was banished from the community for a few years. This individual went to live with relatives in another district.

28. These are also presented in minor cases of disputes between individuals.

29. For example, Selwyn College, chose not to participate in the new water system for the district, instead going it alone, although the other church-run institutions (Franciscan brothers and Sisters of Melanesia) did participate.

30. Although certainly I witnessed many informal encounters between the school community and local villagers.

31. Technically Naro is in the Ngeri District. However, it is right on the border, and the people of Naro regard themselves as Vaturanga for many purposes. There are also Roman Catholic and Anglican churches in Verahue, a Vaturanga village in the Ngeri District.

32. The founder of the Melanesian Brotherhood was a Maravovo man named Ini Kopuria, who is also buried in the village cemetery. The Melanesian Brotherhood is headquartered at Tambulea in the Tambulivu District, also in West Guadalcanal. The story of the Melanesian Brotherhood has been written extensively (see Fox 1962; Whiteman 1983).

33. *Hoko* or *Ghoko* means "talk." West Guadalcanal peoples refer to their language as *hoko ni hita* (lit. "our talk"). The Summer Institute of Linguistics has chosen to name this language "Ghari" after one dialect. Some Vaturanga, however, resent this usage, seeing Ghari as only one dialect of *hoko ni hita*. For brevity's sake, and to avoid the politics of naming other peoples' language, I will use *Hoko* to refer to all the dialects of West Guadalcanal collectively, and use Ghari, Ndi, Ngeri, Nggae, Tambulivu, etc. only to refer to dialects.

34. At the time I was leaving the Solomon Islands, the Roman Catholic Church was preparing to issue a version of the Bible in the Ghari dialect of *Hoko*.
35. The five dialects are Ndi, Nggae, Ngeri, Ghari and Nggaria. Poleo is sometimes included, but the usage is inconsistent, and may reflect the idea that they share similar customs with Poleo speakers.
36. You can also arrange for this truck to take your copra to Honiara, in which case the brothers charge a fixed rate per bag of copra. If there is room, they will allow those with large coolers going to market to hop onto the truck as well, again with a set fee.
37. There is now a third, Wantok FM.
38. In fact, it was easier to receive radio stations in Australia and Papua New Guinea than SIBC or Island FM because of this, a factor which made shortwave radios very desirable.
39. My own AM/FM/SW radio took six AA batteries which had to be replenished once per week. My receiver itself cost \$300+ Solomon dollars, a significant outlay of cash.
40. The Roman Catholic Church actually uses Ghari in Central Province too.
41. I prefer here the term "magic" over "sorcery" for several reasons: 1) the Vaturanga themselves use the English word "magic" to refer to these matters; 2) the term "magic" is more all-encompassing than "sorcery" (although they may be equivalents in some contexts, the latter is not always used in such an all-encompassing manner); 3) the term "magic" has implied within it a concern with establishing a reality or (perhaps) an illusion of reality which more closely corresponds to rhetoric or discourse than "sorcery" which tends to imply something hidden or secretive, rather than the establishment of a reality.
42. The exceptions being magic used for hunting, gardening or fishing, or magic used for "romantic" purposes.
43. For Guadalcanal islanders who live in areas without access to a road, there is a regular copra ship which goes around the island.
44. A fourth case involving *sui kokochi* had a somewhat different circumstance. In this case, the "renters" had, several generations earlier, changed the relationship to one of *sahe tana duli*, i.e., via feasting they had "joined" the landowning lineage and become full members. This land dispute was also precipitated by a potential logging concession.
45. This is at a mortuary feast. The term *sulukima* means "wash hands" and is a payment by the deceased kin to the widow and her kin. It acknowledges the widow's work and care for her husband and also the children resulting.

46. In reality there are more, including at least five different forms related to subsistence (i.e., for gardening, fishing, hunting, keeping pigs, etc.) and hints of others that people did not know details about, such as *puni*, which makes you invisible, but which no one (I could find) knew how to do. There are also *madu* forms, which are designed to seduce the opposite sex.

47. I was singularly unsuccessful in getting anyone to explain to me why it is always "old men" and not young ones (or middle aged ones) who are suspected of doing *vele*, despite repeatedly asking the question. The inference, given the exchange reported here, is that *vele* is no longer used for hunting (a younger man's activity). It may also be that it requires many years to learn how to *vele*, thus it is not within the range of skills a younger man can learn. Another possibility is that it is regarded as a customary practice which has died out except for some "old men" who continue to use it, but in "rubbish" ways. Young men frequently talk about *vele* and speculate not only about individuals, but about how to do it, the contents of the *vele* basket, etc., often giving lurid details, which elders I spoke to said were incorrect.

48. Indeed, the contrast could not be more stark. While there are numerous anthropological articles and books written about the peoples of Malaita, there are comparatively few studies of Guadalcanal.

49. I left Guadalcanal approximately eighteen months before these conflicts erupted into open violence, which has been widely reported. See Epilogue.

50. I do not know the current situation. From news reports I have obtained, it would appear that most plantation workers from this area are now refugees.

51. There are descendants of such workers living in Queensland, Australia today.

52. Lavuro Plantation does not even have a source of drinking water. The workers there must travel to Vaturanga villages to obtain water.

53. *Kastom* is variously constructed on Malaita, and not uniform. I have encountered Malaitans who believe that they are the descendants of the sons of Noah (as in the Ark), and hence believe that Christianity is authentically *kastom* (see Ryniker 1991), while it has been widely reported that other Malaitans, particularly the Kwaio, regard Christianity as the antithesis of *kastom* (see Keesing 1982a, 1982b, 1982c, 1992). The meaning of the term is frequently contested.

54. A *mumu* is a kind of dwarf, sometimes described as a "giant" (because of his extreme muscular development), and is similar to the *kakamora* of Makira Island (see Fox 1962).

55. See previous chapter's discussion of *riana pupuku* magic.

56. As we can see also, the *mumu* is a sort of trickster figure, condemning some peoples to

incestuous practices, others to selfishness, others to stubbornness, and only one does he give positive attributes. Thus, the landownership comes with a kind of curse. This is not an uncommon theme in myth, of course: many people's origin myths explain inconsistencies and paradoxes by reference to a trickster figure.

57. Especially since I did not exactly "get" the joke, but it was quite clear that a common stereotype had emerged.

58. I am told this term also contains the implication of "pregnant" making the image especially comical.

59. Unfortunately I was never able to obtain the words or a recording of this latter song, despite extensive queries. Both songs apparently date from more than a decade ago.

60. Guadalcanal people I asked about this expressed great confusion about being designated "Solomons men" or the like. Often, my question was misunderstood and elicited an explanation as to how the islands got their name (i.e., from the Spanish explorer Mendana). When I clarified my question, the reply would often be: "Oh, yes, they do call us that. But I don't know what it means."

61. A sort of layabout youth with no job (see Jourdan 1995a).

62. It would be misleading to imply that these characterizations were specific to the Vaturanga. Although some Malaitans did specifically mention the Vaturanga, their comments were focused on Guadalcanal peoples generally.

63. See Davenport and Coker 1967 for information on the Moro Movement.

64. I did, however, note them observing many customary *tambus*, including mother-in-law avoidance, sister/brother avoidance, rules concerning the dead, naming, etc.

65. Interestingly, there are in Fiji as well descendants of plantation workers brought from Malaita (see Howard 1991:4).

66. In fact, an editorial cartoon appearing in one newspaper satirized this before the final match as "Malaita versus ex-Malaita."

67. Although there are indications of such trends in the Isatambu Freedom Movement.

68. This will also help to prevent confusion and the constant need to qualify whether I am referring to Ghari as the language or Ghari as one dialect.

69. In Solomon Islands, it is spelled Pijin not Pidgin.

70. Indeed, the notion of English as a "language of education" is so strong that I had difficulty convincing one Vaturanga that there is such a thing as a "native speaker" of English. He repeatedly would ask me what my "native language" was and when I answered "English" would protest that I had not understood his question.

71. There are also two other dialects which are sometimes referred to as *hoko ni hita*: Poleo and Tambulehu. The inclusion of these languages/dialects in the definition of *hoko ni hita* has, in my experience, an inconsistent usage, with some individuals saying that they clearly belong, and others seemingly uncertain. Vaturanga will tell you that the speakers of these languages/dialects share their *kastom* and belong to their clans. But they are excluded from the mythical story discussed in Chapter Three, the names of their languages/dialects do not have the same meaning of "there," and many Vaturanga describe these languages/dialects as significantly different from their own, i.e., they cannot "hear" them. The relationship of these languages/dialects and their speakers to the other peoples of West Guadalcanal is not the purview of this present study, and hence I have excluded them from the definition of *Hoko* pending additional information.

72. In fact, the Roman Catholic Church uses the Ghari dialect in Central Province as well.

73. It should also be noted that English words are also replacing some Ndi terms: e.g., *rumu* (room) and *laiti* (light or lamp).

74. Although there are some indications that it is creolizing in Honiara.

75. Their equivalents in Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu respectively.

76. See Table 2.1.

77. This term is used throughout the Solomon Islands to designate an Anglican priest.

78. The Solomon Islands Christian Association, which had, by this point, completed a translation of the New Testament into Solomon Islands Pijin.

79. Ini Kopuria is an Anglican divine from Maravovo, he founded the Melanesian Brotherhood, of which much has been written (see Fox 1962; Whiteman 1983).

80. One teacher is from the Vaturanga District.

81. Selwyn College does have a daily bus traveling to Honiara, which Vaturanga villagers can access if there is room, but priority is given to staff, teachers and students. In some ways, this institution has set itself apart from the local community: for instance, they chose not to participate in the new water system for the district, although all the other church-run institutions did.

82. Some students at St. Francis come from the neighbouring Nggae District because it is closer to them than the Nggae Primary School. There are also some children of plantation workers attending the school.

83. Prior to 1969 the Vaturanga attended two separate primary schools: Standard 1 through 4 were offered at Verahue in the Ngeri District, and Standard 5 through 7 at Maravovo Senior Primary School at Veranaaso in the Vaturanga District.

84. Interestingly, according to this table, children who have had some education are **less** likely to be competent in Pijin than those who have none: 57% versus 71% respectively. However, if we exclude the pre-class and kindergarten levels, in which children are being first introduced to Pijin and English, we find a different relationship whereby those with some education above kindergarten are significantly more likely to speak Pijin than those with no education attainment: 86% versus 71%. Note that enrollment in a particular level is not necessarily related to age, nor are all or even most of those with no education at all extremely young children. However, the kindergarten and pre-class levels consist of younger children.

85. This interview involved a group of five teachers. Rather than give each a pseudonym, I will simply present their comments collectively.

86. Interestingly, I observed all of the items on this list still being done in the Vaturanga District, except for the last two: nobody wears a grass skirt or a loincloth.

87. On the very same days as I arrived in Guadalcanal in November 1996, the last Vaturanga who had been born "pagan" died. I was greeted with this news at the airport. I had met this individual on previous visits.

88. See Note 79 above.

89. It is titled "Hira na Hoko na Sasavo," in English "The Book of Common Prayer in the language of the Vaturana (Guadalcanal) British Solomon Islands." A revised Eucharistic service titled "Na Sasavona Hahani Tabu" or "The Prayer (Service) of the Holy Communion" was published in 1987.

90. Except in the Tasemboko District, where they use the Nggela language service book because the people of that district speak a language more closely related to the Nggela Islands.

91. This is an on-going work since 1988, sponsored by the ecumenical Solomon Islands Christian Association and the Bible Society of the South Pacific.

92. Except for services held in the monastic communities, which I am not counting here.

93. A general term used to designate a Roman Catholic priest in the Solomon Islands.

94. Not being a linguist it is not clear to me whether these are all the same dialect of Hoko, or three separate dialects of Hoko or, as Kesa suggests, dialects of Ndi. What is clear is that ideological connections about languages and dialects are being asserted by Kesa.

95. Later Kesa reported back to me that he had spoken to the wardens and they agreed that it would be good to have preaching in Ndi. They invited Kesa to do so. I was unable to attend that service because of illness, but when I returned to the village a few days later, Kesa told me that he had preached in Ndi and that everyone in the village had approved of this and thought it was a good thing.

96. The term "Rastafarian" comes from the Emperor Halle Selassie of Ethiopia, who was born Ras Tafari Makonnen. He was important ideologically because he was a black man (African) who "was a staunch and ferocious defender of the doctrine of independence (and) Africanism" (Thurnton 1998:17). Reggae became a vehicle of Rastafarian ideas initially through Bob Marley in the 1960s. Marley, a Jamaican, "literally took reggae and the resistance movement to the world stage" (Thurnton 1998:17). Thus reggae, through this association, cultivates world-wide an image of resistance, anti-colonialism and the unity of oppressed peoples (especially from Africa, Australia and the Caribbean).

97. Please note that I did not obtain every single issue of every newspaper that was published during that time. This table is presented as a sampling of the types of reporting: it is a random sample, but not a comprehensive or exhaustive sample.

98. Sandlines is a private company which has recruited mercenaries to fight in several conflicts, mainly in Africa.

99. The central government in Honiara was under attack at the time on many fronts, not just Bougainville. A government minister from West Guadalcanal had been on trial for corruption in late 1996. He was acquitted, despite a widely held belief that he was guilty. There was much speculation that he had used magic to gain the acquittal, and this was cited as another instance of how Guadalcanal magic had become "rubbish magic." The employment of such magic in support of the BRA was sometimes explicitly contrasted with this.

100. This programme was not specifically about reggae, but a "top ten countdown" which included a great deal of reggae.

101. There was at least one other studio I could find evidence of in newspaper articles: Waterproof Studio.

102. The group changed its name to "Free At Last" after apartheid was abolished in South Africa.

103. One song, "Usizi" is not in English and I was unable to determine its theme.

104. The word "tete'ulu" means "gentle slopes" and refers to the gentle slopes of the mountains. It is the name indigenous peoples in West Guadalcanal give to the island.

105. Upon reflection, this statement did not make much sense to me, as "sekoli" is a verb. Upon further clarification, Lelavi said he meant that "sekoli" is the form for use with singular pronouns, and "sekolia" with plural pronouns.

106. Jajaha (in Ndi) or Sasaga (in Ghari) is a term which has no precise English equivalent. It can mean such disparate things as "mind," "clever," "smart," or "wise."

107. Ghari is also "softer" (sort of like the difference between Low and High German). In the example provided here, jajaha versus sasaga, the "j" actually represents a sound more like English "z" and is spoken more harshly or explosively than the "s" sound in "sasaga." Likewise, the "h" in jajaha is regarded as harsher than the "g" in sasaga. These differences, between "j" and "s" and between "h" and "g" are markers of the dialects, and are part of the reason Ghari is regarded as more "tuneful." In technical jargon, the Ndi usage is aspirated, while the Ghari usage is voiced.

108. It is not exclusively so, however: there were Bougainville refugees in Guadalcanal, some even in northwest Guadalcanal. I encountered such persons myself in Honiara, and I know that some Vaturanga did so as well.

109. In fact, if anything, Central Guadalcanal has experienced more land alienation and development than West Guadalcanal.

110. Although I do not know this for a fact, I do know that peoples in West Guadalcanal regard Central Guadalcanal peoples as having a similar *kastom* and clans which are equivalent to their own; in one case in which a Central Guadalcanal woman married into the Vaturanga community, she was incorporated into the matrilineal kin structure there, and it was explained to me that she belonged to an equivalent "tribe" in her home community.

111. Olos = "old men" or "elders."

112. The last paragraph of the letter, the one in Pijin, is especially interesting. Here, the writer states that people should not let SB (SolBrew, the local beer brewery) and VB (village brew, i.e., homemade brew) make decisions for them. Why? Because SB and VB have a belly, neck and mouth (a reference to the bottles), but no head or brain for thinking. This reference reflects a commonly stated opinion that when people get money from development concessions, much of it goes into drinking.

113. A resort right on the border of the Visale and Vaturanga Districts, but inside the Visale District.

114. Vele is always done at twilight or dawn.

115. "That's all" in Pijin, a term which implies consent or understanding or completion.

116. Paru, a Vaturanga village, is designated as one of the sites where weapons will be collected (personal communication, July 1999).

117. Certainly outside news reports made the connection: several columnists placed the Solomons situation in the context of other crises in the Pacific, beginning with Bougainville and Fiji.

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GLOSSARY OF HOKO

biti = garden magic

bobote = lit. fat man, derisive term for a Malaitan plantation worker

bule = a state of being in which one is unresponsive, can refer to being drunk or under the effects of magic

chachango = ceremonial offering by litigants in a dispute

devil = Pijin term for ancestor or mythical being (e.g., see mumu)

didila = a type of protective magic or magical device

duli = clan

golo ni hita = customary shell money

golo ni mane sere = lit. white man's money, or modern money

hani kokolu na tinoni mate = mortuary feast

haubata = name of a clan

hoko ni hita = lit. our language, the common language of West Guadalcanal

hoko sivona aso = type of magic

isu = a point of land jutting out into the sea

kaka = father

kakau = name of a clan and moiety

kastom = same as kastomu

kastomu = custom, customary practices

kavo ome = feasting and exchange system

kekena = hunting for tambu animals (possum, flying fox, iguana)

kenjo = type of magic

kidipale = name of a clan

kiki = name of a clan

lakuili = name of a clan and moiety

liu = town youth, implies someone who sponges off their relatives in town, steals and drinks too much

longa = bush or towards the bush (a direction)

luma = a house belonging to an unmarried man

madu = love or seduction magic

Mala = Guadalcanal term for Malaita

mama = Pijin word for Anglican priest

mane sere = white man

matepuka = a type of customary money held only by chiefs
moe = hidden treasure
molonaho = lit. put in front, meaning proud or selfish
mumu = a mythical figure variously described as a giant or dwarf, very strong, very powerful,
regarded as the "real landowners" of Guadalcanal

nambanaen = Pijin, lit. number nine, refers to Central Hospital in Honiara
Ndi = Vaturanga dialect of hoko ni hita
Nggae = dialect of hoko ni hita spoken in the Visale region
Nggeri = dialect of hoko ni hita spoken in Tabughu, Sumate and Kombiloko area
Ngaria = dialect of hoko ni hita spoken in area close to Honiara
nuhu = a small coral island which is associated with a devil (see devil above)

olo = old man

pai tidao = type of magic
pateri = Pijin word for Roman Catholic priest
poke sosolo = type of magic
porodula = type of magic
puku = matrilineage
pupu = relationship between maternal uncle and nephew
pupuku = doing riana pupuku, a type of magic

riana pupuku = lit. tying ginger, a type of magic
ruhu = hunting

sahe = refers to a feasting exchange in which one joins a lineage
simbo = name of a clan
sina hore = healing magic
soa na manu loki = lit. call the eagle, a type of magic
sosolo = a magical action involving blowing
sui kokochi = type of feasting exchange in which one lineage "rents" land from another
sui niu = type of sui kokochi which includes land for fruit and coconut trees
susui = healing magic
sulukima = important exchange which takes place at a mortuary feast, from the dead man's
matrilineage to his widow's kin

taho = type of lucky magic
tambu = forbidden or holy (cf. tabu)
tarasambo = fishing
tasi = sea or towards the sea (a direction)
tasu = a member of the Melanesian Brotherhood (an indigenous Anglican religious order)
tatali = healer, one who can especially cure sickness from magic

tauvia = elder or chief of a lineage

Tete 'ulu = lit. gentle slopes, name for Guadalcanal

tidao = spirit or ancestor, same as "devil" in Pijin

tinoni bora = black man or black people

tobatu = type of magic

tuva vota tinoni = lit. share separate people, the distribution at a feasting exchange

vale = house belonging to a married man

vele = a kind of sorcery or magic

ventia = refers to an obligation to feed everyone at a feast

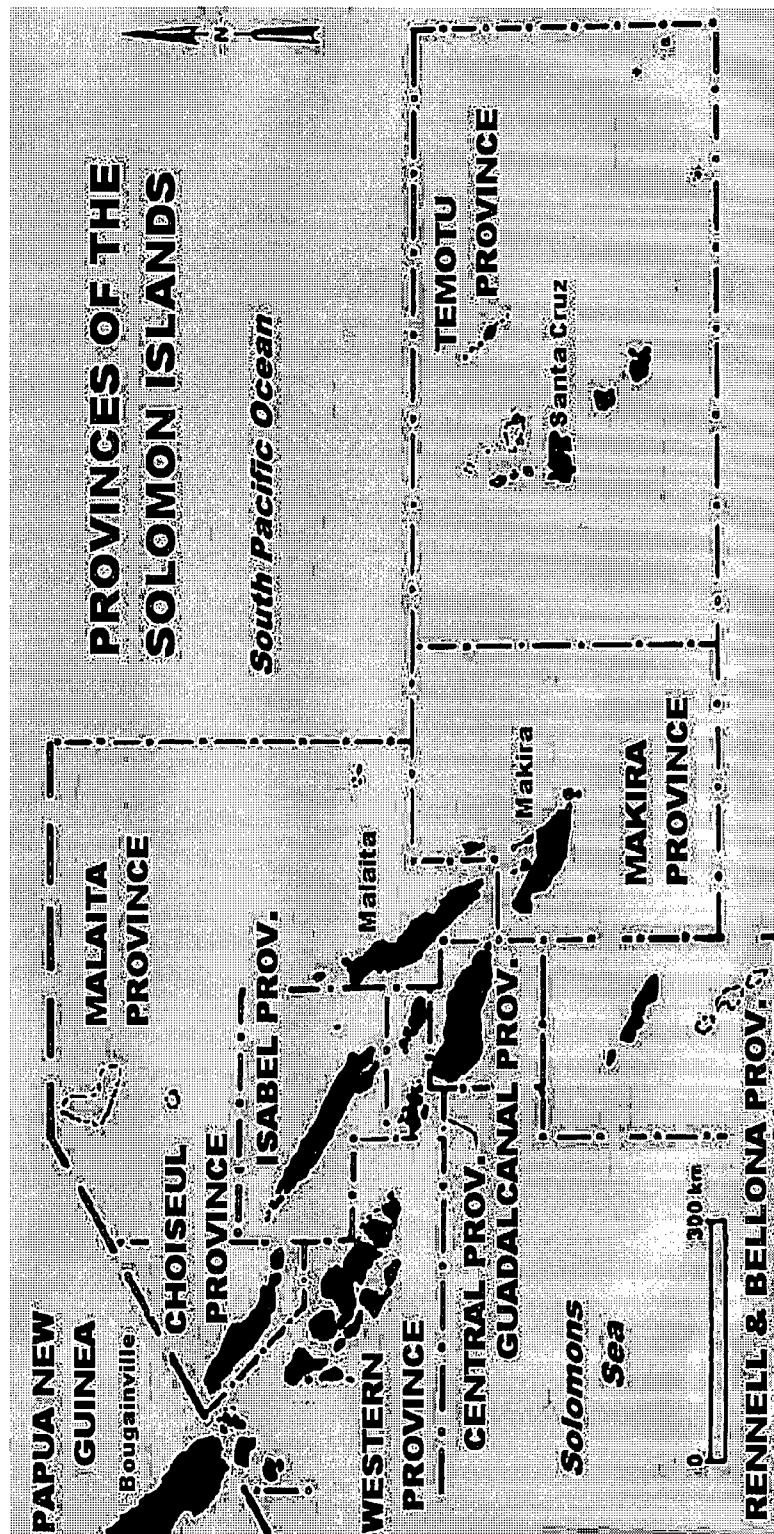
visuhaso = type of lucky magic

vuvuti = bride price (a type of feasting exchange)

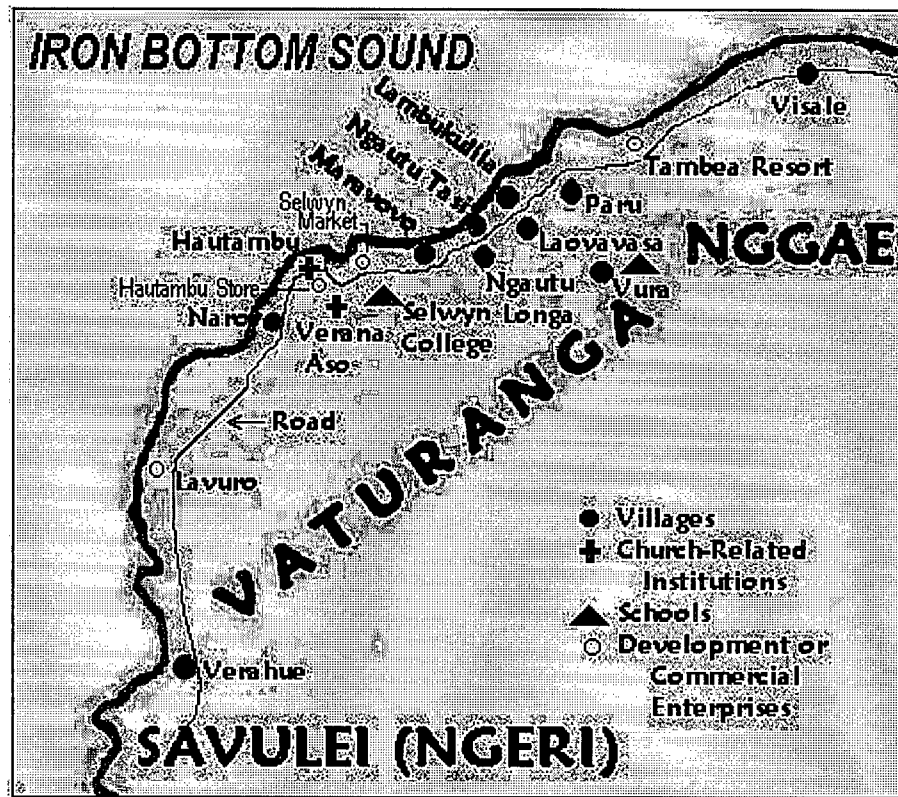
wantoks = Pijin term for "one talk" or those who share the same language

weket = the sound an electric guitar makes in a reggae recording

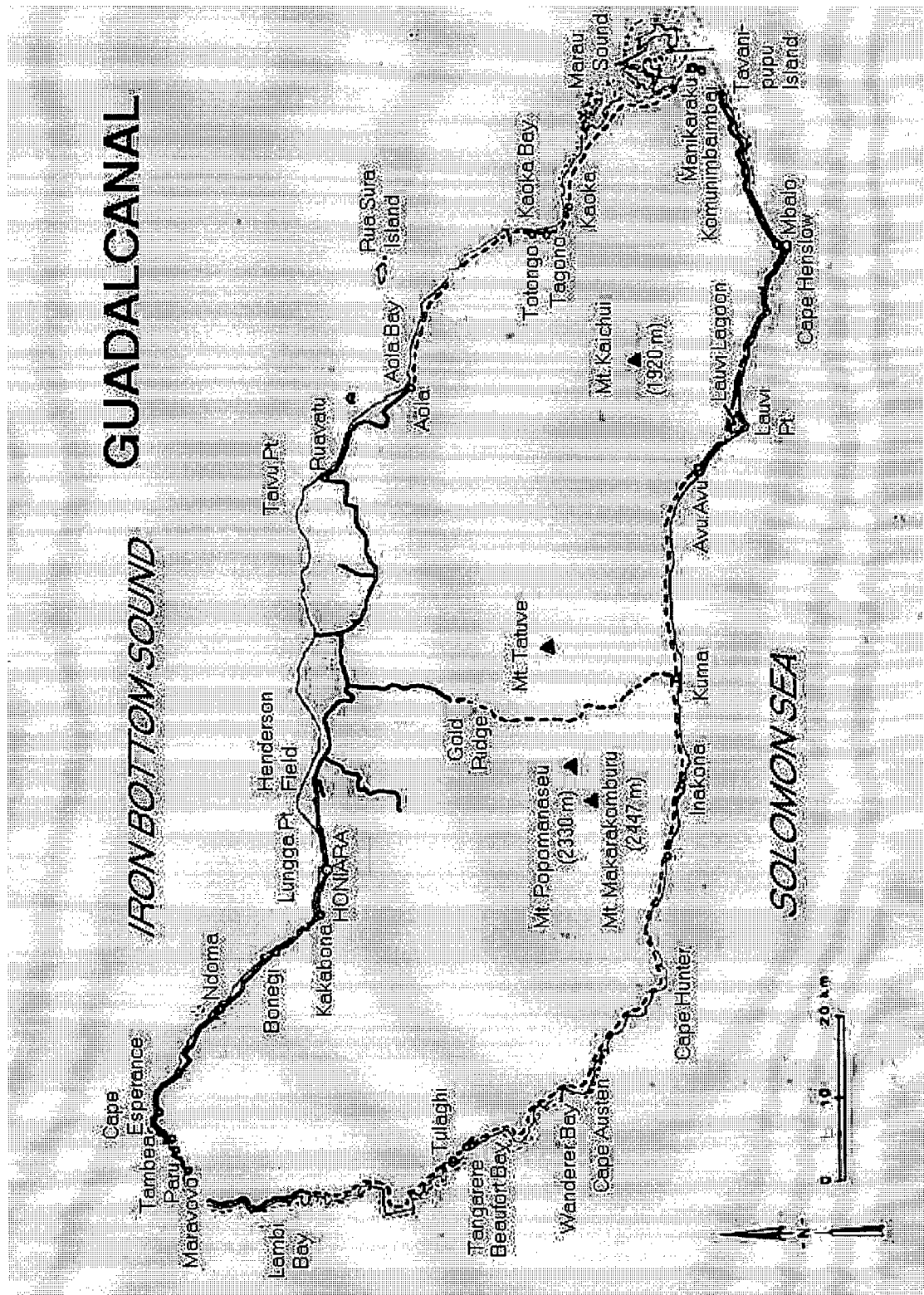
MAP 1
Provinces of the Solomon Islands
Source: Stanley 1996



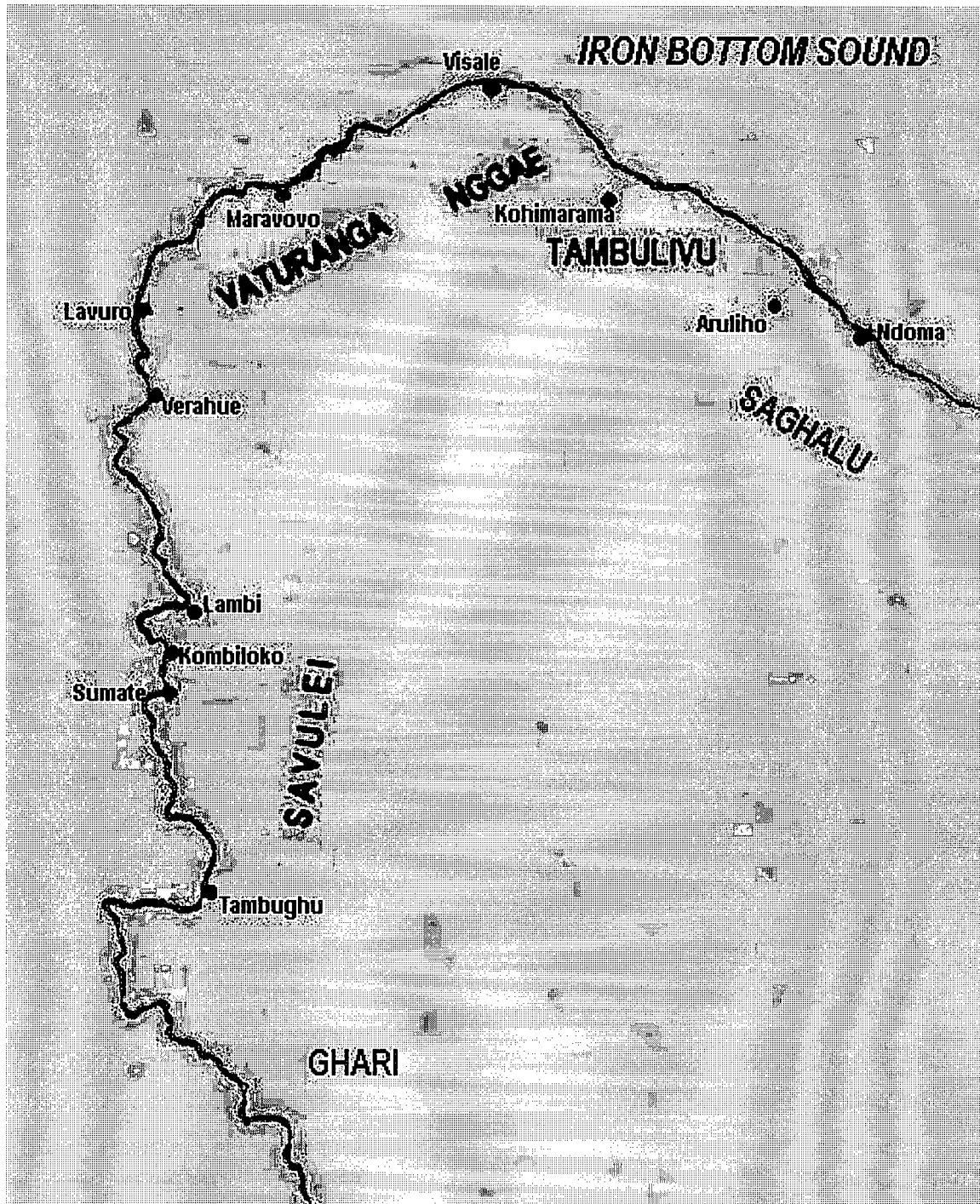
MAP 2
The Vaturanga District
Source: Ministry of Agriculture and Lands, Honiara, Solomon Islands



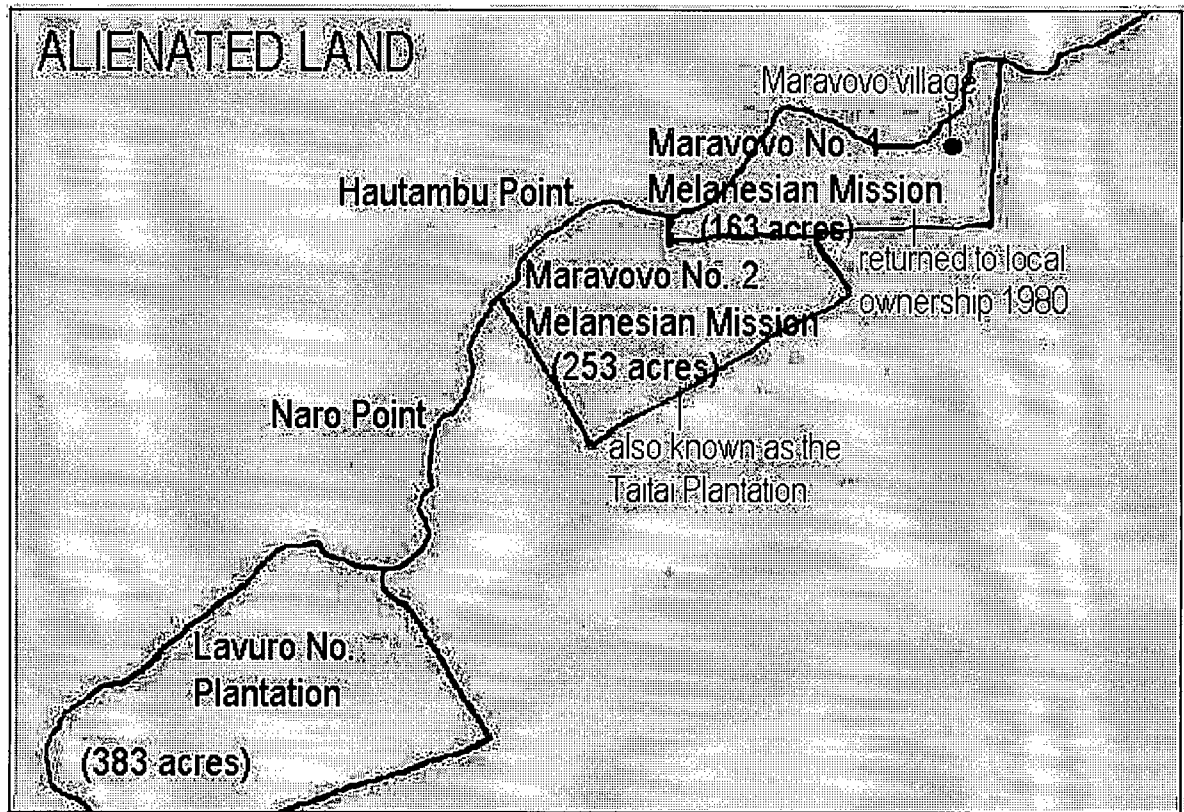
MAP 3
Guadalcanal Island
Source: Stanley 1996



MAP 4
West Guadalcanal Districts
Source: Ministry of Agriculture and Lands, Honiara, Solomon Islands



MAP 5
Alienated Land In and Near the Vaturanga District



APPENDIX
Census and Survey
Households in Maravovo Village

1. Is this a *vale* or *luma*?
vale = 22 luma = 3
2. How many people live in this house?
mean = 4.75
3. Where were these persons born?
Vaturanga District = 92
Savulei District = 7
Ghari District = 2
Tambulivu District = 2
Savo = 6
Nggela = 1
Honiara = 3
Malaita = 3
Russell Islands = 4
4. Who are their wantoks? (self-described)
Vaturanga = 106
Ngeri = 15
Savo = 15
Tambulivu = 1
Tasemboko = 1
Malaita = 6
Ghari = 4
Nggela = 1
Russell Islands = 2
Western Province = 1
5. What is their *duli* and *puku*?
Lakuili = 67
Haubata = 16
Kakau = 19
Kidipale = 11
Kiki = 2
N/A = 1

6. How many languages do they speak?
Ndi = 109
Pijin = 81
English = 24
Nggae = 4
Savosavo = 4
Russell languages = 5
Ngeri = 11
Ghari = 7
Nggela = 8
Malaita languages = 2
Tasemboko = 5
N/A (too young) = 2
7. What is their religion?
Anglican (Church of Melanesia) = 114
South Seas Evangelical Church = 5
Roman Catholic Church = 5
8. How many years of education have they attained? (highest attainment)
0 years = 35
Kindergarten = 11
Standard 1 = 2
Standard 2 = 13
Standard 3 = 7
Standard 4 = 8
Standard 5 = 5
Standard 6 = 15
Standard 7 = 4
Form 1 = 1
Form 2 = 3
Form 3 = 4
Form 4 = 0
Form 5 = 2
Post-secondary = 1
9. What is their gender?
Males = 48 Females = 76

10. What is their age?
 0 - 7 years = 29
 8 - 12 years = 21
 13 - 17 years = 13
 18 - 40 years = 36
 41 - 60 years = 16
 older than 60 = 6
11. What are the relationships of the people in this household?
 This question did not yield any useful data.
12. Is anyone in this house employed?
 Yes = 5 No = 20
13. Where employed?
 Honiara = 2 Selwyn College = 1 Vaturanga School = 1 Logging Company = 1
14. What is their monthly wage?
 average = \$924 per month (Solomon Islands Dollars)
 range = \$500 - \$1600 per month
15. What other sources of income does this household have? How much made from these sources per month?
 Small Business = 5
 Market Selling = 22
 Copra Making = 18
 Other = 7 (diving for trochus shells, selling cocoa, selling pigs, fishing)
 Income from these sources:
 average = \$290 per month (Solomon Islands Dollars)
 range = \$60 - \$900 per month
16. Does anyone in this house own land or claim land outside the Vaturanga District?
 Where?
 Yes = 28 No = 83
 Savulei = 13
 Ghari = 5
 Nggae = 2
 Russell Islands = 3
 Savo = 3
 Nggela = 1
 Tasemboko = 1
 Malaita = 1

17. Is there a radio in this house? What kind?
 No = 15 Yes = 10
 MW/SW = 5 MW/SW/FM = 5
18. How often is it listened to per week? How many people are present when listened to?
 3x per week = 1 one = 1
 5x per week = 1 two = 1
 everyday = 8 three = 1
 four = 1
 five = 1
 six = 2
 seven = 1
 ten or more = 2
19. What is your favourite programme? On what station?
 Radio Australia News (SIBC): 4
 Nius blong Pijin (SIBC): 1
 Family/Children's Programme (SIBC): 1
 Sports (SIBC): 1
 Music (Island FM): 1
 Message Service (SIBC): 1
20. How often does a newspaper come into this house?
 Never = 12
 1x per month = 5
 2x per month = 1
 4x per month = 4
 8x per month = 3
21. With how many people is it shared?
 None = 0
 1 to 5 persons = 8
 6 to 10 persons = 4
 More than 10 = 1
22. Which newspaper do you prefer? (Two people expressed two preferences.)
 Solomon Star = 13
 Solomons Voice = 2
23. Is there a stereo/cassette player in this house? With speakers or personal?
 Yes = 6 No = 19 w/speakers = 5 personal = 1

24. What kind of music do you like to play?
 Gospel = 1
 Blues = 1
 Pop = 2
 Reggae = 3
 Traditional = 1
25. Do you own any Solomon Islands' produced recordings?
 Yes = 5 No = 1
26. Does anyone from this house go to market? In Honiara or Selwyn? How often?
 Yes = 24 No = 1 Both = 24
 12x per mo. = 3
 8x per mo. = 6
 4x per mo. = 10
 3x per mo. = 2
 2x per mo. = 2
 1x per mo. = 1
27. To buy or sell?
 Buy = 3 Sell = 21
28. How much on average do you earn from selling per trip?
 \$10 - \$25 = 3
 \$26 - \$50 = 9
 \$51 - \$75 = 4
 \$75 - \$100 = 4
 \$100 - \$150 = 2
 \$150 - \$200 = 1
29. How are you transported to market in Honiara?
 Market Truck = 20
 Hautambu Truck = 1
 Public Bus = 1
30. Does anyone go to Hautambu store?
 Yes = 23 No = 2
- How often?
 8x per mo. = 1
 4x per mo. = 10
 2x per mo. = 2
 1x per mo. = 9
 everyday = 1

How much spent per visit?

less than \$10 = 1

\$10 - \$25 = 14

\$26 - \$80 = 5

\$51 - \$100 = 3

For what? (They were asked to simply name as many items as came to mind.)

Soap = 10

Noodles = 7

Rice = 13

Cloth = 7

Taiyo (tinned tuna) = 6

Biscuits = 6

Flour = 1

Kerosene = 3

Pencils = 1

Notebooks (for school) = 1

Candy = 1

Fishing equipment = 1

Salt = 1

31. Does anyone go to stores in Honiara?

Yes = 25 No = 0

How often?

8x per mo. = 3

4x per mo. = 3

2x per mo. = 9

1x per mo. = 10

How much spent per visit?

\$10 - \$25 = 5

\$26 - \$50 = 10

\$51 - \$100 = 6

\$100 - \$150 = 1

more than \$150 = 8

For what? (They were asked to name as many items as came to mind.)

Cloth = 15

Rice = 17

Bread = 7

Sugar = 6

Taiyo = 2

Noodles = 2
Utensils = 2
Soap = 1

32. Does anyone go to village stores?

Yes = 24 No = 1

How often?

Everyday = 21

4x per week = 1

1 or 2x per week = 2

How much spent?

\$1 - \$5 = 4

\$6 - \$10 = 13

\$11 - \$15 = 0

\$16 - \$20 = 1

more than \$20 = 3

For what? (They were asked to name as many items as came to mind.)

Sugar = 12

Cigarettes/Tobacco = 10

Rice = 10

Taiyo = 10

Biscuits = 9

Tobacco Papers = 5

Noodles = 2

Soap = 2

Candy = 2