USE OF THESES

This copy is supplied for purposes of private study and research only. Passages from the thesis may not be copied or closely paraphrased without the written consent of the author.
This thesis is my own work.
Canberra, 1 October 1991

Elisabetta G necchi - Ruscone
To Noël Stewart Crespi
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Professor Ronald Frankenberg, Maggie Whitley, and Ursula Sharma of Keele University for introducing me to anthropology, Marina Shacola for accompanying me in my first ventures in fieldwork, and all of the above for encouraging me to continue.

I am grateful to the Department of Prehistory and Anthropology, Australian National University for giving me the opportunity to do so. I am thankful to all its members and visiting academics, and those of the Department of Anthropology in the Research School of Pacific Studies, for creating a challenging, stimulating and amicable environment in which to work.

The assistance of David McGregor, Helen Nicol, Jan Lee, and especially Debbie McGrath, always extended promptly and willingly, has been invaluable, as is their friendship.

I am particularly indebted to all those who played a part in the supervision of this thesis: Jimmy Weiner and Professor Anthony Forge for their comments on early drafts; Don Gardner, Chris Gregory, and Michael Young for their invaluable help throughout my research and writing. I have learned much from each of them, and I appreciated their efforts, their accessibility, and the sympathetic support they offered me.

The friendship of Bev Sibthorpe, Mary Edmunds, Cecilia Ng, Di Smith, Maureen Mackenzie, and Luke Taylor, all of whom shared their fieldwork experiences with me, contributed greatly to prepare me for mine.

I am grateful to Jakob Simet and the Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies for assistance in Port Moresby. Also in Port Moresby, I am thankful to the families of Jo Brissone, and Judith and Richard Gregory-Smith, for their friendship and hospitality.

In Tufi I am indebted to a great number of people for the warmth, understanding, and genuine concern with which they welcomed and looked after me. In particular the families of afa Robert and aya Teresa, afa Noah and aya Jessette, afa Mackenzie and aya Barbara, afa Randellson and aya Dorothea, afa Lazarus and aya Alma, afa Inok and aya Greta, for making me feel at home amongst them. Robertson, Janice, Anilda, Kennedy, Vinolia, Loti, Robert, Samuel, Nixon, Lascam, Janice, and Leviticus, all contributed to my enjoyment of fieldwork and gave me help whenever I needed it. The young children in the village, especially Joyce, Stordus, Diana, Alphansus, Pia, and Roberto, added warmth and good humor to my life in Goodenough village.
For their help in learning about Korafe culture I am especially indebted to abua Elkin, abua Elijah, abua Godfrey, abua Joseph, abua Clifford, avia Waiora, abua Sebastian, abua Formen, avia Selemane, avia Rogheia. To all their families, as well as those of afa Alphonsus, avia Brigitta and abua Justus, and aya Joyce and Stordus, for putting up with my visits to their homes and with my inexhaustible curiosity. For hospitality in Uwe I am grateful to ebe Zacharias and tata Clarissa, their son Robert and his wife Rose. Ayakoe bekáresena!

I also wish to express my gratitude to the Department of Anthropology at the University of Sydney, particularly Daryl Fei, for hospitality during my stay in Sydney.

Friends and fellow students who have contributed through discussions, support, and encouragement over many coffees are Tina Fong, Erika Mordek, Val Jones, Hartmut Holzknecht, Barbara Luem, Bill Giles, Rita Armstrong, Ton Otto, Christine Boulan-Smit, Penny Graham, Bernard Sikora, Anna and Alicia Paini, Toon van Meijl (irreplaceable office-mate), and Gary Kildea (who provided the spur of competition towards completion, but also excuses for leisure when necessary).

For their time, generously given to help me sort out computing problems, I wish to thank David Martin and Ria Van de Zandt. For their constructive and encouraging comments on draft chapters I am grateful to Margaret Burns, Elisha Renne, Jim and Cindi Farr, Margaret Willson, Grayson Gerrard, Don Kulick, and Christopher Emsden. I am grateful to Kit Laughlin, proof-reader extraordinaire, for the time he spent with me, discussing the meanings of words, querying my commas, and helping refine my thoughts through insightful critique.

To my family and friends in Italy, especially Raffaele Origone, I owe thanks for their unwavering support, understanding, and most of all their patience.
ABSTRACT

This thesis addresses the nexus between Christianity and magic in the contemporary beliefs of a small group of Korafe villagers of coastal Papua New Guinea. The ethnography focusses on the clans living on one peninsula of Cape Nelson, and their various links with neighbouring groups, with the government station at Tufi, with urban dwellers, and with larger institutions and forces, during the period between January 1987 and July 1988.

One crucial outcome of the Korafe colonial experience was conversion to Christianity. Despite their allegiance to the Anglican church, however, Korafe continue to believe in and practice magic. The question posed in this thesis is: how do magic and Christianity coexist? I suggest that the difficulty is not the compatibility of beliefs: contemporary Korafe believe that God gave magic to their ancestors. The contradiction is introduced by the missionary condemnation of magic on moral grounds. Responsible for preserving their clans' heritage, elders are faced with a paradox.

At times Korafe consider magic necessary and valuable; at other times primitive and evil. I argue that the conflicting evaluations of magic stem from Korafe notions about the nature of knowledge, and the relationship between the control of esoteric knowledge and political power. These notions have shaped Korafe experiences of colonial and post-colonial contact. Christianity is held to be the basis of Western knowledge, underlying Western powers. This knowledge is thought to be necessary for success in those activities associated with post-contact social, political and economic changes. Everyday life, however, is characterised by continuity with the past. Contemporary villagers' concerns with subsistence and well-being are no different to their predecessors'. In this context the empowering properties of magic continue to be valued, and magic is practiced by elders despite the Christian ideology of 'magic as evil'.

These dilemmas are generally the concern of ritual leaders alone. By following the villagers through a drought, this thesis shows the processes through which such conflicts are brought to the surface in crisis situations, for resolution involving the larger community in decisions concerning the fate of common ancestral heritage.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**Acknowledgements**

v

**Abstract**

vii

**List of illustrations**

xii

## INTRODUCTION

1

**ARRIVAL: SITUATING TUFI AND THE KORAFE**

1

Geographical setting

Regional ethnographic perspective

5

**FROM TUFI STATION TO GOODENOUGH VILLAGE: CHURCH, VILLAGE AND CLANS IN THE LOCAL CONTEXT**

7

**FIELDWORK PRACTICES AND EPISTEMOLOGICAL QUESTIONS**

10

Names and Collectivities

11

Women, Elders, and Myself

13

**FROM DILEMMAS OF REPRESENTATION TO REPRESENTATION OF DILEMMAS**

14

**SYNOPSIS**

19

**ENDNOTES**

24

## CHAPTER 1 CLANS AND BROTHERS

25

**INTRODUCTION**

25

**SOCIAL STRUCTURE**

26

Levels of inclusion

27

Territorial groups

30

Clanship and Kotofu

33

**THE IDEOLOGY OF SIBLINGSHIP AND SENIORITY**

37

Elder and younger brother

38

Brothers and jealousy

39

Brothers and neighbours

41

Village and town brothers

44

Brothers and business: 'Komoa Brothers Guesthouse'

45

Sisters

50

**SOCIAL GROUPS AS BROTHERS AND THE IDEOLOGY OF SIBLINGSHIP**

51

Lineages as brothers

51

Clans as brothers

52

**ENDNOTES**

57

## CHAPTER 2 BROTHER-SISTER PAIRS IN AFFINAL RELATIONS

59

**INTRODUCTION**

59

Iteanu and the du couple of the Orokaiva

59

**BROTHER AND SISTER RELATIONS**

62
### Affinal Relations
- Marriage preferences
- Courtship and marriage: reminiscing about the old days and the contemporary ambiguities

### Brideprice
- A ‘political’ brideprice feast
- A widow’s brideprice: her brothers and her sisters

### Pigs for the Eldest Child
- Pig giving feasts
- *Vujari* and ‘Birthday Parties’
- What do the uncles want? The significance of *vujari*
- Transactors and Transacted

### Mourning
- Mourning practices: variation and change
- *Guméma*
- *Soróra*
- Farewelling the deceased
- Seclusion
- Divining
- *Kandngara* and *rovdrowa*
- *Ghaségia* and the sisters of the deceased
- The removal of mourning restrictions
- *Vujari* and the widow’s brothers

### Conclusion: Iteanu Revisited

### Endnotes

### Chapter 3 VASAI FEASTING

#### Kotofu, Seniority and VASAI Partnerships

- The Feast and the Dance
  - Dance practices
  - Dancing decorations
- The Feast
  - The dance formation
  - The feast processes

#### Discussion
- Individual relations
- Vasi: rivals or partners?
- And the spirits?

### Endnotes

### Chapter 4 The Magical Powers of Clans

#### Introduction
- Speaking of magic
- Spirits and ancestors
- Possession and transmission of magical powers
- The powers and responsibilities of knowledge
CLAN POWERS IN KABUNI

Bubu: magical powers of the Kotofu
Arere: sorcery and weather magic
Ameta: thunder magic
Beghuma: garden magic
Javosa: garden magic
Javosa: sorcery

DISCUSSION

ENDNOTES

CHAPTER 5 KNOWLEDGE AND EMPOWERMENT

INTRODUCTION

OWNERSHIP, POSSESSION, AND USE OF KNOWLEDGE

THE KNOWLEDGE OF COLONISERS

First Impressions
Government station at Tufi: incorporation by colonial authority
Sefoa Mission: inclusion in the 'Christian Brotherhood'
Post-War migration and 'development': involvement in the market economy
From vasdi to Church Day feasts: the interplay of political, economic and religious transformations

CONCLUDING REMARKS

ENDNOTES

CHAPTER 6 DROUGHT, DEATH AND DECISIONS

INTRODUCTION

THE DROUGHT AND THE DRAMA

The drought
Visiting the sick and then the healer
A meeting of the sorcery committee
Gumema
Joseph dies
Forcing against closure
Monangi has a vision
Court case with spirit
Interlude
Secluded by indecision
Elijah's return
Sebastian's death
A third death in Lelioa
Epilogue

ENDNOTES

GLOSSARY

BIBLIOGRAPHY
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

INTRODUCTION

Map 1: Tufi Location map 4
Map 2: Cape Nelson Language Groups 5
Map 3: Kabuni Peninsula 7

CHAPTER 1

Figure 1: Korafe Social Structure: the Meanings of ‘Oro’ 28
Figure 2: Korafe Territorial Groups 29
Figure 3: Korafe Social Structure: Kotófu and Sabúa 31
Table 1: Household Population by Clan and Village 32
Figure 4: Siblingship Reference Terms 37
Figure 5: Guesthouse Members: Landowners and Beach Owners 47

CHAPTER 2

Figure 1: Terms of Reference: Parallel and Cross Cousins 65
Table 1: Origin of Kabuni Men’s Wives 67
Figure 2: Previous Affinal ties between the Two Spouses 75
Figure 3: Initiands and Initiators 79
Figure 4: Terms of Reference: Main Protagonists in Ego’s Vujari Exchanges 88

CHAPTER 3

Figure 1: Pairing: Aga da Mandi Vasdí Partnerships 108
Figure 2: Dance Formation: the Starting Position 119
Figure 3: Vasdí Exchanges 127

CHAPTER 4

Table 1: Kabuni Clans and their Powers 137

CHAPTER 5

Figure 1: Exchanges in ‘Church Day’ Feast 192

CHAPTER 6

Figure 1: The Main Actors 202
Figure 2: Monangi’s Link to the Actors 215

xii
INTRODUCTION

ARRIVAL: SITUATING TUFU AND THE KORAFE

Geographical setting

Arriving in Tufi by air is an opportunity to get a bird’s-eye view of the distinctive features of Cape Nelson, on the north-eastern coast of Papua New Guinea. The volcanic peninsulæ fan out like outstretched fingers from the Nelson and Topographers' ranges into the Solomon sea. The upper reaches, where the fingers join to form the back of the hand, are densely forested and seem unpopulated. The small clearings, dotted with grey-brown thatch and the occasional tin roof, only begin to appear at the top of each ridge. Some of the ridges are a duller green, showing the places where kunai grass and scrub has grown to replace cleared forest. Near the tips of the fingers, as the plane flies lower, it is easier to see that the patches of different shades of green between the villages are newly-planted or overgrown gardens. Near each of the fingers' point is a fringe of coconut trees, planted on the more gentle slopes. Beyond these, as the plane veers seawards to position itself for the descent to the airstrip, the coral jewels towards which the fingers are reaching barely surface from the sea. Even when submerged by the tide, the line of coral is betrayed by the sudden change in the seawater: deep blue and wavy on one side, pale and mirror still on the other - like liquid fingernails. The peninsulæ are steeper at the sides, and there is no reef to frame the dark blue deep water which separates one finger of land from the others. Sheer cliffs drop straight into the water. Where their volcanic rock forms a sheltering fold, mangroves grow on mud flats. There is hardly any time to notice the canoes moored to the mangroves before the small plane comes to a bumpy stop on a wide flat grassy ridge about 100 metres above the sea.

Landing at Tufi airstrip also reveals the regular contacts which contemporary villagers have with the towns. Small airplanes connect Tufi to Popondetta (the capital of Oro Province) and Port Moresby three times a week. As I peered outside
the tiny airplane, the first thing I noticed were the strikingly tattooed faces of women who had gathered (with their children, brothers and husbands) to farewell those leaving on the plane that took me there. This would become a familiar scene later, and I marvelled at the frequency and duration of villagers' trips to different parts of the country. As well as migrants living and working in town, there were men who went on business trips: to collect war pensions or to arrange finance for their latest commercial enterprise. School-leavers in search of work and young girls asked to take care of the children of working kin were sent their tickets by the relatives with whom they would stay. Older men and women travelled to the towns to spend time with their migrant children until, tired of the 'soft' city food, they returned to their village.

Ever since the first young men from Tufi were enlisted as plantation labourers and native constabulary in the first decades of this century, it has been normal practice for young men to seek wage work away from their villages. Most migrant workers remain away from Tufi only a few years; those who stay longer make efforts to maintain ties by visiting their families during holidays or sending airfares for their kin to visit them in town. Life in the towns is a part of almost every contemporary villager's life experience, and is taken for granted. This continual interaction between village and town highlights the fact that villagers do not form a world apart, a self-contained society operating within its own boundaries and isolated from the rest of the world. People's aims, objectives, beliefs and values are not confined to the local context of their villages. They articulate with, and are shaped by, their particular experiences of the provincial, national, and global context within which their lives take place.

The women were wearing bright cotton skirts and printed blouses, and they carried stringbags. I saw someone smile, and the anxious feeling that had been sitting in my stomach since morning melted away: it was going to be alright. As I stepped down a man introduced himself, 'I am Mackenzie, the manager of the Komoa Brothers' Guesthouse, this is Robertson, are you Elizabeth?' They were both wearing what I would come to know as their smart shorts. Mackenzie's T-shirt advertised a ski resort in the U.S. He carried a small stringbag over his shoulder which, I was told later, no man would be seen without in public, and in which he should always carry betelnut to share with anyone he talks to.

When he saw the size of my luggage, disproportionate even for a Western tourist, Robertson, who was a tall teen-aged boy, persuaded the driver of a tractor to give us a ride to Tufi Station. We drove along the only road in Tufi, linking the airstrip, through the township, to the wharf. The tractor, the police car, and the District Officer's vehicle thread their way along this narrow track daily. We passed through the small group of louvred, tin-roofed government houses and skirted the playing field, where a formation of school children were sweeping up the grass cut the previous day by their parents. We stopped in front of the 'Laki Hotel'. This expatriate-owned complex included a guesthouse, trade store, and bottle-shop. It also held concessions from the post office, a bank, and the airline company which
serves this area. There was another trade store nearby, owned by a retired teacher from a local village.

These were not the only attractions of Tufi Station, and I quickly learned that a visit there was never a brief affair. Mackenzie's wife had gone with their twin baby daughters to the hospital for some medication. Robertson's sisters were buying betel nut from the market. Mackenzie's sister had joined a group of married women on a platform erected in the shade of one of the huge mango trees of Tufi Station. They had formed a Ladies' Club which, for a time, met every week to cut and sew tapa cloth into bags to sell tourists. I too had business to attend to at the bank and post office. When I finished I sat under a mango tree with one of Robertson's sisters. Women returned from the market with bulging stringbags and sat with us; they shared betel nut with each other while they talked. Those who had earned some money by selling produce at the market would carefully consider how to spend it. A woman would count her money, a handful of coins, then summon a small child and send him or her to buy a tin of meat or a bag of sugar. When the child returned with the goods, the woman concealed them in a wrapping inside her stringbag. After a short time she would count out another small sum and send off for half a bottle of kerosene, or a bar of laundry soap. Lastly she might buy tobacco for her husband, or a treat for her children. When Mackenzie had finished his business, some of the people gathered under the mango tree got up and walked with us down the steep track to the wharf.

There were four or five motor boats belonging to the fisheries plant moored to the cement pier. Another boat was loading passengers for Alotau (in Milne Bay Province). Men were unloading its cargo, goods brought from Oro Bay to stock the shelves of local tradestores. Along the shore were numerous canoes. The smaller ones, pulled up on the muddy banks, belonged mainly to children who paddled every day to school from their villages across the bay. Larger canoes with platforms were tied to poles rammed into the mud. Some were equipped with a mast and a sail. These brought people from as far as Collingwood Bay to the south or Spear Point to the northwest (see map 1). Robertson waded out to one of the largest canoes and brought it closer to the pier, where we embarked. I remember counting fourteen people on board. They all came from Mackenzie's village and had taken advantage of the large 'guesthouse canoe' to visit Tufi.

As well as functioning as a node linking the villages in the district and the rest of the country, Tufi is a focal point for the villagers of Cape Nelson. With its tradestores, hospital, and market place, it provides opportunities for casual encounters and informal meetings, as well as a limited range of cash-earning jobs. Seat of the district government offices, it also provides administrative services for Korafe, Arifama, Miniafia, Ubir, Maisin and Yega villagers. Despite linguistic differences and past animosities, there has been considerable cultural exchange between all these groups. Young people from different groups communicate in English which they learn at school or, more rarely, Tok pisin. Older people sometimes use Motu, but they are generally able to understand each others' vernacular.
Map 1: Tufi location map
Regional ethnographic perspective

The Maisin people are the only group in the vicinity about which there is a significant body of ethnographic writing (Barker 1984). There are considerable similarities in Korafe and Maisin social organisation, culture, and colonial history. The Korafe language is classified as a Non-Austronesian language of the Binandelean stock, which is spoken by between two and three thousand people in two areas of Cape Nelson, as well as up to another thousand currently residing in other parts of the country. Yega, sometimes called Mokorua, is considered a dialect of Korafe. Arifama, Ubir and Miniafia are Austronesian languages, while the classification of Maisin language is uncertain.¹ There are a number of villages which include speakers of two or even three languages.

Map 2: Cape Nelson Language Groups

Non-Austronesian language
Austronesian language
Unclassified

¹ There are a number of villages which include speakers of two or even three languages.
Ethnographically, as well as linguistically, the groups in this area seem to reflect their geographical location inbetween two major 'culture areas' with distinct features. On the one hand, the decorative patterns worn on tapa cloth and tattooed on the women's faces (and, previously, on their legs) which Korafe share with the Maisin, show considerable similarity with the decorative style common in the Massim area (Barker 1984:50, Young 1983b:5). Another significant feature of similarity between Korafe and the Massim societies of Goodenough Island is the identification of patrilineal groups with inherited rights to objects, 'customary' ways of doing things, and knowledge, which serve diacritically to distinguish members of different groups. Like the societies of Kalauna and the Trobriands, leadership is associated with the control of magical powers, and is expressed in a hierarchical ranking of clans (Young 1971, Malinowski 1978 [1922]). Further, dancing and feasting are important cultural features in this region (cf. Seligman 1910:ch. 45). As in Wamira and on Goodenough Island competitive exchange feasts are the main context for leaders, and the groups they represent, to display and compete for political status (Kahn 1986, Young 1971).

Korafe and Maisin origin myths are very similar to those of the Orokaiva, Baruga, and Binandele, all tracing their primal ancestors to a hole in the ground somewhere in the Musa and Bariji basin (Waiko 1982, Barker 1984:46, Williams 1930:154-6). Other features of similarity between Orokaiva and Korafe include the organisation of minimal social groups according to the principle of patrilineal descent, which is ideologically favoured but is moderated by an emphasis on bilateral kinship and by residential practices (Schwimmer 1991:148, Williams 1930:130-2). Korafe feasts, like those of the Orokaiva, mediate different levels of social relations. At one level, feasts involving affinal relations mark different stages in the life cycle of a married couple (such as brideprice payment, the birth and initiation of the first child, and the death of one of the spouses). In these exchanges there is a tendency for brother and sister pairs to play the central roles, and for balanced reciprocity to result from the overall transactions (Iteanu 1983, Schwimmer 1991:147). By contrast, the taro and pig exchanges, involving feasting partnerships and groups of allied clans, are more competitive in spirit. They are modelled on peace-making exchanges, and provide a context for the testing and exercise of leadership. Like Orokaiva leaders, their Korafe counterparts are thought to achieve status through a demonstration of knowledge and wisdom. However, there is a degree of ascription in that the possession of knowledge is symbolised by material objects which are inherited patrilineally (Schwimmer 1991:148).

Unlike both Orokaiva and Massim societies, however, Korafe clans are differentiated by a division of magical labour. On the basis of this magic specialisation clans are ranked as elder and younger brothers, in a manner reminiscent of Mekeo social organisation (Hau'ofa 1981). Around each high-ranking clan develops a coalition of junior clans, each of which controls a different kind of magic. The elders of the high ranking clans (associated with peace making, diplomatic ability and feasting) control magic which enables them to promote
solidarity among the 'younger brother' clans which form their solidarity group, and to negotiate with their counterparts outside it. The success of feasting, which involves exchanges between the realm of the living and that of ancestors, (Iteanu 1983) depends on the ability of high ranking clans to promote cooperation between the junior clans associated with them (Schwimmer 1991:147).

FROM TUFU STATION TO GOODENOUGH VILLAGE: CHURCH, VILLAGE AND CLANS IN THE LOCAL CONTEXT

From the wharf, our canoe cut across Tufi Harbour and rounded the point of Kabuni peninsula, leaving the protected waters of the harbour, and landed just the other side of the point on the white sandy beach of Komoa. The Komoa Brothers' Guesthouse, built on this point by Mackenzie and his classificatory brothers, provides their families with an occasional source of cash. I was to live there while arrangements could be made for me to move to a village.

Map 3: Kabuni Peninsula
During those two weeks quite a few people from the surrounding villages came to
meet me to find out what I was doing. On Sunday I was taken to the Anglican
church service. This is the main occasion for people from all villages on the
peninsula to gather on a regular basis, and it provided the right opportunity to
introduce me.

St. Luke's church, which serves the villages of Kabuni, was moved downhill
from its original location in the village of Karikari in 1972, after a cyclone
knocked it to the ground. Most houses in the area were also destroyed, and many
people who had been living in scattered settlements re-grouped following that
occasion. The village which developed around the new church was called
Goodenough because it is located on a small plateau from which, on a clear day, it
is possible to make out the island of that name on the horizon. Apparently, during
the construction of the church a man looked out to sea and joked that next time
they would move the church to Goodenough. The joke, and the name, stuck.

The path which links Komoa to Goodenough village climbs through coconut
groves and taro gardens. On reaching the ridge, the path opens into the grassy
plateau of Goodenough. At the far end of the village is the church, a squat
rectangular building lined with split sago and roofed partly with corrugated iron,
partly with nipa thatch. The main door to the church does not face the village
clearing but the bush beyond it. Split sago and thatch houses on short posts are
arranged in two lines, facing each other across the width of the plateau.
Interspersed amongst them are a number of shaded sitting platforms. Their name,
oro, refers to the fenced ceremonial platforms of the past, where men used to sit
apart from the women, and which were decorated with ancestral clan emblems.3
The unadorned contemporary platforms are used by villagers for sitting when they
remain in the village during the day, as well as for sheltering visitors. Behind one
line of houses runs a very narrow stream, dry for most of the year, which marks
the boundary of the village. A path leads beyond it to other villages higher up on
the ridge. The other line of houses is backed by a steep cliff, dropping to an inner
inlet of Fesaba Bay. Gardens are planted at the top of the cliff, and a steep path
leads through them to the mangroves at the bottom.

Inside the church, women were seated on a row of benches to the left, men to
the right. Unmarried girls and boys sat in the front rows; mothers with small
children sat next to the side door, so they could slip out if their child began to cry.
A cross was carved out of the wall behind the altar. It was decorated with two
prints of biblical scenes, and with a few short cylindrical carvings with pronged
endings. These, I later found out, were replicas of the house-posts which were
exclusive to the oro platforms built in the past by the Bubu clan (the high rank clan
of Kabuni). There was a small cane table in front of the altar, for people to leave
offerings to the church. A few toea were collected every week; often there would
also be a sweet potato or a hand of bananas, brought by old women who had no
money. The service was led by one of two evangelists of the Bubu clan who had
returned to live in their village after a period of mission training and teaching
elsewhere. A passage was read from the Korafe version of the New Testament
At the end of the service, before anyone left the church, Mackenzie stood up and addressed the congregation, saying my name. As I walked out I was surprised by all the women who gathered outside the church door, to clasp my hand in theirs, stroking my forearms with expressions of sympathy and pity, as they told me their names. People dispersed to different platforms and verandas, drifting sociably from one to the next. I sat with Mackenzie's mother, wife, and children on their veranda. Mackenzie and other men sat on a platform opposite his house. Occasionally one of these men would pace to the centre of the clearing announcing that they had something to say. The general conversation around subsided while he spoke. People on the sidelines laughed, called out responses, then returned to their conversations until someone else claimed their attention with a speech. I recognised Robert among the orators; he was married to Mackenzie's older sister, and was village councillor for Kabuni villages. His younger brother Noah, Robertson's father and the man in charge of catering at the guesthouse, also spoke. Finally I was called to their platform and we agreed that I could live in Goodenough village, where I would be 'looked after' by the families of Robert, Noah, and Mackenzie. Elkin Kegana, an elder of the Bubu clan from Kabuni village - after which the whole peninsula is named - was introduced to me. He was declared to be the best language teacher in the area and a man of great knowledge concerning not only his own but all other Korafe clans' traditions. He would teach me.

Of the elders sitting on the platform, Elkin said they were all his younger brothers. He belonged to the Bubu clan, which was a Kotofi (high-ranking) clan, and every one else was like young boys compared to him. That was one reason for his greater knowledge of traditions, he explained. Another reason was that he had always been an attentive listener and, throughout his life, had always paid attention when elders talked (unlike other young men) so he never forgot what he was told and accumulated vast knowledge. Nonetheless, Elkin went on to single out a few of those elders sitting on the platform whom he considered to be knowledgeable. Each man he pointed out was a senior man of one of the clans or lineages of the villages on Kabuni. As he indicated them he told me their clan's name and some feature which distinguished them from members of other clans. Although he mentioned different characteristics, the two things which he included in each description were the colour of the feathers which they were entitled to use to crown their dancing headdresses, and their association with particular magical powers of which, he said, they were 'boss'.

I was intrigued at the time by the notion that these men, whom I had just seen reverently wrapping their bibles in clean covers, were known for practising
magic. When I inquired about this, however, I was further surprised by the off-hand manner in which Elkin dismissed magic as a thing of the past, belonging to their ancestors, no longer practiced and mostly forgotten by his peers, all of whom were 'Good Christians'. Although I did not know it at the time, the relation between magic and Christianity was a major issue of contention in the villages and it was to become an important focus of my research. I was to spend considerable time with each of the elders who were pointed out to me that first Sunday (see chapter 4).

FIELDWORK PRACTICES AND EPISTEMOLOGICAL QUESTIONS

It is obvious that each fieldworker's experiences will shape the direction of their enquiries and privilege certain things over others as 'data'. It is equally obvious that it is impossible to trace all of one's preconceptions and assumptions, and all the factors influencing the process of note-taking, and the transformation of field notes into a thesis (cf. Clifford 1988:40). However, I want to take this opportunity to discuss those conditions of my fieldwork which I am aware of having influenced the sort of questions I asked people, the things I paid attention to, and the details I have attempted to retain through the synthesising process of writing.

I lived in Goodenough village for the remainder of my eighteen months' fieldwork. I inhabited a house originally built for the priest when he visited St. Luke's church. I shared the house with occasional overnight visitors to the village, and with a variable number of children and unmarried young women who took turns to keep me company, as my neighbours disliked the idea of anyone sleeping alone. Apart from the formal language lessons during which Elkin dictated word lists to me, it was in the course of the many evening conversations with Janice, Anilda, Loti, Vinolia, Diana, Joyce and their sisters that I gradually began incorporating Korafe words into my utterances.

Throughout the formative period of my fieldwork, during which I acquired basic language and social skills, I spent most of my time with these young women. In the daytime I either followed them as they performed their daily chores, or spent time learning about fishing from their teen-aged brothers. Robertson or one of his village brothers (Lascam, Kennedy, Nixon, Moses) would accompany me when I needed to go to neighbouring villages or Tufi station. The bemusement and gentle teasing which my strange ways provoked in the young people who 'looked after' me was instrumental to fine-tuning my social competence. It was by interacting with them, and persuading them to let me get involved in their work, that I gradually succeeded in convincing the rest of the villagers that I was not a tourist to be waited upon. The families who had taken it upon themselves to look after me
ceased planning their days so that someone could stay behind in the village with me when they went elsewhere, and began taking me with them instead.

Like the households with which I became associated, I interacted daily with the other families of Goodenough village. There were also a number of households from villages of the immediate vicinity (such as Lelioa, Komoa and Famadara, see map 3) which also figured regularly in my daily life, as their members cooperated with Goodenough villagers in gardening or fishing, and visited each others' homes. Less frequent, but still significant and equally informal, were our contacts with specific households in other villages of the peninsula. Church services gave me the opportunity to meet and talk with those villagers who were more distantly related to Goodenough villagers. Visits to Tufi station were the main opportunity to spend time with people living on different peninsulae. A visit to these villages was always a formal occasion: either arranged by me specifically to interview someone, or a feast in which members of Goodenough village participated.

Among people who figured prominently in the social lives of the people I lived with were Maisin affines living in the village of Uwe, at the southern limit of Korafe territory (see map 2). Throughout my stay in Goodenough village there were many occasions when affinally related members of the two villages exchanged visits. Similarly, the Miniafia brother and sister of Noah's wife occasionally came to visit from Utukaf. As a result of my close association with specific households, of the practical difficulties of travelling to other peninsulae independently of my hosts, and of the undercurrent of suspicion which unrelated individuals from different villages feel for each other, my knowledge derives mainly from my experiences of life with the villagers of Kabuni peninsula and the people they associated with.

On reflection, I worried that on the one hand my informants represented a narrow section of the overall Korafe population while, on the other hand, some were drawn from beyond the group of people who identify themselves as Korafe. To what extent I can claim to be writing about 'the Korafe' is one of the epistemological questions that I am faced with.

**Names and collectivities**

One aspect of this problem has to do with designating 'groups' with which their posited members identify, and which shape their interactions with others. People use a variety of collective names to make distinctions between each other. However, Wagner has pointed out the dangers of using such markers of difference to create groups where they do not exist in the consciousness of the people involved. He suggested that criteria for the definition of groups ought to emphasise 'a deliberate collective focus, a sense of common participation and awareness' (Wagner 1974:104). Although the people I was working with would identify with the label 'Korafe', they used it contextually to differentiate themselves from different sets of people who were thought of as 'not Korafe'. Korafe was used to
differentiate villagers from Europeans. The same name could be used in one instance to exclude speakers of other languages living in their vicinity, and in others to exclude speakers of a closely related dialect. Finally, in some cases 'Korafe' was used to distinguish most villagers from those whose ancestors spoke a different language and whose origin myths were different.

Perhaps, then, 'Korafe' identity is predicated on shared origin myth and history. Korafe clans trace their origin to a hole in the ground between the Musa and Bariji rivers. However, each clan had individual histories, had reached its present location on Cape Nelson along a different route, and had forged alliances with different groups along the way. Korafe clans are not strongly associated with the land they own. According to oral history the Arifama and Miniafia, as well as the now nearly extinct Kerebi, were the autochtonous inhabitants of the area. Korafe and Yega settlers are believed to have arrived on Cape Nelson at the beginning of the century, shortly before the colonial pacification of the, then, North-Eastern district of British New Guinea.

Each clan's history is a succession of alliances, separations, betrayals and night-time flights from besieged villages. Korafe ancestors faced little resistance from the autochtonous populations of Cape Nelson, who 'gave' them land to settle on. In time, they are said to have decimated the original inhabitants through violence and magical might. There are numerous people who trace their origins to different groups encountered by the Korafe ancestors and assimilated to their clan. Among them are people who trace their origin to Kerebi ancestry. Except for one solitary elder, they no longer speak their ancestors' language, and they maintain a discreet silence over their cultural distinctiveness. They are wary of telling their myths in public lest Korafe interpret them as claiming prior rights to the land, or appropriate them for their own ideological ends. Perhaps as a result of their turbulent past, the people who identify with the label 'Korafe' do not actually form a group in the sense of collective consciousness.

The social units which have a more obvious reality for Korafe are smaller groups such as clans (or at least their local segments), villages, and what I have called territorial groups. The last are constituted as federations of those clans and villages whose members live and garden in a well-defined geographical area. Relationships among brothers are referred to as models for relations within and among all these groups. The reality of villages, clans and territorial groups as social units for their members is manifested in different ways and contexts. At one level, all clans on the peninsula of Kabuni are conceptually regarded as brothers. Their cooperation is predicated on the specialisation of each clan's elders in different realms of magical knowledge. Under the aegis of a high ranking clan considered to be the 'eldest brother', clans of the same group cooperate with magical services, feasting, dancing and (in the past) fighting. These territorial groups represent the widest social group with a well-defined corporate reality. Beyond these realms of activity interaction between individuals is governed by kinship, residential patterns, and the duties and rights associated with affinal relations.
Women, elders, and myself

Within any group one can expect to find people with different interests, concerns, values and attitudes. The kind of things which found their way into my notebook and thence into this thesis, were partly determined by the interests of the people I spoke to most, and whose words I considered important. This, in turn, was determined by villagers' perceptions of me and expectations concerning the right place for me in their midst. There is an unspoken expectation in the profession that women fieldworkers, by virtue of their gender, have privileged access to aspects of social life and culture which pertain to the lives of women. I did not find this to be the case.

My status in the village was not fixed; it changed over time as I became known as an individual, rather than as a *taubora* (white person). I was able to participate in their lives in different capacities in different situations - and this very fact marked me, as clearly as my complexion, as an outsider. However many times people from my village boasted to outsiders of my virtues as a villager and a speaker of the vernacular, no one ever lost sight of the elements of fiction in these assertions. My obvious incompetences in some areas of everyday life were never overcome. Ironically, this was most significant precisely for my position in relation to women.

Unmarried and childless, I straddled uncomfortably the boundary between girlhood and womanhood. While my foreignness, association with an Australian university, and access to money placed me in a position which transcended gender barriers, that same foreignness only served to reinforce villagers' assumptions concerning my unsuitability as an adult Korafe woman. Village women knew that Western women get food for their families from shop shelves and water from taps; they cook on gas stoves (if they don't hire a house boy to do it for them) and have machines to wash their clothes and dishes. It was not only that they considered it difficult for a European to carry out the work Korafe women do regularly, but they felt it was inappropriate for me to do so. I had to break through their reluctance to be allowed to do any such work.

Thus, while my status as visitor required that I share the more prestigious food with the elders, age and sex differences notwithstanding, there was no context for me to act as a village woman. By this I do not mean that I was somehow considered an 'honorary male' (an alternative stereotypical description of the social position of female fieldworkers). I think that most people I interacted with considered me as a kind of overgrown schoolgirl, to whom they indulgently explained things, because they felt sorry that I had left my family so far away to learn about Korafe ways. Young people of the village referred to me using terms for sister (elder or younger), adults as daughter, and the elders as grand-daughter. My relationship to all other villagers was worked out from this base-line.

The significance of my ambiguous status is that, although I did become close to some married women (especially Jessette and Teresa who considered themselves
my 'village' mothers and eventually came to trust me at least as baby-sitter), it was not on their specific concerns as women that my fieldwork was focussed. As I became more proficient in the language I began to follow the conversations held by the elders with whom I was expected to sit on any public occasion. This undoubtedly had a great influence on the direction of my inquiries. It was from listening to their discussions that I became aware of some of the dilemmas involved in the responsibilities of elders for the custody of their clans' magical powers, and the ambiguity with which such powers were valued in a context where people were striving for legitimacy as Christians.

As these interests were shaped further by events in the village, I began systematic enquiries into each clan's magical specialisation. This involved seeking out the various ritual experts in their own villages, and talking to them about the specific origin, nature, and implications of their particular magical powers. These issues belong to a realm governed by elders. Women and younger men would talk with me in general terms, helping me to acquire an understanding of shared notions regarding magic, its social value, and people's feelings regarding its compatibility with Christianity. I questioned them about the significance of issues discussed in the villages, and tested my understanding on them. They would patiently explain the background to complex events, and clarify relationships between people involved. But when I asked for information about specific powers they would reply that the knowledge did not belong to them, and refer me to the acknowledged authorities: their eldest brothers, husbands, or fathers. This response was common even from those women who, as wives or widows of magical experts, were considered to know about such things.

As a result of all these circumstances, senior men have come to hold a privileged position in this thesis, as cited authorities and as the protagonists of case studies. It was these men who were held responsible for maintaining and making judicious use of their clan's traditional patrimony and who, therefore, were confronted more directly than others by the dilemmas resulting from the articulation of traditional beliefs in the powers of magic with Christian moral teaching. This is a major theme to be explored in this thesis. In order to deal with this kind of issue the areas of indeterminacy, conflict and contradiction in indigenous cultural conceptualisations, often overlooked in conventional anthropology, have to be taken into consideration.

FROM DILEMMAS OF REPRESENTATION TO REPRESENTATION OF DILEMMAS

Dealing with internal contradictions requires thinking about epistemological questions concerning the construction of knowledge about cultural and social systems from ethnographic enquiry. There are many kinds of 'facts' about Korafe culture and social structure. At one level villagers speak of their customs, beliefs
or rituals as eternal manifestations of ancestral ways. There is a verb form in Korafe language which has been glossed by linguists as 'when we do (it), we always do (it) this way.' This form makes it possible for Korafe to speak of objectified ancestral customs as current practice: whether or not they have been practiced for any number of years is not indicated by the use of this verb. These objectified ancestral customs are juxtaposed to 'normative' accounts of current practices and beliefs. The acknowledged transformations are explained as conscious responses to pressure by missionaries, educators, and government officials. Alternatively they are considered to be necessary adaptations to changed conditions of existence. In addition to these two levels of self-description, there are my own observations of things people did and professed to believe. These often deviate in many respects from both 'traditional' and 'modern' versions of reified representations. Further, people often made contradictory statements about the value of a given practice depending upon whether they talked in abstract terms or of particular instances. These divergences are accounted for in terms of particular relations enmeshing the protagonists, or special conditions requiring a variation of the norm for specific needs or purposes. It is impossible to construct a systematic all-encompassing and self-sufficient account of Korafe social and cultural life without ignoring large parts of indigenous experience.

Representations which stress coherence are achieved at the cost of excluding those features which seem to conflict with the overall system constructed by ethnographers, and compromise their plausibility. As a result there is a tendency to treat recent innovations as meaningless and to ignore the historical aspects of cross-cultural elaboration. Critics have emphasised that, in their pursuit of the 'exotic' and 'authentic', ethnographers have tended to reify peoples's practices and ideas by representing them as essential objectifications, manifestations of 'eternal' culture, which has no counterpart in real life. This, according to Keesing, is a consequence of definitions of cultures as 'discrete, self-contained, self-reproducing universes of shared customary practices and beliefs' (1990:10).

One consequence of the multiple ties which different Korafe clans have forged in the course of their history is that they do not view their culture as self-contained. Korafe often refer to cultural borrowings from allies or enemies of their migratory past. They talk of the dance songs which they have learned from the Baruga, and of the tapa cloths with which they were dressed by friendly Miniafia. In turn, they profess to have taught the Miniafia about making canoes and fishing nets, and the Kerebi how to build houses and grow taro. Magic and other esoteric knowledge can also be acquired. Cultural contact, in other words, is taken for granted by Korafe as a source of new ideas and practices. Among outside influences, those of the West rank very high in contemporary Korafe construction of their own identity. Reference to the things which Western agents have taught them, to practices which have been transformed since colonisation, and to the customs which they have dropped because of other changes in their lives, are all common in Korafe discourse. People's opinions of the relative value of ancestral and contemporary ways of doing things are ambivalent. 'Tradition' is sometimes
held up as an ideal, a world of stability and certainty, in which people always knew what to expect from others, in contrast to the chaotic contemporary scene where people's rights and responsibilities have been made uncertain by the social and cultural changes. On the other hand, the world of Westerners is aspired to, and Christianity and introduced technology were seen as valuable changes.

The effects of essentialising tendencies in Melanesian anthropology are most apparent in those ethnographies in which migrant workers, missionaries, tradestores, provincial politicians, government officials, local church organisations, and other institutions which betray villagers' involvement with structures and forces which transcend local boundaries, are completely absent (cf. Iteanu 1983). Similarly, according to A. Carrier and J. Carrier (1987), anthropologists who construct logically derived structural cycles appear to be making use of time and history, but they continue to produce synchronic representations of essentialised systems since the conceptual time postulated in the cycles has no relation to the actual, historical, course of events. Essentialising predispositions are also thinly disguised in the common anthropological practice of dichotomizing pre- and post-contact institutions. Here the 'traditional' is distilled from the contamination of outside influences, changes are treated separately in a final chapter, almost as an afterthought (cf. Godelier 1986). Even the well-meaning efforts of anthropologists to defend colonised people's cultural autonomy by relegating recent cultural phenomena emerging from colonial encounters to a marginal position - or describing them as a mere veneer of 'Westernisation' over a resilient core of authentic native culture - are coloured by essentialist preconceptions (cf. Kahn 1983). Carrier argues for the need to reorient anthropology, to find ways of writing about Melanesian societies which allow us to understand how outside influences and processes affect local communities and shape events within them (Carrier forthcoming: 14).

According to Fabian, the anthropological shortcoming in dealing with the flow of ideas and influences between people and across cultures in the contemporary world, results from a 'denial of coevalness' (1983). He argues that anthropologists distance themselves from the people they study by conflating geographical and temporal distance. Through 'allochronism', or the allocation of the exotic people they observe to a different time from their own, anthropologists create an object of study (ibid. 25, 31, 32). The irony is that although the discourse of anthropology is allochronic, its methodology is predicated on fieldwork - an encounter of observers and observed in the same time - which informs and legitimates anthropological knowledge (ibid. 33-5). Anthropology, therefore, is characterised by an epistemological split between coeval research and allochronic writing and theorising (ibid. 148); the temporal distancing occurs in the process of transformation of fieldwork experiences and recorded observations into ethnographic text. This contradiction, for Fabian, is the crux of anthropology and the point of departure for its critique (ibid. 159).

One realm of village life where the interplay of indigenous and Western ideas is particularly salient and inadequately represented in much Melanesian
ethnography is the religious one. Christian values and precepts are apparent in all
domains of village life, and pervade contemporary villagers' relationships with
their ancestors, the rest of the world, and between themselves. Barker (n.d.) argues
that anthropologists' concern with authenticity, coupled with their preconceptions
about missionization as a one-way process of imposition, have prevented them
from taking Melanesian Christians seriously and acknowledging that Christianity is
an important part of contemporary villagers' social, cultural and religious identity
(Barker 1985:263). Christianity is viewed as an artificially imposed innovation to
be excluded from representations of indigenous culture.

Thomas suggests that descriptions in which particular practices or ideas are
explicated in terms of a coherent social or cultural totality should be replaced by an
approach which allows the history of indigenous confrontation with intrusive
foreigners to be taken into account. He points to the role which Melanesian's
reified conceptions of Western culture and society - constructed on the basis of
their experience of colonial encounters - play in the construction of indigenous
definitions of their own cultural characteristics. Such dynamic, reactive processes
of cultural construction, characteristic of colonial histories, provide the context in
which 'substantivized' cultural features held as emblematic of a particular
community can be understood (Thomas forthcoming). In another paper, Thomas
shows that the construction of self-identity by indigenous people can involve a
number of different processes and strategies. Anthropologists concerned with issues
of 'invention of tradition' have emphasised those resulting in the affirmation of
native customs which become objectified as representative of indigenous identity.
This emphasis has obscured other processes such as 'reversal of tradition', by
which aspects of traditional culture, seen as diametrically opposed to modernity,
are negatively valued and repudiated (Thomas n.d.:24).

Such repudiations consist, however, not in absolute negations that deny
the construction of identity in particular terms, but instead invert the
values attached to that identity through a kind of negative self-
fashioning, valorizing what is other and foreign rather than what is
associated with one's place. (ibid.:8)

This process, too, involves reified notions of what constitutes both the 'we' and the
'other'. In this way, I will argue, Korafe have come to consider Christianity as the
'knowledge' which defines and empowers Westerners in the same way that
ancestral knowledge attributes different powers to different clans. This notion
underpins the ambivalence of contemporary Korafe attitudes to traditional esoteric
knowledge and its relationship to Christianity. As Thomas points out, villagers' accounts of their ancestors' conversion to Christianity abound with instances of
reversal and repudiation. What is repudiated, however, is not
indigenous religion, as an anthropologist might have construed it, but the particular array of practices and beliefs that the encounter had made
constitutive of heathenism. (ibid.:15)

Another consequence of the anthropological pursuit of coherent and unified
systems is that it does not allow for the co-existence, within any social group,
alternative and conflicting versions of cultural objectifications. Different kinds of things were regarded as emblematic of Korafe culture by the people I lived with. Korafe switched frequently from referring to objectified notions of their ancestors to those of Westerners as foils for themselves. All these levels of self-description are integral to the cultural and social identity which contemporary Korafe construct for themselves. The relative evaluation of their own practices, knowledge and institutions in opposition to those of significant others are not consistent, however.

Keesing (1990:18) suggests that the concept of culture should be replaced by a 'critical conception of the cultural' which would take for granted the 'multiple, subdominant and partially submerged cultural traditions' to be found besides the 'hegemonic force of the dominant tradition' in any community. In this view the production of alternative systems of knowledge and symbols and their relative prominence in a society's discourse is linked to the interests and relative power of different sections within the community (defined in terms of class, rank, gender, age, and so on). Although this dimension of the 'political economy of knowledge' is relevant to the diversity of opinions and values expressed by different Korafe, it does not account for indeterminacies, for conflicting views expressed by the same individuals, or the personal dilemmas with which they contend.

Contemporary representations and practices can be explained as objectifications, reversals or substantivisations of traditional ways in dynamic confrontation with outside influences. Important questions still remain unanswered, though. How do people change their minds, come to select among their practices and beliefs those which become emblematic of their ethnic identity, those to be rejected as outdated or counterproductive - in short what choice do people have in what to believe and how to act? These questions can only be posed by examining culture in terms of its processes: the processes through which people's tenets, ideas, and associated practices are transmitted between generations, influenced by internal and external forces, and transformed by people's actions.

People's beliefs and practices are constantly shaped and refashioned in the processes of living, interacting, and adjusting their relations to others. Dilemmas are constantly emerging from the confrontation of ideas and representations with realities which challenge them. The different views which Korafe have of themselves in relation to their ancestors on one side, and to 'the West' on the other are not simply exegetical devices. They are ideas and ideals to which people refer in making decisions about how to act in empirical situations. They can also be used in rhetorical oratory to promote given definitions of events or sway public opinion towards one of many courses of action. The uses to which they are put and the perceived outcomes, in turn, influence their evaluation, acceptance, or rejection. It is by seeking resolutions to conflicts that people come to face the contradictory aspects of their ideologies and attempt to resolve them.

A 'processual' approach to ethnography does not lend itself to tidy representations or to conclusions in which essential features of society and culture can be summed up (Falk Moore 1978). It privileges the analysis of events which
allows the juxtaposition and contestation of conflicting views, ideals, and interests to be highlighted, and areas of indeterminacy to be revealed. Certain types of events are more revealing of the processes of social and cultural change and adjustment than others. These 'diagnostic events', according to Falk Moore, frequently coincide with times of crisis, death, or the passage of rights or property to the emerging generation (1987).

This thesis is constructed around a series of events which occurred in Kabuni during my fieldwork, which fit all these criteria, and which are described in the last chapter. In the first five chapters I attempt to provide a context for understanding some of the issues faced by contemporary Korafe in 1987-8, which emerged during a crisis involving a drought and the death of ritual experts. The transmission of magical powers to young men committed to Christian values, and the seclusion of widows in the face of general feelings that such customs are no longer appropriate, were two areas of contestation which required people to act and take positions on unresolved issues. The processes of resolution of these conflicts raised many of the issues discussed in the main body of the thesis, and focussed my attention on the issue of the relationship between magic and Christianity.

I decided to leave the narrative to the concluding chapter because I felt it was necessary to precede it with chapters to set the scene and provide a framework for understanding the nature of the dilemmas, their historical origin and development, and some of the discursive tools which are brought to bear in resolution processes. Various issues discussed separately in the early chapters appear again in the last chapter where they are seen to operate jointly: affecting individuals in different role positions in different ways and at different levels as they are confronted by the testing of ideological positions in reality. The final reason for leaving the narration of these events to the end is to avoid a conclusion in which 'essential' Korafe cultural and social features are 'summed up'.

Anthropologists doing fieldwork, instead of conceiving of themselves as looking at whole cultures or whole societies, are now acutely conscious of observing part of the cultural construction of part of a society at a particular time. (Falk Moore 1987:735)

Thus, I hope with this ending to escape the denial of coevalness implicit in writing about exotic people, I wish to leave the reader with the sense that life, with all its conflicts, resolutions and dilemmas, continues for the Korafe independently of my presence among them.

SYNOPSIS

The first part of the thesis (chapters one to three) is concerned with the structures and processes of Korafe social life. The first chapter describes different levels of
social groups whose formation is ideologically attributed to patrilineal descent. Korafe use of the siblingship model as an ideological representation of possible relations between people and groups of this kind (cooperation and sharing, hierarchical relations and division of responsibilities and rights between senior and junior, and the disruptive potential of competition and jealousy) is juxtaposed to the actual organisation of daily life in villages. Patterns of cooperation between people on grounds such as co-residence, friendship, and uterine kinship are also shown to be relevant to social experience. Korafe are conscious of the complexity of the fit between model and reality, and make use of the alternatives available in the kinship reference system to portray any actual relationship of cooperation as one of brotherhood. Groups of different levels of inclusion (lineages, clans and territorial groups) come into being for different purposes. The contemporary application of this ideology to relations between villagers and migrant workers, and for the establishment of commercial enterprises are also described.

Another feature of the patrilineal descent ideology considered in this chapter is the distribution of things of cultural value among clans. The two meanings of the word *Kotofu* are introduced in this context. Spelt with a capital 'K', this word refers to high-ranking clans around which are formed coalitions of clans residing in a specific territory. These clans are described as the elder brothers of the lower ranking (*Sabúa*) clans in the territorial groups. *Kotofu* clans assume rights to leadership and responsibilities to represent the territorial group in dealings with similar groups. Written with a lower-case 'k', the word *kotofu* refers to cultural items considered to be shared property of clan members. They mediate relations with ancestral spirits and define individuals' clan identity. The distribution of these *kotofu*, particularly the ancestral relics and knowledge associated with magical powers, are the key to relations between junior and senior members of each clan, and to political relations between the clans in a territorial group, whose coalition is predicated on magical specialisation and cooperation.

Chapter two deals with relations between affines and groups which are constituted on the basis of affinal exchanges. In this chapter I use Iteanu's monograph on Orokaiva cycles of exchange (1983), as a foil for my own arguments in terms of methodology, theory and ethnography. Like Iteanu, I describe affinal relationships as the outcome of continuing relations between brothers and sisters, not as relations between groups of men exchanging women. By following the life cycle of brother-sister and husband-wife couples, affinal exchanges are seen as marking stages in their relations, continued in the next generation between cross-cousins. Like Iteanu, I also draw connections between affinal exchanges and those between the living and ancestral spirits. However, I do not consider the exchanges with ancestral spirits to be of a hierarchically higher level. Unlike Iteanu, I juxtapose the objectivised description of each life cycle exchange with accounts of those which took place during my fieldwork, indicating the points of difference, the reasons given, and people's evaluations. Christianity and the consequences of participation in a cash economy frequently feature as explanations, colouring people's appraisal of their relative worth. Some of the
rituals associated with affinal exchanges only exist in name. They have not been performed for years, and yet still play a part in Korafe discourse about themselves and their identity in relation to modernity, the West, and their ancestors. This is the point at which the Orokaiva and Korafe material differs in ethnographic detail. Iteanu portrays Orokaiva ancestors as an undifferentiated entity with whom the living, as a group, engage in exchanges. At initiation children are offered to the spirits in exchange for magic. For the Korafe, instead, relations between living and spirits are particular. Each person's identity depends on the relations constituted with specific ancestors through patrilineal inheritance and the mediation of the brother-sister exchanges. Magic power comes to clan members from clan ancestors, and the clan's children are not offered in exchange for magical assistance. Instead, pigs for the ancestors are obtained from rival clans in the context of competitive dance and exchange feasts.

The themes of fraternal cooperation between clans within territorial groups (introduced in chapter one) and the articulation of exchanges mediating relations between groups of people with those between the living and their ancestors (delineated in chapter two) are elaborated in chapter three, which describes exchange feasts mediating political relations between territorial groups. Although no longer held, Vásái feasts remain salient features of Korafe political ideology. The organisation of feasts is a prerogative of Kotófu clans, and is considered to be the basis for their leadership role within territorial groups. By coordinating the magical, productive, and performative efforts of the Sabúa clans in their territorial group and negotiating with their counterparts, Kotófu elders create the conditions for the clans' ancestral spirits, embodied in the dancers' decorations, to obtain from their feasting partners the pigs due to them. Rooted in social and political relations between clans, Vásái feasts gave expression to such relations and were a context for consolidating or changing alliance and leadership patterns, as their success depended on the Sabúa's willingness to comply with Kotófu requests. The data for this chapter are a mixture of indigenous objectifications and the observation of contemporary inter-clan feasting on occasions of church festivities which have developed specifically in opposition to the traditional feasts while reproducing some of their features in a new context.

The second part of the thesis is more directly focussed on the issues of complementary and conflicting beliefs endorsed by the Korafe and their actualisation in contemporary practice. Chapter four describes in detail the situation of the Kabuni clans' magic specialisation during 1987-8. Each clan's magical patrimony is listed with a description of the clan elder who, at the time, was considered to be responsible for its common knowledge and powers. The myths about the origins of the magic, the oral history of its acquisition by the clan's ancestors and its transmission to the current holders, and accounts of the pressures by colonial administrators and missionaries to abandon it, are reported. Some of the techniques and effects associated with each magical discipline are described, and the relative importance of different parts of magical rituals for their efficacy compared. Across all clans primacy is given to possession and manipulation of
ancestral relics which embody ancestral essence and power, and symbolise the legitimacy of their possessor's claims to be the inheritor and caretaker of his clan's magical tradition. The 'timeless' aspects of magic tradition, as described in Korafe rhetoric, are contrasted to the contemporary reality. The current status of each clan's specialist is considered in terms of his reputation for powerfulness, public opinion concerning the worth of his powers, the morality of their use, the frequency and context in which they are used, his position in relation to Christianity, and his thoughts about transmitting his powers to a successor. As the fortunes of each clan's magical tradition are traced, the divergences between the conceptual model of the reproduction of the division of magical labour on the one hand, and the processual instability caused by realities of material and social reproduction in specific historical conditions on the other, are highlighted.

Christianity, as the most significant and emblematic of Western influences or modern tendencies, appears at different levels of discourse: as explanation for the disappearance of some powers, as motivation for efforts to combat the existing powers, as proof of the elder's moral standing despite his possession of magical powers, and as raising moral dilemmas by affirming a fundamental incompatibility between Christian values and the practice of magic.

In chapter five the ambiguous relationship between Korafe commitment to Christianity and their reliance on magic is unravelled through a reconstruction of the processes which engendered and transforms it. It provides the historical background and the conceptual framework for the dilemmas recounted in chapter six. Korafe ideas concerning the distribution of knowledge and its properties of empowerment are discussed as a key to understanding their ambivalence regarding Christian moral condemnation of magic. Christianity is considered by them as the knowledge which empowers Westerners, as magic lore empowers members of different clans differentially. This desirable aspect of Christianity has shaped relations with missionaries throughout the history of encounter, encouraging Korafe to acquire the knowledge promised by missionaries. While Korafe had relatively little trouble accommodating Christian teachings among their own beliefs or acknowledging the desirability of some of its moral precepts, they did not swap magical beliefs for Christianity as the early missionaries hoped and expected. Nevertheless, they have adopted an ambiguous stance in relation to traditional powers, which are considered by them as 'primitive' and even evil.

Korafe ideology emphasises that knowledge, to empower, must belong to its possessor. Claims to inheritance of ancestral powers are legitimated by the possession of the relevant relics, as well as by the perceived effectiveness of the magic performed: both attesting to the necessary relationship with the relevant ancestors. The rigid moral position of Christianity regarding all dealings with ancestral spirits as evil is at odds with a Korafe view of magic as a source of powers which can be used for good or evil. Thus on the one hand, the perceived failure of contemporary Korafe to succeed in a modern context is attributed to the fact that Christianity is really Westerners' knowledge, to which Korafe are not really entitled while magic continues. On the other hand, magical powers are
fundamental to the constitution of political relations within and between clans, and continue to be essential for survival and fundamental subsistence activities. Therefore, the general condemnation of magic in public discourse is undercut by a reliance on clan elders for maintaining relations with the ancestors and making appropriate use of magic for the benefit of the community. While most people are able to profess ignorance of magic and blame others for its continued presence in the community, clan elders are faced with difficult choices and attempt to recast their traditional knowledge in ways which seem to accommodate Christian values. This is the background for the events recounted in the concluding chapter. Magic was appealed to as explanation for and solution to a social crisis, while the death of a key ritual figure plunged the community into a period of contestation and contradiction as the rightful successors to the clan’s magic appealed to their commitment to Christianity in order to reject the responsibilities attached to the inheritance of magical powers.
ENDNOTES - INTRODUCTION

1 Some linguists consider Maisin to be an Austronesian language with Non-Austronesian overlays, while others consider it to be a Non-Austronesian language influenced by Austronesian, see Dutton 1971:8 and Barker 1984:53-4.

2 See chapter 1.

3 Oro also refers to groups like lineages, clans and tribes. It also means welcome in many of the languages in the district.

4 Elkin was able to transcend the normal limitations on acquisition of knowledge beyond that of one's own group. He was considered an expert in Korafe traditions, as well as a speaker of many languages learned from the plantation labourers he worked with in his youth. He was consulted by elders concerning aspects of their own heritage they were uncertain about. Although a senior man in the high ranking clan, however, Elkin did not appear to use his knowledge to further claims to a position of leadership. His classificatory brother Formen was the acknowledged political leader of the clan and territorial group. Elkin was respected and welcomed anywhere for his modest demeanour, story-telling abilities, and fair-minded use of historical knowledge to help in settling disputes.

5 Whether I was his younger or elder sister became something of an issue, masked in mutual teasing and jokes, between Robertson and me. He was Noah’s and Jessette’s eldest son, and the youth who had accompanied Mackenzie to meet me at the airstrip. To begin with he was happy to refer to me as his elder sister, like most of the youths and unmarried girls in Goodenough village: my being an outsider was sufficient reason to use the term which carried most respect. As I succeeded in becoming more of an insider, and in response to my becoming more closely associated with his parents than other families in the village, Robertson tried to shift to referring to me as his younger sister. It is also significant that his jocular challenges corresponded to a stage when he was beginning to assert himself as an adult, and felt that the way he addressed me would affect others’ perceptions of his own status.

6 C. Farr, personal communication 1991