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**NOT THE WAY IT REALLY WAS:
CONSTRUCTING THE TOLAI PAST**

December 1988

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of the Australian National University.

This thesis is my own work.

Canberra, 23 December 1988

(Klaus Neumann)

*Pire ra utul a bul, Noel Gerson, Zebulon Willie dital ma Delma Polong,
nina dital tur vakilang a kalamana tarai ma vaden,
upi dlat parika dlat a vatur vake ra minatoto ure ra umana tubuidiat.*

**For Noel Gerson, Zebulon Willie and Delma Polong,
and all those who will keep alive the Total past.**

Abstract

This study is an attempt to write a history of the colonial past of the Tolai in East New Britain, Papua New Guinea. The history consists of seven parts, each of them dealing with a particular theme or episode: the Toma killings in 1902 (chapter 1), prophecies of the arrival of the white people (chapter 3), the coming of the mission (chapter 5), the life history of Abaram ToBobo of Vunabalbal (chapter 7), early political organisation among Tolai men on Matupit and around Vunamami from the 1930s (chapter 9), images of the "time of darkness" (chapter 11), and the alienation of Tolai land by Queen Emma and other planters in the late nineteenth century (chapter 13). The history uses European documentary sources and Tolai testimonies. The oral traditions and histories are used both as material to write a history and as elements of that history. The history draws also on observations made during twenty months of fieldwork in Papua New Guinea.

This study also attempts to analyse the way Tolai understand and use their past. In chapter 8 it is shown how the control of land is dependent on a control of the past. In chapters 10 and 12 it is demonstrated how customary exchanges guarantee a continuity between past and present, how customs change, and how customs become *kastom*. In chapters 3, 5 and 12, Tolai constructions of the past are compared with those of Tami and Kotte people. It is argued that a different pattern of colonisation changes the way people look at their past, and that the making of history has changed the production of histories.

In chapter 6, I argue that academic oral historians need to recognise oral histories and traditions as histories in their own right instead of using them only as sources to establish what really happened. In chapters 2, 4 and 14 some of the subjective premises of this history are presented when I talk about the history of this study, the concept and practice of fieldwork, and sketch a philosophy of history that is partly informed by Tolai constructions of their past. In the last chapter I suggest that the construction of the Tolai past needs to be a dialogue that is directed at knowing rather than knowledge.

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Conventions

Personal names

The names of persons mentioned in the colonial records are spelt according to today's convention. The Tolai do not distinguish between surnames and first names. Today they have at least two names, one of them being a Christian name. Sometimes the first name is used exclusively, sometimes the second. Names preceded by 'la' are, with some rare exceptions, those of women, whereas the prefix 'To' denotes male names. The use of prefixes is optional. Male names beginning with 'T' are rarely preceded by 'To'. There are two ways to write Tolai names: To An and ToAn; followers of either way claim theirs is the only proper one. Throughout the text I choose the second variant in accordance with A.L. Epstein's and R.F. Salisbury's practice.

Place names

I spell the names of places according to today's convention. The village names follow the latest census. 'Raluana' refers to Raluana Village. 'Raluana*' comprises the six villages Raluana, Ialakua, Barovon, Vunamurmur, Vunatagia and Bitabaur, which Tolai also call 'Ra Laptikai'. 'Kiniginunan' always refers to the area around today's Vunamami, and 'Kiniginunan' to a plantation, owned by Octave Mouton and later by the Catholic Mission, east of Kokopo.

Tolai language

Whenever possible I follow the recognised standard Tolai in the latest edition of the Bible which was jointly edited by representatives of the Catholic and United Churches. In all other cases I follow the spelling common in Raluana* (e.g. *tabu* instead of *tambu*; *inglet* instead of *inlet* or *ingiat*). For translations from the Tolai language, also referred to as Kuanua, I consulted the dictionary prepared by the Methodist missionaries Rickard, Fellmann and Linggood (METHODIST OVERSEAS MISSION 1964), MEYER 1921, and COSTANTINI 1907 (in this order). I consider BLEY 1912 and LANYON-ORGILL 1960 unreliable.

Tok Pisin

For the spelling of Tok Pisin, also referred to as Neo-Melanesian Pidgin, I consulted MIHALIC 1971, but followed regional variations whenever appropriate.

Kotte, Yabim and Tami languages

I follow common practice around Finschhafen and use the letter 'c' for the glottal stop.

Translations

All translations from the Tolai, Tok Pisin, German or French languages are by myself unless otherwise stated.

Reference to oral testimonies

I learnt from Papua New Guineans by way of instruction or through experience and interaction. I got to know Papua New Guinean histories by recording narratives, by

casually talking to people, or by observing people, e.g. by watching enactments of the past. It is not possible to list all those Papua New Guineans who passed on knowledge to me. But in footnotes I give a full reference if I am quoting somebody verbatim or if I give the gist of a long statement. Otherwise I just give the name and home village of the informant. After the informant's name I give the name of the village of which she/he is a member. I always give the official village name, though that might not always be the most common one - in several cases villages are referred to by the name of their congregation, e.g. most people call Bitarebarebe Village: Bitavavar. If the informant is associated with or resides in a different village, I add its name after a stroke.

Currency

The currency used in Papua New Guinea is the Kina (1 kina = 100 toea). In 1986-1988 1 PNG Kina equalled roughly 1 US Dollar.

Map 1: Papua New Guinea

Acknowledgements

Many individuals and institutions have over the years contributed knowledge, advice, hospitality and assistance. I regret the impossibility of thanking everyone by name.

Heinz Schütte both interested me in Papua New Guinea, the Tolai, and the writing of history, and provided encouragement and intellectual stimulation during the first few years of my work.

The Australian National University enabled me to pursue my interest by awarding me a Ph.D. scholarship and by funding a large part of my research. The Provincial Governments of Morobe and East New Britain invited me to carry out research in Papua New Guinea between 1986 and 1988.

Many archivists and librarians have been of great help. I would like to express my particular gratitude to staff at the Menzies Library (Canberra), at the Mitchell Library (Sydney) and at the Hessische Landesbibliothek (Wiesbaden), and to Pfarrer Konrad Rauh of the Lutheran Mission's archives in Neuendettelsau. I also thank Stewart Firth for lending me a carload of photocopies of German colonial records and Heinz Schütte for making available his transcripts of Brown's and Danks' papers.

For their hospitality I am grateful to Masina and Alisi in Malasiga, Klaus Müller in Finschhafen, and laNila and the late Peni ToPapakat. Darius ToNamaliu generously allowed me to stay in a house at Bonat-Vunaruga and was certainly the most amicable landlord I ever had. The Raluana Community School's teachers, students and board of management all kindly tolerated the new tenant at Bonat.

Murewe, Beddi Jubilee, ToBalaguan and ToMago all helped me to settle into a foreign environment and to make contacts around Finschhafen or on the Gazelle. I had many patient teachers who helped me to learn Tok Pisin and Kuanua.

I am indebted to all those people who looked after me during my stay in Papua New Guinea, in particular to the women of Ialakua for their caring and for the delicious food: a special thanks to laBaita, laBata, laBonnie, laBungtabu, laDokas, laElsie, laGagui, laHennie, laIrima, laKalinga, laKapana, laLivuana, laLuisah, laMalana, laMioko, laMitam, laMitinare, laNalir, laNiiba, laPatete, laPia, laPipe, laRika, laRota, laTavune, laTiala, laTingtarum, laVue, laVura, and many others. I also appreciate the help of those who took care of me at various stages: ToVarkia, ToAiun, ToLeba and ToSelot.

Sem Reuben accompanied me to the Kotte, Yabim and Bukaua people, and helped me to understand their histories. ToSinot, laLena and others did a great job transcribing tapes. Without ToPolong's help I would not have got around.

I am greatly indebted to all those who shared their knowledge with me, who taught me their histories and who initiated me into their culture. It is not possible to name them all; those who do not find their photograph or name in the thesis should know

that I have not forgotten them. I would like to thank in particular Jakobus Tom of Malasiga, ToWilliam and Tavul of Vunamami, ToVuia of Matupit, ToVetenge of Tagitagi No. 1, and ToMoseley of Takubar. I am also grateful to Zurewe Zurenuo, Paulias Matane, ToAgi, Yakotung Saki David, Stanley ToMarita, Tokunai, Vin ToBaining, Toltinge, Rabbie Namaliu, and many others for questions, suggestions and criticisms that challenged my way of thinking.

laNasain, Eliza Willie, laKangal and ToGerson became close friends. I do not know what I would have done without their support. I owe Gerson in particular a loud "*boina boina tuna, talaigul*" for his commitment to our friendship and hope that he will not be disappointed with the result of my work. Nasain's enthusiasm and competence as a teacher has encouraged me to make proposals which may sound utopian, but I am confident she could prove them to be realisable.

I would like to thank those who commented on earlier drafts of one or more chapters, and in particular Judy Davis, William Laisuit, Raiman Bilak and Ton Otto. Bill Gammage and Martha Macintyre have read much of the final draft and made useful suggestions. Donald Denoon has read the greater part of the thesis at various stages of its completion and has encouraged me throughout my Ph.D. course. I am also indebted to Peter Hempenstall, Margaret Jolly and Alan Ward for inviting me to give papers: writing and discussing them with perceptive audiences in Newcastle and Sydney helped to steer my thoughts.

In the Department of Pacific and South East Asian History at the Australian National University I thank Dorothy McIntosh, Karen Haines, Julie Gordon and Sally-Anne Leigh for their hospitality and their manifold assistance, and my colleagues August Kituai and Nicholas Thomas for their concern and encouragement. Staff at the university's photographic services have done a great job, as has Ian Heyward, who drew all the maps.

I thank Kathleen Weekley for her friendship, love and support.

The thesis would not have been completed without Hank Nelson's persistent encouragement. He has been a supportive and tolerant supervisor. He put a lot of work into teaching me to write in English and to translate my way of thinking into a foreign language. With his preoccupation with form and style, he more than anybody else has influenced my ideas about the content of the thesis.

1: Account of a Defeat

I.

"Our ancestors fought with wood."
(Total weapons, collected c. 1900)

and they killed men and they burnt down houses and they killed pigs and chickens - and all that as a pay-back for one woman, for one white woman?" That's what we asked the court. We went to court, the first time in Rabaul. Mr Kampari¹ was the judge. ... Mr Kruksen² was our lawyer. ... We argued that according to our knowledge of the law, if one person were killed by two people, those two would be killed in return. The ones who had killed will be killed, and that's it. And in this case, many men were killed, and houses were burnt, some women were killed and some children and so forth. We asked the Government and we asked the court: 'How come there was only one woman, just one white woman, but they have retaliated many times?' The court replied that in those days people were not enlightened. 'It was probably done in order to prevent them from taking up arms again.' We said: 'If they had killed only ToVagira and ToKilang, there would have been no more hostilities.' That's what we told the court. There would not have been another war. Because the people would have known. That is, we knew that our ancestors fought with wood and Germany arrived with the rifle. They just took up position in the distance, shot, and the man was dead. Therefore, if they had killed just those two, ToVagira and ToKilang, there would have been no more war. ... We asked: 'Which law applies here? We, too, know that when one person is murdered, they kill the one who has killed. If there were two of them, they would kill the two. If there had been three who killed, those three would be killed in return. If there had been four or more who killed, all of them would be killed.' That's how we presented our case. The court heard

"My name is Iosep ToVetenge. I will tell you about this court case we had. I have forgotten which year it was. It was about the piece of land which is called Tokota. We began it like this: we knew that when Mrs Wolff was killed at Tabaule, they confiscated this particular piece of land without paying for it. The land they paid for was Tabaule, where Mrs Wolff lived. Well, we killed Mrs Wolff, that is ToKilang and ToVagira did. They had a meeting where they decided that they would kill Mrs Wolff. After they had killed her, boundary markers were planted to mark out the land which was seized, that is Tokota, Toma I and Toma II. We saw this happening and said: 'Hey, wait a minute! They had already killed those women, and they had killed those men, and they had killed those pigs and chickens and they had burnt down those houses.' So we asked: 'What does the law say about this? They seized our land, and they killed women and they killed children

¹ Name is spelt phonetically.

² Name is spelt phonetically.

our arguments and put them into the right words. They ruled that this particular piece of land, Tokota, be returned to us, because it had been seized illegally as just another compensation for Mrs Wolff. The people rejoiced because we had got back the land. ... The payback for Mrs Wolff was to have been ToVagira, ToKilang, some men and women and some animals. That was to be counted as the pay-back for Mrs Wolff. Our land returned.³ The court, that is Mr Kampari who heard our case in Rabaul, agreed that the land should be returned to us. After the court had admitted that we were right, they announced it in the news, and we listened to it, and we were happy, we were really happy. They broadcast it in the news ... that the people of Tagitagi No. 1 would take possession of the land Tokota and that the land Tabaule which had been bought would remain with the *masta*.⁴ So far, so good. The *masta*, Tom Garrett, heard the verdict and appealed in Australia to the High Court. We collected one hundred pounds to support me, or rather, to assist the Government which paid for my air fare, so that I could attend the court case at the High Court in Australia.

I arrived in Australia at night time. They put me up in a hotel. I slept. In the morning, a white man by the name of Mr Brown met me at the hotel and accompanied me to the court. I arrived at the court. The court proceedings began. I sat there, I did not say anything. My lawyer did the talking. I did not say anything. The court was adjourned. We rose, we knocked off. On the next day we went to the court again. Only the lawyer spoke, I just sat there like an idiot. Nobody interpreted for me, so that I would know what was going on and could say something. Nothing. I just sat there. I simply sat there. On the third day, a Friday, we went again to the court. I sat there again and did not speak. I just sat there. Nobody interpreted for me or asked me to speak. No, I just sat there until they wound up the court proceedings. And they told us to get ready to return to Rabaul. We rose. Mr Brown, the white man who was taking care of me, told me that I would return to Rabaul. His wife prepared something to eat at their place. We had a farewell meal, and in the afternoon between five and six o'clock I boarded the plane. We travelled all night and arrived in Moresby at daybreak, at six o'clock. We changed planes for Rabaul.

I arrived back in Rabaul and then went to my village, to Tagitagi No. 1. The people asked me: 'So what? Did we win?' 'Oh, I was like a statue,'⁵ I did not say anything. I just sat there with my eyes wide open. Like a piece of wood I sat there. Just like a statue. I did not speak.' The people were furious, and they walked on the plantation Toma I. They occupied it. They did not occupy Tokota. They just did it out of anger, they just walked on the plantation here, Toma I. Some *kiaps*⁶ came and calmed them down. And that was the end of it."⁷

³ In the Tolai understanding, land (*pia*) can be an active subject which returns ... and even kills (see chapter 8).

⁴ ToVetenge used the Pidgin term *masta*. In the next paragraph, when talking about Mr. Brown, he used the word by which a white man is most commonly referred to nowadays by the Tolai: *waitiman*.

⁵ ToVetenge used the Pidgin term *piksa* (picture). He emphasised the lifelessness of him sitting in the courtroom. On another occasion he said: "*lau dari a malalar* (I was like a picture/statue)."

⁶ The Tok Pisin term *kiap* refers to an Australian or Papua New Guinean patrol officer, but is also used in a wider sense to refer to any white man who regularly visits Papua New Guinean villages in his function as a government official. It has become part of Australian English (it is listed in the latest edition of the *Macquarie Dictionary*); therefore I will use the English plural form whenever applicable.

⁷ Iosep ToVetenge of Tagitagi No. 1 on 22 October 1987 at Ravae (Tagitagi No. 1). Slightly abridged extract. Taped statement. Non-literal translation from the Tolai language, on the basis of a transcript prepared by Paul ToSilot and myself.

II.

My aim is to write a history of a people who these days call themselves Tolai.⁸ There are about 80,000 Tolai today. Most of them live on the northeastern Gazelle Peninsula in East New Britain Province, Papua New Guinea. I want to say something about histories Tolai tell and the history I write. Over the next 230 pages I do not always neatly distinguish between writing a history and writing about histories, and often make the second undertaking become part of the first. I invite you to come on a journey which does not head for the conclusion of one central argument. Rather I make many suggestions, some of them implicit, some allusive. I pose questions and propose points of contact: between Tolai histories and my history of the Tolai, between the past and the present, between the spoken and the written word, between form and content, and between you and me. I ask for your active participation.

Map 2: The northeastern Gazelle Peninsula and the Duke of York Islands

This chapter is an introduction to the subject matters of this dissertation: the colonial past of the Tolai people, and histories concerned with that past. It touches on a variety of issues that will be taken up later. It juxtaposes a conventional historical narrative that is structured along a linear chronology and based on written sources

⁸ The term Tolai as well as the concept of a group living on the northeastern Gazelle Peninsula who have a common identity, which is represented by the term, did not come into being until about the 1930s (cf. A.L. EPSTEIN 1969, pp. 13f; A.L. EPSTEIN 1978 pp. 41ff). It is anachronistic to call a man living near Tabaule around 1900 a Tolai, though sometimes inevitable to make the text clear.

with a collage of my translations of Tolai stories, with ethnographic descriptions of features of Tolai society, and with observations and interpretations. It combines a plurality of voices into a heterogeneous total.

For my history, I have selected seven clips from the Tolai past. This first episode concerns events evolving around the murder of Hedwig Wolff, whose husband Rudolf owned early this century a plantation near today's Toma. The affair is well documented in contemporary German sources. It is one of the two most frequently cited events about German colonial rule on the northeastern Gazelle Peninsula, made to me during my fieldwork from 1986 to 1988. (The other event concerns the landing of the Australians in 1914.) I had neither the time nor the intention to make a general statement about what the Tolai say about their past. I did not have much contact with people in Livuan, Kabakada, Balanatanaman, Reimber, Watom or Bitapaka, nor with Tolai living in the diaspora. Most of the people I knew were from coastal villages along Blanche Bay. Only stories concerning the coming of the missions are widely known throughout the whole Tolai area. Stories about other events of the colonial past, including Mrs Wolff's murder, are, outside the areas affected, known by just a few individuals who are either related to people of the area, have worked there, or have lived there.

Those who were willing to tell me something about the Tolai past did not represent a cross-section of the community. Most of them were over fifty-five, and most of them were men. I soon learnt that I could not just ask IaAn or ToAn⁹ to tell me something about the past. In most cases they would refer me to somebody else who in their opinion was knowledgeable. This person would either have a reputation as an expert, and be a prominent member of the community or be in some way related to them. I once devised a questionnaire about attitudes towards the past and knowledge of stories, to which I wanted all adults in one particular village to reply. Most people I asked did not want to comply. The ones who were willing to make statements about the past belonged either to the same group I was already talking to most of the time, or they did it reluctantly to do me a favour. I thought that I probably lack some of the impertinence which makes a successful anthropologist. So I asked a young man from the village to help me. I explained carefully what I wanted and gave him my tape-recorder. He encountered the same problem and then decided to approach only a very small number of people because, as he put it, the questions were difficult and I could expect to get "good" answers from only a small group of experts.

Iosep ToVetenge was, in 1987, regarded as an expert. As a clan leader and former councillor of more than twenty years' standing he was also a public figure. ToVetenge lived on the small hill at the Toma Junction where the road from the coast to Toma forks - one prong ascending towards Paparatava Catholic Mission, the other (the Toma Highway) ascending towards the Vunadidir Crossing. From ToVetenge's place there is a fine view and one gets a geographical picture of the localities featured in the stories about Mrs Wolff. ToVetenge was not surprised at being asked about Mrs Wolff. He was aware of his reputation and claimed to be the only one knowing "the full story" (a

⁹ Being the equivalent of Ms and Mr Average.

kidoloina pirpir). When I met him in 1987, ToVetenge was a sprightly old man in his late seventies. A couple of times he was working in the garden when I went to see him. He was confident of what he said, and what he told me once, he would tell me the next time in other words without contradicting his first version but for minor details. When the people of Tagitagi occupied Toma I Plantation he did not, as he explained, join them, because he was a councillor and had to be loyal to the Government, at that time the Australian Administration. He appeared to be conservative in his views and careful in his assessments. He had nothing to do with the radicalism of the Mataungans, a movement which in 1969 embarked on a militant campaign for Tolai self-determination. He would have been a follower of Matthias ToLiman, the late leader of the Toma people during the 1960s and early 1970s.

Having had only very little (Catholic Mission) education, ToVetenge clearly could not have followed the court proceedings. But it was not only a matter of language. The rituals displayed in the courtroom discouraged him from demanding to be made an active participant, though he did not explicitly say so. The judges were sitting high above everyone else, ToVetenge explained. "Only those who had the strength could talk with them." The lengthy portrayal of his role in Australia was provoked by my own curiosity born out of ignorance of the reality of colonial relations in New Guinea in the 1950s and 1960s. "*Di ga valung avet - a mangana kai Australia* (they made us look like fools, that was the Australian way)", he remarked. He was cynical rather than outraged about his experiences. When people were indignant whilst talking about personal experiences under Australian colonial rule, more often than not I was the one who provoked their reactions by showing signs of being scandalised at their accounts.

"I will tell you about this court case we had." (Iosep ToVetenge of Tagitagi No. 1)

ToVetenge's version of the episode is an oral tradition as well as an oral history of one of the main protagonists in the later acts of the drama.¹⁰ He did not start by telling me about the court case but by describing the plot to kill Mrs Wolff. In my history as well as in ToVetenge's perception of the events, though, the confiscation of land in the aftermath of the murder is the crucial point. ToVetenge's account of the court case describes a defeat. He mentions only indirectly that the Tolai lost in Sydney. Indeed, the fact that he was not meant to be an active participant of the proceedings is a symptom of a defeat suffered in the aftermath of Mrs Wolff's death decades earlier. Retrospectively, the victory in Rabaul was just a short intermezzo, terminated when the appeal was allowed.

III.

In 1902, New Britain was part of the German colony Deutsch-Neu-Guinea. The island was then called Neu-Pommern, and its northern appendix was the Gazelle-Halbinsel. Most of the colony was unknown territory to those claiming it. The northeastern Gazelle Peninsula was one of the best known and most profitable parts of the colony. Its administrative capital was there, in Kokopo, then called Herbertshöhe. Effective colonial control did not extend to all areas populated by Tolai speakers - which was roughly all land on the Rabaul side of the Kerevat and Warangoi valleys. The areas of longest contact and most effective penetration by missions, plantations or the colonial Administration were the coast, in particular the stretch between Tagirgir (Raluana Point) and Kabakaul, plus the island of Matupit. Tabaule, the plantation owned by the Wolffs, was in 1902 on the frontier of German colonialism, though only twelve kilometres (as the *minigulai* flies) from Kokopo.

On 18 April the Foreign Office in Berlin received the first news of an alleged massacre in the distant colony.

today 3 April in the morning
on station of planter Wolff at Varzin
his wife and small boy and Miss Coe
murdered by natives
details not available yet
Assessor Wolff immediately off with police force
Hahl¹¹

Hahl was the Imperial Judge and Acting Governor, and at the time of the murder he was suffering from black-water fever which put him out of action during the days of drama. The Assessor (a rank within the German civil service) was district judge and second-in-charge.

¹⁰ In accordance with Vansina's earlier distinction, when talking about "oral traditions" I mean "testimonies that narrate an event which has not been witnessed and remembered by the informant himself (or herself), but which he (or she) has learnt about through hearsay" (VANSINA 1965, p. 20; but see also VANSINA 1985, p. 27), whereas by "oral histories" I refer to eyewitness accounts. I deliberately do not distinguish "oral traditions" from "myths", as I agree with Pender-Cudlip's critique of such distinctions (PENDER-CUDLIP 1972). "Oral history" of course also denotes the academic discipline, whose members produce histories by using both oral histories and oral traditions.

¹¹ Telegram Hahl to Auswärtiges Amt--Kolonial-Abteilung (AA-KA), Herbertshöhe: 3 April 1902, RKA 2989, ZStA Potsdam.

The first telegram was soon to be corrected and amended by details of the incident. In giving a narrative account of the killings and counter-killings below I stick to the information provided by contemporary sources.¹² Several versions emerge from them. There are the reports written by Assessor Wolff, touched up by their writer to satisfy his superiors in Berlin and edited again at the German Colonial Office. Secondly there are critical statements by the Catholic Mission, namely Father Eberlein, made public in Mission publications or in papers with leanings to the Catholic Zentrum party or the Socialists. There are statements by Hahl or Wolff in reaction to comments critical of the Administration's handling of the affair.

Principal Actors

- Rudolf Wolff: German planter
- Hedwig Wolff: his wife
- the baby: their son
- Carrie Coe: their guest
- Albert Hahl and Assessor Wolff: representing the Government
- Assunto Costantini: fallen father and familiar with the natives
- Father Eberlein: the Administration's opponent, also familiar with the natives
- natives from Paparatava, Tamanairik, Viviren, and other places: the enemy
- ToKilang and ToVagira: the ringleaders
- ToKitang: undecided big man
- ToNaie and ToMaidang: big men who are becoming allies
- ToKikile, Tue, ToKuprune, ToUlagunan, ToKilik, ToManmaduk, Turpele, ToVakailakan, ToGamut, ToKalelek, Tambung, ToPipi, ToValur, ToKaribui: prominent enemies
- ToVurgilo, ToKinkin, and others: friendly natives
- Sophie and others: victims
- plantation labourers

Preliminaries

Rudolf Wolff was granted a licence by the colonial authorities to purchase up to 500 hectares of customary land near the Vunakokor, formerly also referred to as (Mount) Varzin or Beautemps-Beaupré. He bought c. 320 hectares from two Paparatava big men, ToKitang and ToKilang. The purchase was sealed by a bill of sale dated 14 January 1900. In October 1900 Wolff settled in Tabaule some kilometres north of the Vunakokor. In December of the same year his wife Hedwig, nee Krebs, joined him. On 10 November 1901 she gave birth to a son. By March 1902, approximately sixty hectares had been cleared and planted, mainly with coconut palms. Wolff was also a trader who bought coconuts from villagers.

¹² For the official version, on which my narrative is based unless otherwise stated, see: Wolff to AA-KA, Herbertshöhe: 8 April 1902; Wolff to AA-KA, H'höhe: 20 May 1902; report Wolff, H'höhe: 5 August 1902, All in: RKA 2989; Wolff to Stübel, Berlin: 15 Jan. 1904; Hahl to Eberlein, H'höhe: 11 August 1903, Both in: RKA 2990. The incident was dealt with in some detail in the German press, see: KVZ of 28 May 1902 and of 13 Jan. 1903; *Vorwärts* of 30 May 1902 and 17 Jan. 1903; *Der Ostasiatische Lloyd* of 15 August 1902; *Berliner Neueste Nachrichten* of 29 May 1902; *Frankfurter Zeitung* of 30 May 1902; *Berliner Tageblatt* of 30 May 1902. The events are featured in detail in the Sacred Heart Mission's journal *Monatshefte* (1902, pp. 358-365, pp. 489-492, pp. 536-540; 1903, pp. 248-252).

Map 3: The Vunamami, Raluana and Toma areas

Grievances

On 17 March 1902 Wolff began to have another part of the land cleared to plant coffee. This plot was adjacent to a men's house used by Tokilang and his men. Allegedly, in the past it had been a place used by initiates of the *ingiet* magic.

Glossary I: *Ingiet*

Powerful magic, today still in use in New Ireland, on the Duke of York Islands, and in the Tolai periphery (Bitapaka and Livuan). It can be benevolent magic, but is also used to kill people. Only men can be initiated. Initiates can change into sharks, pigs and *minigulai* (a kind of eagle). The *ingiet* is known outside the Gazelle through anthropomorphic stone carvings used in rituals by initiates, many of which have found their way into European museums.¹³

Apparently in the late nineteenth century, the *ingiet* was also an influential male secret society. European observers claimed that occasionally *ingiet* initiates gathered for large-scale ceremonies at a *maravot*, a secluded

¹³ See KROLL 1937, pp. 183ff; KOCH 1982.

place belonging to the *ingiet*, where they performed rituals and dances and practised sodomy.¹⁴ According to Parkinson, around the turn of the century most male Tolai were *ingiet* initiates.¹⁵ The *ingiet*, perceived by some Europeans as an organisation with anti-colonial leanings,¹⁶ was banned by the German colonial administration and fought by both the Catholic and the Methodist Missions. The Catholics demanded that men who wanted to be baptised had to eat pork as a proof that they had renounced the *ingiet*, because it was taboo for initiates to consume pork.

ToKilang had lived on this plot before the 'war-of-the-bullet-proof-ointment'¹⁷ in 1893, and again for a short time up to March 1902. Earlier Wolff had conceded that ToKilang could be buried at this very place. After the clearing of the land had begun, ToKilang returned the trade goods he had received in payment for the land and announced that he did not want to be buried close to where a white man was working. Wolff sent the trade goods plus a few presents back to ToKilang, as he had done on earlier occasions when the latter had returned the goods as a means of protest. This time, however, ToKilang was not prepared to make peace. Wolff summoned ToVarnaume who knew some English, questioned him about ToKilang's stand and demonstrated to him the power of his hand-gun - which ToKilang interpreted as Wolff shooting at one of his men. On 19 March ToKitang sent word to Wolff warning him. Father Eberlein, who lived in Takabur but was also in charge of a mission station at Paparatava, learnt from ToKilang that another reason for his anger was the theft of chickens by Wolff's labourers. The Father advised him to make a complaint in Herbertshöhe and warned Wolff of ToKilang's grievance. Wolff went to Kokopo and got Hahl to come to Tabaule on 22 March to tell ToKilang and ToKitang that the land which was being cleared belonged to the planter. Only ToKitang turned up to listen to the Imperial Judge.

The Plot

When Hahl arrived at Tabaule, ToKilang had already left for Tamanairik to see the big man ToVagira, a renowned enemy of the whites. He had once killed one of ToKitang's men, allegedly for helping the whites to build a road, and on another occasion had killed a hunter employed by Wolff for trespassing. ToVagira proposed to raid the station at Tabaule and then retreat to Tamanairik (which at that time was outside the area under colonial control). ToVagira arranged for a meeting of men from Paparatava, Viviren and Tamanairik at an *ingiet* place in Viviren, where it was decided to wage war against the whites. Neither ToKilang nor ToVagira himself were present at that gathering. The German sources name ToKilang's brother ToKaribui ToVaurunga, ToKilang's son ToManmaduk, and Tue from Paparatava, as well as ToVagira's sister's sons Tokilik and ToUlagunan as participants. At the end of March ToKilang returned to Paparatava and sent word to Wolff that he wanted peace. Wolff was asked to come to ToKilang's place. Though unaware of this trap, Wolff declined but was subsequently

¹⁴ Parkinson (1907, p. 611) and Couppé (quoted in KROLL 1937, p. 212) are the only authors who say so explicitly, whereas others mention "Indescribable Indecencies". Neither Parkinson nor Couppé witnessed any such *ingiet* ceremony.

¹⁵ PARKINSON 1907, p. 599.

¹⁶ See, for example, KLEINTITSCHEN 1906, p. 359; DEANE 1933, p. 280; and KVZ of 16 July 1905.

¹⁷ See chapter 7.

visited by Tokilang and his family. Convinced by Tokilang's protestations of goodwill he told Hahl that there was no longer anything to worry about. On 31 March people from Paparatava, liegemen of both Tokilang and ToKitang, came to Tabaule to raid the station, but were persuaded by Tokirara to refrain. Two days later Tokilang dispatched Tokilik and ToUlagunan to Tamanairik to tell ToVagira to come. The big man declined but promised to send some of his men instead. On the same day Tokilang distributed food and *tabu* (shell-money) to his men. In the night ToVagira's men arrived.

The Murder

On the morning of 3 April, Wolff detailed his men for their day's duties. He then left the house to supervise them. ToManmaduk, Tokikile, Tue, Tambunga, ToValur and ToMalari offered Mrs Wolff copra and a pig for sale. Others, among them ToKaribui and Tokilang, were hiding behind the labourers' quarters. Mrs Wolff weighed the copra. Meanwhile Tue sent ToKuprune to take care of the domestic servant Sileni; ToKuprune battered him down with a hatchet. Tokikile offered Mrs Wolff some eggs for sale, which she put into her lap while still bargaining for the pig. ToManmaduk moved behind the woman and hit her with an axe on the back of her head. That was the sign for the others to thrust their spears into her body. In an ensuing fight between some of Wolff's men and the attackers, one man from Paparatava was killed and five of Wolff's labourers seriously wounded. Tokikile killed the baby, and Turpele the black maid Sophie. Carrie Coe, a niece of the Samoan-American planter "Queen" Emma Kolbe, was saved by the cook Siar.

22 October 1987.

Like others before him, ToVetenge insists that I visit the place mentioned in his account, to see for myself that I was not told just a story but the truth (*vakir a stori, a dovotina iaf*). I pick up the old man at his house in Ravae and we follow the road towards Kokopo. We pass the main gate for Varzin Plantation on the right hand side. A bit further down we stop at the plantation's cocoa fermentary. ToVetenge explains to the Total manager that we want to see the place where the first owner of the plantation had lived. Apparently ToVetenge does not exactly know how to get there. The manager has only a vague idea of the 1902 events. He tells his foreman Kavaron, a Karkar Islander, to accompany us. Kavaron has been working here for ages. He knows where the Wolff's house was, and he knows the story, too. That does not prevent ToVetenge from telling it once again. Even if Kavaron knew more, he would not contradict the Total big man.

Tabaule is more than one kilometre from the main road, downhill towards Wairiki. We cross the old road to Kokopo, built in German times and now only used as a track for the plantation's tractors. There are hardly any coconut palms. It is mainly hybrid cocoa. The rows are dead-straight, all the sectors I see look as if they have been weeded recently. The plantation looks very neat, more orderly than the cocoa plots owned by village people, which I have seen so far. The roads inside the plantation are good, better than some of the dirt roads looked after by the provincial or community governments. It is hard to imagine the same place ninety years ago. According to Governor Bennigsen's description, then it was partly bush, partly *kunal* grassland, with the occasional garden.¹⁸

Kavaron talks about the frequency of cocoa theft; Varzin Plantation is no exception. They can't pick the cocoa and leave it for some days before taking the beans out. Instead they have to

¹⁸ Bennigsen to AA-KA, 26 September 1899, RKA 2987. A contemporary photograph of the station Tabaule can be found in *Monatshette* 1902, p. 447.

process it immediately after picking the fruit. Apparently that is an unsatisfactory way of harvesting cocoa. The thieves are said to be from Tolai villages. Varzin Plantation is owned by sixty-four individuals from Bitakapuk and Tagitagi villages and managed by a plantation management agency with labourers from the mainland. ToVetenge is one of the owners. They do not want it to be divided into blocks. It seems land shortage is not pressing enough to make them give up a profitable business.

Tabaule is a paint spot in the midst of the orderly green of the cocoa. The flowering frangipani tree was, according to my guides, planted by Wolff next to his house (which of course no longer exists). It is a peaceful place and I wonder who was responsible for not replacing the frangipani with a couple of hybrids. Later I tape ToVetenge's account of the court case. He is satisfied with our sightseeing tour: *"U tar gire ra pia, ma u nunur i dovot. lau tar tata ma ra dovotina* (You have seen the piece of land, and you believe it's true. I have said the truth)."

The Planter's Return

Wolff, hearing screams, rode back to his house. One of his labourers, Sotelle from Buka, rushed to meet him, shouting: *"Masta, kanaka! kanaka!"* The planter saw many Tolai men, some aiming a gun at him, running around in excitement, but none of them seemed to be particularly concerned about him. Someone cried: *"Masta, virtual! virtual!"*¹⁹ Later Wolff claimed to have been shot at and to have fallen from his horse three times. Presuming that his wife and child were dead and finding no trace of Carrie Coe (who was then hiding with the cook and the cook's wife in the kitchen), he shouted to the labourer Toraki to get help from the mission station at Takabur and he himself rode to Giregire Plantation.

Pillage and Retreat

The attackers looted and ransacked the premises and took at least eleven guns and ammunition with them. They retreated towards Paparatava and Tamanairik. People from Malakuna appeared and continued the looting until the first Europeans arrived. ToNaie, apparently not part of the plot, had entrenched himself with his people in the mission station at Paparatava. When the warriors from Tamanairik passed on their way back home, ToNaie demanded a share of the spoils. It was denied. In the ensuing brawl, ToVakailakan from Tamanairik was wounded by ToKitang's follower ToVatangure, and ToNaie attacked ToGamut. The Tamanairik men fled. The warriors from Paparatava left their *gunan* and sought refuge in Tamanairik, Wairiki, Viviren and other places.

Glossary II: *Gunan*

Today, the term *gunan* can mean anything between a hamlet and a whole country. At the time of the arrival of the Europeans in the last quarter of the 19th century, the Tolai-speaking people did not live in large clustered settlements. A small group of people, linked through kinship and marriage, consisting of less than twenty adults would live in their hamlet which was usually fenced and out of sight of the next hamlet.²⁰ Several hamlets could form a political alliance which was, however, defined by membership rather than by the piece of land on which they lived. They

¹⁹ "Virtual" could mean, "somebody has been killed!" or "murder!", but the cry was also used to announce that there was a human body to be eaten.

²⁰ EBERLEIN 1899, pp. 317f; KLEINTITSCHEN 1906, p. 45; ROMILLY 1887, p. 23; cf. drawing in POWELL 1883, facing p. 178.

would have one or more fight leaders (*luluai*).²¹ Those alliances, which sometimes comprised several sub-alliances, were referred to as *District*²² or *Landschaft*²³ in the early ethnographic literature. Tamanairik was one such district, with ToVagira as its political leader. German records mention four districts or *Stämme* (tribes) around Mount Varzin: Paparatava, Viviren, Tamanairik and Wairiki. Paparatava obviously then comprised several alliances/places, among them Tamanabel and Malamale. Today, Viviren and Tamanairik are names of administrative units, called villages.²⁴ Wairiki comprises three villages (Wairiki No. 1, No. 2, No.3), whereas Paparatava is the name of the Catholic Mission station near Bitakapuk. More than anyone else, those living today in the villages of Tagitagi No. 1, Tagitagi No. 2 and Bitakapuk would consider themselves the descendants of the "Paparatava tribe" of 1902. The village name also defines a particular piece of land. Ialakua village borders on Barovon, Raluana and Bitabaur Villages. But the group of people who call themselves the inhabitants of Ialakua (and who are listed on Ialakua's census roll) are not identical with the group living within Ialakua's boundaries. The people comprising Ialakua Village are still an alliance of persons who more often than not live within the boundaries of Ialakua, but may live in neighbouring villages, in Rabaul, or in other provinces, and who define themselves as members of that group because of marriage or kinship ties. People in Ialakua would also define themselves as members of Raluana*, a unit which comes close to the "district" and comprises the villages of Raluana, Bitabaur, Vunatagia, Vunamurmur, Barovon and Ialakua.²⁵ The German Administration created villages with static boundaries when they appointed village headmen, whom they named *Luluai*, using the Tolai word for "fight leader".²⁶ Today, most villages still consist of a number of scattered hamlets, with the notable exception of suburban Tolai settlements near Rabaul (Matupit, Malakuna, and others).

The Reprisal

Wolff rushed to Emma Kolbe's Giregire Plantation and sent a labourer to Kokopo to alert the police. Some hours later, about eighty New Guinean policemen, led by Assessor Wolff and accompanied by Rudolf Wolff and some other whites, arrived in Tabaule. They went to Paparatava where they burnt all houses. On the next day the Administration put Assunto Costantini, a former Catholic missionary, in charge of the

²¹ "A big chief may have twenty or more "gunans" within three-quarters of a mile of his own; then about a mile further on there would be the homes of another tribe, and so the whole part of this country is populated" (Rickard, in: *Advocate* of 12 Dec. 1885, p. 303 (letter of 5 Sept. 1885)). Cf. Kleintitschen, in: *Monatshefte* 1904, pp. 11f.

²² E.g. PARKINSON 1887, pp. 50ff.

²³ E.g. PARKINSON 1907, p. 56.

²⁴ Nowadays, many Tolai translate "village" universally with *pia na pal*, which, however, only means the settled as against the uninhabited land. In my opinion, unless one created a new term, "village" would have to be translated with *gunan*, too.

²⁵ Peter Sack distinguishes between two territorial units, the *paparagunan* and the *pakana pia* (1973, pp. 33ff). The concept of the *paparagunan* was not relevant in those areas of the Gazelle where I conducted my fieldwork. A.L. and T.S. Epstein (1962, p. 70) distinguish between the hamlet and the parish. I think the flexibility of the term *gunan* contradicts any clear-cut hierarchical terminology. One has also to be careful to distinguish the settlement patterns of the time of the first European descriptions and of today.

²⁶ See: WOLFF 1904. To distinguish the official appointed by the colonial Administration from the fight leader, I write the term for the headman always with a capital "L".

operations. He was later credited with their success. Over the next few days the police tried in vain to get hold of the Paparatava people who were held responsible for the murder. A prize was put on ToKilang's and ToVagira's heads. On 6 and 7 April about 2000 labourers supplied by Emma Kolbe and the Neu-Guinea-Kompagnie destroyed the gardens in and around Paparatava. On 11 April the police, apparently again supported by plantation labourers, occupied Tamanairik and killed eight men. But ToKilang, ToVagira and their men had fled towards Taulil. They sent a delegation to Taulil; all seven delegates were killed by Taulil people who had long-standing feuds with the Tolai of Tamanairik and Paparatava. The police, assuming that the culprits had fled to Taulil, demanded their extradition ("dead or alive"). When their demands were not met, they raided Taulil on 28 April. The Taulil, caught eating their victims, were taken by surprise. In that raid, eight Taulil were killed. On 24 April 1902, ToKilang was shot by a police patrol, after his hide-out had been betrayed. Some time between 19 May and 5 August 1902, ToVagira, tracked down by people from Paparatava, was also killed by the police. According to figures supplied by members of the police force, between eighty and ninety "enemies" had been killed. According to police informers that estimate was too high. ToKaribui was shot. ToManmaduk, ToKikile and ToKalelek were killed by the Taulil. ToKilik, ToUlagunan, Tambung, ToPipi, and ToValur were sentenced to jail sentences which they served in Nusa (New Ireland). Tue and Turpele died of dysentery in the hospital.

The Non-Aligned Big Man

ToKitang had been appointed *Luluai* for Paparatava some time before the murder, presumably around 1900. On the day of the murder he went to Father Eberlein who was teaching children at a mission school at Paparatava. After urging the missionary not to return via Tabaule to the Takabur mission station, he accompanied him to Wairiki and ordered two men to escort him from there. Whilst the police were hunting down the Paparatava people, ToKitang stayed in Wairiki. His in-law, the big man ToGuatal, was coerced by the police to reveal his hide-out. ToKitang was imprisoned in Herbertshöhe. He denied having been an accomplice to the plot, and supplied the Government with information about ToKilang's whereabouts. In June 1902 he died in custody.

Warfare

Apart from the guns taken from Wolff's house, the police captured forty-five firearms, nearly all of them usable. The Tolai had adapted Wolff's ammunition for their own weapons, either by making bullets from shot gun pellets removed from their cartridges (of which they had captured about 600) or by swathing Mauser cartridges so that they could be fired from Snider rifles. Nevertheless they were short of ammunition. The Government troops had no casualties from bullets. In his report Assessor Wolff noted that the Tolai did not use a deadly weapon applied in earlier confrontations, the sling stone. To sling, the warriors had to operate in the open. Wolff reckoned that they were afraid to do so because of the sophisticated firearms used by the police and their allies.

The details supplied in reports written before the end of the hostilities suggest that the police could rely on a network of informers among the Tolai. Of Costantini it was reported that from the very beginning he "was in close touch with the natives, was

well informed about their plans and managed to approach the peaceful elements at the right moment.²⁷

From the beginning, the avengers of Mrs Wolff took the offensive. The Government troops declared an 'operational zone' between Tabaule and Mount Varzin, the north-western boundary of which was to be held as a defence line. People living inside this zone were shot dead; fled either to villages outside of the zone or to mission stations; or were brought to Herbertshöhe, where women and children from Paparatava seem to have been kept in a camp. Gardens within the zone were destroyed.

Alliances

The Government forces were made up of the (para-military) police force (mainly comprised of men from the North Solomons and New Ireland, and some Tolai); white volunteers; about 2000 plantation labourers (who would have been mostly from New Ireland and the North Solomons); and former policemen called up as a reserve force from the coastal areas of the Gazelle Peninsula. Assessor Wolff said in his report that the latter could not be constrained, and because the Government feared that they would swap sides, they were consequently disarmed and dismissed.²⁸ Later Hahl admitted that the Government had been supported by friendly coastal big men who provided warriors to reinforce the regular police force.²⁹ Among the friendly big men were ToKinkin of Raluana* and ToVurgilo of Bitarebarebe. A claim made by Eberlein in the *Kölnische Volkszeitung* of 28 May 1902 that after the murder, men from Karavi approached the Government and asked to be supplied with firearms and were actually given sixty-five guns plus ammunition, was neither denied nor confirmed by the Government. The Tolai speakers who lived on reservations between Kokopo and the area of unrest were sympathetic to those fought by the Government. They warned them of troop movements through drum signals, but did not actively interfere in the confrontation. Only ToNgaru, a big man from Ulagunan with ties to Paparatava, was suspected of supporting the rebels. When he was arrested the police discovered a cache of arms. He was deported to Nusa. In the early stages of the reprisal, the people of Paparatava were given refuge in neighbouring Wairiki. In mid-April the Government appointed ToMaidang Luluai of Wairiki, whereafter relations between Wairiki and Herbertshöhe improved to the extent that many of the refugees from Paparatava were handed over to the police.

Grenzkrieg (Frontier War)

'This seems to be an irregular and unrestrained *Grenzkrieg* which is conducted without mercy by both sides', commented the Socialist *Vorwärts* on 30 May 1902, relying in its assessment on information provided by Father Eberlein and published in the Catholic German press. 'The murder of Mrs Wolff committed by a large number of natives meant only the beginning of the hostilities, indeed of a *Grenzkrieg*, which the tribes at Mount Varzin, who were not yet or only in parts loyal to the Government, had resolved

²⁷ Wolff to AA-KA, Herbertshöhe: 20 May 1902, RKA 2989.

²⁸ Report Wolff, Herbertshöhe: 5 August 1902, RKA 2989.

²⁹ Hahl to AA-KA, Traustadt: 22 January 1903, RKA 2989.

to wage", remarked Governor Hahl, when defending his Administration against accusations by Father Eberlein, published in the Catholic press.³⁰

Unwelcome Side-Effects

The Catholic mission station St. Otto was raided by Tolai auxiliary troops. On another occasion Father Eberlein was nearly shot by police. The Government troops had shot at anybody within sight, claimed Eberlein. The *Luluai* of Napapar and one of his men were accidentally shot dead by police. Food was requisitioned by Government troops and *tabu* went missing in places other than Paparatava and Tamanairik.

Culprits

Assessor Wolff identified the people of Paparatava (population estimated at 400-500) and Tamanairik (400-500) as definite participants and those of Viviren (200-300) as possible participants of the "uprising". Hahl categorically declared: "All those natives who took part in the armed resistance which followed the murder were guilty."³¹

Peace Terms

The Government paid compensation for the eight Taulil killed on 28 April and in return the Taulil handed over the firearms they had captured. The Administration established a police post at Toma, permanently staffed with twenty police.³² The people of Paparatava, Viviren, Tamanairik and Wairiki were drafted into building the "Toma Highway". The Administration confiscated land renowned for its abundance of coconut trees, which was said to belong to the people of Paparatava and Tamanairik. The Catholic Mission benefited from the war, because after peace had been established, many of those driven from their land settled in the vicinity of the mission station at Paparatava.³³ Rudolf Wolff was charged with shooting at ToVarnaume. The district of Paparatava had to pay a fine of 200 fathoms of *tabu*, which was then distributed among auxiliary troops. All Paparatava men arrested by the police were sentenced to hard labour.³⁴ On 22 October 1902 peace was sealed by a feast organised on the occasion of the Empress' birthday at the newly established police post. It was attended by Rudolf Wolff, twenty-five other Europeans and about 2000 people from nearby villages, some of whom performed dances.³⁵ About ten years later, the ethnographer Burger noticed that the people had not yet recovered from the aftermath of the uprising.³⁶

³⁰ Hahl to AA-KA, Traustadt: 22 Jan. 1903, RKA 2989. He reacted to an article published on 13 Jan. 1903 in the KVZ and reprinted in parts by the *Vorwärts*.

³¹ Hahl to AA-KA, Traustadt: 22 January 1903, RKA 2989.

³² This police post resumed prominence for a few days in August 1914, when the German Administration, anticipating an allied attack, transferred the seat of government to Toma (MACKENZIE 1987, pp. 38ff).

³³ KLEINTITSCHEN 1906, 308.

³⁴ They were still serving their terms in New Ireland two years after the murder (Hahl to AA-KA, Herbertshöhe: 11 June 1904, RKA 2991). I do not know when they were eventually released or how many of them died during their imprisonment.

³⁵ Knake to AA-KA, Herbertshöhe: 23 October 1902, RKA 2989.

³⁶ BURGER 1923, p. 102.

IV.

A souvenir photograph kept by Assessor Wolff showed:

two heads
(human, black, male)
severed from their bodies.³⁷

The heads belonged to ToVagira and ToKilang, the leaders of the last bloody attempt by Tolai speakers to oppose colonial rule until the Australian District Commissioner Jack Emmanuel was murdered at Kabaira in 1971.

Apart from a few personal friends, I talked with nobody as much as I did with John Vuia, grand old man of Tolai politics; few people in Papua New Guinea taught me as much as he did. ToVuia lived on Matupit, and Matupit is nowhere near Tabaule. Being most conscious about the Tolai past though, ToVuia could produce a history of the Toma killings. He based part of it on what he saw for himself. One element of ToVuia's history concerns the visit of a Government party to Matupit.

The *kiap* told the two *Luluai* in charge of the islanders, Taniele and Ote ToMaiilil, to assemble their people. All inhabitants of Matupit Island got together at the place where later the Community School was built. In those days there was a large *vutung*³⁸ tree. The *kiap* hung a human head at the tree and told the crowd: 'That's ToVagira's head. He has murdered a white woman. Anybody who does that again, will suffer the same fate.' They had been exhibiting ToVagira's head all over the Gazelle, and Matupit was the last stage of its tour. The *kiap* went to see the German businessman living on Matupit, and he had the head buried under an *iroto*³⁹ tree at Iavarvul in Raulei on his way.

Researcher: "Why are you so sure about what you just told me?"

"The *iroto* was at the road, and that's just where us kids often played. We would get together there in the afternoon and chat. When one of us got bored and wanted us to depart, he would say: "*Bul ik, iau ga valongore ba di ga punang a lori ToVagira ati. I tap ta pulpul vanavana* [Gosh, I have heard they buried the head of ToVagira here. There it is rolling along]."

ToVuia had to repeat the sentences quoted in Kuanua many times before I understood them, because he said them very fast - that was part of the story - and started chuckling immediately afterwards, because it was such a vivid childhood memory. A childhood memory about him and his mates playing games - after all, ToVagira's head did not mean all that much to John Vuia. Matupit is nowhere near Tamanairik.

Some years ago Michael Toliman, the famous Matthias' brother, heard that ToVagira's head was supposed to be buried on Matupit. In an attempt to retrieve it and bury it in Tamanairik, he looked up ToVuia who told him what he told me. The two of them went to Raulei. The *iroto* had gone a long time ago. Somebody had built a house at the place, but had not come across a human skull.⁴⁰

³⁷ Manfred Wolff of Berlin learnt this from his grandmother, the Assessor's widow.

³⁸ *Barringtonia speciosa*.

³⁹ *Calophyllum inophyllum*.

⁴⁰ John ToVuia of Matupit-Kikila on 13 and 20 October 1987 at Matupit. Gist of his statement according to my notes. Quote verbatim from notes.

The only other person I met who claimed to have seen ToVagira's head was laOra of Ngunguna who was born around 1890. She said she saw it nailed to the wall at the government offices in Kokopo. There is general consent that both ToKilang's and ToVagira's heads were cut off and taken to Kokopo. Nobody could confirm ToVuia's story. Most people I talked to presumed that both heads were taken to Germany. There were a few who, with ToPele, strenuously denied ToVuia's claim and insisted that the skull was returned to Tamanairik via New Ireland:

ToVagira's son, Peni ToUpai, served as a policeman, stationed at Kavieng, or maybe somewhere else in New Ireland. He noticed that a nearby cemetery was guarded day and night and learned that the skull of an infamous rogue killed by the police on the Gazelle Peninsula had been buried there. He knew at once that it must be that of his father. He managed to be assigned to guard the cemetery one night, dug out the skull, put it into a box, and brought it back to Tamanairik. After its teeth had been removed to be used in black magic, the skull was buried at a *taraiu*, a men's secret place, in Tamanairik.⁴¹

The fate of ToVagira's mortal remains deserves more than a foot note in a history of the Toma killings. Whether having been exhibited to deter potential trouble makers or

laOra of Ngunguna

being guarded because of their dangerousness, ToVagira was far from dead after he had been killed by police in 1902. It is a cultural trait of barbarians of diverse origin to cut off their opponents' heads to show them around. The Aboriginal Australian warrior Pemulwuy, to name one example, was shot and beheaded; the head was put in a jar of spirits and despatched to England.⁴²

The problem with the Tolai histories of the 1902 events, and of most other episodes in the Tolai past, is that there is not just one version, as the controversy surrounding the whereabouts of ToVagira's skull already indicated. It is not a problem for the Tolai historian who knows very well her or his truth. But it poses a serious problem for the historian who is writing a history from an outsider's point of view.

Wasiton ToLiuna about a manslaughter for low motives:

"I will talk about a white woman who lived at Toma. The place where they killed her is called Tabaule. The people of Tamanairik killed her. They heard that one could buy guns from ... her.

⁴¹ Edward ToPele of Viviren on 27 August 1987 at Viviren, gist of his statement according to my notes. I heard similar accounts from Henry ToLeima of Nangananga-Livuan, Gideon Tatike of Viviren, William ToKavivi of Vunamaml, and others.

⁴² WILLMOT 1987, p. 299. In 1988 only vehement protests prevented the auctioning of a 150-year-old head of a Maori chieftain in London, which was expected to fetch between £ 6,000 and £ 7,000; it was then revealed that there were at least sixty-seven preserved Maori heads in Britain (*SMH* of 14 May 1988 and 6 July 1988; *The Weekend Australian* of 21/22 May 1988). See also: *SMH* of 21 Nov. 1988.

They took some pigs to the white woman at Tabaule. ... Her husband, Mr Wol, had gone to Kokopo. They arrived with their pigs and told her that they wanted to sell them for guns. The white woman declined, saying: 'There are no guns left.' The people said to her: 'You are lying. There are guns in the house.' 'No, there are no guns, I tell you the truth, there are no guns.' It went on like this; the people said: 'That's a lie'; they were angry, they went up to the house of the couple and climbed up to the white woman. They searched through the house. They searched it thoroughly for a gun. They were angry. They ransacked the house until they found a gun. They were outraged, they hit the woman until they had killed her. She was dead. Afterwards they took her child and threw it on top of her body."⁴³

Pillipo ToDivona about a murder for not so low motives:

"The white woman was killed because of the boundary at Tabaule. Land surveyors were marking out the boundary at Tabaule, and they shifted the boundary towards Tamanabel. Up at Tamanabel they wrecked ToKilang's fence. Some cows intruded on ToKilang's *gunan*, and goats and horses, too, and they ate the people's food, and they shit inside the *gunan*. ToKilang's anger stemmed from this."⁴⁴

Why are there different versions? Somebody renowned for being knowledgeable about the past, who told me a story, would usually not refer to other experts for the same subject. To get to know other versions, I had to start at another point with new leads. Of course those experts know each other, but usually they do not enter a discourse in which one version emerges as History. The first of the above extracts was told to me by a man from Ravat, which is about four kilometres north of Tabaule. Ravat was affected by the reprisal, but people from Ravat had not been affected by the establishment of the plantation and had no part in the murder. No land in Ravat was confiscated. ToDivona is from Tamanairik. Ravat and Tamanairik are not traditionally closely linked by kinship or marriage. The sources of ToDivona's and ToLiuna's stories are one generation further back and are not in any way related. The histories told by ToDivona and ToLiuna had been produced under very different circumstances and therefore with differing results.

In exceptional cases, two or more story tellers might produce one version, but then they usually would have one common source or at least closely related sources, and their 'present' would be similar. The second extract represents such a case. I went to Rapael ToNataram's place at Tamanairik and ToDivona happened to be there at the time. ToRapael was over eighty years old, and recognised by the other man who was about ten years younger, as the authority regarding knowledge of this particular episode. ToDivona told the story and was interrupted by ToRapael whenever the latter thought the narrator had missed a detail. ToDivona himself asked the older man for details whenever he was not sure. They obviously knew the same basic story and both named Turnanga (Rapael's father) as their main informant. I was introduced to them

⁴³ Wasiton ToLiuna of Ravat on 22 June 1987 at Ravat. Slightly abridged extract. Taped statement. Non-literal translation from the Tolai language, on the basis of a transcript prepared by laHennie Stanley, Joyce laUrua and myself.

⁴⁴ Pillipo ToDivona of Tamanairik on 26 September 1987 at Tamanairik. Unabridged extract. Taped statement. Non-literal translation from the Tolai language, on the basis of a transcript prepared by Helena laNiumal Jacob, Lesley ToPiner and myself.

by the big man ToRarau from Tagitagi No. 1 who had recommended ToRapael as the only one who knew a *kidoloina pirpir*. Very reluctantly he had told me earlier what he knew about the episode. It was not a very detailed account. Its content differed slightly from ToDivona's version. ToRarau, out of respect for ToRapael and ToDivona, at no stage challenged their version.

Many historians solve the problem of conflicting accounts of one and the same event by attempting to reconstruct objectively the past the way it really was and thereby

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identifying factually true and untrue accounts. These historians tend to pass over in silence the fact that they still make a selection according to their own subjective idea of what is important and what is not, and that they apply their own subjective ideas of what can be factually correct and how the factuality of an account can be verified. All sources, Tolai and German, agree that ToKilang was shot dead by the police. But that ToKilang was killed by the police, may be only half the truth. Gideon Tatike said of the death of ToKilang:

"ToKilang said: 'As long as the sun is high in the sky, I shall not die.' The police shot at him. The bullets dripped off ToKilang's body like water, because he had applied a *malan* [a magic that made him invulnerable]. When the sun was about to set, they killed ToKilang."⁴⁵

A Tolai historian is likely to say: 'Experience has shown that this account could be factually correct.' A European historian is likely to say: 'Science tells us that this account cannot be factually correct.' From my own experience and understanding of Tolai magical practice I do not want to dismiss this and similar stories as lies.

"Methodologically speaking", - the face darkens, and furrows appear on the forehead - "one might add that it is nonsense to defend by theoretical argument that certain aspects of reality can not come into focus via strictly scientific observation and reasoning. For in science we need and can only deal with that which, within the framework of the scientific method, can be established and taken hold of. The rest - granted that such a rest exists - is simply irrelevant to the student."⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Gideon Tatike of Vivren on 27 August 1987 at Vivren. Translation of verbatim notes from the Tolai language. James Aiun Kaminiel of Ialakua heard the same from the renowned historians ToKutang of Vunamurmur and Tilom of Ialakua. This reminds me of what Towarawagina told Jack Crump in 1895: "When the sun gets to that point in the sky you are going to be shot", said Tomara of Vunavulila to four white men, who just awaited their fate, made stupefied by Tomara's *malira* (magical spell). "I don't believe the yarn about *malira* and the 4 white men", said Crump in his diary, although he does not doubt that they were killed (CARTER 1975, pp. 50f).

⁴⁶ DUERR 1985, p. 146. Duerr quotes J. Tennekes' *Anthropology, Relativism, and Method* (Assen 1971, p. 201). From Tennekes it is not far to Ernest Gellner, who in his 1965 paper 'The New Idealism - Cause and Meaning in the Social Sciences' says (screwing up his nose, but with an undertone of fear in his voice): "If a doctrine conflicts with the acceptance of the superiority of scientific-industrial societies over others, then it really is out."

The enlightened presumption that any phenomenon must be explicable within the parameters of a particular brand of natural science, otherwise it would have to be a sensory perception of something not actually-factually happening, is not a universal and eternal truth but a premise which has developed in a certain historical context. And if we conceded it were **not correct** to say Tokilang was shot but the bullets did not penetrate his skin, this would still not make this an **untrue** statement. Not only is it sociologically true in a Durkheimian sense.⁴⁷ The truth lies in the moment when the past is resurrected into the present; it is "bound to a temporal nucleus in which the knower and the known both share".⁴⁸

I have come a long way from my initial problem of stories which cannot be easily reconciled and conflated into one history. I am producing a history of the Tolai, partly by using Tolai histories, and by making their critique part of my construction of the Tolai past. I make statements about the Tolai society to explain the meaning of Tolai histories. I sometimes juxtapose elements through the principle of montage. Yet my product has narrative threads; their function is also to explain what I am doing. I outline a method, implicitly by using it, and explicitly whenever practice does not make it sufficiently clear. The variety of images of the past also reflects some of the diversity of Tolai society. Free from historicist inhibitions I admit my subjective attempt to construct a past that makes preferential use of those Tolai articulations of the past, which, to use Benjamin's words, "seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger",⁴⁹ although the definition of that moment is my own.

John Vuia's account of children's games and ToPele's story of an exhumation in New Ireland contradict each other. They may both be factually incorrect, but are nevertheless both true articulations of the past and say a lot not only about ToVagira, but also about the coping with a past stretching over some eighty years. ToLiuna's account of the motives of Mrs Wolff's murderers reflects the peripheral role Ravat played in the events. It may also be taken as a square in a mosaic describing the colonial situation on the Gazelle: It indicates that planters traded guns long after the ban on fire arm sales in 1885 (how else could the police have captured forty-five firearms, nearly all of them usable?), and Wolff may have been no exception. ToDivona's description of cow-pats is an image of colonial encroachment, thus supporting the notion that it was a *Grenzkrieg*.

It is not difficult to explain why John Vuia and Iosep Vetenge knew a lot about their past and to analyse the content of their histories. It is more pressing and more difficult to explain why today so many Tolai know so little about their past. My presentation not only of the digressions and details of history, but also of its colourful variety, is partly provoked by a historical amnesia.

⁴⁷ "The most barbarous and the most fantastic rites and the strangest myths translate some human need, some aspect of life, either individual or social. The reasons with which the faithful justify them may be, and generally are, erroneous; but the true reasons do not cease to exist, and it is the duty of science to discover them" (DURKHEIM 1976, pp. 2f; cf. p. 438).

⁴⁸ BENJAMIN 1982, p. 578 (N 3.2).

⁴⁹ BENJAMIN 1974, p. 695 (sixth thesis).

V.

I have taped six accounts of the murder of Mrs Wolff and its aftermath, five of them in Kuanua and one in Tok Pisin. Three of them are of the *kidoloina pipir*-type, whilst the others concern only particular aspects. I have taken notes of another four histories whose authors rightfully claim to present a "full story".⁵⁰ Altogether, I have talked to six women and thirty-one men, one of them a Taulil, the others Tolai, who could tell me something about the Toma killings. I have spoken to many more who had to pass on the question for a story about the events. The following does not draw on all stories collected, but tries to mention the main patterns.

Principal Actors

- "Masta Wol": a German planter and trader
- *a misit*: his wife, according to most informants a Samoan
- *a umana vok*: plantation labourers
- *a tarai*: the people
- Tokukubak *ditai*:⁵¹ men from around Vunamami
- Tokilang: big man of Tamanabel
- ToVagira: big man of Tamanairik
- ToKitang, ToKirara and Turnanga: big men
- the wives of Tokilang and ToVagira
- ToNaie: big man and father of ToLiman
- the police

Grievances

Wolff acquired land at Tabaule to establish a plantation.

He did not pay for it, said Tiopo ToPalangat of Wairiki No. 2.

It is not important whether he initially paid for it; he marked out land which (had) belonged to Tokilang, said ToValubia and ToVamutue.

He paid for it and paid the right person

but let his cows shit in Tokilang's *gunan*, said ToVetenge.

but Mrs Wolff refused

to sell guns, said ToLiuna.

to hand out goods, said ToLarme of Vunadidir.

but the people got angry, said ToUrama of Ngatur, and others.

He paid for it, but he paid the wrong person

that is ToKitang, said ToPele and ToGideon.

which the true owners, ToVagira, Tokilang and ToKitang, realised when cows shit in their *gunan*, said ToDivona and ToRaphael.

The Plot

ToVetenge: The people of Tamanabel, the *gunan* polluted with cow-pats, were furious. Led by Tokilang they arranged a meeting at the *maravot* in Tamanabel. The organisers

⁵⁰ Those who were in possession of a *kidoloina pipir* were: Iosep ToVetenge of Tagitagl No. 1, Edward ToPele and Gideon Tatike of Viviren, Pilipo ToDivona and Raphael ToNataram of Tamanairik, Esau ToVamutue of Vunakaur, ToValubia of Takubar, Henry ToKele of Bitakapuk (all of them living in the Toma area); Iakob Timele of Gunanba (Vunamami area).

⁵¹ *Ditai* literally means "the three of them". In this context it means: "Tokukubak and his people" (all those whose names are not really worth mentioning and who can be listed under Tokukubak's name).

killed chickens and distributed uncooked parts of them to the men whom they wanted to be part of a plot. Those who accepted thereby committed themselves: 'Let us kill the white woman!'

- ToPele: I don't know anything about the cows. The point was that ToKilang was angry with ToKitang who had sold land belonging to ToKilang to Mr Wolff. He would have killed ToKitang, but according to our customs he could not do that, he could not even be angry with him, because ToKitang was his *maku* [in-law]. Mrs Wolff was only a scape-goat.
- ToVetenge: Anyway, the meeting at Tamanabel did not get very far, because the big man ToKirara objected strongly to the idea of killing Mrs Wolff. They adjourned and held a second meeting at Takubar ...
- ToGideon: ... at Viviren, to be precise at the *maravot* Tagura. And again one man strongly objected to the plan: ToPalubir.
- ToValubia: You did not mention ToVagira yet. ToKilang secured his assistance by forwarding *tabu* to him. ToVagira was to take part because Tamanairik was at that time, unlike ToKilang's place, under no form of direct European influence. Having not yet been in any contact with the *lotu* [Christian religion; church service], ToVagira was the ideal person to carry out the murder.
- ToDivona: Indeed, ToKilang requested ToVagira's assistance. According to my sources, they had two meetings, one at Palnatidir in Viviren, the other one at Ialimut in Rabagi. ToVagira consented. They devised a plan and procured the items required for its execution: a pig, beans and eggs.⁵²

The Women's Perspective

"Everything had been prepared. They had appointed the day for killing the couple. On the last day they cooked a big meal for the men only at the *maravot*. Another big meal was prepared at their women's and children's place. The women and children did not know why they had prepared this big meal. After they had eaten, their leader ToKilang told them. The women were sad, and the children too, and they all cried, for the women knew big trouble and sorrow would be the result. ToKilang's wife pleaded with him not to go ahead with their plan. But ToKilang replied to her: "You are just a woman. You don't know what you are talking about." Addressing all of them he said: "You should just wait patiently and let us men get along with our job for the betterment of all of us." His wife sighed. "It is alright. You know best."⁵³

This account by ToKele, a c. fifty year old catechist from Bitakapuk, was not confirmed by any of the others.

⁵² This conversation did not, and probably would never have taken place. Arranged on the basis of statements made by ToVetenge on 24 August 1987 at Tagitagi No. 1, ToPele on 27 August 1987 at Viviren, ToValubia on 1 October 1987 at Rapirok, ToGideon on 27 August 1987 at Viviren, and ToDivona on 26 September 1987 at Tamanairik.

⁵³ Henry ToKele of Bitakapuk on 6 February 1987 at Bitakapuk. Unabridged extract. Taped statement read by its author from a manuscript. Non-literal translation from Tok Plisin on the basis of a transcript prepared by myself. I found it very difficult to keep alive the meaning of the statement. Its last paragraph reads in Tok Plisin: "*Tasol ToKilang i bin bekim meri bilong en: 'Yu meri nating, yu no save long wanpela samting. Yupela stap na sindaun isi tasol, na larim mipela ol man i wokim samting bilong kamapim gutpela taim bilong yumi.*" Na meri i tok: 'I orait. I samting bilong yupela."

The Murder

The majority of my informants claimed that ToKilang and ToVagira were around when the murder took place or actually committed it themselves. The conspirators offered a pig, beans and eggs for sale. At that time Mr Wolff was away supervising his labourers.

"They called the *misit* to come outside so that she would sit at the top of the flight of steps. She sat down at this staircase, not at that one", ToDivona and ToRaphael remembered vividly the image and gave a description of the location of the two flights of stairs with their hands. ToDivona continued: "She sat there and put the eggs into a bowl. She took one egg - the eggs were wrapped in leaves, so she had to unwrap it -, she held it up to the sunlight. She put it away. She took the next one, unwrapped it, held it up to the sunlight, put it away. By the time she took the third egg, a man had entered the house through the back door and moved behind her back. The *misit* unwrapped the third egg ...", ToRaphael imitated the *misit* holding an imaginary egg and screwing up one eye to have a close look at it, while ToDivona kept on talking, "... and held it up to the light. At that moment the man hit her neck with a hatchet. She fell down."⁵⁴

Nearly all of those telling me the story seemed to see this or a very similar scene in their minds' eyes. Some mentioned the child, most claimed that there had been no child. Nobody mentioned Carrie Coe or casualties among the labourers. laOra of Ngunguna claimed that Mrs Wolff was subsequently raped. According to laMila of Tagitagi No. 2 she was eaten.⁵⁵

The Planter's Return

- (1) Mr Wolff returned.
- (2) He was attacked.
- (3) Somebody speared his horse.
- (4) The horse nevertheless made it to Kokopo, where
- (5) Mr Wolff reported the murder to the police.

No controversy surrounds these five statements. Nobody mentioned the guns, neither the ones allegedly taken nor the ones allegedly already in the possession of the attackers. Some mentioned the looting.

The Reprisal

The police, reinforced by men from Vunamami and other, mainly coastal, villages, and by plantation labourers, took revenge. They hunted for ToVagira and ToKilang. They were said to have

- (1) killed men, women and children,
- (2) burnt houses,
- (3) killed domesticated animals, and
- (4) raped women.

"*Pa dia ga bolo ta tikai* (they did not miss out anybody)", remarked ToPele.

⁵⁴ Pilipo ToDivona of Tamanairik on 26 September 1987 in Tamanairik. Slightly abridged extract. Taped statement. Non-literal translation from the Tolai language, on the basis of a transcript prepared by Helena laNiumai Jacob, Lesley ToPiner and myself.

⁵⁵ Some fifteen years ago, Barbara Sheret was told by ToPalina of Vunakaur that he was present when Mrs Wolff was eaten at Tamanabel (SHERET 1976, appendix p. 14).

The reprisals were not confined to Papatava and Tamanairik. ToBianga of Raim was shot in Tanaka while hiding in a coconut palm.⁵⁶ Uvuk, a mentally handicapped woman from Taulil, was shot by the police, because she did not run away. ToPiam of Taulil was shot because he did not run fast enough.⁵⁷ ToVokatip and laValuban of Ravat were killed by Government troops.⁵⁸ Tatama of Turagunan was shot at Palnabaining, turned into a chicken and then back into a man, and thereby scared the police away.⁵⁹

Within a radius of more than five kilometers around the Vunakokor, people were on the run or hiding. Wairiki was spared, and therefore had to accommodate refugees from Viviren, Bitakapuk and Tamanabel. Some of them stayed for good. The people of Wairiki owed their preferential treatment to their *Luluai* ToMaidang who negotiated successfully with the Government and arranged for his people to wear a white cloth wrapped around their heads so that they could be distinguished by the police and their allies.⁶⁰

ToKukubak Dital

Men from Kininigunan feature prominently in accounts of the reprisal, whereas the plantation labourers are only mentioned briefly. ToKukubak of Vunabalbal had been a policeman under the Germans. Other big men who were said to have taken part in the punitive expeditions include Paula ToVurgilo of Bitarebarebe and the infamous sorcerer, Tioti ToMataria of Vunamami. All three men mentioned above were both *luluai* and *Luluai*. Darius ToNamaliu indicated that men from Raluana, too, were recruited to fight on the side of the Government. "A white man came to Raluana. He took some men with him to kill the people up in Toma. One of those he took was Noa Tiogo."⁶¹

Abaram ToBobo, big man of Vunabalbal and one of the founding fathers of the Methodist *lotu* in the Vunamami area was another leader of the Kininigunan auxiliary troops. When pursuing ToVagira and his men between Tamanairik and Taulil, they had to cross a deep gorge. ToBobo lowered himself quickly down on a *kaika* liana which was much too thin for that purpose. Thus ToBobo once again proved his faith in Kalou, the Methodist God of the Tolai. At that time he was well ahead of his people in matters of faith. His companions had to find a path which descended down the steep side to the bottom of the gorge, before they could catch up with him.⁶²

The Kininigunan warriors did not return empty-handed to their respective *gunan*. ToVurgilo took two girls from Raravat, laTopor and laKaka, along to Bitarebarebe. laKaka married ToKapupia of Tingenavudu and bore ToPetro. People from Turagunan, who were also supporting the police, abducted a boy by the name of ToMatanaik who was adopted by ToOlalol and laMongava and later became a pastor.

⁵⁶ ToKarigal of Gunanur in November 1987.

⁵⁷ ToKapal of Taulil in December 1987.

⁵⁸ laDarutila of Palvarkuvo in August 1987.

⁵⁹ ToLuna of Ravat in June 1987; ToWesley of Vunaulul/Turagunan in August 1987.

⁶⁰ Anton ToPunulam and Vivi laMila of Tagitagl No. 2, July 1987.

⁶¹ Darius ToNamaliu of Raluana on 15 October 1987 at Raluana-Tobit. Translation of verbatim notes from the Tolai language.

⁶² William ToKavivi of Vunamami, August 1987. More about ToBobo in chapter 7.

The Death of ToVagira

10 October 1987.

The wilderness of the western and southwestern slopes of the Vunakokor contrasts with the cocoa and coconut *Kulturlandschaft* of the areas settled by the Tolai on the Gazeile Peninsula elsewhere. I was surprised to find bush close to Tolai villages where there are hardly any coconut palms, let alone food gardens or cocoa plantations. It is an area which around the turn of the century was still outside the territory inhabited by the Tolai speaking people. When the frontier was pushed towards the Baining mountains, this patch of bush was by-passed. Tolai settled on former Taulil land in Malabonga and Rapitok to the west. In the south the frontier was pushed further towards the Warangoi River. I imagine this enclave of bush between Tamanairik and Takubar owes its continued existence to the ruggedness of its terrain. Deep gorges cut through it, which eventually feed into the Warangoi. Anybody who planted coconuts here, would have to be pretty desperate.

It was at or near this creek that ToVagira was killed and ToBobo lowered himself down a *kalka* (white llana on the right)

Visiting the place where the Wolffs had once built their house, bordered on absurdity. There was nothing left of the "original" vegetation. The only indication that this was the site we were looking for, the frangipani tree, was said to have been non-indigenous and planted by Wolff. The Tolai refer to it only as a *plaua*, the flower. Visiting the gorges where ToVagira had tried to escape his pursuers was a different experience altogether. This place still looked as if the story I learned could have happened here, in this very environment.

ToVamutue, the expert, had stayed behind in the car, because he found it too tiring to clamber up and down the steep slopes to reach the gorge where ToVagira had been killed. Or maybe he simply could not be bothered with ToMavur and his sons keen on venturing into the bush. We waded through a creek, presuming it was the creek. Wading through the water was the only possible way to proceed, with bare rock face on one side and virgin forest on the other side of a narrow gorge with steep walls. One of my companions discovered a cave some metres above creek-level, and it was decided that that must be it.

ToDivona:

"They hunted us, and they killed the people. ... The entrances to our places became overgrown, and we had a hard time in the bush. It was then that Turnanga felt sorry for the people. He mourned for his wife, his brother, and his children when he left them behind up at Tapakupak. ... He got going, he passed Kalivut, he passed Wairiki, he went all the way to Palnaviu. He stood there in some distance and waved until Mr Otman⁶³ noticed him. He spoke to two police officers. They

⁶³ Name is spelt phonetically. He was said to be the European in charge of the police.

blew the whistle to assemble the policemen. They told them: 'Keep calm. This man has come on his own. Do not shoot at him. We do not know yet on which matter he has come. Maybe he has something to tell us.' They beckoned Turnanga to come forward. They told him to sit down in their midst and asked him: 'Why did you come?' He said: 'I have come to tell you that I feel sorry for the people. I feel sorry for us. I am just telling you that it is us who are hiding ToVagira, and that I know where he is.'⁶⁴

Turnanga and his men led the police near ToVagira's hide-out, and then left them, because they did not want to be seen with the police by ToVagira's people. ToVagira tried in vain to escape. He fled into a cave near where the creeks Iakalulu and Tavulabung merge. A policeman from the North Solomons shot him dead. The police raped his two wives and killed them. They cut off ToVagira's head and carried it to Kokopo.

The last paragraph is a summary of what ToRapael and ToDivona told me. Their story is very detailed - remember Turnanga was one of their informants. Other accounts differ from this one in detail and in length, but not in principle.

The Death of ToKilang

According to the two historians I met in Tamanairik, ToVagira died before ToKilang. Others disagreed. The outcome of this controversy does not matter for the tragic finale of my history. Some told me that ToKilang was shot dead unceremoniously, and their statements came near to what Father Eberlein wrote:

For some time ToKilang wandered around like a wild animal on the wooded slopes of Mount Varzin, until eventually, dogged by hunger and fear, he ran into the police. He was shot dead about one hundred metres from the mission station Papatava. His head was brought to Herbertshöh.⁶⁵

I have already cited ToGideon; ToPele, ToDivona, ToRapael, ToAiun, ToVetenge and ToRarau agreed with him that there was more to it. ToKele told me the most elaborate history of the death of ToKilang:

"They got hold of ToVagira and ToKitang first. ... But the people were still hunted by the police, because ToKilang had not been killed yet. One of his closest relatives, his *kandere* ToNaie⁶⁶ took some *tabu* and food and went up to the Vunakokor to find his *kandere* who was hiding in a cave. ToNaie did not know where ToKilang was hiding. He called out for him. ToKilang heard the calling: 'Who is that?' His *kandere* replied: 'It's only me, your *kandere* ToNaie. I am trying to find you.' 'Why do you want to find me', asked ToKilang. 'Just hang on, will you. I'll come and we can talk about it. Then I can tell you about my problem', replied ToNaie.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Pillpo ToDivona of Tamanairik on 26 September 1987 in Tamanairik. Slightly abridged extract. Taped statement. Non-literal translation from the Tolai language, on the basis of a transcript prepared by Helena laNiumai Jacob, Lesley ToPiner and myself.

⁶⁵ Eberlein, in: *Monatshefte* 1903, p. 25; cf. his almost identical account in KVZ of 13 January 1903. "Herbertshöh" and "Herbertshöhe" were used indiscriminately.

⁶⁶ The equivalent of this Tok Pisin term in Kuanua would be *matuana* (and that is the word ToPele used to define the relationship between ToKilang and ToNaie). Strictly *matuana* means the closest male matrilineal relative in the previous generation or a man's closest matrilineal relative in the next generation. Today the term *matuana* can have a wider meaning, e.g. the classificatory mother's brother. According to ToPele the *kandere*'s full name was ToNaie ToMinigulai ToBatalio, the latter two being *inglet* names.

⁶⁷ ToNaie did not venture up the Vunakokor, said ToPele. He sent two of his men with ten fathoms of *tabu* (*tikana rip*) to ToKilang: 'I, ToMinigulai send you to ToKilang to tell him to come here.'

ToNaie found his *kandere*. They shook hands, and they both wept. ToKilang asked his *kandere* to tell him what had happened since he went into hiding. ToNaie withheld nothing. He told him about what had happened to the people, what the police had destroyed and whom the police had shot dead. 'The police are still trying to find you; they are about to move to Tamanairik and Takubar, and they will again burn houses and destroy property. I am pleading with you. You are my real *kandere*. Have pity on the men and women and children, so that they can leave their hiding places. I am asking you, *kandere*, to give yourself up to the police so that the people will live in peace again. ToKilang consented to his *kandere*'s speech. ToKilang, his wife⁶⁸ and his *kandere* prepared a farewell meal for his wife and his *kandere* and others. While they were preparing the food, ToNaie sent word to ToKirara at Ravuru that he tell the police to wait for ToKilang at the road.⁶⁹ They were ready to go. ToKilang had picked up his spear, his club (*biribirika*), stones for the sling and his handbag.⁷⁰ They climbed down the mountain. ToKilang called out when they approached the road where the police were waiting. The police heard him shouting and went to meet him. When they were close to the police, ToKilang told his people to eat the food. His wife, ToNaie and the others offered him food, and they had something to eat. After he had eaten, ToKilang called his wife to bring him some water. He drank the water and chewed betel nut. While he was chewing betel nut, he told his people: 'You will now stay behind. I alone, I will meet the police. I know I must die now. You don't need to worry about me', thus he told them and left them. His *kandere* and his wife and his people, they all cried.

ToKilang's last sanctuary: the Vunakokor, an extinct volcano, landmark and part of Toma's identity.

⁶⁸ ToDivona and ToRaphael said her name was laBoronau. ToGideon and laMila maintain that her name was laKakapai.

⁶⁹ Earlier, ToKele had mentioned that ToKirara had co-operated very closely with the police. That was confirmed by other informants.

⁷⁰ They prepared his head-dress (*kanga*), they painted his body, they washed him, they put oil on his body, they prepared bunches of nice-smelling flowers and herbs, remarked ToDivona. He ate a *malan*, said ToGideon. He had a bangle (*kakale*), a belt (*vipit*), and ornaments (*mamar*), claimed ToPele. Ointments and Ornaments were to protect him.

When he came up to the junction, to the turn-off to Tamanairik [at the Toma-Viviren road], the police were already awaiting him. When he saw the police on a small hill [at the Toma Junction], he started to dance and cried: 'I am not worried about you. I am not scared. Just come. I am ready for you. While he was shouting and dancing, three policemen and one police officer took position and aimed at him. First the officer shot at him. The bullet hit him, but did not penetrate his body - as if it had hit a stone. ToKilang was still yelling at them. When the next policeman shot at him, the bullet hit him, but it did not penetrate his body. He still danced with the spear in his hand. The third time another policeman shot at him. The same happened again. The bullet did not penetrate his body. His *kandere*, his wife, and all the others heard the shots and him still shouting. He thus demonstrated his power, his magic to them. The fourth time, once again the officer aimed at him. The bullet hit his chest, he cried out: 'ToKilang is finished. Now he will die.' They shot him again, he fell down, and he died."⁷¹

The police cut off his head and took it to Kokopo. ToNaie buried the rest of his body at Taderada near Paparatava Mission. The place where ToKilang was killed has two names: Vunagiau, that is the old name, and Tungitokilang, meaning 'the-place-where-ToKilang-died'. When you go to Toma, you will have no difficulty finding somebody to take you to Tungitokilang. You can recognise the spot easily from the bamboo growing in that very corner.

There is no time to spare for mourning Tokilang, for the worst was yet to come.

1. Peace Terms

- ToKele: "After ToKilang was dead, the Government let the people of Toma live in peace. However, when they wanted to return to their homes, they couldn't. The Government had seized their land."⁷²
- ToVetenge: "They had seized the land as a payment. It was only to compensate for Mrs Wolff."⁷³
- ToLarme: "A big ending: the land. To end the anger of Germany. The court seized the land. The *misit* took it for the blood she had shed."⁷⁴

The land seized was to become Toma I, Toma II, and Tokota Plantations, and Government land around the Toma patrol post. No records dealing with the confiscation of that land have survived. It is possible that some of the land turned into plantations after 1902 was part of the land allegedly purchased by Wolff in 1900.⁷⁵ After the First World War, Wolff was dispossessed like every other German national in New Guinea.

⁷¹ Henry ToKele of Bitakapuk on 6 February 1987. Slightly abridged extract. Taped statement read by its author from a manuscript. Non-literal translation from Tok Plisin on the basis of a transcript prepared by myself.

⁷² Henry ToKele of Bitakapuk on 6 February 1987. Unabridged extract. Non-literal translation from Tok Plisin.

⁷³ Iosep ToVetenge on 9 October 1987 in Ravae. Translation of verbatim notes from the Tolai language. ('*Di ga kap ra pia pi a varukulu. Di ga kutuga Misit Wol me*': literally that means: 'they bought Mrs. Wolff with the land').

⁷⁴ Bernard ToLarme of Vunadidir on 5 November 1987 in Vunadidir. Translation of verbatim notes from the Tolai language. ('*A ngala na mutualina: a piapia. Pi na varnut a kankan kal ra Germany. Go ra kot i ga kap ra piapia. A misit i ga kap la ta ra gapuna i ga tallngir.*')

⁷⁵ On a contemporary German map, the Government land seems to comprise Toma I and II, whereas Tokota seems to be part of Wolff's land. Did he receive this as a compensation or did he "buy" it in 1900? (Beilage zur Denkschrift über die Entwicklung der deutschen Schutzgebiete in Afrika und der Süasee 1902/03, Berlin: 15 December 1903, Blatt 284, Reichstag 1117, ZStA Potsdam).

Some of the people driven from their land settled in Tamtavul inside the boundaries of the newly established plantations. They were allowed to stay, but had to pay a one-off rent in kind (pigs, taro etc.). Others settled at Bitakapuk which was garden land before 1902.⁷⁶

In different court cases, thirteen sub-clans were granted the right to claim back Toma I and Toma II after a lease granted by the Australian colonial administration would have expired in the early twenty-first century.⁷⁷ They lost the court case for Tokota in Sydney. By now Toma I and II, Varzin, and Tokota Plantations have been bought back from the respective lessees by different groups of villagers who live around Tabaule.

After the end of the hostilities the Government appointed *Luluais*: laUbar, a renowned *luluai*, for Bitakapuk, and ToDukum for Tamtavul. laUbar was soon to be replaced by ToNaie. ToNaie fathered ToLiman who was a Paramount *Luluai* before the Second World War. ToLiman fathered Matthias, Michael and laGoale, the former becoming Leader of the Opposition in the House of Assembly in 1972.

VI.

Neither do I intend to write a history that places a particular sequel of the past firmly between a before and an after.⁷⁸ Nor do I try to reconcile the account based on written sources with that based on Tolai histories to establish what **really** happened in Toma. Yet there are many realities in those accounts. There is, for example, the reality of a colonial project that could only succeed if the colonised were subdued by military conquest and by making them into images that could be conquered. There is also the reality of two old men in Tamanairik in 1987 who recreate their past by telling it. By structuring the accounts, by incorporating particular histories, by selecting different styles and a particular form, by juxtaposing different realities I propose a truth, but this truth is open-ended. It is now your turn to tell a history of the Toma killings. But before I tell another chapter of my history of the Tolai, I shall make some observations about the histories just presented.

When telling their histories, Tolai establish links between the Otherness of the past and the familiarity of the present. They moor the past securely in the present. ToNaie was real though we did not know him, for we all know of his grandson. The best proof that Tokilang died at Vunagiau is that this place is referred to as Tungitokilang today.

⁷⁶ Iosep ToVetenge in October 1987.

⁷⁷ The sub-clans were represented and named after their respective leaders (*luluai*): Takala, Tidi, Tutan, ToMitulam, Tedep, ToVetenge, Taroro, ToVute, ToLial, ToUragogol, Taidel, ToRarau (according to ToVetenge who had in his possession records referring to the court cases about Toma I and Toma II).

⁷⁸ No doubt this history could be extended in various directions. I shall give three examples:

- I could talk about earlier confrontations between ToVagira and his men and the German colonial administration, which culminated in 1898 when German marines were marched to Mount Varzin (cf. *DKB IX*, of 15 Dec. 1898, p. 796f; Bley, in: *Monatshefte* 1897, pp. 263f; HAHN 1980, pp. 31 and 86).
- I could deal with earlier confrontations between people around Toma and people living between Malakuna No. 4 and Vunamami, or between groups of Tolai and the Taullil. Some of them are described in the colonial sources (for example: Müller, in: *Monatshefte* 1897, p. 24). Some are mentioned in Tolai oral traditions: so I was told by Elitabet laPururu of Tingnavudu that ToVuvul, a big man from Malakuna who was said to have taken part in the reprisal and who was certainly a contemporary of Tokukubak *dital*, had on earlier occasions abducted three Taullil girls: laKanam, laLitla and laNuia.
- I could include more oral traditions from places like Rabagl, Rapirok, and Wairiki.

ToValubla, a Tolai historian

Histories told by the Tolai deal with single events. There are no 'general' histories told which would connect the Toma killings with the arrival of the Australians in 1914. Nor are they always told in a way which condenses historical time into something which requires only a fraction of the historical time to consume. We could tell the history of the Japanese occupation of Rabaul, which lasted 1326 days, in 200 pages or 200,000 words or in a paragraph which can be read in two minutes. We could not tell it in a quantity which resembles 1326 days. A Tolai account of the Second World War is more likely to deal with a few single events, and some of these events could well require the same time to be told as they took to happen. Like a film which consists of bits of real time joined by a narrator's comment, a Tolai history often assembles uncondensed images which are connected by

a narrative. The image of Mrs Wolff examining the eggs or the police shooting Tokilang are bits of real time in an otherwise condensed account of the events.

Colonial sources depict a conflict between black men and white men, colonised and coloniser. The natives mischievously murdered a white woman, they were subdued. Pacification, domestication, progress proceeded. The records of the German Administration try to pick out the delinquents, particularly the ringleaders. They analyse the murder as part of an armed insurrection to justify the scale of retaliation.⁷⁹ They stress the importance of the *ingiet* which is perceived as an organisation plotting against the colonial regime.⁸⁰ Some colonial chroniclers describe a counterinsurgency operation, as they perceived the killing of Moses as the beginning of an uprising. Ranajit Guha has shown that although similar reports written by British officials in India represent a discourse of (colonial) power, they can be excellent sources for anti-colonial histories, because counterinsurgency 'can hardly afford a discourse that is not fully and compulsively involved with the rebel and his activities'.⁸¹ For some Catholic missionaries, the murder of Hedwig Wolff resulted from the 'wildness' of the 'kanakas, who are worse than ferocious beasts'.⁸² In their interpretation of the colonial project, the taming of the natives was of foremost importance. It would be rewarding and useful to brush the colonial sources the wrong way - but this is not the thrust of my dissertation.

⁷⁹ 'It was a question of holding on to Neu-Pommern' (RIBBE 1924, p. 185).

⁸⁰ Ten years later, Burger found that Mrs Wolff was killed only because her husband had defiled a *maravot* at Tabauile (BURGER 1923, p. 114).

⁸¹ GUHA 1983, p. 15; see also pp. 106ff.

⁸² Fromm, in: *Monatshefte* 1902, p. 400. The equation of 'natives' and wild beasts was not uncommon among Catholic missionaries, see, for example: (Bley), in: *Monatshefte* 1892, p. 25; and Huser, in: *Monatshefte* 1894, p. 315.

Given the big man system on the Gazelle Peninsula in 1902 and in 1987, we may as well let Tokilang and a few others steal the limelight of the tragedy. In fact this is also a story about the demise and emergence of big men. ToKitang and ToVagira were the men of yesteryear. Tokilang had his moments of glory only minutes before his head was cut off. ToNaie was not even mentioned in the Tolai accounts of the plot, but, far from being a traitor like ToKirara, he became the saviour of his people in the dramatic finale. But there were others. This is the story of a defeat for a large group of people, and a story of the fate of a number of victims: ToVagira's wives, the nanny Sophie and others. And although Wolff, Eberlein, Hahl and others blame just a few ringleaders, the colonial records fulfil an important role by preserving the names of losers who in the oral traditions have sunk into oblivion. In oral accounts of the past, few losers are saved from anonymity.

Histories cannot be separated from the people telling them. This is true for written histories (although historians sometimes pretend that it is not the case) and the more so for oral traditions. ToKele has mainly third-hand knowledge of the 1902 events. He is a catechist and frequently uses biblical images - the Vunakokor becomes a Garden of Gethsemane. A history is also a statement about its author.

The Toma events reflect the catastrophic experience of the initial loss of the land, and the drama of this story is a relevant description for other, less bloody losses elsewhere on the Gazelle. The men and women telling the stories of the Toma killings belong to a generation which has fought long battles to regain their land, not only in Toma, but all over the Gazelle Peninsula. Will the stories become extinct with the dying out of that generation?

The lost court case at the High Court of Australia had a great impact on the Tolai as a whole.⁸³ It caused disenchantment with the Administration which had appeared to be willing to help the Tolai to claim back their land.

The courts were increasingly distrusted because the Administration relied on legalistic solutions whenever Tolai intransigence stalemated negotiations. Court orders and police action became the last resort of the Government and of plantation owners when the plantations were illegally occupied.⁸⁴

Indirectly, the defeat in Sydney did contribute to the formation of the Mataungan Association, though Toma itself remained a stronghold of the pro-Administration conservatives led by Matthias ToLiman - because they were still labouring under a long defeat?

⁸³ Cf. DOWNS 1980, pp. 173f. A Tolai lawyer, William Kaputin, wrote against the "doctrine of indefeasible title" in the early 1970s: "In conclusion, I a Tolai, voice here a cry from the depths of despair to which the Tolai people have been reduced in their struggle for justice over land; now they appear to be totally disillusioned, alienated from the fountain of justice from which they were meant to drink." (W. KAPUTIN 1974, p. 163) William Kaputin became later a Supreme Court judge. For a similar view, see John Kaputin (1975) who channelled the Tolai's frustration into political action.

⁸⁴ DOWNS 1980, p. 174. The planters' confidence in the courts was restored: "Natives who claim that their ancestors sold their land at a 'give away' price, or sold it without authority, or allowed it to be confiscated, have not much chance in New Guinea of taking over the title at this stage. If the land was properly registered on behalf of new owners, then old history can't be dug up again", rejoiced the planters' mouthpiece, the *Pacific Islands Monthly* (vol. 35, No. 12, December 1964, p. 13).

VII.

By the way, ToVetenge did not miss the handing down of the judgement by accident. He probably returned to Rabaul on the last day of the hearing on 5 November 1964. The judgement was handed down on 30 November. It was not Tom Garrett, but the Custodian of Expropriated Property and the Administration of the Territory of Papua and New Guinea who had appealed against a decision by the Supreme Court of the Territory of Papua and New Guinea 'in favour of the native community in question'.⁸⁵ ToVetenge did not mention that Norah Ellen Richards had inherited her late husband's estate and had thus taken the place of Tom Garrett who in 1926 had purchased the plantation for £ 12,500 from the Expropriation Board.⁸⁶ Nor did he mention that although the Administration had appealed, the Director of Native Affairs had argued the Tolai's case in Sydney. He could not have known that his legal representative, whose name he could not recall, later sacked an Australian Prime Minister who not only was in office when Papua New Guinea was granted independence but who on 7 January 1970 was enthusiastically received by a crowd of 10,000 on Matupit to deliver the Tolai from colonial bondage.⁸⁷ But the 'legal gymnastics of the Varzin case'⁸⁸ are irrelevant to this history. After all, in his recollection of the court proceedings ToVetenge did not miss the point.

⁸⁵ C.L.R. 113, 1964/65, p. 320. For this and the following cf. op. cit. pp. 318-340, and DOWNS 1980, pp. 170-174. From the planters' point of view see: *PIM* 33, April 1963, pp. 39ff; *PIM* 33, June 1963, pp. 11ff; *PIM* 33, July 1963, p. 19; *PIM* 35, December 1964, pp. 13f; *PIM* 36, January 1965, pp. 14f.

⁸⁶ *PIM* 36, No. 1 (January 1965), p. 14.

⁸⁷ Cf. DOWNS 1980, pp. 465f. No doubt, the enthusiasm was mutual (see *SMH* of 8 Jan. 1970; *PIM* 41, no. 2 (Feb. 1970)).

⁸⁸ DOWNS 1980, p. 173.

2: Setting Out

As my vision has widened and my focus has deepened, my lens (through which I perceive our time, all of us, you, myself) has changed decisively. ... When I try to realise what is happening, what has happened, I find that ... there has been an expansion of what for me is "real". Moreover, the nature, the inner structure, the movement of this reality has also changed and continues to change almost daily. It is indescribable; my professional interest is wide-awake and aims precisely at description, but it must hold back, withdraw, and it has to learn to want to bring about its own defeat. (Now who was it who taught us the joy of being bewildered!)¹

Christa Wolf

The introductory chapter of a thesis is supposed to lead the readers carefully to the topic which is to be addressed. It puts them on a train of thought and discourages them from being distracted by looking out of the carriage window. In my first chapter I have tried to arrest your attention by leading you, on a deliberately winding and long track, right into the subject matter: the Tolai past and Tolai histories. In this I open a few windows to show the context in which the journey takes place.

The construction of the Tolai past which I propose is as subjective as other written histories - with the difference that other written histories often vie to be objective reconstructions of the past. I stand by the partiality of my approach. Nevertheless I think it is essential to unfold some of its subjectivity to the readers to enable them to criticise it. The angle from which I look at the Tolai past has its own history, and this history becomes part of my construction.

In the first place I was not interested in Papua New Guinea but in the topic of a course at Frankfurt/Main University which dealt with social change in the colonial context. "What makes a society change?", or: "How do transformations occur?" - questions like that had intrigued me before when posed in the context of European history. In the first place, Papua New Guinea seemed to be just another case, perhaps more interesting because of its exotic remoteness. But after a while, not only images of the South Seas and the aura of the unknown breathed colour into an academic subject. The history as such seemed to convey this colour to a greater extent than was the case in Europe. I am aware that I could have found the liveliness of Papua New Guinea's recent past in Europe, too, but at that time I did not look for it. The bulk of the material available to me about Papua New Guinea consisted either of anthropological studies of small communities or the tales of explorers, missionaries, planters, or *kiaps*. A large collection was housed in a nearby library, and I was apparently its first systematic post-war reader. Social change was becoming less of an abstract process which could be described in formulas but something which was initiated by individuals and groups who could be named. It was witnessed, and perhaps endured. History in late nineteenth and early twentieth century New Guinea presented itself as a drama, though a drama which could be theorised.

¹ WOLF 1983, p. 131.

Dissatisfaction and discontent with where and how I lived contributed to my desire to travel to and live at the scene of that drama. The thesis is an outcome of the conditions which made such a journey possible: doing a doctorate was the easiest way of getting a substantial grant. Being attracted to this scene was one thing. Attracting others with a research proposal to be awarded a scholarship was another. The questions I wanted to study in Papua New Guinea had to make sense in an academic discourse, and so I suggested that I look behind the theatrical and discover the mechanisms of social change.

Becoming part of the academic environment at the Australian National University at first brought me back to broader theoretical problems of societies in transition. Reading Melanesian testimonies about aspects of social change made me reconsider the merits of history's theatrical aspects, although this time from a different angle.

I had intended to use both written, colonial sources and Papua New Guinean oral testimonies to sketch the process of social change in the early years of colonial penetration. Three difficulties arose with that. First, the colourful images in Papua New Guinean perceptions of colonial contact seemed to be too precious to be reduced to abstract formulas or used merely as evidence in a discourse in a very different mode of thought. Second, the Papua New Guinean histories seemed to be appropriations of experiences. The story-tellers seemed to claim (back) their history. The result of my research could turn out to be yet another alienation or expropriation of historical experience. Third, I began to question the role I was to play during my fieldwork. After all, I wanted to stay between one and two years in Papua New Guinea, a period which I considered necessary because I had to become familiar with the basics of another culture, not the least difficult part of this venture being the learning of its language. Would the result of my findings have anything to do with the people among whom I was to live for one and a half years? Could they read them? If they could read them, would they think that my writing did justice to their way of looking at past and present?

In other words: I focused my attention on some of the proposed sources of my study, that is on Papua New Guinean perceptions of the colonial past. I wondered how to avoid a separation of the content and nature of the research from the form in which the results would be presented. And I realised that I would need to develop a critique of the process of gaining knowledge in the "field".

Before leaving for Papua New Guinea, I sought ideas in the writings of authors whose approaches to "doing" history had fascinated me. In introducing two of them I shall be brief. I take up the issues mentioned here again in subsequent chapters.

In his "Theses on the Philosophy of History" Walter Benjamin outlines the principles of a historical materialism which loathes both historicism and mechanistic interpretations of Marx's concept of "base" and "superstructure". For Benjamin, "to articulate the past historically ... means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of

danger".² The memory flashes up as an image of the past, an image in which for a moment the 'now' fuses with the 'what has been'.³ In spite of their fragmentary character Benjamin's 'Theses' and his *Passagenwerk* still represent the most incisive condensation of a truly revolutionary History. I do not claim to have succeeded in complying with Benjamin's demands on the historian. As Benjamin never developed a methodology, nor published any history that could be taken as a model, it is not possible to adhere to a method, or copy a pattern. However, with his philosophy of history he more than any other single author has challenged my way of thinking and informed my approach.

An assertion central to my dissertation is that I attempt a **construction** (*Konstruktion*) of the past in opposition to a historicist **reconstruction** (*Rekonstruktion*). I borrow this term, and the meaning it carries, from Benjamin who said:

For the materialist historian it is important to distinguish strictly the construction of a historical state of affairs from what is commonly called its 'reconstruction'. 'Reconstruction' by empathy is monolithic. 'Construction' presupposes 'destruction'.⁴

The destructive or critical moment in materialist historiography is set off in the blasting-open of historical continuity, by which the historical object constitutes itself in the first place.⁵

Historical materialism has to relinquish the epic element of history. It blasts the epoch off the thing-like 'continuity of history'. But it also blasts open the epoch's homogeneity. It intersperses it with *écrasite*, i.e. with the present.⁶

In a discussion about means of expression in the bourgeois cinema, Alexander Kluge, a West German director, suggested splitting perceptions of reality into two 'lines' - one line of perception to be defused by exposing its mystifying character, the other to be used as building material 'like the colosseum which the Romans used to build their houses'.⁷ According to Kluge there is a real need behind ideology, because through ideology people demand to appropriate their conditions (*Verhältnisse*). This demand should be sustained. Applied to Papua New Guinean perceptions of the past, Kluge's proposal meant that I could use stories as elements for my construction of the past and at the same time subject them to a critique which tries to unveil the conditions (*Verhältnisse*). Thus the construction could juxtapose **real** conditions with **true** images.

Kluge is primarily concerned with means and forms of expression. Not only does he - involuntarily and if he knew much to his amusement - help me to develop a way of dealing with some of my 'sources', he has ideas about the constructive process. His essential concern is how to take the colosseum apart and build new houses from the rubble. The cinematic rendering of the past is not necessarily a helpful model for

² BENJAMIN 1974, p. 695 (sixth thesis).

³ Cf. BENJAMIN 1982, pp. 576ff (N 2a,3). Benjamin's *Passagenwerk* has in part been translated into English (*The Philosophical Forum* 15,1-2: 1-40).

⁴ BENJAMIN 1982, p. 587 (N 7,6).

⁵ BENJAMIN 1982, p. 594 (N 10a,1).

⁶ BENJAMIN 1982, pp. 592f (N 9a,6). *Écrasite* is an explosive used by the Hungaro-Austrian army in the First World War.

⁷ KLUGE & NEGTE 1974, p. 32.

writing a thesis, but it provides a vision for producing a history, especially since Kluge's films are also literary artifacts.⁶

It was apparent that the theoretical approach to the research topic and the composition of the content (the production of a history) were closely related. And after having approached my problem from the angle of materialist aesthetics the conclusion was irresistible that the decision about the forms of expression had to be made in the context of the discussion about approach and methods, the more so since I wanted my construction of the past to be made available to those whose histories I had studied.

During the first leg of fieldwork from January until June 1986 I spent about two months in the Finschhafen area (Morobe Province) and three months on the Gazelle Peninsula (East New Britain Province). Most of the time I stayed with a family, first in the Tami village of Malasiga, and then in Navuneram near Rabaul. During these first months in Papua New Guinea I became fluent in Tok Pisin (Neo-Melanesian Pidgin), Papua New Guinea's lingua franca, but I did not pick up much Kuanua, the language spoken by the Tolai people. That was partly because I had learnt Tok Pisin first and could thus get along without Kuanua in most conversations. Towards the end of my initial stay I began to doubt whether I could really empathise with Tami or Tolai modes of thought. During the second stay in Papua New Guinea the assumption that I could not put myself in the place of the people I was "studying" became a certainty. In fact the shocks resulting from the cultural gap between the Other and the Self turned out to be necessary ingredients of an anthropological understanding.

Because of the expectations of my hosts I began immediately collecting oral traditions and histories, instead of just assessing the conditions for systematic research and familiarising myself with the environment, as I had intended. I made three observations which helped direct further thoughts:

- The histories I listened to, especially those of the Tolai, consisted indeed of colourful and powerful images and were **true constructions** of the past, no matter whether they were factually **correct reconstructions** of the past.
- The rich imagery of Tolai histories about the pre-colonial and early colonial past contrasted with the fragmentariness of histories in the coastal areas around Finschhafen. The self-conscious and prosperous Tolai society contrasted with classical features of "under"development around Finschhafen.
- The majority of the Tolai knew next to nothing about the past prior to their own lifetime. There was no such thing as **the Tolai construction of the past**.

The third observation reminded me that I had to take the production of a history into account. A history is also an individual's articulation of the past. And each oral tradition has its own distinctive features depending on who tells it, in which language and when, where and to whom it is told. The second observation suggested there might be a relationship between the (material) ability to cope with colonialism and the inclusion of the colonial past in the present through a vivid history. The first observation

⁶ Cf. KAES 1987, pp. 52f.

made me think further along Kluge's concept of the two lines of a perception. But I came to realise that the analytical penetration of the process of social change and its abstraction in terms of a 'modes of production' theory could not be a last scientific, objective resort against which subjective histories could be measured.

I felt assured that Benjamin and Kluge had set me on the right track. I went back to one of their spiritual fathers, Karl Marx. In September 1843 he wrote in a letter to Ruge:

The reform of the consciousness **only** means that one makes the world pause and become aware of its consciousness, that one wakes it from the dream about itself. ... The world already possesses the dream of a thing, of which it has only to possess the consciousness to possess it truly. It will become evident that it is not a matter of a great mental dividing line between past and future, but of the **realisation** of the thoughts of the past.⁹

Marx deals with two dimensions of 'the dream'. One dimension may be termed mystification. We have to become aware how dreams can cloud reality. The other dimension is the anticipating consciousness. We dream of better days to come without being able to name them. Histories in which Papua New Guineans construct their colonial past sometimes represent appropriations of the past which transcend the reality of the present. They deserve to be saved from the rationalising scalpel.

I returned to Papua New Guinea in October 1986. First I spent another six weeks in the Finschhafen area. When embarking on this research some years back, I had been interested first of all in the Tolai. That was thanks to the abundance of written material available about them: mission, government, and private sources; a lot of colonial ethnographic writings, most prominent among those Parkinson's opus *Dreissig Jahre in der Südsee*; and three anthropological monographs based on fieldwork carried out in the early 1960s. To make my research more attractive to potential sponsors, I added the Finschhafen area as another case to be studied. Whereas many researchers have felt drawn by the Tolai after 1945, the Finschhafen area has been left largely untouched since the research undertaken by the first missionaries, with the notable exception of Harding's study on the Vitiaz Strait traders. Besides, I was granted permission to use the Lutheran Mission's archives in Neuendettelsau (Bavaria), and I was one of the first secular historians to work systematically through the records. At that time the prospect of working with 'virgin sources' still appealed to me. After my first visit to Papua New Guinea I realised that it was impossible to do two separate pieces of anthropological fieldwork (which in Finschhafen should have included the learning of either the Yabim or Kotte language). I decided to concentrate on the Gazelle Peninsula and collect only a few stories on selected topics around Finschhafen for comparison. I am glad now that I did spend some months around Finschhafen, because my experiences there have helped me to understand what is specific about the Tolai.

At the beginning of December 1986 I returned to Rabaul. For the next fourteen months I lived at Bonat-Vunaruga, in the grounds of the Raluana Community School in a house which had once been built to accommodate a single teacher. It was a place of great historic significance for the Tolai of Raluana*. Here the clan of the most important big man in Raluana*, ToNamaliu, first went ashore after migrating from New Ireland via the Duke of York Islands. Here one of the first government-run primary

⁹ MARX 1975, p. 56; his emphasis.

schools in the Territory of Papua and New Guinea was established after the Second World War. Here Apelis Tuvi hit District Commissioner Keith McCarthy with his crutch. And nearby the people of Raluana and Ialakua clashed over who would get the first Methodist missionary. I thought there would be no better place to write a history of the Tolai than here where I would be inspired by being at the scene of so many events prominent in Tolai histories.¹⁰ That I started writing the dissertation only after returning to Australia in early 1988 did not prove me wrong. But it highlighted the tension between two goals: to write a doctoral dissertation and to produce a history of the Tolai. The thesis reflects this tension in that it tries to be both **a** history and **about** history.

It also reflects the tension between two ways of knowing - knowing by reading and knowing by interacting. They cannot be separated. I came to the "field" as someone influenced by a particular assemblage of ideas, who had certain conceptions about how to learn and why. I was led to question my presumptions and those of the discipline I was part of through learning about Tolai approaches to their past, in an interaction with Tolai.

There is another way of knowing involved: knowing by writing, both in the sense that I try to 'come to terms' with something by writing it down, and in the sense that I am talking to an imaginary audience. Through writing I try to continue a dialogue that began in the "field". The history I write is influenced by the fact that I have come to know ToVuia, ToVetenge and others, that I have talked with them, about their past, among many other things. In my writing I try to continue listening to what they have to say, how they produce histories, how they rely on produced history when making history. I try to continue talking to them, offering them images, open-ended histories, and interpretations, based on what I learned outside Papua New Guinea, and shaped by what I saw as a participant observer in the "field". I know many Tolai who do not know anything about ToVagira's head, the court case in Sydney, the nanny Sophie, nor the massacres in the aftermath of Hedwig Wolff's murder. So I am talking to them, telling them histories, offering them my construction of the past. I know non-Tolai who do not know ToVagira, nor John Vuia. When talking to them, I am trying to retain the Otherness of Tolai histories. I am mediating, explaining, analysing, sketching the cultural process 'history', without resolving it into the chronological corset of a narrative. The immanent solitude of the thesis-writer contradicts these imaginary dialogues, and often it requires a major effort to carry them on. The process of learning (in) another culture implies a relationship between the Other and Self. Academics are fond of saying 'we are working on the ... (Tolai, Eskimos, etc.)'. There is indeed a lot of work involved in trying to come to terms with the Other, realigning one's Self. Addressing also myself through producing a history of the Tolai, is a reflection of that work.

The process of knowing by writing is a continuation of knowing by reading and interaction. It takes a peculiar form in this thesis, because I am writing in a language that is neither that of many of those I am talking to, nor my own. There are numerous

¹⁰ While he was working on the *Passagenwerk*, Benjamin lamented that he had to live in a hotel room overlooking the courtyard and was thus deprived of a view of the Boulevard Saint-Germain which could be seen from the (probably expensive) front rooms of the same hotel. His problem was that he missed out on a view of a scene of revolutionary events in nineteenth century Paris. (Benjamin to Gretel Adorno, n.d. (1934), quoted in BENJAMIN 1982, p. 1099).

restrictions and constraints involved in writing a doctoral dissertation: I have to limit what I want to say to 100,000 words, I have a limited period of time (in my case, less than nine months for a lot of reading as well as the actual writing), I have to adhere to a certain format. Writing within the straitjacket of a foreign language is the most severe constraint. Transcending a subject instead of penetrating it (and this is what construction also means) requires transcending the language (the meaning it carries) that is conventionally used to describe it. What Roland Barthes has said for the literary writer, is true for the academic writer too (the more so since in history the opposition between "literary" and "academic"/"scientific" is questionable):

Before his eyes, the world of society now exists as a veritable Nature, and this Nature speaks, elaborating living languages from which the writer is excluded: on the contrary, History puts in his hands a decorative and compromising instrument, a writing inherited from a previous and different History, for which he is not responsible and yet which is the only one he can use.¹¹

The words have to be emancipated, not by creating a new academic jargon, nor by retreating into incomprehensible introversion, and preferably not by just putting them into inverted commas. As knowing by writing should be understood also as social interaction, the new language is defined by its ability to convey meaning in a dialogue with others.¹² Just imagine what writing could strive for:

an imagination eagerly desiring a felicity of words, it hastens towards a dreamed-of language whose freshness, by a kind of ideal anticipation, might portray the perfection of some new Adamic world where language would no longer be alienated.¹³

There is another constraint, which creates an unwanted tension. This is a thesis in the discipline of Pacific History. What I propose often stands outside the parameters of the discourses that predominate in the discipline at the Australian National University, and in its periodical, the *Journal of Pacific History*. Sometimes only polemics bridge the gap.

The desire to know needs to be associated with a frame of mind. "*Doch die Verhältnisse, sie sind nicht so*", the world is not as it should be, sings Peachum in the *Beggar's Opera*. Nor as it could be, one might add. But that it could be what it should be, is not more than a faint hope, and what it could and should be not more than a feeble knowing of the contours of "the dream of a thing". "Historical materialism is a mode of historiography in which the painstaking scientific mind is driven by a passion rooted in sadness", Michael Taussig writes.¹⁴ Historical materialism in the tradition of Benjamin is the quest for knowing founded on a nagging discontent with the *Verhältnisse*. If it were simply dissatisfaction, and it made sense to take immediate remedial action (to realise the "could"), one could resort to actionist politics. When actionism is replaced by an attempt to transcend *Verhältnisse* by writing them, discontent has turned into melancholy. Again Taussig, mutilated by my own selective reading:

Melancholy establishes and confirms the distance separating subject from object ... while it simultaneously registers the need to transcend that alienation, which is also the alienation of man as created by history. Melancholy is the gaze that penetrates

¹¹ BARTHES 1977, p. 86.

¹² I am aware that this concern has a longer tradition in, for example, German and French, than in English. In academic English writings, in American English in particular, there has been an unfortunate tendency to define a new language by introducing a new jargon.

¹³ BARTHES 1977, p. 88.

¹⁴ TAUSSIG 1980, p. 123.

the images of the past, transforming them from dead objects into images vibrant with meaning for the revolutionary encounter with the present....¹⁵

The distance separating subject from object, knower from known, is also established by the switch from the oral to the written discourse.¹⁶ I mourn the end of the spoken dialogue and its limitations, but in registering a loss I try to re-establish that dialogue on a new level, through writing.

There are good reasons why Europeans could find it useful to learn (in) another culture: for one, because they thereby learn about themselves. Papua New Guineans may have good reasons to host Europeans learning (in) their culture. In the particular context of a nation trying to assert its identity and autonomy, Papua New Guineans may want to maintain that their history belongs exclusively to them. Yet, Papua New Guinea has become part of a capitalist world system that has its centers nowhere near the South Pacific. Tolai, Germans, Australians have been made to become part of One World. Not only are our fates now linked, we should perceive each other's fate as One Fate. Parochial ignorance does not help to transcend the realities of the World System. So we may not only assert with Eric Wolf that "their" history and "our" history have emerged as part of One History,¹⁷ but articulate those ideas about One World that are part of our "dream of a thing". But on the other hand we should retain a plurality of histories which do not succumb to the levelling forces of the One World. Not only has Papua New Guinean history been subjugated to European history in this irrevocable process, but, whether we live in Europe or Melanesia, we are faced with the prospect of a *post-histoire*,¹⁸ an era of standardised norms and values, where the Other becomes the deviate.

The odd numbered chapters of this thesis, in which I try to write a history, are all concerned with the colonial past. I have chosen different forms of presentation, and selected episodes and themes to highlight different aspects (for example, Tolai versus European accounts in the first chapter, or the differences between written, spoken and enacted histories in the fifth chapter). In glossaries I try to explain aspects of Tolai society as I proceed: what might seem a series of casual remarks to help the non-Tolai reader, represents my understanding of crucial features of Tolai society, which becomes an important part of my history of the Tolai. The even chapters try to establish the contexts in which this history has been produced, and in which Tolai produce their histories. The odd and the even chapters are not aiming at different discourses. As this is a doctoral dissertation, my writing is necessarily part of an academic discourse.

I do not strive to pull together different threads to make one rope, but insist on the virtues of the allusion and advocate a deliberate and shameless eclecticism. In juxtaposing my reading of European authors with my listening to Papua New Guinean story-tellers, and my understanding of how Tolai view their past with my ideas about how the past could be constructed, I propose points of contact.

¹⁵ TAUSSIG 1980, p. 123.

¹⁶ Cf. ONG 1982, pp. 43ff.

¹⁷ WOLF 1982, p. 19.

¹⁸ I take the term *post-histoire* and its meaning from BRÜCKNER 1982, pp. 258ff.

3: ToMarnakat was a Real Human Being

I.

The first white settlers we know of arrived on the Gazelle Peninsula in about 1873. Before then, people living on the Gazelle and on the Duke of York Islands had had several decades of irregular contacts with Europeans. They came in naval vessels on exploring expeditions, and in trading or whaling ships.¹ Duke of York Islanders had been taken as crew members "for a whaling cruise or pearl shell expedition" and observers in the 1870s noted their ability to communicate in English.²

Compared with other groups in Papua New Guinea, the Tolai have a long history of Western education. Many Tolai know about the *tena kotakotop*, the explorers, because they learnt about them at school. But I was not told any story about explorers, whalers or early traders which described their visits from a Tolai point of view.³ I did not come across any accounts of the arrival of the first traders who settled around Kininigunan or Raluana. I heard stories about the expulsion of two traders from Matupit,⁴ and a confrontation between a trader and people from Kininigunan not long after his arrival.⁵ And there are detailed accounts of the arrival of Methodist and Catholic missionaries. But a history, based on Tolai histories, about the coming of the white people has not to confine itself to the coming of the *lotu*, as the following story shows. I tell it myself, largely in my own words, based on what I have heard from ToWilliam, ToPainai, ToMoseley and ToLar, all of whom I quote,⁶ and others.⁷ I am indebted to all of them for learning so many details of what has become my favourite Tolai narrative.

¹ For descriptions of these visits see, for example, BACH 1968, pp. 155-163, or JACOBS 1844, pp. 104-198. See also: WICHMANN 1909 and WICHMANN 1910, for a comprehensive listing of published accounts of exploring voyages to New Britain. According to Vogel (1911, p. 14), whalers had come particularly during the 1850s.

² Commander HMS *Rosario* to Goodenough, Sydney: 16 Feb. 1874 (NatArchNZ: RNAS 13). In 1872 Edwin Redlich of the *Franz* signed on seven Duke of York Islanders at one pound a month (MULLINS 1988, p. 229). A Duke of York Islander, Teem, accompanied Brown in 1875 from Sydney (BROWN 1908, p. 106). Cf. HERNSHEIM 1883, p. 102.

³ Otto Meyer, who was a Catholic missionary on Watom Island early this century, recorded several stories about encounters between explorers, whalers and blackbirders, and Watom Islanders: Otto Meyer, *Missionierung auf Vuatom*, ms n.d. (ProArchMü: C 4/32b).

⁴ See chapter 5.

⁵ Cf. SALISBURY 1970, pp. 77f. The first blackbirders, who took Tolai speaking people to plantations in Samoa, Queensland and Fiji, arrived several years after the first traders and missionaries had settled permanently in the area. But although at the height of the "labour traffic", in 1883, probably more than a hundred Tolai were taken to the British colonies (and few returned), the only detailed stories I heard about labour recruiting concerned men who had worked in Samoa in later years.

⁶ The names in square brackets refer to the narrators who have provided the respective quotes. For Marnakat quoted by ToPainai (1): Lui ToPainai of Tingenavudu on 17 October 1987 at Tingenavudu, taped statement, non-literal translation from the Tolai language, on the basis of a transcript prepared by Paul ToSnot and myself. For Marnakat quoted by ToLar (2): Elipas ToLar of Ialakua on 8 October 1987 at Ialakua, translation of verbatim notes. For Marnakat quoted by ToWilliam (3): William ToKavivi of Vunamami on 13 August 1987 at Ialakua, translation of verbatim notes. For Marnakat quoted by ToMoseley (4): Moseley ToViringe of Takubar on 2 September 1987 at Takubar, translation of verbatim notes. But for the position of the last paragraph, my narrative follows the sequence chosen by these four narrators.

⁷ Jimmy Malcolm of Ialakua in July 1987 and February 1988; Gregor Tolamin of Nangananga-Livuan in August 1987; Derlo Titi of Vunamami in August 1987; Elles Tolum of Bitarebarebe in August 1987; Niut ToKamit of Tingenavudu in August 1987; Johannes ToMalom of Karavi in September 1987; Enos Sael ToMaruai of Vunamami in September 1987; Lina laLivuana of Ialakua in October 1987; Polos ToPultima of Vunamami in October 1987; Elias ToEnana and Kepas Lawo of Bitarebarebe in October 1987; Wilimon ToKlang of Vunabalbal in October 1987; Paul ToDukduk and Pascalis ToNam of Ngunguna in November 1987.

II.

This is the story of ToMarnakat. ToMarnakat was a man who lived during what Tolai often call "the time of darkness". He lived before Europeans settled in New Britain, before the establishment of the colonial government, and before the arrival of the *lotu*. It is not known who gave birth to ToMarnakat. Nor is it known exactly where he was born. ToMarnakat came from the Siar area in New Ireland. He went ashore in Kabagap. From there he moved on to Tingenavudu and joined the Gagali *vunatarai*. That is, the clan of ToElies and ToJack and their sister IaLina, the wife of the late Reverend Epineri Kopman. He stayed with the Gagali people and became their leader. He resided at Vunalama. ToMarnakat was a real human being, but he had the eyes of a monkey. His penis was unusually small. He spoke in a falsetto voice. Apart from that everything else appeared properly human. By the way, in those days on the Gazelle and in New Ireland quite a few men supposedly had the eyes of animals. Some people say that ToBobo, too, had the eyes of a monkey.

Glossary III: *Vunatarai*

The term refers to a group of common matrilineal descent. It is however impossible to translate *vunatarai* consistently as "clan" or "matrilineage",⁸ for its meaning is flexible and depends on the context in which it is used.⁹ The usage of the word also differs slightly regionally. It can be used as a synonym for *papar* (half, side). One of the distinctive features of Tolai society is that all Tolai belong to one of two exogamous moieties which are called Pikalaba and Marmar, or Taragau and Minigulai, or Makadao and Kubar.¹⁰ If asked: 'what is your *vunatarai*?', a lot of people try to think to which moiety (*papar*) they belong. Most of them are not able to tell, but they are able to say of every person in the village whether they belong to "us" or to "them", and in what way they are related to them.¹¹

The leader of a *vunatarai* is called *lualua*. A *lualua*'s reputation depends on his, occasionally her, oratory skills, *tabu* and money resources, knowledge of customary, genealogical and land matters, and amount of controlled land. The better the reputation and means to take care of followers, the more people will align with a particular *lualua*, and the bigger his, occasionally her, *vunatarai* will be. The *vunatarai* of an outstanding *lualua* could split at the leader's death into several different *vunatarai*. To distinguish between a *vunatarai* as a sort of umbrella matri-

⁸ As Scarlett Epstein does (1968, p. 6).

⁹ I agree with A. L. Epstein's conclusions in his detailed discussion of the term (1969, pp. 100, 122-126, 162-164). Salisbury (1970) mentions the flexibility of the term, but circumvents the problem by using "clan" throughout most of his book on Vunamami.

¹⁰ A *taragau* is a sea eagle (*Pandion haliaetus cristatus*); a *minigulai* is also a sea eagle (*Haliaetus leucog.*). A *makadao* is a species of coconut(-tree) which is of a green colour; a *kubar* is a different species of coconut of reddish colour. Some people use the term *Ngenge* instead of *Kubar*, a *ngenge* is a species of coconut of yellowish colour. The use of various pairs differs regionally. Today people in Raluana and Vunamami use *Pikalaba* and *Marmar*, whereas in Toma *Taragau* and *Minigulai* are commonly used to refer to the two moieties. Meier (1921, pp. 476, 274) lists also *Vunagio* *Taulapui*, *Kalagar* and *Taurapui* as totem names to refer to the two moieties. It seems, though, that at the turn of the century the above mentioned names were less common than "we" (*daf*) and "they" (*diaf*), when people wanted to refer to the moiety they belonged to (cf. PARKINSON 1907, pp. 67, 612).

¹¹ Henry Tavul told me that he once tested it out and asked people at a village gathering in Vunamami to form two groups, one called *Pikalaba* and one called *Marmar*. That created a lot of confusion. Only when well-known representatives for the *Marmar* and the *Pikalaba* moieties were appointed, did everybody immediately know which group to join.

lineal descent group and a smaller unit, one can use the terms *apik* or *kakang* (also: *kakakang*), both referring to parts of a bunch of bananas. When people want to identify a particular *vanatarai*, they might refer either to a living big man (or, though that happens rarely, to a big woman), or to a dead ancestor or to a *madapai*, the piece of land which is said to have first been cleared after the *vanatarai* arrived on the Gazelle Peninsula. Again, this varies regionally. People in Toma tend to refer to a living big man whereas people in Vunamami tend to refer to their respective *mada-pai*.

ToMarnakat was married to a woman from Vunamami who belonged to Tetegete *vanatarai*. But it was an unusual marriage. He never slept with his wife. She did not live in his house. It is doubtful anyway that he was capable of fathering children. When she brought him food, she put it at his door and beat on a piece of bamboo to let him know that his meal had been delivered. After she left, ToMarnakat would take the food inside. ToMarnakat's wife became pregnant. She felt that she became pregnant without cause, since she did not have sex with her husband. The people, too, were surprised because ToMarnakat had never been seen together with his wife. She gave birth to a girl. She had only that one daughter and no other children. The name of Marnakat's wife has been lost, but I know the name of her daughter: IaTetek. IaTetek in turn had one daughter, Margaret IaViliren who is IaLom's and ToWaisak's mother. ToWaisak died only recently at the beginning of 1987. He lived in Vunabalbal near the main road, and had become the oldest man in the Vunamami area.

ToMarnakat lived at his house in Vunalama, and his wife stayed somewhere else at a women's house. ToMarnakat did not live alone though; he had a pig which slept in his house. It was a big pig which was half white, half black. It was called IaOi. An *oi* is a digging stick for planting taro, and the name referred to the pig's long snout. Frequently, ToMarnakat and his pig travelled to the whites' country. ToMarnakat mounted his pig, and a whirlwind carried them away. The people heard the whirlwind, and they knew: "ToMarnakat has once again left us." When they heard the whirlwind again, they said: "ToMarnakat has come back." When he returned from his travels, he told his people what he had seen, and illustrated his explanations. He constructed a road leading to the door of his house which was built on a small hill. He planted cygas palms and ornamental shrubs along the side of the road and said: "Look what I have done. Later some *tilik* [white-skinned strangers] will come, and they will do the same here in our country." [1]

He took some stones which can be hewn easily. They are called *papapa*. He chipped them with a stone blade used in those days as part of a weapon in warfare. At that time, the people living on the Gazelle Peninsula had no machete, no knife and no axe. ToMarnakat chipped each stone until it looked like a boundary marker and then planted these stones in two rows at Tinginarumi, a piece of land used by him. He called together his *vanatarai*, and told them: "You see this *cement* (boundary stone)...", but then of course he did not call it *cement*, he said: "Look at this stone, later some *tilik* will come and they will tear asunder our little land. They are still to come." [1]

One day, at another of the plots he used, called Tabiroaik, he made something else. He dug a long ditch, and then went again to the country of the whites. He brought some coconuts, the kind they call *ngenge*, and planted them on both sides of the ditch. He called his *vanatarai* together, and said:

"When this tree is bearing, you will notice that its fruit is white. Some men, some *tilik*, will come and their skin will be of the colour of this particular species of coconut. Some day those people will come to our country."[1]

The last surviving *ngenge* planted by ToMarnakat at Tabiroaik in Tingenavudu; picture taken in 1988

On another occasion, ToMarnakat took a piece of fruit from the gardenia tree, hollowed it out, cut off the top, bored a hole into its side and put a small bamboo tube into the hole. He filled it with withered *ibika*¹² or *popo*¹³ leaves, lit the leaves and smoked it like a pipe. He told the people that later some strangers would come bringing with them some of those things.

¹² Plant with edible leaves (*Abelmoschus esculentus*).

¹³ Plant with edible leaves.

From his travels, ToMarnakat brought pieces of broken glass which he gave to the women to use for scraping taro roasted in the fire. In those days Tolai had only knives made from bamboo. ToMarnakat called those pieces of broken glass *koto* (obsidian), because they resembled this particular stone. When he distributed them, he said to the people: "I got them from a place far away. I went to visit the *kabakabang* [white people] who eat the inside of a sprouting coconut. Some day they will come and thrust us aside. They will plant their stones on our land." [3] When talking about the inside of the sprouting coconut, he was referring to the bread he had seen in the white people's country.

ToMarnakat told his people: "Some *kalavuar* [white strangers] will come in sailing canoes. Some *puapua* [white beings] will come and evict us. They will plant their stones amongst us. We will intermarry with them." [4] He said: "I have travelled underground, I have travelled underwater, and through the air. I have travelled to the end of the world to those people who eat the inside of a sprouting coconut." [2]

One day ToMarnakat asked his kinsfolk to come to his house. "You shall come to my house to see ToMarnakat. You shall bring food. All of you shall come, husbands and wives, parents and children. You shall come early so that we can eat together." [1] He did not disclose the intention behind his announcement. When they came on the appointed day, he said: "ToMarnakat is getting ready. ToMarnakat is about to go." [1] After the people had eaten the food they had brought, he told them: "It is time for ToMarnakat to leave you. You will see that all he was telling you about will come true." [1] "When you see ships with wings like butterflies appearing on the horizon, you will know: Soon ToMarnakat will come back." [2] Having said that, he mounted his pig. A storm set in, the sky clouded, it started to rain heavily and became dark. A cloud covered ToMarnakat. When it had dispersed, he had disappeared. He did not return. His people cried; they did not know where he had gone.

The story proper ends here.

Some years later, the white people came. ToMarnakat's prophecies came true. Amongst those who settled on Tolai land was Queen Emma who had a sister whom the Tolai used to call "Miti". The Europeans called her Phoebe Parkinson. She lived at Kuradui Plantation. She brought with her a monkey from Samoa and kept it as a pet. The people heard about the monkey, and especially those who belonged to the *vunatarai* of ToMarnakat's wife thought that ToMarnakat had come back. They flocked to Kuradui to see the monkey. Among those visitors from Tetegete were Margaret IaViliren and her young son ToWaisak. They asked the monkey: "Are you ToMarnakat, are you our father?" The monkey nodded. The visitors wept. The monkey, too, wiped tears from its face. The Tetegete people became very upset. They assumed that ToMarnakat had returned and were outraged that he was kept in a cage. In the end Miti became so frightened that she got rid of the monkey.

This is not just a tale. It is a true story. It is true, because ToMarnakat's prophecies came true. Those who still have doubts may go to Vunalama to find one of the stones worked by ToMarnakat. They may go to Tabiroaik to see the last *ngenge* planted by him. One day, William ToKavivi, ToNiut and ToElies took me there. They showed me the stone and the coconut palm which towers above all the trees around it. It is still bearing fruit typical of the *ngenge*. The Tolai call very tall coconut trees *ilaila*. I will always think of this particular palm when the word is mentioned in conversation.

ToMarnakat's origins are obscure. There is, however, one account which is said to explain where he really came from. It is not well known - in fact, I heard it only from ToMoseley who was entrusted with this story by the late ToWaisak. In New Ireland, probably in the Namatanai area, a *vavina tabaran*, a female evil spirit, played havoc among the people. Her name was Tutubelbel. She killed people and ate them. When she caught sight of human beings, she exclaimed: "*Agu mana krip* [Meat for me]!" She fought using her breasts as lethal weapons. After she had killed many people, the remaining inhabitants, but for a woman and her five sons, fled the area. The five brothers prepared to fight Tutubelbel. Each made two spears. When they encountered the *vavina tabaran*, the eldest brother threw his weapons. He missed. The second hurled his spears. He did not hit her either. The third one tried his luck. He, too, missed. The same with the fourth brother. The fifth, the youngest, wounded her with his first spear. He shouted to her: "*Ka ka ka, agu krip* [You are meat for me]!" Then he thrust his second spear and killed her. They cut up her body. They took out her liver and threw it into the sea. The liver was washed ashore in New Britain and changed into a man, it changed into ToMarnakat.

III.

The story as told above, excluding the bit about Tutubelbel, was in 1987 known by not more than twenty men and women, probably less. They would be either from a village in the vicinity of Bitarebarebe and/or have ties to Gagaliip or Tetegete *vunatarai*. The accounts I heard differed, but the main thread was the same. It is not known where ToMarnakat came from. He had the eyes of a monkey. He became a member of Gagaliip. He was married, with one daughter, though he never slept with his wife. He issued strong warnings about the impending arrival of the whites after having visited their country. He left as mysteriously as he had arrived. End of the story. Epilogue: A monkey was brought to New Britain by Phoebe Parkinson and people thought it was ToMarnakat. None of the narrators claimed that the monkey had been him.

There was only one major difference in the various accounts. Some said that ToMarnakat was an *ingiet* man. ToPainai explained that Marnakat used not only laOi for his excursions, but changed into a shark and into a *minigulai* as well, to travel to the whites' country. The name Marnakat (*a mar na kat* means "one hundred livers") is evidence for this claim. laOi is said to have been an *ingiet* pig (*boroi na ingiet*), because of a peculiar white stripe on its snout. The *papapa*, also referred to as *vat na ingiet*, is used to carve stone images for the *ingiet*. The power of the *ingiet* is said to be located in the liver (somebody killing an *ingiet* man who has changed into a *minigulai* would have to cut the bird's liver into small pieces and burn them in order to kill the man himself), thus the story of ToMarnakat's birth points to the *ingiet*, too.¹⁴

¹⁴ Apart from that, the variations concerned only minor details:

- ToMarnakat was from Simanai near Siar, and he went ashore in Davaon. (ToLar)
- He had locks like white people (*uluna pilpilue*) instead of typical Tolai curls. (ToEnana, ToWilliam, ToKepas)
- He brought a clay pipe (Titi, ToPainai) and tobacco (ToPainai) along from his travels. He explained that one day people who smoked these things would come to the Tolai's country.
- He used to hollow out betelnuts to demonstrate what pipes looked like. (ToEnana)
- The area round his house at Vunalama looked as if he were sweeping it constantly. There were no withered leaves on the ground. But he never actually swept his area. He must have prevented the trees and shrubs near his house from losing their leaves. After he disappeared for good, the trees in Vupalama lost their leaves just like any other tree. (ToLar, ToWilliam)
- ToBing, ToVavakai and ToGill, three brothers of Gagaliip *vunatarai*, bought laTetek for ToBalu of Papakan *vunatarai*. laVillren was married to a man of Tion's *vunatarai*. (ToPainai)

Whether Marnakat used the *ingiet* or not, the important point is that in order to experience the threat of colonialism, he had to leave the everyday world, he had to step across the fence, dissolve the boundary between the Tolai world and the wilderness. In the wilderness he saw those believing in their historic mission as harbingers of civilisation.

ToMoseley of Takubar

Moseley was about sixty-five years old when I met him in 1987. I was introduced to him by Gerson ToVue and Aiun Kaminiel from lalakua. They had erected shelters near his house in 1984/85 when Mount Tavurvur was suspiciously active and most inhabitants of lalakua had arranged for a refuge in case of an eruption. We had been talking about a number of subjects ranging from the elections to an account of the migration of Moseley's *vanatarai*, when I asked him whether he knew about ToMarnakat. Moseley was not prepared to say anything in the presence of my companions and told me to come back on my own some other night. It was he who told me about ToMarnakat's origins. Moseley had stayed with ToWaisak, his *patuana* (elder), in Vunabalbal many times. He was one of those looking after ToWaisak when the latter's health became frail. Moseley told me the story which he had heard from his *patuana*, because he wanted me to record all stories central for the understand-

ding of the recent past of the Tolai living in the Vunamami area. On later occasions, he introduced me to other men whom he regarded as knowledgeable about the Tolai past. Moseley asked me not to retell the story about Tutubelbel, though he did not object to me writing it down for others to read. I decided to give ToMoseley a nominal amount of shell money in order to have a formal claim on the story. It was the only occasion that I ever "paid" for a story during my research in Papua New Guinea. ToMoseley's wife, laLutei, and their children listened when he gave his account of ToMarnakat's origins and life. They had heard him tell the story before.

Others, like ToJimmy - Waisak was his wife's *patuana* - and ToLar had also procured their knowledge about ToMarnakat from ToWaisak.¹⁵ William ToKavivi said that the story

- ToMarnakat pulled out laOl's bristles. He led it on a leash and said: "The *tilik* have this kind of pig to look after the house." (ToDukduk)

- Mrs. Parkinson got rid of the monkey after being advised by Pero ToKinkin, the most outstanding big man at her time in the Raluana area. (ToLar)

¹⁵ Peter Sack quotes ToWaisak about Marnakat (SACK 1976a, pp. 222f). This account differs in important details from the ones I have collected and, given that Waisak was the source of some of my most knowledgeable informants, it is surprisingly brief.

had been well known in Vunamami before the war and that both his father Levi ToLingling and his mother laMelat laVavina had told him about ToMarnakat. He claimed that his father, who was probably born around 1860, was a small child when ToMarnakat disappeared. ToPainai's source was ToKubau, a big man of Gagali. It may be assumed that most of those who knew the story in the form presented above, procured their knowledge directly or indirectly from versions handed down within Tetegete or Gagali *vunatarai*.

The field worker's participant observation may well have had some impact on the dissemination of this story. I produced it whenever it was my turn to entertain a Tolai audience.

Some people told me the story without being asked, because they assumed that being a *pua* (white), I would be particularly interested in it. laPururu of Tingenavudu suspected that I might in the end be a relative of ToMarnakat. These expectations could have had something to do with my predecessors. One of them was Richard Salisbury who left Moseley and others mystified when he said on the occasion of his farewell: *"lau vana. lau Marnakat (I am going. I am Marnakat)."*¹⁶

Nearly all who told me variations of the version retold by me were over the age of sixty, most of them were male and most of them had reputations for knowing a lot about the past. A few others, among them younger people, knew abbreviated accounts of ToMarnakat's life which referred only to his prophecies, omitting the one about intermarriage and occasionally others too, sometimes adding new ones. "ToMarnakat told the people that one day white-skinned people would come and bring cars, ships and aeroplanes" said ToSael. Sketchy accounts of Marnakat's life sometimes included elements from other stories. ToElies for example claimed that Marnakat taught the men how to sleep with women.

Most of the narrators established a link between Abaram ToBobo and Marnakat.¹⁷ The similarity in their physiognomy was stressed. laNamur, the last wife of the late Misiel Tiriman, a minister of the United Church,¹⁸ said her husband portrayed ToMarnakat as the one who prepared the Tolai for worldly changes, whereas ToBobo prepared them for spiritual changes. ToMarnakat taught them to plant coconuts and cocoa, whereas ToBobo taught them to believe in God and to abjure magical practices. The origins of both of them are obscure and neither was a native Tolai, according to Tiriman.

None of the Tolai histories is codified in the sense that different people would tell it with the same wording. However, ToMarnakat's prophecies are meant to be literal quotations. Though every story teller had their own selection of prophecies and used their own wording (which hardly changed when they retold the story on another day), they were not just retold in the narrators' own words. They contain words no longer used

¹⁶ Moseley ToViringe of Takubar in August 1987.

¹⁷ See chapter 7.

¹⁸ On 19 January 1968 the Methodist Church in Melanesia, the United Church of Port Moresby, and Papua Ekalesia (formerly London Missionary Society) amalgamated to form the United Church in Papua, New Guinea, and the Solomon Islands.

today or introduce metaphors for things unknown to the Tolai at Marnakat's time.¹⁹ *Tilik*, *kalavuar*, (*pua*)*pua* or (*kaba*)*kabang* were names given to the Europeans in the Vunamami and Raluana areas. *Pua* is the only one still in use, besides the more common *waitiman*, which is derived from the English 'white man'.

Vunalama, Tabiroaik and Tingenarumi are all within a few kilometers of each other; the latter two in Tingenavudu, the former in Bitarebarebe. Vunalama was in 1987/88 planted with cocoa and coconuts by Niut ToVilamur of Gagalip *vunatarai* and not much could be seen but for one *papapa*-stone. The fact that only one *papapa* was left was attributed to *ingiet* men who took them away. The *papapa* are said not to be found indigenously in that area. At Vunalama there is something which could have been a road once, and the roots and trunk of a *ngenge*. Tabiroaik, looked after in 1987/88 by Tilo of Gagalip, was more impressive because there is the last *ngenge* planted by ToMarnakat and something which could once have been a ditch. It is about twenty metres long. ToWilliam arranged for me to see ToMarnakat's traces at Vunalama and Tabiroaik. We were accompanied by the locals Elles ToLum of Gagalip and Niut ToKamit of William's own *vunatarai* Vunakua, who was fathered by Gagalip. Though only a few kilometers away from William's village Vunamami, it was not appropriate for us to search for Marnakat's traces on our own. ToWilliam and others were concerned that I realise the truth of the story - showing me Vunalama and Tabiroaik was one way to accomplish this. Another way was to prove the link between ToMarnakat (distant past) and ToWaisak (present) whom I could have met myself - except that he was already too sick when I arrived on the scene. All of my informants regretted that they did not know the name of ToMarnakat's wife - that would have sealed the link between Marnakat and Waisak, between past and present. Only two knew the name of laViliren's mother. Names are often considered an indispensable part of a story. ToWilliam was at great pains to find out the names of Marnakat's wife and daughter for me, whereas he did not worry about not knowing anything of Marnakat's origins.

IV.

Historians assessing oral traditions about ToMarnakat's life as a source for their reconstructions of the Tolai past would want to find out whether ToMarnakat actually-factually existed. They could dig for pieces of broken glass at Vunalama or determine the age of the *ngenge* at Tabiroaik. They would try to make ToMarnakat's prophecies evidence for the claim that ships passing through St. George's Channel traded broken glass or clay pipes with the people living on the Gazelle Peninsula. Enlightened fact-finders would shrug off the suggestion that Marnakat, shrouded in storm, really rode a pig to the country of the white people.

¹⁹ Sailing ships are referred to as *vabebe* (ToLar; ToWilliam). European ships are also called *ogo na kar* or *ogo na kanal* (ToMoseley), they are distinguished from the Tolai canoe by its anchor (*balabala na kubau*) (ToJohannes). Bread is called *mal na varai* (ToWilliam, ToLar, ToJimmy). The European ships are said to appear on the horizon (*vanvanu*) (ToLar), and ToMarnakat travelled to the end of the world (*bitabitakubu*) (ToLar) where the sky meets the earth which is thought to be flat. A pipe is a *pal a bokbok* (ToPainai), and a year is a *e na pitpit* (ToWilliam), the cycle of the wild sugarcane.

Whereas the story would be intriguing though unproductive for the fact-finders, it would be more promising for the symbolists. They could fill pages with interpretations of remarks such as that the pig was female, that it had a long snout, that it was half black, half white, that it was the only being sleeping with ToMarnakat in his house, etc..

I will neither examine the story with regard to its factual truth, nor will I treat the texts simply as subjects for a hermeneutical exercise.²⁰ When I write this history I presume that the Tolai texts which I use as building elements, contain messages beyond their literal meaning. I am confident the reader will receive many of them without me having to point them out.

For my history, it is irrelevant whether the events reported in the story about ToMarnakat's life "really" happened. Even if we operated with a very narrow definition of reality, and dismissed the story's factuality, the story's message would still be true. Not the least because it is true, indeed factually correct to say that white people planted their boundary markers on the Tolai's land and drove out the legitimate owners. "What do you want to know", the Balinese teacher asks his student, who questions him about the story of Prince Rama. "Do you want to know whether the story is true, or only whether it took place?"²¹

The story about ToMarnakat was never part of the Tolai interpretation of the past. Fifty years ago it would have been a story which was widely disseminated in what is today the Vunamami-Kokopo constituency, although maybe with a slightly different content. The formation of a Tolai identity is still in its early stages and there are very few stories which are known generally and told with equal frequency in Bitapaka, Raluana and Kabakada.²² The concept of the Tolai as a homogeneous group is one which is frequently applied by non-Tolai, or by Tolai migrants in Panguna, Lae or Port Moresby, but rarely by Tolai living in villages on the Gazelle Peninsula. Stories like the one about ToMarnakat do not easily become part of the Tolai interpretation of their past, because their form and content are not even in parts of the Tolai country public knowledge, since they are not regularly told publicly.²³

ToMarnakat was a stranger and "one of us" at the same time. He came from New Ireland, from the area said to have been inhabited originally by the ancestors of today's Tolai. He followed the route taken by the forebears of many clans represented

²⁰ I am also sceptical about its values. The Tolai histories I listened to were not formal narratives, and they could not be easily reduced to texts that can be taken away to the philologist's study. In Tolai histories, words are said in a very specific context. They might not be chosen for a different audience, at a different place, at a different time. I sometimes felt that the story-teller chose a peculiar word because he or she assumed that I would not know the meaning of the term that should have been used. Dennis Tedlock has made this point convincingly, when talking about Zuni narratives (TEDLOCK 1983, chapter 13; cf. TEDLOCK 1977, pp. 509f.).

²¹ BICHSEL 1982, p. 14.

²² I doubt that there was ever anything that could be termed the Tolai lore. In the beginning of this century Meier found that only very few of the myths he collected were known all over the northeastern Gazelle (MEIER 1909, p.5).

²³ That is very different from what has been observed in other Papua New Guinean societies. Burrige, who in the 1950s did fieldwork among the Tangu of Madang Province, reports: "At each telling a narrative is criticised and welded into a community asset with community support by promptings from the audience, reminders and arguments as to the correct ordering of events and their content" (1969, p. 198).

in and around Bitarebarebe and went ashore in Kabagap.²⁴ He had the eyes of a monkey,²⁵ nevertheless he became a big man and the relation between him and Gagali is stressed: they were *his* people, *his* *yunatarai*. ToMarnakat was the harbinger of a new age, but being from New Ireland he was a messenger from times gone by. Some narrators interpret the shape of his eyes in the framework of a Darwinistic theory of evolution - ToMarnakat and ToBobo as representatives of *homo sapiens'* precursors.²⁶

As a member of the Royal Papua and New Guinea constabulary's brass band, ToJimmy travelled in about 1952 to Australia. He visited the zoo in Sydney and saw a monkey for the first time in his life. He bought a picture of a monkey and showed it to his wife's *patuana*, ToWaisak, at Vunabalbal. ToWaisak was deeply moved. (ToJimmy is the drummer on the left.)

ToJimmy In 1987

²⁴ ToLar said he went ashore in Davaon. This would have been more typical for people living e.g. in Nangananga or Tingenalom.

²⁵ I could not find out how these eyes would have been described if the story had been told before Tolal knew what a monkey looked like.

²⁶ So did ToJimmy of Ialakua.

The crucial parts of the story are ToMarnakat's prophecies. The narrators with the most detailed and coherent stories were big men who on other occasions, too, pondered about origins, continuance and consequences of colonial dependency. In telling this story they grasped the past and kept it alive in the present. The catastrophic experience of the establishment of colonial rule, the most important part of which is the expropriation of 40 % of the Tolai's customary land, **and its lasting effects** are at the heart of the story about ToMarnakat. Only a seer could prepare the Tolai and absorb the shock, because no other signs hinted at the impending far-reaching changes. But seers do not construct causal connections, nor do they renounce responsibilities.

In 1987 it looked as if the histories that were similar to my version, were about to die out. If they were as widely known and as often told as ToWilliam and others maintained, then they would have given at that time expression to an independent and self-conscious interpretation of the past in the Vunamami area. Their reshaping *à la* Sael changes their message. **What** ToMarnakat said becomes less important than his remarkable ability to foretell the future. The story loses some of its relevance and is only told as a fragment. A history becomes a folk-tale.

In the version presented above, the history of ToMarnakat is anachronistic in the sense that it does not form an important part of today's image of the past and is only told by a few elderly women and men. But anachronism can mean that the content of the story disturbs historical amnesia. When today the voyages of discovery are taught in schools as events to be remembered, they are not linked with changes on the Gazelle Peninsula. They may be interpreted as part of the European expansion's dynamic, but most likely they are offered as isolated, factually correct information without consequence or relevance.²⁷ The life history of ToMarnakat resurrects the past into the present.

V.

What about other accounts of Tolai speakers establishing contacts with white people overseas or heralding their arrival? A story known by about as many people as the one about ToMarnakat concerns ToLabit, an expert in the *ingiet* from the Bitabaur/Ranguna area:

ToLabit travelled to Australia as a *minigulai* with the help of the *ingiet*. Upon arrival in Australia he wanted to get himself something to eat. He entered a kitchen. He cut himself a slice of bread. He ate it. He pinched the small knife he had used (of the type to butter bread, not a bread knife) and brought it home. He told the people: "There is another country where fair-skinned people live. Their houses are white. They wrap themselves in cloth. They live on the inside of a sprouting coconut. I have eaten it, too."

²⁷ I am grateful to those Tolai teachers who told me about the role of history as a subject in community and high school education, in particular Peri ToPapakat of Navuneram, Nasain Willie of Vunamami and Henry Toitinge of Vunatagia. I am also indebted to the Department of Education and the principals concerned for the opportunity to sit in on classes at Rabaul High School and Boisen High School in April and May 1986.

This is what Tiligur, the son of ToLabit's classificatory brother ToNgeve, told me.²⁸ ToMangana, whose father was one of the most renowned *ingiet* men remembered, amplified his father's brother's account: ToLabit exhibited the knife for one fathom of *tabu*, because it was such a novelty.²⁹ To exhibit something for payment of *tabu* is not unusual, even today. ToMangana's supplement was confirmed by Lasiel ToRavien of Bitabaur, who is of ToLabit's *vnatarai* Ralalar.³⁰ ToLabit was well remembered for his sorcery and expertise in the *ingiet*. Several people claim to have seen the coconut palm at Bitavudu in Bitabaur, on which ToLabit used to keep track of the number of his victims. Allegedly it had more than eighty notches engraved in the trunk.

Almost forgotten by 1987 was a story about IaLaur's son Taniel ToUratidir who lived and died at Bitakabamalum (Ialakua). He was said to have correctly forecast an earthquake for the moment of his death, which only shows how fervent was his belief in Kalou. He had the nickname Titit, which is derived from the English "scissors", because he was one of the first Raluana men to have his hair cut and be baptised at a large gathering in Vunamami.³¹ Anyway, Taniel became acquainted with the Methodist *lotu* only at a late stage of his life and what I am going to tell here was said to have happened before the arrival of the missionaries, or of any white person for that matter. The late Serrie Talava was a little boy then and it was he who told Gerson ToVue about the incident, and he in turn told me:

Taniel and Serrie stayed at IaUlu's *taraiu* Raula. It was night time. Taniel saw something in the sky. It was like a shade of light moving slowly from Kininigunan to Davaon. The shade took the form of a cross. Taniel remarked to Serrie: "Tomorrow that will be the talk of the day. The *tena buai* [people who by chewing special kinds of betel nut can communicate with spirits] will try to interpret the appearance. But they won't be able to do so, because this light can't be explained in terms known to us." Taniel ToUratidir was right. Shortly after that incident, the Methodist missionary George Brown and his party landed at Molot, Duke of York Island.³²

The fourth reference to the impending arrival of white people is better known than the ones cited above. ToKabakavir, a contemporary of Taniel, was from Raluana, but often stayed with relatives in Matupit. He was famous for composing songs for the *tubuan*.

²⁸ Paulo Tilligur of Nanuk on 24 November 1987 in Nanuk, gist of his statement according to my notes.

²⁹ Francis ToMangana of Ranguna in October 1987.

³⁰ ToRavien, however, had a different story to tell about the visit of his *patuana* to the country of the white people.

³¹ For a contemporary portrayal of ToUratidir see missionary Rickard's account in *AMMR*, May 1891, pp. 4f.

³² Gerson ToVue of Ialakua, gist of various statements in 1987 and 1988 according to my notes. The retired pastor ToPulpui of Nangananga-Vunaulul heard a similar story from Rupen ToKaruvuvu, one of the first Tolai pastors from Raluana. He claimed that it happened in broad daylight, and it was evident that the appearance was the Holy Spirit. He found the story remarkable enough to write it all down, but later lost the exercise book. Darius ToNamallu of Raluana, who was once trained to become a pastor, also remembered having been told about Taniel and the appearance.

Glossary IV: *Tubuan*³³

The *tubuan* is a being represented by a conical mask and a dress of leaves. Each *tubuan* has its own individual design. The term *tubuan* also refers to the male secret society which guards the secret of the *tubuan*. Each *tubuan* has a name, in most cases a female name. A *tubuan* is controlled and sponsored by its owner; normally, it has one owner, though there might be a group of big men who contribute to the *tubuan*'s funds and thereby gain a say in its affairs. Each *tubuan* is associated with a particular *vunatarai* and thus part of its identity. In rare cases, when the *tubuan* is passed on from father to son, the affiliation with the original *vunatarai* can become loose. Formerly, each *vunatarai* had only one *tubuan*. With the birth of many new *tubuan* in recent years, this no longer holds true, though most *vunatarai* would still have one "old" *tubuan* which is more important for its identity than others. The *tubuan* is "raised" in connection with a number of ceremonies, namely *vunavuna*, *balaguan* and *matamatam*. It is raised at its *taraiu*, an enclosure in the bush or on the beach, which is off-limits for non-initiates. The *tubuan* is also raised when a *tubuan*'s owner (*bita tubuan*) has died.³⁴ It is rarely raised for more than two weeks at a time. The *tubuan* has its own *tabu*, part of which is distributed when the *tubuan* is raised at somebody's death. The *tubuan* is presented with shell-money by those present at ceremonies in which it participates. The *tubuan* can avenge violations of customary law, by extorting fines payable in *tabu* and by more drastic means. Most *tubuan* have their own magical power (*babat*). Some *tubuan*'s *babat* were so deadly that today nobody wants to raise them again. At a *matamatam*, the *tubuan* dance in public, while initiated men sing *tapialai*, songs composed for the *tubuan* and beat drums or pieces of bamboo.

There are different types of *tubuan*. All *tubuan* in Raluana belong to the *nialir* type; east of Kokopo most *tubuan* are of the *matatar* or *kapikapi* type. Closely connected with the *tubuan* is its child, the *dukduk*, which is represented by a different mask and is raised only at a *matamatam*.

Today a whole category of *tapialai* composed by Kabakavir and distinctive because of their style, is named after him. Some say he composed *tapialai* when he was still a *mana*, not yet initiated. Some of his songs, composed before the arrival of the whites, contain references which suggest that ToKabakavir knew beforehand of things connected with the arrival of the whites. The best known of these *tapialai* contains the lines: "ma go ra bon i tar pokai / ma go kana tur a dawai",³⁵ meaning, the dove has landed on the treetop. It is said to be a reference to Genesis 8:6-12, and is remarkable, since how could ToKabakavir have known of the Flood before the Methodists told him about it? The latest edition of the Bible in the Tolai language uses the word

³³ The following account describes the *tubuan*'s features in Raluana*. The role and characteristics of the *tubuan* vary regionally. If this glossary appears to give an insufficient explanation, it is because most of the knowledge concerning the *tubuan* must not be revealed to non-initiates.

³⁴ It is now raised for other people, too; see chapters 10 and 12.

³⁵ In a *tapialai* words are often pronounced in a peculiar way. In standard Kuanua it would read: *ma go ra buna i tar pukai / ma go kana tur a dawai*.

uka for the dove mentioned in the Genesis, which is not a synonym of *bon* (*buna*), but refers to a different bird.³⁶ Nobody saw this as detrimental to the argument.

Erue! ToPal had told me about ToKabakavir and the *kabakavir*. He was about ninety and felt too old to sing the *kabakavir* about the *buna* for me to record it. He asked his son, Ephraim ToKulaut, to help me. I recorded the singing of ToKulaut and two of his friends, but was only allowed to do so after the three men had auditioned with ToPal. ToKulaut later said: "He thinks we might have forgotten parts of it, but the *tapialai* are all in our exercise books."

VI.

To show that it is not unusual for Papua New Guineans to have histories in which they foresee the arrival of the whites, and to emphasise distinctive features of Tolai prophecies, I invite you for a short excursion to Tami in Morobe Province. Tami consists of the inhabited islands of Kalal and Wanam and two smaller uninhabited islands, Idjan, and Nusinut. The islands are about thirteen kilometres off the Yabim Coast, about twenty kilometres SSE of Finschhafen-Gagidu. The Tami people speak their own language, as distinct from the Bukaua and Yabim of their neighbours. In the 1930s the colonial administration initiated the establishment of a colony, Malasiga, on the mainland opposite Tami because the islands were said to be overcrowded. Tami was missionised by Lutherans from the Neuendettelsau Mission who were in the area from 1886 and set up a station on Wanam in 1889. Tami people recall that they had contact with Europeans prior to the establishment of Finschhafen in 1885. The men in Malasiga whom I found most knowledgeable about the Tami past, gave me conflicting accounts of those early European visits. I shall first retell what I learned from Sem Reuben:

Three European ships had arrived before the Lutheran missionaries: one ship anchored off Kalal. It had black people on board who taught the inhabitants of Kalal a dance which was named *nakilwanged* in the Tami language. The dance became very popular and was exported to the Yabim

³⁶ THE BIBLE SOCIETY OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA 1983.

area where it is known as *takalong*. No people of Kalal went on it when the ship left after a brief stay. Two smaller ships anchored off Wanam. One of them was first sighted by a Wanam man by the name of Alanmalu Langwa³⁷ who was looking for driftwood. It anchored first off Mboita and then off Anagalon on Idjan. The captain who went ashore at Wanam from this ship was a tall, bearded white man by the name of Paulus, the first apostle of the Gospel, though this was only found out later. At that time it was assumed that the whites on the ship were returned ancestors. The Tami people acquired some European goods, in particular rice, by bargaining. The third ship anchored off Kamanbi (both Mboita and Kamanbi are names of strips of beach on Wanam).³⁸

Jakobus Tom whose main informant was his mother, the late Lea Kobec of the Painau clan on Wanam, did not know anything about the Kalal ship, which was not surprising, as the Wanam are not necessarily well informed about their neighbours' past. He did, however, know some details of two ships which anchored off Wanam and Idjan respectively:

The first one anchored off Mboita. It had many sails. It was attacked by Tami Islanders with arrows which did not cause any harm. Eventually some Tami people boarded the ship, but they did not go with the best intentions. When the captain wanted to shake hands with them, they refused. Whilst on board, a long "fighting spear" attached to the side of the ship caught their eye. They decided to get hold of it. At night they removed the ship's anchor and tried to pull the ship towards a reef. But the captain [no members of the crew were mentioned by Jakobus] detected them, chased them away, set sail and left for an anchorage further away from the islands. The next day the captain again invited some islanders aboard and tried to establish friendly relations with them. He gave them food, in particular rice, and trade tobacco.

When a second sailing vessel anchored off Idjan, there was no contact between the ship's crew and the Tami Islanders. The ship remained for only a brief period before leaving for New Britain. There the ship was anchored again and the captain engraved his name, Paulus, on the beach and on a big stone which he threw into the water near the shore. This stone was later found by divers looking for shells. Paulus visited many islands in the area to announce the arrival of the Gospel. It was only after they heard of the discovery of the stone in New Britain that the Tami Islanders realised that Paulus had paid them a visit³⁹.

An essential part of both Tami accounts is the detailed description of how the ignorant ancestors handled the rice acquired from the ship which anchored near Mboita. Both story tellers ridicule the way the people tried to cook the rice in coconut shells which burnt before any result could be achieved. Jakobus Tom also mentioned that the islanders acquired some black slabs which they took for iron plates. As soon as they tried to sharpen them by grinding them on a whetstone, they disintegrated, because they were in fact trade tobacco. Other Tami told me these stories, too.⁴⁰

³⁷ *Langwa* is only an attribute, meaning "old". According to Bamler it is also a honorific (BAMLER 1911, p. 536, fn. 1).

³⁸ G. Sem Reuben of Malasiga in March 1986.

³⁹ Jakobus Tom of Malasiga, gist of his taped statement, recorded in Malasiga on 23 March 1986 in Tok Pisin.

⁴⁰ Around 1900, Tami islanders told Bamler stories about the visits of two ships, which of course do not mention Paulus. But they told him about the grinding of trade tobacco (BAMLER 1911, p. 525).

This particular aspect of the Tami past - the contact with European ships prior to the first contact with the Mission - is covered only cursorily by the Tami historians. Knowledge about it is sketchy and the stories are not detailed. More Tami Islanders know about an event which was later said to have heralded the missionary Flierl's arrival:

"This happened at the time of our forebears. They saw a star. This big star, which had been high above the clouds, left the other stars. It really was a big star, bigger than most other stars. It came down, and remained just underneath the leaves of the trees. Its beam was like that of a big torch, its light like that of the rising sun."⁴¹ This light shone on one house belonging to the Moiyongal clan on Wanam. There was something peculiar about this house. It was a sanctuary. A taboo protected those who took refuge there from being killed by their opponents.⁴² As may have been expected, everybody hid inside their houses; only some elders dared to look at the phenomenon from their verandahs. On the suggestion of one of them they collected dogs' teeth, boars' tusks, netbags and carved bowls, valuables which were normally used in exchanges for women or pigs, and placed them on a sleeping mat in the cone of rays. They then offered those gifts to the star: "Our God, all of us together, we can't cope with you. We are offering you this little gift, so that you can take it and be pleased with us and return to your folk - shut your eye and leave us now. You see all the men and women and children: they have seen your beam and now they are frightened and cry in their houses. We put this little gift under your eye so you can take it, be happy and go back home."⁴³ The light indeed disappeared into the sky. Later, after the missionaries had taken up Sacred History with them, the Tami people realised that this could have been, some say, must have been, the same star that directed the three Magi to the stable in Bethlehem.⁴⁴

VII.

Malasiga, Kalal and Wanam together have less than 1000 inhabitants. Still, there is no single Tami oral tradition, but at least one Kalal and one Wanam version. In Tami, ties established through kinship are not the only links in the chain of transmission of oral accounts. Residence is also important. Neither Jakobus Tom nor Sem Reuben are closely related to Alanmalu Langwa or the Moiyongal clan. In the case of the Tolai, where clustered settlements have been established only very recently, more often than not the persons most knowledgeable about an event are related to protagonists in that event. The story about ToLabit was told to me by three men whose knowledge could be traced back genealogically.

In both cases the knowledge about the stories is kept by very few people, mostly men. None of the stories told is well known by younger people. In both cases those telling the stories complained that younger people were not interested in acquiring their

⁴¹ Jakobus Tom of Malasiga on 23 March 1986 in Malasiga. Taped statement. Non-abridged extract. Translated from the Tok Pisin.

⁴² According to another informant, Lukas Yucago Akade of Wanam, the sanctuary was a house between the ground of Moiyongal clan and that of the Alanmalu clan. Lukas claimed it was called either *panuc wamac* or *panuc wamakac* (*panuc* means "house").

⁴³ Jakobus Tom of Malasiga on 23 March 1986 in Malasiga. Taped statement. Non-abridged extract. Translated from the Tok Pisin.

⁴⁴ The part of the story not in quotation marks is a gist of what I learnt from Jakobus Tom, Lukas Akade, and others.

knowledge. In neither case did the knowledgeable elders make an attempt to disseminate their knowledge (but for passing it on to me?). Young Tolai are accused of mocking their elders by saying about their stories and speeches: '*A manga na gris kai ra umana bikpela* (the big men's bullshit).' That is a sentence in Tolai mixed with Tok Pisin words; this kind of language is often used by young Tolai, and often they are rebuked for using it. I never heard a young man or woman actually making this particular remark, but several times I heard older men or women quoting it.

ToMarnakat is not Paulus. That is not because the past on the Gazelle Peninsula witnessed a different prophet from the one who came to Tami. It is because of a very different historical development, since the time the stories were said to have happened in Tami and on the Gazelle. It is because of a different level of autonomy gained on the Gazelle and on Tami, or of a varying degree of colonial penetration in the two places. It is because of different starting points for Tami and Tolai speaking people at the time the Europeans arrived.

The Tami story about Paulus and the star of Bethlehem leads irrevocably to missionisation. Lutheran missionaries and their local adherents reshaped the basics of Tami society. A rich fund of beliefs was abandoned and a new belief-system adopted. Traders eventually became fisherfolk and peasants.

The Tolai society changed irrevocably and radically, too, but the Tolai were more actively involved in the direction these changes took than the Tami. Having the luck, for example, to be missionised by two different Missions - the Catholics and the Methodists, who were not on good terms with each other - they could change denomination if the pressure became unbearable. The Missions knew this, and tried to proceed carefully. When they insisted on what they regarded as indispensable articles of faith, their flock might toy with the idea of adopting another faith with other articles. The Catholics lost many followers because they did not tolerate polygamy. That was compensated for by the Methodists not tolerating violations of the Sabbath.⁴⁵

The emphasis of the story about ToLabit is that the journey to Australia was the epitome of the *ingiet*. And this is only one story told about ToLabit, among others which feature the *ingiet*. The emphasis of the story about ToKabakavir is on the author of so many *kabakavir*, not on any prophecies regarding the arrival of the Mission. The nearly forgotten story about Taniel ToUratidir is part of an account of the life of this remarkable convert to Christian faith in its Methodist variant.

The Tami story about the star deals with one stage in the lead-up to the arrival of the *miti* (as the Gospel is called around Finschhafen), but it also refutes the notion that Tami might be on the periphery of Christianity. By taking themselves within reach of the central history of Christianity, the Tami stress that they are an integral part of the Christian community.

⁴⁵ Contemporary Europeans realised that the rivalry between Methodists and Catholics tended to adversely affect the establishment of colonial control; see e.g. RIBBE 1924, p. 182.

The Kotte live around Sattelberg, some twenty kilometres from Finschhafen. This is the very heart of the Lutheran country. They tell the story of Zenginec of Masangko, who was gifted with the *fangfang*, the prophetic eye. She saw an appearance which heralded the arrival of the *miti*. Thereupon she lost her gift. She composed a song about it and died soon afterwards. There was no place for pre-Christian prophets in a missionised community. The song was made into a hymn by the missionary Christian Keysser - with different wording, of course.⁴⁶ I doubt that the Tolai would produce a similar history.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Honeoc Gubung of Sattelberg, Bafuo Eso and Kukulec Nabung of Balangko, Boski Selembe and Saseoc Kelemu of Fior, and Tom Labisang of Molulo, all in November 1986. I will go into more detail about differences between Kotte and Tolai histories in chapter 5.

⁴⁷ One could also compare changes in Tolai society, particularly since the arrival of Western colonialism, with those in Chambri society, and show why the historical consciousness expressed through the intriguing story of Wobowi and the king of the Australians (GEWERTZ 1983, pp. 117ff) is very different from that articulated in the story of ToMarnakat.

4: Of People and Place

I.

Oral historians often lament that oral testimonies are difficult to interpret, because the information hidden in them has been distorted in the chain of transmission, not least through the historian who might influence the statement made to her or him by the "informant" in the "recording situation".¹ Although it is not my intention to expurgate oral histories and traditions to reveal barren pieces of information, I would like to lay my construction open to criticism by sketching aspects of the interaction between the "informants" and myself.

I looked for people who were willing to talk with me about the Tolai past and present, and I was interested in a number of topics about which I wanted to collect histories. It was relatively easy to collect narratives on a given theme, but harder to find out what the people themselves were interested in, and what stance they took towards their past. Before I came to the Gazelle, I read all books, articles and theses on the Tolai, that I could get hold of, and searched Administration and mission archives for unpublished records. Hence I already knew a fair bit about the Tolai after 1875, mainly from the point of view of missionaries, planters, administrators, travellers, and anthropologists. I drew up a list of topics I wanted to discuss with Tolai. However, three of the seven chapters from the Tolai past I am presenting in this history, the "prophets" (chapter 3), the pre-council *kivung* (chapter 9), and the *bobotoi* (chapter 11), were not on my list. Of a fourth, the story of ToBobo (chapter 7), only a sideline had previously interested me.² If I went to see someone I had not met before, about whom I knew little and who knew little about me, I could not, of course, just say: "Please tell me something about the past!" Sometimes I was told about a person who knew a particular story. So I would go there and start by asking the person about that story, even if initially I had no intention to record it. But in most cases, I needed to come with a particular interest, that is, I would suggest clearly defined topics, and I had to find out what the other person's interests were. During my fieldwork I was constantly questioning and realigning my own interests. In a few cases I got to know people well and felt that during the year we met and talked, their interests also shifted, reflecting a dynamic in our conversations.

The network of contacts I established grew out of a series of incidental circumstances. By chance I met ToBalaguan and ToMago from Raluana during my first visit to the Gazelle. They offered to help me look for accommodation should I return for a second longer stay. So I ended up in a house on the grounds of the Raluana Community School, which is part of Ialakua Village. I might not have collected material about Enos Teve and the *kivung*, had I not been introduced to ToWilliam of Vunamami through his niece laNascain who worked as a teacher at Bonat. Even when I made plans to

¹ VANSINA 1985, pp. 36ff, 56ff and 108ff; cf. VANSINA 1965, pp. 91ff. See also chapter 6.

² I collected narratives and information for more topics than the ones featured in this thesis. Nevertheless, despite my intensive pre-fieldwork reading, not more than 50 % of those had I considered before going to Rabaul.

concentrate my research on a particular aspect or on a particular area, I often had to abandon them because I did not meet the right people or because of banal material constraints like having to rely on a most unreliable car.

During the first and greater part of my stay on the Gazelle, when my ability to converse in Kuanua was as low as my self-confidence about approaching people in other villages, I regularly asked friends from Ialakua to accompany me. Often it was a matter of etiquette not to go alone to a distant village to see somebody not personally known to me. In the last chapter, I mentioned how I got to know ToMoseley. His village is about fifteen kilometres by road from where I stayed. To get to know people in Takubar, I needed leads, I had to be introduced by people I knew. Similarly I had to find links to ToDivona and ToRapael of Tamanairik, who told me about the Toma killings. A man from Ialakua, living in Rabaul and married to a woman from Toma, introduced me to the big man ToRarau in Tagitagi, who in turn took the two of us to Tamanairik. In those cases meetings were by appointment. Nearly always people wanted me to visit them, not necessarily at their houses, but at places familiar to and chosen by them. This meant that I was their guest and - according to custom - presented with betelnut and pepper upon arrival; often I was invited for a meal.

Because I stayed such a short time on the Gazelle, I got to know only one group of informants well: men who were in their sixties and older, with a reputation for being knowledgeable, who were particularly interested in their own culture, who appreciated somebody listening attentively and who wanted me to write things down. Of those mentioned so far, ToVetenge and ToMoseley were typical of this group. With some of them the common interest in the Tolai past developed into a genuine interest in each other. This was particularly the case with ToWilliam of Vunamami and ToVuia of Matupit. In my neighbourhood, I got to know a cross-section of the community. Here I learned rather casually about the Tolai past and present. However, Ialakua not being a village where people live close together, but a conglomeration of *gunan* out of sight of each other, it did not seem appropriate to drop in on people, except for a few friends, without prior notice. If I wanted to meet people casually I could hang around one of the village stores, sit along the side of the main road, watch the men playing cards on the beach, or take part in communal activities. In the village of Malasiga near Finschhafen, where I stayed for a couple of months in 1986, the houses were built close to each other on both sides of a road. Fences separating the yards often existed only in token form. A person walking from one end of Malasiga to the other was noticed by all those living along the road; a walk could be turned into a series of conversations. Because I became involved in the community and took part in communal activities and functions, it was relatively easy to get to know people in Ialakua or neighbouring villages. But here, where I was easily drawn into village politics, it was more complicated to build up relationships. By talking to certain people more than to others, I could be seen as someone who aligned himself with one faction within the village.

laPipe, "informant" in Ialaku

To gain an insight into the Tolai past and present, it was essential to understand the Tolai language. I was lucky, because Kuanua has been recorded extensively.³ A written language has been developed to the extent that there exists now a recognised High Kuanua: the Catholic Mission and the United Church have agreed on one Bible translation. Retrospectively I admit that I should have paid even more attention to mastering the language, for example in order "to see what the choices in vocabulary were for someone who wanted to express a given idea in various forms and hence to find out why one item was chosen over another."⁴ My knowledge of Kuanua was best for that used by older people, and pretty poor for the Kuanua used by young people, with whom I spoke often in Tok Pisin. It was also important to be informed about the topics I wanted to discuss. Most people would only take me seriously and pass on stories or pieces of information, after I had hinted at what I knew already, either from written sources, or from other Tolai.

Only during the last few months of my stay on the Gazelle was I free of difficulties in comprehending stories told to me. This proved important not only in understanding what I was told, but also in relating to people. The more I knew about their language and about their past, the more I was taught. The more familiar I became with the people, the culture and the language, the more we had conversations instead of interviews in which the interviewer could not relate questions or answers to the interviewee, and the "informant" could not understand the sense of the questions. Familiarity with a culture and individuals also brought restraints. The better people got to know me and the better I could speak their language, the greater the knowledge that I knew I would not be able to reveal. This could be either esoteric information that

³ Both the Methodist dictionary (METHODIST OVERSEAS MISSION 1964), which is based on earlier compilations by Rickard, Fellmann and Linggood, and the Catholic counterpart, MEYER 1921, are fairly comprehensive. English-Kuanua dictionaries compiled by Mannering, Poole, and Lanyon Orgill are not very useful. For native German speakers two old language courses are still helpful (BLEY 1912 and COSTANTINI 1907); for native English speakers, I recommend LEAN 1986 rather than the Summer Institute of Linguistics' courses (FRANKLIN et al. 1974, or one of its predecessors) or WATERHOUSE 1939. Ulrike Mosel's work on Tolai syntax is one of the most recent publications dealing with the Tolai language and gives an idea not only of the latest development in research on the language, but also on the amount and standard of research done previously.

⁴ VANSINA 1985, p. 71; cf. p. 84.

could be shared only with other initiates or other men, or it was delicate and told to me with the understanding that I would be responsible enough not to make it public.⁵

In recent years, many anthropologists working in Melanesia have found host communities initially eager to have them because they wanted them to record their culture which they saw under threat. But I did not come across any general enthusiasm to have a white researcher around. Several of the people who were recommended to me were not interested in talking to me and I never insisted beyond the first rejection. But most of those who told me their stories appreciated, or even demanded that I wrote them down, because they sensed that this was a more realistic way of preserving them than to expect younger people to learn and disseminate them. Sometimes a small audience gathered around me and the person I was talking with. If the latter was not noticeably uncomfortable about it, I encouraged them to stay and made it clear that in my opinion it made more sense to transmit knowledge which he or she wanted to be preserved or disseminated, to friends or relatives in terms and in media chosen by him or her, than to rely on a foreign researcher.

It should be apparent by now that it is not a "recording situation" in Vansina's sense which I am trying to make transparent, but some aspects of my relationships with people, which influenced the process of gaining knowledge. Depending on how well I knew the person and how well we could communicate, we entered a conversation with me primarily asking questions and she or he primarily trying to answer them, or we had a discussion in the course of which I was taught about certain features of Tolai culture. Even if I had an appointment with somebody in a place further away from Ialakua, so that it took me some effort to get there, it did not mean that we were necessarily talking about a particular aspect of the past or that I was recording a narrative. We might just chat casually and postpone the "work" to a later date. These chats, which I did not record, helped me enormously to understand condensed and intentionally given information which I did record. I had expectations about what I could learn from those sessions as much as the Tolai had ideas about how they could benefit.⁶ When talking with each other, our respective expectations had to be adjusted.

Discussions often evolved around the problem of transmitting histories. I was curious whether and in what form I could make my history of the Tolai accessible to a Tolai audience. The Tolai would ask their European informant for his opinion about the problem that oral histories were disappearing. I was never asked for a payment by people who told me stories or shared their knowledge in any other way. Sometimes people demanded that it was now my turn to tell a story. Several times I was accused by younger people of wanting to sell their elders' stories for a lot of money. I was in the fortunate position, however, that the three researchers who had worked in places where I spent a lot of time, Ulrike Mosel (in Raluana), A.L. Epstein (in Matupit) and Richard Salisbury (in Vunamami) were all held in esteem and had given "professional

⁵ In several cases I was in doubt whether a matter I got to know in passing would be too embarrassing to reveal, and I then always decided against it. I could have restricted access to my thesis in order to be able to cite more cases to illustrate features of Tolai society, but that would have contravened my intention to write a history of the Tolai, that becomes part of a dialogue between my "informants" and me.

⁶ For a fascinating account of the interplay of interests of "informers" and researcher see: BECKETT 1985.

strangers' a good reputation. Those who passed knowledge on to me expected me to treat it respectfully, to take good care of it, and to bring it back to the Gazelle. We talked a good deal about this, since this was important for them as well as for me. I soon realised that most of my ideas about how this could be achieved were naive, and that my naivety was immediately perceived. In the last chapter I try to outline how histories of the Tolai could be produced, and the readers may decide for themselves whether long discussions with Tolai let me become more realistic. Towards the end of my stay, Stanley ToMarita, one of the most distinguished Tolai educationists, told me a story which, had I known it earlier, would have cautioned me to be less naive in my proposals and more self-critical in my justifications for working on the Gazelle:

My father's father, ToKede, was a renowned warrior. He had a deep dent from a slingstone on his forehead. Some time after his death, some of those associated with Queen Emma approached his relatives and asked for permission to dig up his body and take the skull. They said: "It might be of benefit to your grandchildren." Our people agreed and organised a large ceremony after which they dug up the body. The skull was sent to Germany.⁷

Stanley ToMarita

Having discarded the term 'recording situation' as inappropriate, I proceed to one which is used frequently in the anthropological literature: the 'informant'. The word connotes a one-way flow of information from the researched to the researcher. I gained insights into Tolai culture by taking part in conversations and other activities, and only to a lesser extent, by conducting interviews. When we were talking about the *kaia* ToVup, a being who resides on the reef at Tagirgir and sometimes endangers people passing that place by canoe, I might be asked about similar beings in Europe.

⁷ Stanley ToMarita of Malabonga/Vunatagia on 30 November 1987 at Malabonga. Gist of his statement. The sentence in inverted commas is my translation of a quote. ToStanley said: "*Kan ta boina na liliun mulei ta ra umana tubuivavat.*" The person interested in the skull was most likely Richard Parkinson, the husband of Queen Emma's sister Phoebe who had lived in ToKede's neighbourhood. He would have wanted the skull because the Tolai were renowned for their skull trepanations which were regarded as masterpieces of non-western surgery (cf. PARKINSON 1907, pp. 108-112; Crump, in: AMMR of 7 Oct. 1896, pp. 4f). At that time, other ethnographers collected Tolai skulls to determine that the heads of Melanesians were smaller than those of Europeans, hence their brains less developed and their race inferior, so that colonisation and genocidal policies could be justified along the lines of darwinistic science (see for example MÜLLER 1905). The ethnographer Finsch boasted to have bought 167 skulls during his eight-months-stay on the Gazelle Peninsula in 1880/81 (FINSCH 1893, p. (32)). ToStanley told the story to caution a researcher; apparently in the late nineteenth century it was not an outrageous thing as such to dig up skulls. According to Parkinson, a big man's skull could be dug up years after his death in a ceremony staged in his honour, which involved the *tubuan* and the distribution of *tabu* and food (PARKINSON 1907, p. 81; cf. PFEIL 1899, p. 79).

I could refer to the Lorelei, a siren inhabiting a rock in the river Rhine near Sankt Goarshausen. She was said to have obstructed traffic on the Rhine and was feared by passing bargees. It seems that these days the Lorelei has been tamed, and that ToVup is appearing less frequently than he did about fifty years ago, a coincidence which could make us swap interpretations and explanations about this phenomenon.⁸ I became an informant about my culture; those Tolai who were interested in my culture, acquired most of their knowledge casually, too.

The relations between researchers and their hosts are too complex to denote the hosts by the functional term "informants".⁹ Nor should researchers try to strive for purely instrumental relationships with their hosts. In a case where the researcher does not allow for emotions to enter relationships with those who teach him or her about their culture, he or she would not learn much but the ideological constructions which fit neatly into functionalist or structuralist concepts.

If researchers tried to ensure a one-way flow and left their opposite number in the dark about the use of the data, they would indeed, to paraphrase Sartre's statement about the sociologist, resemble under-cover agents who try to worm themselves into the criminals' confidence in order to trap them.¹⁰ The police will process the knowledge gained by the under-cover agent so that it can be used by the prosecution; the fieldworker is likewise tempted to clip the knowledge gained from informants-turned-informers to exploit it in an academic discourse. If I still use the awkward term "informant" throughout the thesis, it is because there seems to be no better substitute for it in English.

II.

Some anthropologists include paragraphs in their monographs which could be from a travel brochure. They vie in the art of literary landscape painting, as if their own sensual response helped to explain the actions of those they set out to study, or as if scenery could be re-constructed on paper. "(The landscape) cannot be retraced, at best it can be created anew; but this only if one did not try to describe it", Michel Leiris commented on André Gide's African diaries.¹¹ Attempts to describe an environment "as it is" are as futile as undertakings to reproduce the past "as it was". Yet it is rewarding to know how a writer perceives the material surroundings of his/her history, or how a researcher reacted to the "field".

⁸ What I did not know when telling my Tolai friends about the Lorelei was, that the Lorelei became part of German mythology only in the 19th century; the siren was made prominent by the Romantic writer Clemens Brentano in 1802. A *kaia* is a spirit being. I explain that in more detail in a glossary in chapter 13. The story about ToVup is one of the best-known *kaia* stories on the Gazelle. ToVup has a fair chance to follow the Lorelei's example and become, as the main character in a folk tale, part of a people's cultural heritage.

⁹ Cf. LACEY 1980, p. 77. I could even bring Vansina to bear against an uncritical use of the term "informant". He points out that "a statement made in reply to a number of questions must be regarded as the work of two informants: the questioner and the person questioned." However, Vansina is driven by his concern for the purity of the testimony-source, when he acknowledges that "The testimony consists, in fact, not only of the replies, but also of the questions" (VANSINA 1965, p. 29).

¹⁰ SARTRE 1960, p. 51.

¹¹ LEIRIS 1981, p. 200. He is referring to André Gide's *Voyage au Congo* (1927) and *Le retour du Tchad* (1928), published in 1929 in English as *Travels in the Congo* (New York: Alfred Knopf).

Seeing a landscape is only one way of perceiving it. Kurt Tucholsky distinguished between *Augenmenschen* and *Ohrenmenschen*, those who perceive mainly with their eyes and those who perceive mainly with their ears.¹² Maybe I am a *Nasenmensch*, sensing a place first of all through its smell. Of course this smell is most noticeable immediately upon every new arrival or return. I remember vividly arriving at my first Tolai village, Navuneram, in May 1986, and being overwhelmed by the smell of soil. It had just rained, and the soil exuded a sweet, dark and heavy smell. It smelled of wet ashes and of soft blackness. This smell was so rich that it dominated any other smells (of burning wood, or of flowers). I could not imagine there being anything else but soil - no stones, no sand, no clay. I had my first sensual impression of the Gazelle's extraordinary fertility, which is a legacy of frequent falls of volcanic ash and a favourable climate.

The panoramic view is peculiar to a particular culture; it is an achievement of the nineteenth century.¹³ Being brought up in Western Europe, in the second half of this century, in a middle-class family and in an urban environment, I am not only disposed to appreciate spectacular scenery, but also to experience the Tolai geophysical environment from a panoramic perspective. I tend to view the landscape around the town where I was born from a similar perspective; I am too alienated from the land to see much more than physical features. The Tolai I know are much more interested in close-ups than in panoramas.

For them there is also more to their natural environment than can be seen, touched, smelled or heard. In *Oscar and Lucinda*, the Australian novelist Peter Carey gives a wonderful description of a journey made by one of his characters, Oscar Hopkins, on an Australian river.

My great-grandfather drifted up the Bellinger River like a blind man up the central aisle of Notre Dame. He saw nothing. The country was thick with sacred stories more ancient than the ones he carried in his sweat-slippery leather Bible. He did not even imagine their presence. Some of these stories were as small as the transparent arthropods that lived in the puddles beneath the river casuarinas. These stories were like fleas, thrip, so tiny that they might inhabit a place (inside the ears of the seeds of grass) he would later walk across without even seeing. In this landscape every rock had a name, and most names had spirits, ghosts, meanings.¹⁴

When I first came to the Gazelle in 1986, my ignorance of the Tolai landscape equalled Oscar's ignorance of the landscape of Aboriginal Australia. Although listening to stories was one of my pastimes, after one and a half years I could see only a little more than just physical features. Neither had the Tolai escaped what Weber called *Entzauberung*, the thinning out of layers of sacredness until it eventually vanishes.

Bordering the sea between Tagirgir (Raluana Point) and the Raluana Community Government, the territorial unit lalakua Village stretches less than two kilometres south along steep ravines towards Bitabaur. Its area is probably less than one square kilometre. The village lalakua derives its name from the place where the church stands today. "I am going to lalakua", if said in or near lalakua Village, means, "I am going to

¹² TUCHOLSKY 1975, p. 24.

¹³ Cf. the intriguing observations Schivelbusch made in chapter 4 (*Panoramic Travel*) of his book on *Trains and Travel in the 19th century* (SCHIVELBUSCH 1980, especially pp. 62-66).

¹⁴ CAREY 1988, p. 492.

the place where the lalakua United Church building stands'. Today, the area of the village is made up of more than 200 different names. About half of them start with Bita-, Vuna-, Tingena- or Kura-, which in most cases indicates that the place was named after a plant or tree.¹⁵ Bitamarita means, 'the place of the *marita* (pandanus) tree'; Kuragaga is the place of the *gaga* (pipturus) plant. lalakua village, like any other Tolai village, is coated with a layer of fine-sounding names. Following the road from the Community Government at lalakua-Bitapolapolo to the Community School at Bonat, one passes on the right hand side Bitakabamalum, Padivalongor, Balavu, Vunapin, Vunalualuai, Bitakaka and Balanagunan.

Often the plants after which the pieces of land were named, are no longer there. Sometimes the meaning has been lost. I asked many people what Vunavulila, the name of a place on the North Coast, that in turn lent its name to a United Church circuit, stands for. I still do not know. Some of the place names are archaic; others, like Nodup, are said to be Baining terms. And then, how do you remember the meaning of Vunavulila, if there are now no *vulila* at that place? Some place names are tiny fragments of stories. In lalakua there are places like Padivalongor (they do not hear), Puongo (explosion), Tenavavina (sister), Vakuku (in vain) and Kivagonmaratanan (place of pregnant women). 'lalakua' itself could be a woman's name or the name of a spirit.¹⁶ But as with all the other names mentioned above, etymologies have replaced stories. Sometimes new names are created or old names are transformed. In recent years it has been popular among young people to substitute parts of Tolai words with Tok Pisin components. Vunamurmur has become Vunalaslas; the new name now features in a popular song by the *Painim Wok Band* and is emblazoned on half a dozen buses which are run between Rabaul and Kokopo by a businessman from Vunamurmur.

Land is scarce, and in the coastal areas most of it is taken up by gardens or to grow cash crops. lalakua Village is one of the most densely populated places on the Gazelle¹⁷ and its territory is steep and rugged. When I was doing my fieldwork, the Department of Primary Industries provided a group of labourers with chain saws to cut old coconut palms and other big trees because they wanted the villagers in lalakua to use the little arable land more efficiently to grow cocoa. Fewer stories will cling to a cocoa plantation than have inhabited a place in the shade of a mighty tree. Cash-cropping thus transforms the physical and spiritual features of a landscape. In the same year, however, the local Community School was nearly closed down after the United Church congregation at lalakua unanimously decided that they would not let the school's board of management cut down a mango tree considered to be too close to one of the class rooms, because it had been planted by one of the first missionaries.

¹⁵ *Bitā* and *vuna* both mean base, root, cause or origin. *Kura*, *tingena*, and *kaba*, another prefix not used in lalakua, mean cluster. It seems that a place name starting with *Bitā*- refers to a single plant or tree, whilst all the other prefixes denote that several plants of the same species were there.

¹⁶ James Aiun Kaminiei of lalakua maintained that it is the name of a female *kala*.

¹⁷ GRANGER 1971, p. 114 (Figure 8.4).

For somebody walking from Bonat to Bitapolapolo one hundred years ago, the place was more alive than it is today. There were ghosts and spirits associated with certain places. Trees and stones would often bear individual names, as they sometimes still do. Names reminded people of stories, though they would not necessarily be explained by them. Geophysical features had meanings and had a history attached to them. In times long gone by, culture heroes like ToKabinana and ToPurgo shaped the landscape by dumping big stones or by creating valleys.¹⁸

By the end of German colonial rule, about 40 % of the Tolai land, from an economic point of view the better part, had been taken for plantations. In recent years, the Tolai have bought some of this land back, but not the same land they had lost decades earlier. They did not buy it complete with boundaries and landmarks and names and stories. Part of the area occupied by the Community School in Bonat is subject to a land dispute which has been simmering for years. Bonat's landscape was changed drastically between 1941 and 1946, when it was used as a camp, bombed, and later turned into a rubbish dump. After the war, the people of Raluana* levelled the ground, buried the army's scrap in bomb craters, and erected school buildings. Over time part of Bonat has been reclaimed by the sea. Trees and rocks have been removed, and with them mnemonic devices to establish where the boundaries were.

The *Entzauberung* of the natural environment is a process which for people in Ialakua is not complete yet. Land is still active like a living being;¹⁹ there are still places which have spiritual meaning, like the *madapai*, the *matanoi* (the place where the ancestors landed), or the *taraiu*. Meanings of place names are sometimes remembered: Maleioel is a ravine in Ialakua, which was first cleared and planted by the missionary Ioele. Palnakapa, the site of the combined cemetery for Barovon and Ialakua, was named after Pero Tokinkin's house which had a corrugated iron (*kapa*) roof and once stood at that very place. Historical places are becoming alive with stories told about them, and even more so, when they are told at them. Tabaule is now part of a cocoa plantation where most names have been lost. But as long as the story of the killing of the *misit* can still be connected to a particular spot, the place resumes a second (historical) identity.²⁰

The spiritual significance of the Tolai landscape is dwindling, but my Tolai friends could still convey it to me in part. By teaching me about the Tolai past, they made me also realise the enormous transformation of physical features through the change from gardening to cash cropping and through a dramatic increase in the population over the past one hundred years. My awareness of the landscape thus grew, and I could perceive it as a mirror which reflected the present with the past engraved and invisible on the back.

With stories dying out fast on the Gazelle, it is difficult to decipher the past on the back of the mirror. Material relics do not last long in the tropics. In *Heimatkunde*

¹⁸ KLEINTITSCHEN 1924, pp. 27ff. Cf. MALINOWSKI 1922, p. 298.

¹⁹ See chapter 8.

²⁰ Cf. LACEY 1979, pp. 282-84, where he describes a similar case in the New Guinea Highlands: a ceremonial tee ground in Enga Province was cut by a highway but remained an arena full of history.

(community life) at primary school, I was fascinated when our teacher told us about megalithic graves in the heathlands north of Hannover, because they were so old that she could say neither who made them nor when. On the Gazelle, human memory would outlive any monuments or remnants of the past, that are not tended diligently.

With Rabaul being in the immediate vicinity of an active volcano, the importance of volcanological activity in shaping the landscape²¹ is obvious. But to a great extent, the Tolai landscape has been moulded by those living in it.

The oral historian's
participant observation

²¹ As emphasized by the anthropologist A.L. Epstein (1969, p. 71).

5: The Coming of the *Lotu*

I.

The Methodists came first. Dr Brown arrived on 15 August 1875 in Molot (Port Hunter), Duke of York Island. I know this, because I have read it many times, in Brown's papers, in his autobiography, in church histories.¹ The Tolai members of the United Church know it because of the annual commemorations on 15 August. Particularly well remembered are the ones held in 1925 and 1975. It was then that many children were named IaJubilee or ToJubilee (which in the course of time often became Tiubili). Those years are helpful dates to establish chronologies or to determine people's age, as are 1937 (volcano eruption at Rakaia) and 1942 (coming of the Japanese). For older, and more devoted, members of the United Church, 1975 was the year of the centenary. Besides, it was the year Papua New Guinea was granted independence.

From Molot the *lotu* went to Matalau (Nodup).

From Matalau the *lotu* went to Matupit.

From Matupit the *lotu* went to Raluana.

From Raluana the *lotu* went to Vunamami.

From Matupit the *lotu* went to Talwat.

From Raluana the *lotu* went to Rata Vul (Tingenalom).

From Vunamami the *lotu* went to Viviren. And so forth.

The *lotu* often "went" as an item purchased from people of one place by people of another place. The usual price was five fathoms of *tabu*. The item was not actually the *lotu*. It became the *lotu*, after it had been in use for a while at the purchasers' place. The item which was purchased was a *malira*, a magical charm, or, at most, the *letu*, as Tolai initially called the novelty. The purchase was sealed by the dispatch of instructors who were to initiate the purchasing party into the *letu*. They were in the beginning Fijians, Samoans, or Tongans. Later the instructors could be Tolai.² In at least one case, the *lotu*'s expansion was neither mediated through *tabu* payments nor arranged by locals: in 1878 the *lotu* went, on the missionaries' initiative, from Kabakada to Malmaluan. In the process, four missionaries were killed and eaten.

Tolai statements about the past may take on various forms: oral or written, sung or told. They can be enacted as a drama.

Tuesday, 17 November 1987.

I attend the commemorative service to celebrate the 112th anniversary of the coming of the first pastor to Matupit. It starts later than planned, as did nearly all functions I attended in Papua New Guinea; this time, though, it is only to await the arrival of Matupit's current most prominent son, the Hon. Member for Rabaul and Minister for Minerals and Energy, John Kaputin. The service is held at Vunabalbal, at the beach in Kikila, near the late Daniel Kaputin's house. A crowd of

¹ Letter to Chapman, n.d. (letterbook pp. 594ff, probably 4 September 1875) (ML: MCh/OM A 1686-2); BROWN 1908, p. 88; WILLIAMS 1972, p. 107; THRELFALL 1975, p. 31.

² I established this pattern from oral evidence collected in United Church dominated villages all over the Gazelle.

several hundred people assemble. For the hordes of children around, there is a special school holiday.

It is overcast. I point out the approaching rain clouds to the man standing next to me. For a few weeks now, water has had to be brought to Matupit in drums or by tankers; all the rain water tanks are dry. But does it have to rain today of all days? "Don't you worry. It won't rain until later in the day", my neighbour assures me. "The organisers will have taken care of it." I am startled for he is alluding to experts in magic who get paid to prevent rainfall. But he does not seem to find this remarkable and shrugs his shoulders.

A few hundred metres from the shore, a small ship, requisite for the enactment, sways lightly in the swell. The minister's arrival is signalled, and it comes slowly towards the shore. Meanwhile on the beach several men made up as savages (and dressed likewise, so nobody be offended) run around, brandishing spears and axes. They are confused, but hostile and threatening. Repeatedly they blow lime in the direction of the ship. It is clear to the spectators that this is supposed to protect the Matupit men from any evil that might originate from the ship. A canoe is dispatched from the shore to meet the ship. Several men in white, who play Dr. Brown and his Fijian companions, are paddled ashore. The ones playing the savages paw them. The contrast is striking between the Matupit men, who are frightened, excited, but eventually eager to demonstrate their good intentions, and the missionaries, who are calm, intrepid and unaffected to the extent that they appear detached from what is happening around them. The enactment is to depict the coming of Peni Taumia, the first Methodist missionary to be posted to Matupit.³ On my way back to lalakua I notice that it has rained heavily everywhere but on Matupit.

This genre of history is called *varvalaruai* in Kuanua, which is best translated as "enactment". A *varvalaruai* is performed as a means of entertainment, but always with

³ He is called Peni Taumia on Matupit; Threlfall gives his name as Peni (Penijimani) Caumea (THRELFALL 1975, pp. 36 + 249).

the aim to instruct - it is to teach the spectators about a past event and/or to advise them of a proper way of behaviour. There is no script, but each actor's role is clearly defined. Improvisation is within narrow limits.⁴ Unlike other forms of presentation, a *varvalaruai* induces discussion of a particular construction of the past among the keepers of knowledge. Events which are enacted can thereby be constructed into codified histories. By enacting the same event several times to a large audience, the enactment becomes the authoritative history. On the other hand, histories which are already in the process of becoming standardised, are more likely to be selected for dramatisation, because the director(s) of the *varvalaruai* can be sure that their version will be acknowledged as the true representation of past events. Episodes concerning the mission are more often dramatised than others, because church workers promote the wide dissemination of Church History. The coming of the *lotu*, the killing of four Fijian missionaries in 1878 at Tungnaparau, and the amalgamation of the Methodist Church with the Papua Ekalesia in 1968 are frequently enacted by members of the United Church. I was told that enactments of sequences of Church History are common for other denominations on the Gazelle. But because I stayed among followers of the United Church this chapter deals prominently with that 40 % of the Tolai community who are members of United Church congregations.

During the commemorative service at Matupit, the story of the arrival of Peni Taumia was presented in other forms, too. The resident minister, ToVura, gave an account of the events which led to the posting of the Fijian pastor-teacher on Matupit. Several choirs performed hymns, at least one of which referred to the arrival of the *lotu* on Matupit. Vendors sold a booklet about the history of the United Church on Matupit, written by Iosia ToKunai who for several years in the 1960s and 1970s served as a minister on Matupit. Generally, services like the one on 17 November are broadcast on the provincial radio station. And whilst waiting for the service to begin, I met ToButman, who once had given me a detailed account of the Mataungans' activities on Matupit. He did not miss the chance to tell me his version of Peni Taumia's arrival on 17 November 1875.

All those histories were remarkably similar - codification has set in. The anniversary of Peni Taumia's coming to Matupit is not commemorated annually. In fact, it had not been observed for a number of years, not out of slackness or declining interest, but fear that Tavurvur volcano would erupt had disrupted life on the island and led to the temporary emigration of many of its inhabitants. As the 1987 celebration was a profound success, it is likely that the day was observed again in 1988. Occasions like that, which involve a customary or *lotu*-related getting together of many people, are generally welcomed by Tolai living in the village, and are not seen as a bother or bore by participants. Even if the celebration were not repeated in 1988, the anniversary would probably be mentioned in a regular Sunday service around 17 November and in Sunday School. The odds are that in coming years this particular piece of knowledge will be preserved, reproduced and transmitted.

⁴ I know of only one play with the past as its topic, which was written by a Tolai and actually performed: Rabbie Namaliu's *Maski Kaunsil* about events in 1953, when Raluana* villagers refused to join the Local Government Council scheme; the play was put on stage in Port Moresby in 1972 (cf. POWELL 1975, pp. 161-182).

In the following I assemble accounts of the first coming of the Methodist Mission to Matupit in August 1875.

John Vuia:

"After they had set up a church in Molot, George Brown wanted to come to New Britain. ... First of all he came here, to Matupit. He dropped anchor outside the beach below Vunabalbal. ... The people of Matupit flocked together down at the beach. It is written that between ninety and a hundred canoes met the ship."⁵

George Brown:

there were at least from ninety to a hundred canoes alongside, with an average crew of six men in each. We had hard work to keep them from crowding on board together, and many of the members of our crew were very frightened indeed. They came aft and demanded arms from the captain, but these were not supplied, and so they mounted hand spikes instead.⁶

Iosia Tokunai:

The Matupit people were very surprised when they saw the ship and those aboard it, because the latter were peaceable and not afraid. They say that between ninety and a hundred canoes met the ship.⁷

John Vuia:

"The people had no hostile intentions. Indeed they were all peaceable. However, those on board the ship were scared. The Matupit people were not scared. They climbed aboard, and afterwards they talked with Dr. Brown. ... Some men stood on the beach and watched those who went aboard. They did not come closer and did not want to board the ship for a good reason. For not long ago they had burnt down a house belonging to two traders and chased them away."⁸

In 1873 Godeffroy's traders Wawn and Nash and four Non-European companions had established trading posts on Matupit and at Nonga. First Wawn's group was driven out of Nonga and sought refuge with their companions on Matupit, where they were attacked again. Eventually all of them fled to the Duke of York Islands, killing some Matupit men in the course of their retreat.⁹ A Matupit big man, most likely ToPoraporo, supplied the traders with paddles, thereby facilitating their escape.¹⁰ He was subsequently speared in the thigh by other islanders. Godeffroy's agent in the area, Theodor

⁵ John ToVuia of Matupit-Kikila on 20 November 1987 at Matupit. Taped statement. Slightly abridged extract. Non-literal translation from the Tolai language on the basis of a transcript prepared by Paul ToSinot and myself.

⁶ BROWN 1908, p. 92. In his letterbook and in the autobiography which is largely based on the journal and the letterbooks, Brown says that he visited Matupit on Tuesday 21st; this is apparently an error and should be Tuesday 31st.

⁷ TOKUNAI 1976, p. 4.

⁸ John ToVuia of Matupit-Kikila on 20 November 1987 at Matupit. Slightly abridged extract. Taped statement. Non-literal translation from the Tolai language on the basis of a transcript prepared by Paul ToSinot and myself.

⁹ Wawn boasts that they "rubbed out" eight islanders, and wounded seven others (WAWN 1973, p. 287). Brown (1908, p. 122) says that three or five Matupit islanders were killed (see also: BROWN 1908, p. 92).

¹⁰ Wawn gives his name as Torlong (WAWN 1973, p. 287). Brown mentions that ToPoraporo was speared in the thigh and later rewarded by the European traders Ferguson and Hershheim for his assistance to Wawn and others (BROWN 1908, p. 122; cf. Brown letterbook, MCh/OM A 1686-2, p. 661). Wawn says that Torlong had by 1883 become "head chief of the whole tribe" (meaning: the most influential big man on Matupit) (WAWN 1973, p. 287), which points again to ToPoraporo who might just have had two names; the German sources talk of three big men on Matupit in 1875, the most respected being Taulong (also called Taumalong or Tauvalong) (HYDROGRAPHISCHES AMT ... 1889, p. 248; Schleinitz to Kaiserliche Admiralität, Grosser Ocean: 25 September 1875 (BMArch: RM 1/v. 2569).

Weber, also represented the interests of the German state in his capacity as an Imperial consul in Apia, Samoa. At his instigation the authorities in Berlin instructed a German naval vessel to investigate the incident and, if appropriate, to return the hostilities of the local population. Touring the islands on a surveying mission, the *Gazelle* stayed in Blanche Bay from 12 to 17 August 1875. Its commander Schleinitz, in later years a tragic figure as Administrator of New Guinea, tried to comply with Weber's request. He faced insurmountable difficulties with language and unsatisfactory cartography - it took him some time to work out that Weber's Matupit was identical with Henderson Island on his map. Believing that "the appearance of a man-of-war here, which does not take notice of the blameworthy behaviour of the natives, encourages them in fact to repeat it",¹¹ Schleinitz let his men demonstrate the firepower of their weapons but was misled by Matupit people to make the demonstration nowhere near Nonga or Matupit.

John Vuia:

"Those who had climbed aboard the ship, ... accepted [Dr Brown's] invitation to join him for a meal. Then they went back to the island. At that time, the island was not very big; in fact, it was very small. It wasn't as wide as it is today. Dr. Brown and the Reverend Rotuma,¹² accompanied by some Matupit men, walked around the island. Afterwards the two [missionaries] were presented with food. They felt that these islanders were not bad people after all. They returned to their ship, but did not send a pastor at that stage, because the people on Matupit could not agree. Some welcomed the *lotu*; others didn't for the reason I just mentioned. Those who didn't want the *lotu* had burnt the house of the two traders. ... [George Brown's party] returned home via Nodup. At Nodup ToBola talked with them. But at that time two groups of people were fighting each other at Nodup. The two missionaries tried to no avail to dissuade them. That was the first coming. No pastors were posted yet."¹³

I tape John Vuia's story a few days after the memorial service on the beach. ToVuia's house is a modest permanent building in Kikila. ToVuia is mentally very active, but because of a chronic leg complaint he hardly ever leaves his *gunan* these days. Some of his young relatives stay with him and look after him. I have been visiting ToVuia for a few months nearly once every week. I enjoy coming here, and feel comfortable sitting with the old man talking about anything and everything. Besides, he is a gifted story-teller, and I do not mind at all listening to him retell his stories. At least twice before he has told me about the events surrounding the arrival of Peni Taumia. We usually sit on chairs in the shade somewhere behind his house. Unless I bring along somebody from lalakua, as I did a few times, it is just the two of us talking. In fact for long stretches only him, because once he has started a story, he continues without me interrupting him or having to supply him with cues or questions. Although he lives right in the centre of the most densely populated Tolai village, the young people who look after him are the only ones who sometimes sit down a few metres away and listen, only to wander off again after a short while. I always stay for several hours, and from time to time we have to shift our chairs to avoid the sun. I appreciate feeling comfortable when neither of us is talking while we are chewing betelnut or ToVuia is rolling a smoke. Sometimes his minders bring us something to eat. Today is one of my

¹¹ Schleinitz to Kaiserliche Admiralität, Grosser Ocean: 25 Sept. 1875 (RM 1/v. 2569).

¹² He is mentioned by Tokunai, too (1976, p. 4). Brown was accompanied by Reverend William Fletcher who had worked for many years on Rotuma Island (BROWN 1908, pp. 84+93; cf. THRELFALL 1975, p. 30). John Vuia and Tokunai most likely refer to him.

¹³ John ToVuia of Matupit-Kikila on 20 November 1987 at Matupit. Slightly abridged extract. Taped statement. Non-literal translation from the Tolai language on the basis of a transcript prepared by Paul ToSinot and myself.

last visits. It is a typical day, though. For less than one hour, I record ToVuia's talk. The rest of the time we talk about a hundred and one things.

John Vuia is one of the oldest and most respected members of Matupit's United Church congregation. He could not attend the commemorative service on the beach on 17 November, but he had read both ToKunai's booklet and Threlfall's Church History, which in its Kuanua version is widely read among Tolai belonging to the United Church.¹⁴ Unlike ToKunai, John Vuia does not know Brown's autobiography. Written histories bear on John Vuia's account, but testimonies of Tolai eye-witnesses do, too. ToVuia says that the Matupit people were unafraid, and he agrees with Brown that the people on the ship were scared. ToKunai's account conforms with the cliché about contact between white missionaries and New Guineans which was depicted in the enactment of the posting of Peni Taumia: missionaries, intrepid because of their unflustered faith in God, on one side; and excited, frightened and potentially hostile natives on the other.

Few people on Matupit can still recount the incident involving Nash and Wawn. I assume that ToVuia would be more knowledgeable about it than any other islander. Still he does not mention the casualties, or ToPoraporo helping the traders' escape. In ToVuia's history there is no provision made for the traders' victims, because ToPoraporo's stand was enhanced by subsequent events, whereas the attackers of 1873 had, in ToVuia's or his informants' view, fought a losing battle from the beginning. The contact with the traders is part of ToVuia's history because it explains why Brown was not welcomed unanimously. ToVuia alludes to the subsequent division between Catholics and Methodists. But the first catechist was stationed on Matupit about twenty years after the traders were driven out, and those who invited the Catholic Mission were not necessarily identical with the anti-Brown faction of 1875.¹⁵

John Vuia's and ToKunai's accounts of the 1873/75 events are elaborate expressions of a view of this particular aspect of the past, which is collectively held by the members of Matupit's United Church congregation. For them the arrival of the *lotu* counts, and any details which do not directly relate to this arrival, like the visit by the *Gazelle*, or the companions of Nash and Wawn, are omitted. ToVuia also omits the involvement of the Molot big man ToPulu who accompanied Brown to Matupit. ToVuia emphasises that Matupit was the first place in New Britain visited by the Methodist missionary and that the posting of a teacher in Nodup was not successful either, thus enhancing Matupit's pre-eminence.

According to Brown's writings he went to Nodup for the first time on 2 September 1875, apparently because the Nodup big man ToBola had visited him aboard his ship when he had anchored outside Matupit. Brown witnessed the fight mentioned by John Vuia.¹⁶ In mid-September ToPoraporo went to see Brown in Molot.¹⁷ ToBola called upon

¹⁴ THRELFALL 1975. The Kuanua version was published in Rabaul in 1977 (*A Mar na Kilala ta ra Lolalolo. A Lotu Methodist ma ra United Church ta ra New Guinea Islands Region, 1875-1975*).

¹⁵ For the Catholics' coming to Matupit see Mary Mennis' account which is partly based on oral sources (MENNIS 1972, pp. 42ff).

¹⁶ BROWN 1908, p. 94.

¹⁷ Brown letterbook (ML: MCh/OM A 1686-2, p. 648).

Brown about three weeks later to tell him that he had arranged for the building of a house for a pastor-teacher at his place. Brown accompanied ToBola back to Nodup and delivered two Fijian pastor-teachers. He gave ToBola a present 'which was considered by him (ToBola) as payment for the house he had built'.¹⁸ The big man ToKurapa from Rabuana, according to Brown, ToBola's brother, distributed shell money and bananas to those who had helped build the house.¹⁹ While in Nodup, Brown was approached by ToPoraporo and ToLingling, another Matupit big man, who briefed him on the disunity on their island about the posting of a missionary.²⁰ On 20 October, ToPoraporo again visited Brown in Molot and urged him to send a teacher.²¹ On 21 or 22 October Brown travelled to Matupit, talked with ToPoraporo, ToLingling and other big men, and offered to send them a pastor-teacher if they in turn built a house for him.²² On 16 November he went to Nodup and found the teachers ill, and was therefore unable to transfer one of them. The impending removal of one of the pastor-teachers upset ToKurapa; a fight between him and ToPoraporo was only just prevented by Brown's party. The next day Brown delivered Peni Taumia to Matupit and paid for the house which had been built for him.²³

In John Vuia's history of the coming of the *lotu* to Matupit, in ToKunai's written account and in ToVura's talk on 17 November 1987 alike, visits to Matupit between the initial visit by Brown and the posting of Peni Taumia on 17 November are not mentioned. They all say that ToKurapa tried to prevent Peni Taumia's departure for Matupit and that he wanted to spear ToPoraporo who in turn threatened the Rabuana big man with a gun - a detail which is also reported by Brown. After Peni Taumia is landed on Matupit, George Brown, although he visited Matupit on 20 February 1876 to open the first church building,²⁴ and on various other occasions, vanishes from the scene and is not heard of again. People in Raluana* and around Vunamami say that George Brown brought the *lotu* to Molot. He is not credited with anything else. The *lotu* is delivered by Fijian, Samoan and Tongan pastor-teachers who are, like their Tolai successors or any United Church pastor today, referred to as *mitinare* by the Tolai.

In the view of Tolai living along the coast of Blanche Bay or in the Kokopo hinterland, the delivery of a *mitinare* to Matupit by Brown himself ends the first phase of Methodist missionisation on the Gazelle. The principal actors were Dr. Brown and several big men who arranged with him the dispatch of pastor-teachers.

The second phase is dominated by those Tolai leaders who among themselves negotiated the spreading of the *lotu*. ToKabakavir²⁵ arranged with his relatives in Matupit to acquire the *lotu*. When the pastor-teachers, on their way from Matupit to

¹⁸ BROWN 1908, p. 113.

¹⁹ Journal Brown, entry 12 October 1875 (ML: MCh/OM A 1686-11). In his autobiography Brown says that both ToBola and ToKurapa distributed *tabu* and bananas (BROWN 1908, p. 113).

²⁰ BROWN 1908, p. 114.

²¹ Journal Brown, entry 20 October 1875 (MCh/OM A 1686-11).

²² BROWN 1908, pp. 121ff.

²³ BROWN 1908, pp. 129f + 182f.

²⁴ Journal Brown, entry of 20 Feb. 1876 (MCh/OM A 1686-12).

²⁵ See chapter 3, pp. 53ff.

Raluana, rounded Tagirgir, they were intercepted by ToMarum and his people who lived in what is today Ialakua village and who intended to keep for themselves the *lotu* which was designed for and purchased by people in Raluana. A sham fight between the two groups at Tavanapidik, in which the men ran against each other with their chests protruding, was ended by the Fijians' announcement that another pastor-teacher would be stationed with ToMarum's group.²⁶ Toti and ToGilimar of Kininigunan obtained the *lotu* from their relatives in Raluana, and so it spread further eastwards.²⁷ The Pacific Islanders who worked as missionaries in Raluana, Ialakua or Vunamami appear dimly and are overshadowed by those energetic men who organised their coming. Again, Brown's writings suggest that he actively promoted the stationing of missionaries by visiting Kininigunan and other places several times, that he frequently called upon missionaries posted on the Gazelle, and that he opened churches.

In a third phase, the *lotu* has its first successes and remarkable converts emerge: Taniel ToUratidir, Abaram ToBobo and others. Again we learn not much from Tolai stories about those who missionised the Tolai. We do not learn much from Church Histories either.²⁸ Those mentioned are almost exclusively men. We learn nothing about the Fijian, Samoan and Tongan women; sometimes not even their names have been recorded. The contribution of "black" missionaries is manifest through the number of their graves: more than one hundred members of Fijian, Samoan and Tongan missionary families died in New Britain and New Ireland during their terms of service.²⁹ Their impact is apparent in the language: the Methodist *lotu* was commonly referred to as *lotu korakorong* (black *lotu*), whereas the Catholic counterpart was labelled *lotu puapua* (white *lotu*).

In a fourth phase, Tolai who were not prominent before 1875 take the limelight as leaders of the *lotu*. In Raluana Iona ToGigi is of foremost prominence. He travelled in the 1890s with the missionary Rickard, and later again with the missionary Fellmann, to Australia and played a crucial part in the translation of parts of the Bible into Kuanua. ToGigi is held responsible for the fact that today's standard Kuanua, as codified in the Bible translation, is largely based on the Raluana* dialect. He was said to have successfully argued for the preservation of the *tubuan*, at the same time drawing up policies for its deconsecration. He brought a mango seed from Australia and is credited with introducing a cash crop which has become a major source of income for Raluana* villagers.

²⁶ IaDokas of Ialakua in June 1987; Darius ToNamaliu of Raluana in October 1987. Brown (1898, p. 787) suggests this kind of sham fight is part of a peace ceremony. Not more than a footnote: according to written missionary sources, Raluana received its first pastor-teacher in 1876; ten years later another missionary was stationed in what is today called Ialakua (Rickard, in: *Notices* of October 1886, p. 8; Rickard, in: *Notices* of April 1888, p. 3; BROWN 1908, p. 176).

²⁷ William Tokavivi of Vunamami in May and October 1987.

²⁸ Neville Threlfall accentuates the role Tolai played, although in his dedication, which is illustrated by a photograph of Lavenia Baledrokadroka's grave (she was married to a Fijian pastor-teacher and died at Molot), he pays tribute to the "wives and children of overseas and local Church workers" (THRELFALL 1975, p. 5). Contemporary missionary accounts and Ronald Williams stress the contribution of white missionaries. Although there is apparently no extensive documentation on the work of Pacific Islands missionaries, not all records available in archives have been used yet (cf. SCHÜTTE 1986, pp. 39f). So far only Latukefu has collected and published oral evidence relating to the work of Methodist "black" missionaries in New Guinea (LATUKEFU 1981; LATUKEFU 1982).

²⁹ THRELFALL 1975, p. 52.

II.

Tolai oral traditions emphasise that the *lotu* was first thought to be a powerful magic. This is reflected by the men blowing lime towards Brown and Peni Taumia at the *varvalaruai* on Matupit. It is significant that it was Tokabakavir who brought the *lotu* to Raluana. He like any other composer of *tapialai* communicated with spirits who taught him the wordings of the songs. The *lotu* came within his *métier*. In Raluana the *lotu* was first allocated a *taraiu*, a place belonging to the *tubuan*, which was taboo for women and uninitiated men.³⁰ The *lotu*'s suspected properties are the subject of a story about the coming of the Catholics to Gunanba, which I learnt from Iakob Timele:

"In 1882,³¹ the elders from Gunanba sent two men who had become acquainted with Father Bley to the mission station Takabur. They gave them ten fathoms of shell money to take with them. They believed that the white-skin, Father Bley, had a special kind of *buai* [betelnut] at Takabur."

Glossary V: *Buai*

Buai is the most common "carrier" for all kinds of magic: love magic, black magic (*taring*), magic to enhance one's knowledge, etc.. *Buai* can become a synonym for the magic itself. Through the *buai na pepe* men can communicate with spirits who advise them on the choreography of a dance, on the text of a *tapialai* or on a recipe for *taring*. Betelnuts and the accompanying ingredients, the fruits or leaves of the pepper plant (*daka*) and lime (*kabang*), are important in many spheres of Tolai life. They are chewed on all occasions at all times except inside the church. *Buai* is given to guests and visitors as a customary gesture of welcome (*varlapang*).

"They instructed Tepetepe and the man who accompanied him to approach their friend and ask him to set up his *buai* here at Gunanba. In 1882, the two Gunanba men returned with the missionary. In accordance with the practices of the *lotu*, Pater Bley baptised some men here so they would become Catholic. But watching his performances, the people here still believed he had a particular kind of *buai*. The people of Gunanba built a church from bush material. When they attended services, they did not simply enter the church. At the entrance of the building a man supplied them with protective magic. He treated them with *kabang*, extract from the *bubu*³² plant, and the liquid of young green coconuts (*tirip*) [all of which are used, accompanied by proper incantations, as carriers of magic]. So before they entered the church, this man put some protective magic on their bodies. After the service, he gave them the juicy parts of the *goragoro*³³ plant to wipe their bodies clean, a process which we call *naunau*, and he blew some *kabang* onto their heads so that they were freed from the *lotu*'s spell. Later they got to know the meaning of the coming of Pater Bley and the *lotu*. But first, when the *lotu* had just arrived, they did it like I said because they were afraid that this new *buai* might spoil the various other *buai* they were using."³⁴

³⁰ Ainui ToVuvu of Ialakua/Raluana-Kuradui in October 1987. Cf. BROWN 1908, p. 293; DEANE 1933, pp. 21f; letter book Rickard, p. 6.

³¹ According to written sources, the Catholic *lotu* came to Gunanba a few years after 1882, but this is of no importance in this context.

³² *Columbrina Asiatica*.

³³ *Alpinia Oceanica*.

³⁴ Iakob Timele of Gunanba. Conflation of taped statement, recorded on 7 November 1987 in Gunanba, and statement made on 16 October 1987 in Gunanba, according to my notes and transcript prepared by laHelena Jacob and myself. Non-literal translation from the Tolai language.

III.

The Catholic *lotu* was often purchased, too, but from the Mission itself and not from other Tolai. The Catholic priests also faced communities which were divided over the issue of whether they should accept the *lotu*. I did not hear any story which described rivalry between different groups who wanted the same Catholic missionary. Sometimes internal divisions led to the acceptance of both denominations in one village. In any case, the acceptance of one particular kind of *lotu* was always founded on initiatives by villagers to secure either the Methodist or the Catholic variety; the picture is however complicated by the fact that the Catholics arrived seven years later and their activities were for a while restricted by the German Administration which divided the Gazelle into mission districts with boundaries favouring the Methodists.³⁵

In some cases individual converts were alienated by the missionaries or their followers. Misikaram Tarei from Ngatur was a catechist whom his priest took to court for seducing a woman. Angry with the priest, he went to Raluana and asked the Methodists to send a pastor-teacher to his place.³⁶ I shall deal with a similar case involving Abaram ToBobo and ToGillimar of Kiniginunan in chapter 7.

I did not come across Tolai stories about sectarian rivalry in the early period of missionisation. Indeed the bitter feuds between the Catholics and the Methodists on the Gazelle, which are amply documented, gradually disappeared with the localisation of the Catholic clergy from the 1970s. In the past they may have been fuelled by white missionaries rather than their Tolai adherents. ToLarme, a prominent Catholic from Vunadidir told me the following story about the arrival of the *lotu* in Vunadidir:

First came a Father. He rode a horse and handed out salt. He was favourably received and people decided to invite the *lotu* to come to Vunadidir. Taliku knew how to go about this and went to his relatives in Raluana*, Pero ToKinkin and others, and purchased the Methodist *lotu*. The Methodist *mitinare* settled in Tokot, a place which belonged to Taliku's in-law, ToVarkuvo.³⁷ ToVarkuvo suggested that they should try the other brand of *lotu*, too. Taliku consented, so his in-law went to Gunanba to acquire a Catholic catechist who was also told to settle at Tokot. Much to the surprise of the people at Vunadidir, the Catholic and the Methodist did not get along well with each other. Eventually the two in-laws became involved in the quarrel, and the Methodist had to leave Tokot to settle in Vunapoapoi which was later renamed Tavulavaravai [preaching place].³⁸

IV.

A history produced in the present is an explicit statement about the past, and an implicit statement about the present and the change that has taken place in the interim between the history's past and the present. ToLarme states that the establishment of two different missions in Vunadidir was not the outcome of a quarrel between

³⁵ Cf. JASPERS 1978.

³⁶ Iosep ToUrauma and Orim ToVaragat, both of Ngatur, in November 1987.

³⁷ Tatalik Aguria of Ratavul said that Taliku and ToVarkuvo were brothers. I am not familiar enough with people and places in Vunadidir to be able to judge this point.

³⁸ Bernard ToLarme of Vunadidir on 5 November 1987 in Vunadidir, gist of his statement according to my notes.

two factions in Vunadidir, but of an agreement reached in perfect amity. By placing the blame on the missionaries, he emphasises that Tolai should not quarrel just because they belong to different denominations. He shares the widely held view that sectarianism was instigated by non-Tolai missionaries.

United Church and Catholic traditions about the arrival of their respective missions differ not only because they describe different situations but also because of the difference in the process of missionisation between the two denominations. White Catholic missionaries came in greater numbers than their Methodist counterparts. They are still largely in control of the affairs of the Catholic Church in East New Britain, whereas the Methodist Church on the Gazelle Peninsula was probably as localised at the time of its incorporation into the United Church in 1968, as the Catholic Church is in 1988. But white Catholic fathers, brothers and sisters often remain more anonymous. Many of them were based in Vunapope, an essentially European centre, and they did not necessarily venture frequently beyond it. The oral traditions depicting Brown's arrival centre around the white missionary whose name is known by every United Church member on the Gazelle. Many Catholics in the Kokopo area know histories about the arrival of the first fathers at Taraiu (Vunapope). They portray three nameless Europeans who are helpless and survive only because the Tolai big man Tolungen protects them.

In traditions about Methodist missionaries, black and white, preachers and teachers are portrayed in control of the situation, and having no problem adapting to the Tolai environment. The Catholics are depicted as complete strangers who had enormous difficulties coping with people and place so different from what they knew. They must have appeared more alien and less comprehensible than their Methodist counterparts: they dressed in strange garments, conducted their services in a foreign language (Latin), placed more emphasis on a ritual which did not resemble anything the Tolai knew, and were not married.

As in the chapter on prophets, I try to accentuate the quiddity of Tolai histories by presenting material from the Finschhafen area. Johann Flierl of the Neuendettelsau Mission arrived in the then administrative capital of German New Guinea, Finschhafen, in July 1886. He and his fellow-missionary Karl Tremel established the first Lutheran mission station in New Guinea at Simbang, a village near Finschhafen, in October 1886. After other missionaries arrived, the Lutherans set up new stations on Wanam in 1889, and in 1892 at Sattelberg in the Huon Peninsula's interior some eight kilometres from its east coast.³⁹ Although the first converts were baptised in coastal villages, Sattelberg soon became the most successful mission station and was of prime strategic importance to the Lutheran missionisation of the Huon Peninsula's interior in the first decades of this century. The dialect of Kotte spoken around Sattelberg became a *lingua franca* on the Huon Peninsula and in parts of the Highlands. Kotte missionaries played a crucial role in opening up new areas for Lutheran missionisation.

³⁹ For an overview of the first phase of Lutheran missionisation around Finschhafen see: WAGNER & REINER 1986; PILHOFER 1961, pp. 65-117.

In search for a site for a recreation centre,⁴⁰ the missionaries Johann Flierl and Georg Pfalzer, accompanied by five of their Yabim students and guided by Zake from Katika,⁴¹ made their first trip to Belahaluc, a saddle-shaped promontory of the Nuselan, in March 1892.⁴² The Belahaluc had been visited by Europeans for the first time in 1886 (by the New Guinea Company's Schrader-Hollrung expedition) and on that occasion named Sattelberg. According to Flierl, it was climbed by whites several times thereafter, although never by one of the Neuendettelsau missionaries.⁴³

Stories about ToUratidir and ToKabakavir apart, which are indeed above all stories about those two men, Tolai traditions about the Methodist missionisation begin with 15 August 1875. If they refer to events prior to the Methodists' arrival, they do so mainly in footnotes (as with ToVuia's mentioning of the attack on the traders); all those events involve Tolai and take place on Tolai territory. Stories told around Finschhafen about the Lutheran Mission often start well before 1886 with the description of signs heralding the mission's arrival: the *fangfang* or the appearance in the sky above Tami for instance. Sometimes they are started like Natung Hatanao's story:

"I am going to tell you about the coming of Senior [Flierl]⁴⁴ to Nugidu [Finschhafen].⁴⁵ Why did Senior come? He came to New Guinea for the following reason: as a child he lived in his own country, in Germany. He went to school for some years. When he finished school, presumably after completion of Grade Six, he had a dream. He dreamt of a mountain by the name of Nuselan. The people living in the bush around that mountain had tails like dogs.

Senior completed his pastor training. He then left Germany and went to Australia. He was trying to find the place he had dreamt about. He stayed for a long time at a place where Australia's black people live, at Aborigin. ... Eventually he found an opportunity to come to New Guinea. He arrived in Finschhafen. He got to know Zake, a man from Katika. He asked him where this particular place [he had dreamt of] was. Zake told him: 'I know. That's up there in the mountains.' Senior asked Zake: 'Is it possible for me to go there?' Zake replied: 'Yes, because some of my relatives, some uncles, live up there. I can lead you to this place.'⁴⁶

Balangko is the Kotte village closest to Sattelberg Station where the branch road from the Finschhafen-Plindiu highway ends. It is about half an hour downhill from the station, which is situated at about 3000 ft. Sattelberg and environs seem immersed in lavish green vegetation and white mist. I wonder how much the early missionaries loathed the coastal humidity if they

⁴⁰ The idea that they would get sick less often on the "salubrious" island of Wanam than in Simbang had motivated the Lutheran missionaries to establish their second station on Tami (cf. KM 1887, c. 35; Pfalzer, in: KM 1889, cc. 70f; Flierl, in: KM 1889, cc. 94f; Flierl, in: KM 1890, c. 4; BAMLER 1900, p. 9). Like Tami, Sattelberg was initially conceived as a convalescent home for the missionaries. They decided to set up a station at Sattelberg mainly because they hoped they would be spared "tropical fevers" in the mountains (cf. FLIERL 1929, p. 34).

⁴¹ The missionary Keysser has written a small book about Zake's life: KEYSER 1934.

⁴² For written accounts of that trip see: FLIERL 1929, pp. 34f; FLIERL 1931, pp. 41f.

⁴³ Flierl, in: KMZ of 6 September 1892, p. 13. The Sattelberg was climbed at least twice between 1886 and 1892 (SACK & CLARK 1979, p. 38).

⁴⁴ People around Finschhafen frequently refer to Johann Flierl as Senior. Fellow missionaries called him Senior Flierl. Flierl worked for some thirty years as a missionary in New Guinea.

⁴⁵ The German settlement Finschhafen was on a peninsula north of Langemak Bay, some five kilometres north of today's Finschhafen at Gagidu, which lies south of Langemak Bay.

⁴⁶ Natung Hatanao of Sattelberg on 3 November 1986 in Balangko. Taped statement. Abbreviated extract. Translation from the Tok Plsin.

decided to build their sanatorium in this place with its cold and damp. They seem to have accepted the fog to escape imagined vapours they held responsible for their recurrent attacks of fever on the coast. Although the sun shone during my stay in Balangko and on other visits to Sattelberg, in my memory the superb view across the ridges of the Huon Peninsula and over the Vitiaz Strait is eclipsed by an impression of clamminess, and isolation behind wafts of mist.

Balangko is a neat village of about 250 people.⁴⁷ It looks more affluent than the Yabim villages on the coast. The old bishop Zurewe Zurenuo, who lives at Sattelberg Station, sent word to Balangko and prepared the people for the arrival of Sem Reuben, a big man from Malasiga and former secretary of the Yabim District of the Lutheran Church, and myself. I know Sem from my stay in Malasiga in February and March this year. He has offered to accompany me to some Yabim, Kotte and Bukaua villages around Finschhafen. We have chosen Balangko also because Sem's colleague Natung Hatanao is originally from here (both he and Sem are working as land mediators).

We are warmly welcomed and put up in the house of Tingung and Bafuo. On our first evening Sem conducts a service in the village church, which is filled to capacity. He talks about the necessity to transmit local histories. I explain briefly my research project. Afterwards we meet those considered to be knowledgeable about the past, and many others, men and women, in the men's house. This is a rectangular-shaped closed building with two waist-high platforms on both sides of a passageway. People are crowded together, squat on the platforms and sit on the edges, with legs dangling. There are many children, but they are not interfering. The conversation between Sem, myself, and a group of about six men, most of them elderly, dominates. Part of it is in Kotte, part in Tok Pisin. I suggest a few topics, among them "How did the mission come to the Kotte people?". On the periphery other discussions, apparently commenting on what is said in our group, are carried on in low voices. It is fairly dark; a small fire and a kerosine lamp light only the centre. People sitting close to the wall remain in the shade, disappear frequently into or appear from the night.

Siliwa Gowego,
Balangko narrator

⁴⁷ The 1980 census recorded a population of 225 (PAPUA NEW GUINEA ... 1982, p. 10).

I recorded Natung Hatanao's story about Flierl's dream on the second evening. By then most of those who had listened regularly to the discussions, could have retold it. It is clearly a collective interpretation of the past which had been produced and approved of since our arrival. Written histories have certainly influenced this interpretation. In his autobiographical writings, which had an impact on the teaching in mission schools, Flierl emphasises his 'call to New Guinea' and his 'call to become a missionary'.⁴⁸ During our discussions two Kotte history books were frequently consulted, but I gathered that they provided only a fraction of the details contained in the following sequence of the story about the coming of the Lutheran Mission:⁴⁹

Senior Flierl left Simbang in 1892 and followed the coast as far as Katika, where he met Zake who agreed to accompany him to the Nuselan. Senior gave him a piece of red cloth which Zake fastened around his head, and a bush knife which Zake used to clear a way for them.

Lopoc and his son Koli were working in their garden at Zaboikoc. In those pagan days, people were afraid of each other. So Lopoc told Koli to stay at the entrance to the fenced garden and watch out for enemies. Zake, Senior and three Yabim men were approaching Zaboikoc. Senior was whistling. Koli heard him and called out: 'Father, enemies!' Lopoc rushed to grab his spear and bark shield. He was about to spear Senior, when Zake shouted: '*Kandere*, it's me! Me and this *nemunemu* [benevolent spirit]. He is a good man.' 'You are lying. This white something will swallow me', replied Lopoc, still ready to spear Flierl. 'Don't be afraid, *kandere*. He won't do you any harm', Zake said and showed him the loincloth and the bush knife. He held a pinch of salt between his fingers and let Lopoc taste it. 'Oh, that tastes really nice,' exclaimed Lopoc. 'Give him your hand,' demanded Zake. Reluctantly and trembling all over Lopoc shook Flierl's outstretched hand. He told his son to break off a piece of sugar cane and give it to Senior Flierl. 'If he eats it like we do then we know he is a human being. If he doesn't, then he must be an evil spirit.' Koli handed Senior a piece of sugar cane. Senior chewed it. Lopoc was satisfied: 'Good, so he is human.' He turned to his son again: 'You run as fast as you can to Unangko and tell my brother Forec to slaughter a pig which is kept there and which belongs to Fondemote. Forec shall put the pig at the bottom of the ladder which leads up to our tree house. Zake and this *nemunemu* and I, we will come behind. At our place, the *nemunemu* will then step over the pig and climb up the ladder to our house.' Koli went ahead. The others followed, and Senior stepped over the pig and its blood. The people at Unangko were not hostile towards Flierl. They were just very scared. Zake told them not to be afraid. Later they all had a meal together, and every one of them had a piece of pork from the pig which had been slaughtered. They watched Senior eat and saw that he was human. Senior talked to them in Yabim, which Zake, who could speak both languages, translated into Kotte. Senior told them that he wanted to see the Nuselan mountain.

On the next morning they did not go all the way up to the mountain top but to a rise which we call Belahaluc and which the Germans named Sattelberg. Senior asked them whether he could have

⁴⁸ FLIERL 1931, pp. 20f + 13f; cf. FLIERL 1929, pp. 14f + 7f.

⁴⁹ I checked this when I asked people to translate the relevant paragraphs into Tok Pisin. The books in question are: WAGNER 1959 (about the life of Johann Flierl) and FLIERL 1962 (History of the Lutheran Mission in New Guinea; a German translation by Anna Bergmann is held by the Lutheran Mission's archives in Neuendettelsau: *Die Geschichte von der Ausbreitung des Evangeliums bei uns (in Neuguinea)*, ms 1981).

some of that land. He met three headmen, one each of the Laogupe, Tâgi and Tubang groups, who agreed to give him a piece of land at Belahaluc.⁵⁰

Ganggalo and her husband, Zake. History is made by big men: In the official history of the Lutheran Church in Papua New Guinea, Ganggalo is omitted from the picture.⁵¹

People at Balangko were surprised that I did not immediately grasp the symbolic significance of Flierl stepping over the pig's blood, in their opinion the crucial part of the story. They complained that publications to mark the centenary of the Lutheran Church⁵² did not even mention the incident and stressed that their ancestors had staged a sign of deep meaning. I wrongly assumed that the slaughtered pig was of significance in the context of some pre-colonial Kotte ritual. I think the explanation they eventually brought forward has to be seen in the light of my obvious ignorance towards something which was self-evident for those relating it to me. "We believe", said Natung Hatanao after consulting the others, "our forebears shed the pig's blood as a sign that all people in New Guinea were to become Christians. ... This was the very beginning of the Church in New Guinea. The Church washed away the Darkness with the pig's blood."⁵³

⁵⁰ Based on an account by Kawa Aloy of Balangko, taped statement made on 3 November 1986 at Balangko, and on contributions made by Siliwa Gowego, Kululec Nabung, Bafuo Eso, Qatang Kukurec, Natung Hatanao and others, all of Balangko, on 2, 3 and 4 November 1986.

⁵¹ WAGNER & REINER 1986, p. 45.

⁵² WAGNER & REINER 1986; EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH ... 1986. Herwig Wagner's contribution in the former does not even get the mission history, as transmitted by Johann Flierl and others, right. In Wagner's account Zake appears as a "chieftain" from around Sattelberg (p. 39).

⁵³ Natung Hatanao on 3 November 1986, translation of verbatim quote. The last sentence reads in Tok Pisin: *Sias i bin rausim olgeta tudak i go pinis long blut bilong pik.*

The people of Balangko are the descendants of the Tâgi who lived in 1892 in Lopoc's hamlet Unangko and a few other places around it. The Tâgi, the Gafang (whose descendants live in Fior) and the Laogupe (whose descendants live in Sisi) share the dialect of the Kotte language which the Mission used as *lingua franca*. I enquired about the relationship between Lopoc, Fondemote and Forec. Fondemote was apparently not a big man. Forec was Lopoc's brother and the leader of Zabacwecko, a Tâgi hamlet close to Unangko. I did not learn why it was Fondemote's pig that was killed, nor was I told the nature of the relationship between Forec and his brother. The people at Balangko described pre-colonial Kotte big men as chiefs, each relying on a group of henchmen, and made it plain that with the arrival of the mission this structure ceased to exist. No traces of it remain. They did not draw any genealogical links between Lopoc and living inhabitants of Balangko, nor was anybody able to elaborate on the kinship ties between Zake and Lopoc.

Both the Kotte of Balangko and the Tolai of Kikila have wholeheartedly embraced the introduced Christian belief-system. In doing so the Kotte, unlike the Tolai, have, not always voluntarily, abandoned most of their pre-colonial beliefs and cultural practices. They define their identity through their rôle in the process of missionisation. They have severed their links with the pre-colonial past, which has truly become a pre-history. The prominent part the mission played in the Kotte past over ninety-five years is reflected in the prominence missionisation plays in Kotte histories. In fact, from a Kotte point of view there is but one History: Biblical History and its continuation, Church History; Kotte histories have become part of it.

In his fleeting appearance in Tolai histories, George Brown sparks fundamental changes for the Tolai which however did not take place immediately after his arrival. He does not bring about those changes himself. The change from paganism to Christianity is not questioned; but while this change is welcomed, continuity is valued. Elements of pre-colonial Tolai society which are said to have survived the European impact, are emphasised.

With Flierl's arrival at Unangko, the Tâgi step into histories concerning Johann Flierl and the Church. At that moment, they are not yet Christians, but they are no longer heathens either. They had already discarded their tails. Lopoc was momentarily bewildered, but then issued an order so that the Tâgi by the end of the day had secured their place in Flierl's world. In their history the Kotte of Balangko introduce themselves as cast in a hagiography which has no room for other European actors, be they Pfalzer, Schrader or Hollrung. The only continuity from pre-Flierl times conceded is the Kotte people's predisposition to Christianity, which is manifest in the seer Zenginec's premonition⁵⁴ and the events on the day of Flierl's arrival in Unangko. With the acceptance of Flierl on the first day of their encounter, the Tâgi parted with their past.

The Neuendettelsau Mission attributed its success among the Kotte to the work of Christian Keysser who worked as a missionary on Sattelberg between 1899 and 1920. He is often considered the first Lutheran to base missionisation on New Guinean social

⁵⁴ See chapter 3, p. 59.

structures,⁵⁵ by, to put it simply, converting groups and transforming pagan tribes into Christian congregations (*Gemeinden*), whereas his less successful colleagues who worked among the Yabim had tried to convert individuals. Keysser was even credited with creating a Church which took its shape from indigenous social structures.⁵⁶ On the contrary, Keysser was successful because of the emergence of *new* social structures ordered around the institution of *Gemeinde* rather than that of kinship, aided by his policy of relentless eradication of anything pagan, and that label applied to the bulk of the pre-colonial cultural institutions and practices. Rationalisation as prescribed by Keysser was disruptive, sudden and accompanied by violence. A man from Simbang told me that Keysser was no missionary, he was "the man with the gun", employed by the mission to shoot dead all spirits.⁵⁷

Today, Tolai define their identity in three ways. They say their individual lives and their society are based on *matanitu*, *lotu*, and *balanagunan*. *Matanitu* and *lotu* are terms which have been introduced by Pacific Island missionaries and are now part of the Tolai vocabulary. *Matanitu* stands for "government" and includes the introduced political structures from the councillor to the prime minister, as well as western style education, the judiciary and the police.⁵⁸ *Balanagunan* (or *varkurai nigunan*, as some people say instead) denotes the entity of "traditional" Tolai customs. The three are seen as being strictly separate and one interferes with another only in exceptional cases. In the Tolai understanding of their past, before the arrival of the Europeans, their lives were ordered according to the principles of *balanagunan* alone, some of which were subsequently discarded through the influence of *matanitu* and *lotu*.

When applying the Tolai concepts to describe the situation around Finschhafen, we would find that the arrival of the '*lotu*' made the '*balanagunan*' obsolete. Until about the Second World War, the '*lotu*' included all the features of the '*matanitu*' as well.⁵⁹ Since then the '*matanitu*' has developed into a separate entity. More recently still, people around Finschhafen have tried to retrieve some features of the '*balanagunan*', something I will deal with in more detail in chapter 12.

V.

The United Church building in Ialakua is by far the most impressive building in the village. Its turrets demonstrate that the architects were not governed by purely utilitarian considerations. It was not just a matter of erecting a building where church services for the then about 300 people of Ialakua could be conducted. They allowed

⁵⁵ Cf. PILHOFER 1961, pp. 133ff + 222ff. In fact, Konrad Vetter was the first one to break with the old concept, but his untimely death prevented him from witnessing the success of his method. He worked between 1889 and 1906 among the Yabim at Simbang and Jabem mission stations. Cf. SMITH 1979 for an anthropologist's critique of Keysser's method.

⁵⁶ FORMAN 1982, p. 23, whose article is certainly one of the worst mystifications of Lutheran missionary practice, but the thrust of his argument is shared by many others. It is ironical that those groups who experienced as a consequence of missionisation a break with their pre-colonial cultural institutions and practices were hailed as examples of a particularly New Guinean brand of Christianity.

⁵⁷ That was no Lutheran peculiarity. In 1894, William Brown, a Methodist missionary, reported having shot a *kaka* (spirit) on New Ireland (Brown, in: AMMR of 5 July 1894).

⁵⁸ The execution of "traditional" political power is termed *varkurai*.

⁵⁹ Cf. FIRTH 1983, p. 148 ("Christianized villages ... became theocracies").

themselves to add a playful element and at the same time express the congregation's affluence. Though it cannot match the church of Ialakua's rich neighbour Raluana, it leaves nobody in doubt about the role of the *lotu* in Ialakua. The churchyard is always kept trim and clean: the grass is never allowed to grow longer than would be appropriate for an English cricket ground. Whereas people's houses often bear witness to makeshift repairs and attacks by earthquakes and the tropical climate, the church is repaired at the first sign of damage. With more than 5000 Kina in the congregation's passbook account (in 1987), minor repairs are agreed upon without fuss.

In June 1987, I attended the annual Thanksgiving (*bung na vartabar*) at Ialakua, when members of the Ialakua United Church congregation donate money to meet the costs of maintenance of the church building and the contribution made to the United Church's New Guinea Islands Region district. For this occasion, the villagers divide into four groups which developed around residence and kinship: Vunapopo, Talikimar and Bitagiau in Ialakua itself, and one group which comprises all those who live on freehold land at Kuradui. Although these groups may split into sub-groups which prepare for the *bung na vartabar* independent of each other, money is collected in four accounts only. The four groups compete with each other to raise most money.⁶⁰ They also rehearse plays and hymns. Choirs and actors performed on Thanksgiving Day, which indeed lasted for a full day and included conducting a service and time-consuming public counting of money. The *varvalaruai* enacted on this day were all didactic and often stressed the necessity to give money for the Church. Ialakua's *bung na vartabar* in 1987 involved the whole community. Men and women put on their best dresses. Everybody had contributed financially; most took part in a choir or play. Around lunchtime, people sat down on the lawn in front of the church, each family by themselves, and had opulent picnics. The *bung na vartabar* is clearly one of the most important annual events in the Ialakua social calendar. Altogether about 2500 kina was collected. Members of 'my' group were very proud that they had contributed more than others.

In 1889 Johann Flierl witnessed a similar event in Raluana, apparently the annual *bung na vartabar* of the Raluana circuit. Flierl was impressed by the number of Tolai taking part (2000) and the amount of money collected. At the same time he was highly critical of the proceedings: 'I think that there was a lot of show-off at the offering's collection which I witnessed. Thus vanity of the worst kind is raised and encouraged.'⁶¹ Flierl was also taken aback when after the offering both Pacific Islands missionaries and Tolai performed dances which displayed 'heathen savagery', although he found them less indecent than European dances. He was startled when one of his Methodist colleagues said apologetically the dances were not of a peculiarly heathen nature but 'pure amusements'.⁶² After working for three years around Finschhafen more or less

⁶⁰ In other United Church congregations, money is raised differently, either as part of a circuit offering, or on an individual 'one-tenth' basis. Competitive fund raising with residential or kinship based groups trying to gain prestige by vying with each other in donating money to the Church was introduced by Pacific Islands missionaries in many parts of Papua New Guinea. Whereas elsewhere it has replaced the traditional gift exchange system and enforced identification with clans (cf. GREGORY 1982, pp. 203ff), among United Church followers on the Gazelle it has helped to create and sustain new identities, particularly those of congregations.

⁶¹ Flierl, in: KM 1890, c. 46.

⁶² Flierl, in: KM 1890, c. 47. The last quote is English in the otherwise German article.

unsuccessfully, Flierl envied the Methodists' apparent success, but disapproved of what he perceived as superficial conversion. Lutheran missionisation was to be total; in 1897, still two years away from the baptism of the first two proper converts in the Finschhafen area,⁶³ Flierl demanded:

The conversion to Christianity does not just end in acquiring a bulk of knowledge and in adapting some civilised manners, but it entails a change of thought which will be shown by the total break with the rotten pagan customs and an obedient believing devotion to the service of the living God and His only son Jesus Christ.⁶⁴

In 1888, people living on the Huon Peninsula within reach of the Europeans had similar fears to those articulated by Marnakat on the Gazelle: "these white people come to take our land and our women", the missionary Tremel was told.⁶⁵ When the mission had its first successes, they realised that the mission was after something else: "(the missionary) does not want our boars' tusks and dogs' teeth, he wants our hearts", a Digetu big man said in 1901.⁶⁶

In an article which is instructive for the questions it poses, Miriam Kahn examines "the process by which an indigenous population embraces new ideologies"⁶⁷ and in particular how the Wamira, inhabitants of a village near Dogura in Papua, adapted to Christianity. In accordance with the interpretations provided by her Wamira informants she begins by dissecting the Wamira culture into a Christian outer layer and a Wamira core. She contrasts the enthusiasm which Wamira display when celebrating religious holidays and their reverent attendance at church services with their continuing beliefs in spirits, magic and sorcery. She concedes that the process of missionisation had a strong impact on the Wamira way of life, namely that it brought about the cessation of cannibalism, but nevertheless suggests that Christian beliefs and practices remain superficial components of today's Wamira culture. Her assessment seems to stem from a Wamira self-perception that "on the surface we act like Christians and go to Church. But inside we are Wamirans. Our customs are strong and will not die."⁶⁸ Like the Wamira (and to a greater extent than the Kotte), Tolai believe in magic and in spirits. For many Tolai it would not be a contradiction to enlist the services of a weather-maker for a church service. Whilst I was conducting fieldwork, I was told that several people who then died were killed by sorcery. I was frequently warned by people in Ialākua to be very careful in dealing with three of my neighbours because they were said to be skilled in black magic.

The Tolai have no images complementary to the Wamira pair of "inside" and "surface". The *lotu* is one of three foundations, and there is no mention that one is superior to the other two. The Tolai, like the Wamira, or people in medieval Europe,⁶⁹ were initially interested in Christianity, because they assumed that it was a new magic. I don't know

⁶³ Actually, in 1890 the Lutherans baptised a Papuan woman, Luise, who lived with an employee of the New Guinea Company in Finschhafen. The first convert from the Finschhafen area was Fritz Soli who was baptised as a boy in Berlin in 1894. In 1897 the missionaries adopted a Tami baby boy who was christened Joanni a year later (BAMLER 1900, pp. 30ff).

⁶⁴ Flierl, in: *KM* 1897, c. 41. Cf.: Flierl, in *KM* 1890, cc. 84f; Flierl, in: *KM* 1894, cc. 31f.

⁶⁵ Letter Tremel of 26 October 1888 (ArchND 52/21).

⁶⁶ Hansche, in: *KM* 1901, c. 77.

⁶⁷ KAHN 1983, p. 97.

⁶⁸ KAHN 1983, p. 97.

⁶⁹ Cf. THOMAS 1978, p. 27.

when they discovered that their old magical devices were superior. I think the Tolai emphasise that the *lotu* was thought to be a *malira* because it turned out just not to be one at all.

There are several reasons why the *lotu* was so readily accepted and has since become so firmly incorporated into Tolai society. In the beginning the mission offered limited material advantages and protection from labour recruiters and planters, and from other Tolai. The *lotu* is an attractively coherent and comprehensive set of beliefs. Before the arrival of the Europeans, the Tolai had regarded strangers as enemies. Colonialism broke up parochial isolation and brought Tolai in contact with large numbers of strangers. The *lotu* accommodated the inclusion of the Tolai into a world system, not only by offering them the concept of humankind, but also by creating larger units across kinship and residential boundaries. The *lotu* has become an institution which both ideologically sustains emotional and spiritual links between people who are not otherwise related, and provides an institutional framework for ample opportunities to establish, consolidate and manipulate social relationships.

Miriam Kahn might raise the objection that the Tolai can't be Christians "inside", while they still adhere to competing belief systems and cultural practices. Peel has criticised the ethnocentric assumption of the concept of acculturation which underlies this argument.⁷⁰ Papua New Guineans are as much "pluralists" as Peel's Yoruba⁷¹ and have in the past shown an inclination to experiment with new beliefs and practices and adapt them whenever they suited their needs. Kahn axiomatically dissects Wamira culture into two layers; she does not enlighten her readers about the Wamira understanding of the Christian belief system. Why do the Wamira celebrate religious holidays with "special exuberance"?⁷² I have no reason to doubt that the Tolai I know are not only Christians by belief, but that they have a profound theological understanding. The Tolai have a comparatively long tradition of preaching, and instructing preachers, in the vernacular, and, like Aimbe the pastor,⁷³ they have made their own investigations of Christianity.

Flierl was certainly right when he observed that the organisation of the *bung na vartabar* was intended to collect as much money as possible by enticing church members to make a public offering in order to outshine neighbours. For the *bung na vartabar* in lalakua I took part in a choir. We rehearsed far more often than was necessary to learn the hymns, because we enjoyed meeting and practising. When the church in lalakua was repaired in 1987, it did not really need repainting. Only, now it looks better than the church in neighbouring Barovon. After all it is a symbol of lalakua's corporate identity as a village. The *lotu* provides opportunities to do all this: compete with neighbours, meet as a group, and extend an identity beyond kinship ties. The *lotu* is an institution which facilitates the regeneration of society. That does not make it a superficial addition to a Tolai core. In fact the above evidence only shows

⁷⁰ PEEL 1967/68.

⁷¹ PEEL 1967/68, p. 129.

⁷² KAHN 1983, p. 96.

⁷³ Aimbe, the pastor, is the main character in a novel by Paulias Matane, which is set on the Gazelle (MATANE 1979).

that it has been more fully "acculturated" than an analysis along Kahn's premises would concede.

The explanation of how they acquired the *lotu*, which now plays a major role in the social organisation of society, is important for the Tolai and therefore stories about the arrival of the mission are cherished. For the Kotte, who experienced such a dramatic "break with their rotten pagan customs" when they embraced the *lotu*, it is more a question of explaining how they entered the world of the *lotu*.

VI.

This chapter has drawn attention to the interplay between oral traditions and written histories. John Vuia's mentioning of between ninety and a hundred canoes approaching the ship carrying Brown and his entourage is informed by Brown's own estimate. To Vuia's history and the *varvalaruai* performed on 17 November 1987 in Kikila show how far Tolai histories concerning the mission have become codified. "Written records may serve as a fountainhead for oral traditions", writes Vansina,⁷⁴ and this is true even in the sense that an oral tradition can be told to counter the written histories, as in the case of the Kotte of Balangko. But they, too, rely on written accounts.⁷⁵ Clearly the style of Tolai and Kotte oral histories and traditions is influenced by Western written histories: events follow each other in a linear chronological sequence. In the next and in the last chapter I shall return to the issue of the impact of writing down oral histories and traditions.

⁷⁴ VANSINA 1985, p. 31. See for an illustrative example: REDMAYNE 1970, pp. 101f.

⁷⁵ I recorded another version of Flierl's coming to Sattelberg from Honeoc Gubung of Sattelberg, a former president of the Lutheran Church's Kotte district, who is a well-read intellectual. He told me that Flierl was accompanied by Pfälzer and that officials of the New Guinea Company had climbed the Belahaluc prior to the missionaries' 1892 visit.

6: Oral Traditions as Histories?

I.

Oral Tradition as History is the title of Jan Vansina's latest book - a misleading title, as I shall try to show. In reluctant compliance with the conventions of academic discourse I talk in this chapter about the prevailing methods and practices which I try to transcend. In chapters 1, 3 and 5, I have produced a written history by using oral histories. I have thereby come under the label "oral historian", and can avoid being judged in those terms only by defining my position in relation to that of those who have claimed the label for themselves.¹

Jan Vansina is the doyen of oral historians. In chapter 4, I have already mentioned two of his concepts which have to be seen in the context of Vansina's central assumption that oral traditions or histories are sources for a reconstruction of the past: that of the "informant"/"performer", and that of the "recording situation"/"performance". I shall consider Vansina again in some detail, as most scholars using oral testimonies to write histories in Papua New Guinea have applied his methodology (or a modification thereof), and because his approach is symptomatic for the kind of Oral History practised in Pacific History.²

When Vansina published *De la tradition orale* in 1961, the majority of historians still discarded oral accounts as unreliable. At the same time most anthropologists who were studying non-literate peoples had for decades not been concerned with diachronic analyses and, in the tradition of Malinowski, used oral accounts primarily to construct a synchronic and ahistoric ethnographic present.³ That historians were to write their histories only from material found in archives or libraries, or, in co-operation with archaeology, from material relics, had not always been self-evident. An oral historian, Herodotus, was one of the founders of Western historiography. And as late as in the mid-nineteenth century, Jules Michelet advocated the use of "living documents" and demonstrated in his *Histoire de la revolution francaise* how official records needed to be counterbalanced "with the political judgement of popular oral tradition".⁴

But only half a century later, two other eminent French historians, Langlois and Seignobos, expressed a sentiment then shared by most of their contemporary

¹ I do not find it necessary to refute or adopt the label "ethnohistorian". Unlike oral history, ethnohistory cannot easily be identified with a particular methodology. "Born out of the snobbish reluctance of historians to be interested in anyone who was not white and did not wear a crown and born too out of the intransigent belief of anthropologists that to understand anyone they must be alive, in remote places and in dire danger of disappearing" (DENING 1980, p. 35), ethnohistory seems still to exist because ethnohistorians relish the perks connected with having their own discipline, not because history and anthropology are still what they were when their "bastard child" (Denning) was conceived.

² Vansina's methodology, *De la tradition orale*, is a dry and "technical" book. It cannot serve as an emotional bond for those practising oral history. But whether they have read it or not, academic oral historians reiterate the basic concepts of Vansina's methodology. Those who formulate a methodology of oral history, nearly always copy or modify Vansina's approach.

³ Cf. MALINOWSKI 1922, pp. 298ff. The most notable exceptions were the anthropologists Kroeber (see: KROEBER 1966, especially pp. 131-171) and Evans-Pritchard (see: EVANS-PRITCHARD 1961).

⁴ THOMPSON 1978, p. 19; cf. pp. 40ff.

colleagues throughout the Western academic world, when they wrote: "The historian works with documents. ... There is no substitute for documents: no documents, no history."⁵ By then the discipline History had, on the principle of the division of academic labour, staked out its territory in the administration and production of knowledge in European societies by identifying with a particular method; other disciplines laid claim to other methods: excavation of material relics became the domain of archaeology, the collection of oral texts that of folklore. History had also assumed the task of establishing what actually happened in the past in an effort to delineate and thereby justify the present. The casual but causal flow of events in the past, which historians codified in Histories, was equated with historical progress. The discipline History produced histories to reiterate a particular notion of linear progress, which was embedded in a broader discourse of power. Through a methodology which strove for objective reconstructions of the past by using written sources, the discipline's output was disguised as detached from power configurations and relations in the present. History which showed things "as they really were" proved the strongest narcotic of the century, wrote Walter Benjamin about the nineteenth century.⁶ This was nowhere more evident than in Germany where historians belonged to the *Bildungsbürgertum*, the bourgeois intelligentsia, which was excluded from political power until 1919.

The increase in literacy and accessibility of written texts also contributed to the fact that academic historians focused on the interpretation of written texts. For contemporary history, from the nineteenth century there was an abundant store of eye-witness accounts, written by members of the ruling classes and even more so by those who belonged to the same class as historians. Those who did not take part in the written discourses, could only enter the historians' books as anonymous members of the masses. Literacy not only marked a class distinction, but was used as a means of creating a protective distance. "Living documents" were still used by those critical of the present, but neither the German romantics who collected folk traditions, nor British labour historians were accepted in the guild of academic, professional History.

The interpretation of written sources gave the work of historians the notion of accountability. They could not only talk facts, but write about facts they came across in black and white. The written source could be located in a well-defined synchronic context. History did not become part of natural sciences (although there was an influential push for it: positivist historiography), but its scientific approach endowed histories with Cartesian authority.

In the twentieth century, those barred from the exclusive circle of makers of history increasingly realised how important histories were for an assertion of identity and for emancipation. In Europe and the United States oral accounts were revalued as historians critical of the hegemonical Histories of the ruling classes grew increasingly interested in the lives and experiences of those people who had been excluded from power and its written discourses: women, workers, or marginalised groups. In the periphery oral accounts became important material to write histories of the colonised

⁵ Quoted in: THOMPSON 1978, p. 47.

⁶ BENJAMIN 1982, p. 578 (N3.4). Benjamin's remark holds true for this century, too. So Taussig's reading of Benjamin (TAUSSIG 1986, p. xiv) is false only from a philological point of view.

peoples. Jan Vansina's methodology is a product of the era of decolonisation. He did fieldwork in the Congo in the 1950s, and published *De la tradition orale* just after the Belgians had left the country. As decolonisation in the South Pacific lagged behind similar developments in other parts of the world, so did Pacific History lag behind African History. It was not until about fifteen years after its publication that Vansina's pioneering work was seriously received by Pacific historians.

Vansina himself is not an African nationalist, but a Belgian academic. His work leading to *De la tradition orale* was propelled by his desire to grant a pre-colonial history to those whose history had supposedly begun with European colonisation, and, as a matter of coincidence, with the beginning of written records. Vansina turned to oral history by default: "Where there is no writing or almost none, oral traditions must bear the brunt of historical reconstruction"; but in the same breath he cautions: "What one does reconstruct from oral sources may well be of a lower order of reliability."⁷ He was writing against the historians' deeply-rooted allegiance to the methodological principles articulated by Langlois and Seignobos, and against the anthropologists' reluctance to use oral testimonies other than to analyse the present and establish a "sociological" truth.⁸ It was therefore only natural that he would try to vest oral testimonies with respectability by showing how the same apparatus of historical criticism, that historians in Europe had been applying to written texts since the nineteenth century, could be applied to oral texts.

The African (or Pacific) histories written with the help of oral traditions proved not necessarily to be the peoples' histories. Initially they were anti-colonial histories: in using the same tools colonial historians had applied, it could be demonstrated that Africa had a past and a tradition before the arrival of the Europeans. Thus they were initially counter-hegemonical. But with formal decolonisation, they often became as hegemonical as the old colonial histories. With African national histories the new national elites asserted their own identities. The newly independent states of Benin and Mali were located in the tradition of the African empires of Benin and Mali; the African past was reconstructed to legitimise those in power in the new African states. Vansina's methodology was warmly received. As oral traditions were sifted for facts, Histories were again endowed with scientific objectivity.

II.

Vansina aims to "arrive at some approximation to the ultimate historical truth".⁹ Oral testimonies are valid sources for such an undertaking, he argues, but they need to be interpreted and evaluated. As he understands oral traditions as a "series of historical documents",¹⁰ he locates them in a chain of synchronic historical contexts. Whereas the

⁷ VANSINA 1985, p. 199. Vansina's preoccupation with oral testimonies has also a biographical history, as he was confronted with oral traditions in his childhood in a Belgian village and then learnt to appreciate their value (Vansina, in: GRELE et al. 1985, pp. 51f and 61).

⁸ For an example of this reluctance see: BEIDELMAN 1970.

⁹ VANSINA 1965, p. 186.

¹⁰ VANSINA 1965, p. 21.

historicists' textual criticism of sources is synchronic, Vansina's criticism of testimonies is diachronic.

For Vansina, the approximation to historical truth is the task of the professional historian. The African narrator who tells an oral tradition, supplies some of the raw material. For Vansina, this material clearly belongs to a different genre than his own history; the title of his latest book should have been *Oral Tradition as a Source of History*.¹¹ He wants the historian to draw on other material supplied by auxiliary disciplines such as linguistics and archaeology to put the oral traditions and the account based on them into perspective. In his second book on the Kuba, Vansina reiterates that "oral tradition can and indeed must be used in historical reconstruction. It is the essential source for Kuba history."¹² But he warns that

To reconstruct Kuba history one must constantly remember that the available data are the product of selection and constitute a tiny part of the events that actually happened. Therefore it is extremely important to attempt to locate other sources that may help to overcome the lack of data and the bias of selection. It is **not** true that the most momentous events are the ones that are remembered.¹³

Who decides what the most momentous events were? And who defines the parameters of the perspective? For Vansina it is obvious that the historian equipped with the ability to penetrate the Other is the one to make those decisions. The parameters of the perspective are equally self-evident for most historians: who would doubt that the past has to be ordered **chrono**-logically to identify the anachronisms and inconsistencies in its representations in the present? "Causality as a process of change does not exist in oral societies", Vansina laments.¹⁴

Chronology is essential to history. History deals with chains of change, that is, not with change as a fact only, but with change as the result of preceding situation(s) leading to later situations, change as a result of causality. The only law historians have is that what occurred later cannot have influenced what occurred earlier. So history must have chronology. Chronology need not be based on an absolute calendar, it can be a relative sequence of events and situations only. But chronology there must be, if there is to be history.¹⁵

Why the beseeching cry? That the Otherness of the past be rendered into order, that the present be delineated from a chronological past, those are not innocent methodological decisions. They could be driven by the urge to be able to perceive the present in such orderly fashion, maybe in order to ward off a (disorderly, dangerous) desire: to leap into a future that cannot be delineated from the present.

Yet there is a lot to be learned from Vansina's methodology of understanding and interpreting oral testimony. For him it is necessary to elucidate meticulously the process by which history being made becomes history being produced. By analysing the production of oral traditions, Vansina offers interesting insights into modes of perceiving the past in predominantly oral cultures. He develops useful categories to distinguish oral testimonies according to their form and intent.

¹¹ This is in fact the heading of one of his sub-chapters (VANSINA 1985, chapter one: III). At one point Vansina suggests that "oral traditions are **not just a source** about the past, but a historiology (one dare not write historiography!) of the past" (1985, p. 196; my emphasis), but he never goes beyond this cautious hint.

¹² VANSINA 1978, p. 233.

¹³ VANSINA 1978, p. 233; his emphasis.

¹⁴ VANSINA 1985, p. 132.

¹⁵ VANSINA 1985, p. 173.

III.

In the following I consider a few approaches that have been influential in the development of oral history in Papua New Guinea. I pay particular attention to writers who have used Tolai oral traditions.

One of the first scholars to use oral testimonies for a written history in Papua New Guinea was not a historian, but an anthropologist. Richard Salisbury, when writing about the Tolai of Vunamami, furnishes two accounts of their past: one that is based on limited documentary European evidence, and one that recurs on "both the foreign 'bird's eye view' of documents and the local 'worm's eye view' of oral accounts".¹⁶ The first account is to supply a chronological framework and an analysis of the foreigners' strategies. The second account, which is about six times as long as the first, is structured topically, but on the background of the chronological framework already established. The second account is meant to be

one in which continuity is evident, where at all times the local people can be seen as trying to make rational choices in situations of great novelty, and in the face of tremendous ignorance of the long-term consequences of their actions.¹⁷

Salisbury's history is swayed by two premises. Firstly he assumes that social change in Vunamami fits into a modernisationist concept of progress; by looking at the past from a Vunamami perspective and by depicting indigenous economic concepts he traces the factors which slow down, deflect, or accelerate progress. Secondly he analyses the Vunamami past in terms of a dichotomy between black and white, colonised and coloniser. This leads him to ignore differences between various worm's eye views. In a paper given in 1967 Salisbury encourages anthropologists to do detective work, to question the motives of informants for revealing a particular piece of information, and to explore the reasons for divergences in informants' statements.¹⁸ But none of the detective work has found its way into *Vunamami*. Here Salisbury merges anonymous oral testimonies into one Vunamami oral tradition. Nor does Salisbury tell how he himself has become part of his history. He is not explicit about his relationships with people in Vunamami, especially those big men who provided most of the knowledge Salisbury uses in his monograph. Throughout his book he treats his stay in Vunamami as a technical means to assemble information. In passing we learn that the argument put forward in *Vunamami* "developed also from discussions with" seven Tolai men, whose names he lists in his acknowledgements.¹⁹

In 1974 Michele Stephen wrote a history of the Mekeo as a doctoral dissertation in Pacific History. She used archival evidence, oral evidence collected in two Mekeo villages, and ethnographic data assembled during fourteen months of fieldwork. Most of the oral evidence seems to have been collected with the help of interpreters; some of it she recorded in English. Whereas for many anthropologists it has become practice to begin their monographs with a historical account concerning the group they are studying, Stephen begins her thesis with an account of the Mekeo's ethnographic present in 1971. This is contrasted with a description of pre-contact Mekeo society,

¹⁶ SALISBURY 1970, p. 8.

¹⁷ SALISBURY 1970, p. 8.

¹⁸ SALISBURY 1967.

¹⁹ SALISBURY 1970, p. viii. One of them is Enos Teve; see chapter 9.

based on the memory of informants and scattered documentary evidence. Her history is a chronological presentation of social change in Mekeo society. The written evidence is used to sketch the process of social change leading to the ethnographic present:

the historian would be foolish to dismiss the (oral) traditions simply because they do not serve all his purposes or satisfy all his standards. Their unique value, for him, is that they isolate the incidents which were of the greatest significance to villagers and describe the responses to them. If the most authoritative versions are compared with documentary evidence, the general outline, and even the details (where these can be verified) are shown to be accurate. Taken alone, the histories would prove very awkward to handle; an outline of the first years of contact, drawn from conventional sources, furnishes a convenient framework upon which they can be organized and evaluated.²⁰

In effect the oral evidence only supplements the documentary evidence.²¹ Her aim is clearly the reconstruction of the process of social change, not the representation of the Mekeo's view of their past. Rarely does she introduce informants. She does not mention contradictions between two or more informants, nor does she indicate why a particular informant provides a particular piece of information. The researcher herself is not mentioned in the thesis, and we do not learn anything about the interaction between her and the Mekeo. Michele Stephen, who lived for more than a year in the Mekeo village of Inawi, dissolves into "him", "the historian".

Whereas Stephen concedes that "my view point and emphasis are necessarily those of an outsider, writing for outsiders",²² John Kolia, an Australian-born naturalised citizen of Papua New Guinea, implicitly assumes the position of an insider in his history of the Balawaia, like the Mekeo, a people in Papua. He stresses that he was asked by people of one Balawaia village to write down their history,²³ but does not elaborate on his relationship with his informants during the period of his research. Unlike Michele Stephen he starts by learning the local language and collecting oral evidence. But the oral evidence he collects is ordered in a chronological framework. In fact it is this framework itself which makes him stress the importance of oral evidence:

As can be seen from the chronology spanning three hundred years, two-thirds of the history precedes the contact era. ... Both (the Balawaia) and I would wish for an amount of information to match the time-scale involved.²⁴

Kolia's criteria for including evidence in his history are those of an antiquarian who collects and subsequently exhibits whatever he can securely lay hands on.²⁵ While presenting pieces of evidence, both oral and documentary, he does not make his own selection process clear. The conclusions he draws from his material seem as disconnected as the evidence he presents. He emphasises the role played by missionisation, but it is not clear why this should be the most noteworthy aspect of the Balawaia past over the last one hundred years. "But the history of the Balawaia must be written", he insists in his conclusion, without elaborating why. Kolia defines his approach in relation to that of Vansina, but discards him as too rigid, because

²⁰ STEPHEN 1974, p. 65.

²¹ This is evident from remarks like the following: "In many respects informants' statements substantiate the general picture presented in patrol reports" (STEPHEN 1974, p. 214).

²² STEPHEN 1974, p. xv.

²³ KOLIA 1977, p. 11.

²⁴ KOLIA 1977, p. 111.

²⁵ That is even more evident in Kolia's guide for Papua New Guineans to write their own history (KOLIA 1976), or in the journal *Oral History* which Kolia edited for a number of years.

Vansina's approach is supposedly developed for oral societies with fixed texts, which does not suit the 'free' Melanesian oral traditions.²⁶ He also refers to Levi-Strauss when saying that a myth should be regarded as 'a coded message from the ancestors from which we may be able to draw historical evidence',²⁷ but does not follow Levi-Strauss' structuralist interpretations of myths.²⁸ Although he, unlike Stephens, cites his informants at least with their full name, they appear even more anonymous than in Stephen's history of the Mekeo, because he does not relate their lives to the stories they tell.

In 1975, the year Papua New Guinea was granted independence, Roderic Lacey, who taught oral history at the university in Port Moresby, submitted a doctoral dissertation about the pre-contact history of the Enga, the largest ethno-linguistic group in Papua New Guinea. His aim was similar to that of Vansina some fifteen years earlier: to develop an approach for writing history in a predominantly oral culture, and specifically, to write 'truly indigenous history for this emerging nation'.²⁹ Like Vansina he maintained that since there were no written sources and the writing of history requires sources, those sources must be oral, or, oral traditions and histories must be sources. Lacey's reason for choosing the Enga is based on this assumption: in this part of the New Guinea Highlands he hoped to find sources which were little distorted by European influence, since permanent contact between Europeans and Enga had only been established in the late 1930s:

there are still a number of men alive whose lives and attitudes were shaped by pre-colonial historical forces. It is therefore possible, by drawing on the store of traditions belonging to their own, their father's and their grandfather's generations, to gain a real sense of pre-colonial history in some depth.³⁰

Although he concedes that his is a 'study of Enga oral traditions as historical sources',³¹ Lacey, like Vansina, clouds his findings through a misleading title: 'Oral Traditions as History'. Lacey was less concerned with actually producing a history - his history of the Enga makes up just ten pages of his dissertation - than with developing a methodology for writing history in Papua New Guinea. He wanted to lay the groundwork for employing oral traditions as historical evidence by analysing the context from which they have come. He demands that for any oral source five questions must be asked:

What kind or form of oral source is this?
What is the context of this tradition?
What is its territory, span or provenance?
What is its generational depth?
How was it transmitted and what were the actual circumstances in which it was recorded?³²

Answering those questions, which 'need to be put to all oral sources as they are collected in Papua New Guinea',³³ requires an understanding of the culture in which the oral material is collected, and thus the construction of an ethnographic present as a means to trace down the past. Because Lacey is so much concerned with the

²⁶ Cf. KOLIA 1977, p. 170.

²⁷ KOLIA 1977, p. 14.

²⁸ Cf. KOLIA 1977, pp. 168 and 173.

²⁹ LACEY 1975, p. 245; cf. LACEY 1979b, p. 32.

³⁰ LACEY 1975, p. 3.

³¹ LACEY 1975, p. 30; cf. *ibid.* p. 245.

³² LACEY 1975, p. 246.

³³ LACEY 1975, p. 254.

context of his sources, he tells us more about his informants and the researcher's interaction with them, than Kolia, Stephen or Salisbury do.³⁴ Answering the questions is to help distinguish between mirage and reality, event and stereotype, historical men and heroes, past and present, myth and history, in order to arrive at a 'sense of probability about events, changes, and historical protagonists'.³⁵ Like Michele Stephen, Lacey emphasises that he writes from an outsider's perspective, although he claims that the short history that concludes his dissertation 'is indigenous to Enga tradition'.³⁶ He sees his history as the first contribution in a debate 'about what may have been the course of events and changes among men in the past',³⁷ which is to be continued by Enga historians. They would have the advantage of speaking Enga fluently; Lacey had to employ interpreters, used a lingua franca, or got Enga speakers to transcribe and translate testimonies he recorded.

Peter Sack is an academic lawyer, who over the past fifteen years has published several articles and monographs about 'ethnohistorical' topics, nearly all of them related to the Tolai.³⁸ In a recent article Sack has turned his attention to oral traditions and genealogies and tries to assess their value for writing the history of the emergence and settlement of Matupit Island. Although Sack establishes an 'objective base',³⁹ from which he proceeds to his conclusion, and discusses at length chronologies and what he terms 'hard' facts,⁴⁰ he dismisses attempts to write 'objective' history:

Instead of persisting with the attempt to cast Tolai traditions into the illfitting mould of 'objective' history in order to make ourselves feel ideologically more secure by colonising even the pre-colonial history of Melanesians, we should, perhaps, begin to listen to what Melanesian traditions are meant to tell Melanesians - and those outsiders with whom they interact.⁴¹

He criticises the anthropologist A.L. Epstein, who in his book *Matupit* tries to combine vulcanological evidence with oral testimony in order to establish when Matupit was settled:

Is (Epstein's) own urge to translate the observations of human witness into vulcanological evidence and to link the past with the observable present the expression of a European ritual which tries to give historical data a kind of borrowed, scientific objective, because it gains ideological satisfaction from the illusion that the alleged physical reality of the past proves that of the present and thereby guarantees a predictable future?⁴²

However, Sack's own findings fall short of what one might expect after such radical rhetoric. After showing that oral traditions change depending on who tells them and

³⁴ For a fascinating account of the interaction between Lacey and an Enga 'man of knowledge' see: LACEY 1980.

³⁵ LACEY 1975, p. 258.

³⁶ LACEY 1975, p. 277.

³⁷ LACEY 1975, p. 31.

³⁸ Sack seems to have been not so much concerned to illuminate particular aspects of the past, but with making available particular sets of sources. In 1976 he published a history that deals with the Laewomba, a group near Lae, which was based entirely on written, mainly published sources, most of them in German, 'to illustrate that the literature probably contains more detailed information on the pre-colonial history of Papua New Guinea than even the more optimistic among us tend to expect' (SACK 1976, p. 114).

³⁹ SACK 1987, p. 9.

⁴⁰ SACK 1987, p. 1.

⁴¹ SACK 1987, p. 9.

⁴² SACK 1987, p. 9.

when,⁴³ he concludes that "changing traditions provide a record of a sequence of the self-perception of successive presents manifested in their different perceptions of the past",⁴⁴ thus merely following the presentist approach which was so fashionable in anthropology in the 1950s.

Whereas Lacey and Vansina choose titles for their monographs, that are misleading, if not pretentious, John Waiko, first national professor of history at the University of Papua New Guinea, gave his 1982 doctoral dissertation a subtitle which is defensive and claims less than he actually accomplishes: "A History According to the Tradition of the Binandere People". For Waiko, "Binandere oral tradition is history".⁴⁵ He goes well beyond Vansina's equation of oral histories/traditions with sources, although in his conclusion he demonstrates that he is an able conventional historian when he talks about checking oral sources against written sources.⁴⁶ His thesis is as much about the means by which the Binandere construct their past and the forms in which they render the past in the present, as it is a history of the Binandere. Waiko does for the Binandere what Lacey did before him for the Enga, but without being so captivated in Vansina's methodology. And he goes one step further by showing how a history that takes oral histories as a starting point can be written. In comparison with the authors I introduced so far, Waiko's undertaking is exceptional in what he accomplishes, partly because his point of departure is exceptional. Waiko is a Binandere, writing about the Binandere (a Papuan group in Oro Province), and writing for the Binandere: he wrote another, shorter version of the thesis in his mother tongue. Waiko does not write about the Other, but about himself. It is not the notion of academic objectivity, but his own identity that is at stake. The appraisal of oral traditions *vis-à-vis* documentary evidence is a means of writing against those who wrote the documents: the colonisers of his people. His truth is what he considers to be a Binandere truth - by writing it he redresses the context of contact between Kiawa (Europeans) and Binandere: he interprets the coming of the Kiawa from a Binandere world view and locates contact history within the wider framework of Binandere history, thereby implicitly refuting the distinction between 'history' and 'prehistory', which is made in the academic administration and production of knowledge about Melanesian societies, even at the University of Papua New Guinea.

Waiko notes a "hectic confusion of scholarly, personal and communal roles":⁴⁷ "I am both observer and participant; and I am a custodian of tradition while I take part in events that will change the Binandere."⁴⁸ He claims to have created a "synthesis" between colonial histories and Binandere histories,⁴⁹ and takes a relativist stance towards truths in either oral or written testimonies,⁵⁰ but in fact writes counter-hege-

⁴³ Sack does not recognise that oral traditions might change depending on who listens to them; see also chapter 11.

⁴⁴ SACK 1987, p. 11. For similar sentiments see, for example: FISCHER 1976, p. 20.

⁴⁵ WAIKO 1982, p. lxxv; his emphasis. Both Waiko and Stephen produced their dissertation in the ANU's Department of Pacific and South East Asian History.

⁴⁶ WAIKO 1982, pp. 379f.

⁴⁷ WAIKO 1982, p. xxxiii.

⁴⁸ WAIKO 1982, p. xxxvi.

⁴⁹ WAIKO 1982, pp. 380f.

⁵⁰ WAIKO 1982, pp. lxliiff; 379.

monical history. He makes clear that it is John Douglas Dademo Waiko who is writing it, from his own subjective position.⁵¹ But his history of the Binandere may become *The History of the Binandere*, since he resumes the role that has been assigned to him in Binandere society as much as he has chosen it himself: that of the custodian. The nature of Melanesian societies makes it highly unlikely that there is only *one* Binandere perception of the past, or, that tomorrow's perception is today's. Waiko codifies one version. No matter whether he thereby enhances his own position or that of a particular section of the Binandere community, his history, if it is ever widely read, must affect relations of power in Binandere society. He believes that presenting his findings in the vernacular opens them to criticism,⁵² and recognises the repercussions the fixing of his history in writing may have.⁵³ But he does not link these repercussions with the methodology he adheres to, nor with the literary form in which he presents his history. In the near future it may be difficult for other Binandere to question the hegemony of Waiko's history.

This list does not exhaust the attempts that have been made at writing about Papua New Guinean pasts by utilising oral histories or traditions. To give an idea of the range of approaches in Pacific History, let me briefly mention two more examples:⁵⁴

Robin Radford's book on the history of the Kainantu area demonstrates that in 1987 the supremacy of the document is still widely respected.⁵⁵ She uses oral history only to add flavour to an account written in strict adherence to the conventions articulated by Seignobos and Langlois.

The value of oral histories, which are generally treated as sources but sometimes appear as histories, is shown by Leadley in his remarkable M.A. thesis on the period of Japanese occupation on the Gazelle.⁵⁶ Although he, too, aims at maximising probability in reconstructing the past, his stance (as a United Church minister sympathetic to Tolai points of view) enables him to grant space for Tolai oral histories occasionally to speak for themselves without being contained as purified elements in the historian's narrative.

What can I learn from the authors reviewed so far? Jan Vansina and those following in his footsteps (particularly Lacey) have offered a valuable methodology for assessing how oral traditions and histories are influenced through the context in which they are produced and reproduced. This seems self-evident, but the works of Salisbury, Stephen and Kolia show that authors who have pioneered the use of oral testimonies to describe diachronic processes have failed to pay sufficient attention to this context. Lacey and Waiko have contributed lucid analyses of different forms of oral traditions, namely oral poetry. Waiko has drawn our attention to the role of the historian's Self in constructing other people's past. Sack has challenged the notion that objectivity is the

⁵¹ See his *tugata*: WAIKO 1982, pp. lxxff; cf. p. 378.

⁵² WAIKO 1982, pp. xxviiif.

⁵³ WAIKO 1986, p. 22.

⁵⁴ Anthropologists have often been the better historians, and that I do not mention their attempts to write histories here is not to deny this. See particularly Michael Young's anthropological biographies (YOUNG 1983; YOUNG 1983a), Deborah Gewertz's ethnohistory of the Chambri (GEWERTZ 1983) and Martha Macintyre's historical analysis of the *kula* from a Tabetube perspective (MACINTYRE 1983).

⁵⁵ RADFORD 1987.

⁵⁶ LEADLEY 1976.

ultimate goal of writing history, although he has not said what should replace it. All authors have more (Stephens, Kolia, Lacey) or less (Waiko, Leadley) treated oral traditions as sources which need to be expurgated in the fire of historical criticism, verified or falsified, and which belong to a different, lower order than the histories historians are writing. The prevailing attitude towards oral traditions and oral histories in the subdiscipline Oral History in Papua New Guinea, the parameters of which have been defined by Kolia, Lacey, Waiko, and others, is apparent from a statement made by a young Papua New Guinean historian: when writing the contact history of Zia people and the German administration, Biama Kanasa explained to the *Post-Courier*, he interviewed more than one hundred people, but used information from only sixteen, the ones he considered reliable sources.⁵⁷ Defining reliable sources (and eliminating unreliable ones), with the academic historians establishing the criteria by which men and women become informants, and informants become sources, is what Oral History in Papua New Guinea still seems to be about. This is a long way from Michelet's esteem for the political judgement of popular oral tradition. So far, oral historians working in Papua New Guinea have missed the opportunity to break with the conventions of a historiography bound by nineteenth century historicism, and transcend its limitations.⁵⁸

IV.

I hope to demonstrate in my dissertation that oral histories and traditions can be **more** than texts which become the prime object of hermeneutic analyses, to detect structures, symbolisms, etc., and that they can be **more** than sources.⁵⁹ This last suggestion questions the bases of most historians' understanding of their art and craft, for whom sources are the raw material from which they gain factual truths.

To distinguish themselves from social scientists, historians have emphasised their reliance on intuition and empathy, and their affinity with art, particularly with the literary art form of the narrative - more about that later. To distinguish themselves from artists, historians have declared their attachment to science, in particular to a scientific notion of objective truth.⁶⁰ Most historians maintain that history should strive for the objective representation of past events, for an "approximation to historical truth", as Vansina put it, although not even die-hard positivists would claim that they were actually able to achieve that goal. Ranke's motto, to establish *wie es eigentlich gewesen ist*, to reconstruct the past 'the way it really was', is still the most important principle of

⁵⁷ *Post-Courier* of 28 September 1987.

⁵⁸ "This is my line, you know. I've trained African historians and now they have taken over and rightly so, and they are historians. But they are also the people who did not have a voice before. Now some of the books or some of the interpretations are wild, but this is the first generation of African historians. They will integrate, and some of them **superbly integrate** today, the rigor of the historical method, which is something that can be **measured**, into their data." And that is not only the line taken by Vansina, you know. (Vansina, in: GRELE et al. 1985, p. 91; my emphasis)

⁵⁹ I wonder whether they need to be recognised as sources first before they can be recognised as histories in their own right. Ten years ago, one of the academic promoters of Oral History hoped that "oral evidence will become accepted as one among many other historical sources, assumed to be neither more nor less intrinsically trustworthy, but like them subject to the normal processes of historical evaluation" (THOMPSON 1978, p. 221). Vansina, Lacey, and others have of course contributed a lot to securing this acceptance.

⁶⁰ Cf. WHITE 1978, pp. 27f.

Western historical science. And it keeps haunting those trying to write counter-hegemonical and, in the widest sense of the word, anti-colonial histories.

"People go so far as to accept the person who is **not at all affected** by a particular moment of the past as the one called to describe it",⁶¹ Nietzsche said in 1873. More than one hundred years later, not all that much has changed. Although, when staking out their spatial and temporal territories, most historians try to ensure more than anything else that their present and their Selves are kept out, both inevitably creep in. As it is concealed or denied, subjectivity then becomes indeed an irritant and an embarrassment. A place where many Pacific historians can be found pursuing their professional activities, is the Mitchell Library in Sydney. On the wall in its foyer the following words are engraved:

In books lies the soul
of the whole past time
the articulate audible
voice of the past
when the body
and material substance
of it has altogether
vanished like a dream

Historians try to listen to that voice to decipher it. When they reconstruct that obscure object of their desire in the present, they hope to have preserved, if not amplified, the voice of the past. But many of them would deny that in their own books lies the soul of their present, or that history can only be contemporary history, as Benedetto Croce put it.⁶²

Eliminating traces of subjectivity does not necessarily lead to objectivity. Nor does an obsession with factuality make histories non-ideological. "History is a very dangerous weapon. It is the weapon we use to indoctrinate our children. It is the way we build ideologies and we all know that wars then come from certain ideologies", Vansina warns.⁶³ But often "certain ideologies" were proven "scientifically" correct. The ideology of the historical fact, with its claim to define the parameters of **any** past, carries assumptions of what could and could not have been, and obstructs the view of what could be.

To look at history as praxis, as the made and produced and remade and reproduced, is perhaps Marshall Sahlins' most important message for Pacific historians.⁶⁴ The discipline priding itself upon its concern for diachronic processes has too often neglected the diachronic dialectics of histories and has overlooked how even the myth (the "un-truth") makes history by becoming real. That the *lotu* was in the beginning a *malira*, or that people now think that the *lotu* was in the beginning thought to be a *malira*, both perceptions constitute realities that have led or are leading to new realities. History (being produced) and history (being made) are intrinsically intertwined. "We shake ourselves clear", writes Michael Taussig.

⁶¹ NIETZSCHE 1985, p. 61; his emphasis.

⁶² CROCE 1941, p. 19.

⁶³ Vansina, in: GRELE et al. 1985, p. 94.

⁶⁴ In his *Islands of History* (SAHLINS 1985).

We insist on the distinction between reality and depictions of it. But the disturbing thing is that the reality seeped through the pores of the depiction and by means of such seepage continued what such depictions were meant only to be about.⁶⁵

Criticising Sartre's appraisal of history, Lévi-Strauss writes in *The Savage Mind* that historical facts are no more **given** than any other. It is the historian, or the agent of history, who constitutes them by abstraction and as though under the threat of an infinite regress.

What is true of the constitution of historical facts is no less so of their selection. From this point of view, the historian and the agent of history choose, sever and carve them up, for a truly total history would confront them with chaos.⁶⁶

From this he concludes that

History is therefore never history, but history-for. It is partial in the sense of being biased even when it claims not to be, for it inevitably remains partial - that is incomplete - and this is itself a form of partiality.⁶⁷

The obsession with factuality gives this selection process a very particular partiality: what is notable is what has been established by way of historical criticism of sources. The methods used to define facts favour events noted in writing. Radford's history of the Kainantu area is a typical example of a history which is partial **because** it tells the past "the way it really was", defining events by their propensity to be verified as having actually-factually occurred. In the colonial context, Barthes' tautology, "the **noted** issues from the **notable**, but the **notable** is ... only what is worthy of memory, i.e., worthy to be **noted**",⁶⁸ has also a political dimension: historians value certain modes of noting more than others. There is a somewhat comforting "but" to this: histories that select events by virtue of their verifiable factuality are not only biased, they can also be extremely boring. Some people seek a truth that comes to nothing, Nietzsche said. "There are very many trivial truths."⁶⁹ Unless one followed Studs Terkel's ingenious advice: "You get the truth and cut out the fact."⁷⁰

John Waiko has come near to refuting the notion of objectivity by criticising the Kiawa historians' idea of what is actually-factually possible as a culturally-bound perception of reality.⁷¹ Did Tokilang possess the magical ability to let bullets drop off his skin? Can Platonic rationality and Newtonian science be applied anywhere at any time? Papua New Guinean narrators of oral traditions and histories know better, and their knowledge is as empirically founded as that stemming from the free fall of an apple onto an Englishman's head.

Stopping here would only be to succumb to the temptations of relativism. "The only way to write is to say the truth about the truth of the Other without presupposing a truth of things", says one of its advocates, the French historian Veyne. "History does not

⁶⁵ TAUSSIG 1986, p. 133.

⁶⁶ LÉVI-STRAUSS 1966, p. 257; his emphasis.

⁶⁷ LÉVI-STRAUSS 1966, pp. 257f.

⁶⁸ BARTHES 1986, p. 138; his emphasis.

⁶⁹ NIETZSCHE 1985, p. 55.

⁷⁰ Terkel, in: GRELE et al. 1985, p. 33.

⁷¹ WAIKO 1982, pp. lviii.

mean narrating the plot but is the hermeneutics of the Other's truth.⁷² So is it the historians' task to write the truth of those (in other cultures, in other times) who cannot articulate it themselves? No, but listening to the Other's truth without presupposing a truth of things is the precondition for entering into a dialogue (between Other and self, their truth and my truth) which moves towards a truth of things. "We know reality only in its relations with man", writes Gramsci, "and just as man is in an historical process of becoming, so also knowledge and reality are a becoming, and objectivity is a becoming."⁷³ In this sense truth has no finite state, but is embedded in the **knowing towards** something that cannot be named. Ingeborg Bachmann has summed up this point in the last lines of her poem *Was wahr ist* (what is true):

You are fastened to the world, weighed down by chains,
but what is true makes the wall crack.
You are awake and in the darkness look for clues,
facing the passage unknown to you.⁷⁴

My last objection against the historians' fetish of objective, factual truth is concerned with the function of histories "the way it **really** was" to maintain the status quo of the present. Defining the past as the pre-present, as what has become the present, historians distill facts from sources to construct an irreversible and linear process in which "what **really** was" becomes "what **really** is". The appearance of factuality and objectivity vests the logic of this process with authority. A historical science that worships the factual teaches us "to pay tribute to the fact", to acknowledge that we became what we were to become and that the future will be just a progression of the present. History becomes a synonym for irrevocable progress. Nietzsche realised the consequences of abiding by the "tyranny of the actual" and the "blind force of the facts":⁷⁵ "Once we have learnt to bend the back and bow the head before the 'force of history', we will eventually nod like Chinese dolls our 'yes' to every power."⁷⁶

Often historical discourse gains its authority not only from making fetishes of the actual-factual truth, but from embedding the facts in a particular literary form. Most Pacific histories are still written as if the narrative is the obvious and most authentic way of representing the past, as though it were only "a simulacrum of the structure and processes of real events".⁷⁷ Hayden White has pointed out that historians are not looking to art for ideas on how to write history, but that they favour one particular art form, that of the mid-nineteenth-century novel.⁷⁸ The discipline of Pacific History has so far been left largely untouched by the intriguing discussion about the implications of

⁷² VEYNE 1986, p. 34. Please note that this is a translation of a translation. But no matter whether Veyne would have chosen the same words, the "quote" summarises a point he makes in *Les Grecs ont-ils cru à leurs mythes?*, especially in the last two chapters, which I have, alas, also read in German.

⁷³ GRAMSCI 1957, p. 107 (Critical Notes on an Attempt at Popular Presentation of Marxism by Bukharin).

⁷⁴ BACHMANN 1956, p. 48.

⁷⁵ NIETZSCHE 1985 p. 83.

⁷⁶ NIETZSCHE 1985, p. 81.

⁷⁷ WHITE 1987, p. 27.

⁷⁸ WHITE 1978, pp. 42ff. I concede that the "one-damned-thing-after-another version of history" and the analytical narrative that works with the "variagated potentialities of story-telling" (ROSALDO 1980a, p. 91) are worlds apart. My critique is primarily directed at the former. Rosaldo's narrative account of the Ilongot past (ROSALDO 1980) is remarkable because of his sensitive handling of Ilongot oral histories. Yet I find it telling that his appraisal of the narrative form is accompanied by his emphasis that it is the task of oral historians to reconstruct or "reconstitute" the past (1980a), thereby turning histories into History, and divergent recreations of the past into a convergent representation of the past the way it really was.

the narrative form, which has taken place elsewhere, particularly in recent French philosophy and semiotics.⁷⁹ I do not intend to review this discussion and merely want to stress my point that the form in which history is produced must not be naively taken for granted.

History is science. But science is no longer what it used to be when Newton or Seignobos and Langlois were around. Historians who vow to establish a historical **science** would probably be shocked when confronted with the prospect of using concepts of natural science post-Einstein. But why not?

History is art. To alienate the majority of historians, one does not have to go so far as to demand that historians identify themselves with action painters or kinetic sculptors.⁸⁰ One does not have to go so far as to suggest that historians should be prepared to accept the whole range of literary art forms as possible models (although I would love to see some history written influenced by dadaism or surrealism - or Binandere poetry, for that matter).

I have a modest divergence from the conventional in mind: for writing histories like this one I propose to experiment with a method that has been used in Western music, film, literature and other art forms, particularly since the second decade of this century: the montage.⁸¹ Through a montage qualitatively different elements are juxtaposed to create a heterogenous context. The montage is both destructive and constructive: in his films, Alexander Kluge, applying the principle of montage, alienates elements from their conventional contexts to make headway for new contexts. The viewers are called upon to find points of contact or to question those alluded to by the director. They are provoked to patch together elements, informed by their own experiences and imagination. Kluge juxtaposes what happens, with the desires of those who take part in what happens, thereby opposing "to the abstract functional reality of the contemporary world the repressed counter-reality of the productive forces of the imagination."⁸² In a similar manner, the historian needs to juxtapose history made with history produced (which contains ideologies that enable human beings to appropriate their realities - and their experiences). In histories the "factual" and the "fictional" need to be confronted, sometimes to deny the possibility of an easy distinction between fiction and fact, sometimes to make one appear in the light of the other. In *Geschichte und*

⁷⁹ There has been another debate which is not the one I have in mind: historians have been engaged for some decades in a debate about the respective merits of the historical narrative and the analytical description of structural changes. Often the more scientific mode of historiography (as, for example, represented by the *Annales* historians) adheres to chronological linearity and writes the past to delineate the present as much as the more "novelistic" variant. Human agency that makes history proceed towards the present (and moves the representation of the past along in the historical narrative) is replaced by laws and trends established by historians who see themselves as social scientists.

⁸⁰ Cf. WHITE 1978, p. 42.

⁸¹ Benjamin was probably the first to advocate the use of the montage for the writing of history (BENJAMIN 1982, pp. 573ff (N 1.10; N 1a.8; N 2.6)), although he was not quite sure how to go about it (letter to Gretel Adorno, Paris: 16 August 1935, in: BENJAMIN 1982, p. 1139). Taussig claims in the introduction to *Shamanism, Colonialism, and the Wild Man* to carry over into history the principle of montage (TAUSSIG 1986, p. xiv). He does so successfully, although the juxtapositions are mostly those of the people who feature in his book, rather than his own (cf. TAUSSIG 1986, esp. chapter 27). My own attempts to experiment with different art forms may seem half-hearted, but after all this is a doctoral dissertation in Pacific History, with its own peculiar formal and stylistic requirements.

⁸² ROBERTS 1982, p. 118.

Eigensinn, which resembles a film as much as Kluge's films resemble literature, Negt and Kluge say that they use the method of Lévi-Strauss' *bricoleur*.⁸³ A *bricoleur* (Lévi-Strauss' metaphor for what the savage mind does) gathers whatever comes his or her way, and uses the things thus collected in ingenious combinations.⁸⁴ The historian who works like a *bricoleur* has to be sensitive for what can be collected and for the options for combining the collected; the historian expects a sensitive reader, and at the same time provokes the reader to be sensitive, and to relish the unconventional and the unexpected. More than in other films, its results depend on the recipient, Kaes says about *Die Patriotin*.⁸⁵ Similarly historians who use the principle of the montage enter dialogues with their readers, the outcomes of which are more open-ended than would be the case if they stuck to the narrative.

V.

Both Lacey and Waiko have been concerned with historical material contained in oral poetry of the Enga and the Binandere. To some extent, the lyrics of *tapialai*, or songs sung to accompany Tolai dances, contain historical material, too, although they are not as significant as the Binandere *ji tari* in terms of a recreation of the past. In this thesis I do not introduce any of them, because the two steps of translation involved (oral into written, Kunanua into English) would transform these "texts" beyond recognition. Not only is the language used in a *tapialai* archaic, and meanings are cryptic; these texts can hardly be understood removed from their oral-aural and visual contexts. John Waiko, I believe, has done a great job when rendering Binandere chants into written English, but he has thereby created an entirely new art form. But the dilemma does not end here.

POETRY is oral HISTORY
and oral HISTORY
is POETRY.

begins Dennis Tedlock a talk. For
conversational narratives THEMSELVES
traditionally classified as PROSE
turn out, when listened to CLOSELY
to have poetical qualities of their OWN.⁸⁶

After all, there is only a gradual difference between rendering a *tapialai* and rendering a Tolai narrative into written words.⁸⁷ There are several options for the oral historians once they have decided to write history. One is to convey as much of the oral-aural and visual contexts in writing, by describing the setting of the performance, and by transcribing the stories in a way which tells the reader how the words are intoned and

⁸³ NEGt & KLUGE 1981, p. 222. The closest equivalent in English to the word *bricoleur* is "Jack-of-all-trades".

⁸⁴ Cf. LÉVI-STRAUSS 1966, pp. 16ff. In Irving Wohlfahrt's interpretation of Benjamin, the latter's "materialist historian" is a *chiffonnier*, a rag picker (WOHLFAHRT 1986). He describes but one important aspect of what the *bricoleur* does.

⁸⁵ KAES 1987, p. 63; cf. p. 51.

⁸⁶ TEDLOCK 1983, p. 109. Tedlock has transcribed the talk and asks the reader to "imagine yourself speaking to a crowd of historians, nearly all of them closely cropped and necktied" (ibid.). The line change is to indicate a short pause, at least half a second; the words in capitals are to be read in a loud voice.

⁸⁷ If there were a spectrum of texts with poetic qualities, with poetry in the strictest sense of the word on one end, then most oral histories that I quote would be on the other end. There are exceptions, for example, ToBalaguan talking about cannibalism (in chapter 11), or ToBilam introducing Abaram ToBobo (in chapter 7), where the narrator's prose has indeed obvious poetical qualities. But these categorisations follow my own aesthetic criteria, and in general I agree with Tedlock: oral history is poetry.

which gestures accompany them.⁸⁸ I have occasionally chosen this option, for instance, when saying how ToDivona told the story about Mrs Wolff's murder in the first chapter. Once history is written in a language different from that of the oral histories used, it becomes much more difficult to convey the spoken word. One may choose to try reproducing an oral text in the written translation according to one's own perceptions, or according to the assumed perceptions in the narrator's culture. This requires great familiarity with the language that is translated, and in my opinion it requires also that the language into which the oral text is translated, is the translator's mother tongue. Since it became possible to record texts on tape, it has become realistic for the translator to strive for an "authentic" rendering of the oral text;⁸⁹ but I agree with Ong when he says that "a literate person cannot fully recover a sense of what the word is to purely oral people".⁹⁰ I do not claim to reproduce the sense or flavour of the oral narratives I translate. I have chosen different ways of quoting oral histories: summarising them in my own words, or translating them as accurately as possible. This is both the result of different ways of recording them (with a tape recorder, by taking notes, or by writing them down afterwards from memory), and an indication of the tension between the desire to let the reader *listen* to Tolai histories and the realisation that the most the reader can get is my own perceptions and recreations of the histories. I claim to use oral histories as elements of my history, rather than as mere raw material. In doing so I have to be careful not to erase the style of Tolai histories when making them *readable* in the translation, by, for example, deleting repetitions, that are characteristic of oral discourses.⁹¹

Ideally, written oral history is poetry, too: the historian's poetry, informed by the poetics of the oral histories he or she uses. And the style as much as the form may be decisive in recreating some of the features of the oral mode, in resurrecting the transient reality of the spoken as against the permanent unreality of the written word,⁹² in deconstructing the authority of the history book.

⁸⁸ For the role of body movements in oral narratives, cf. SCHEUB 1977, esp. pp. 354-363.

⁸⁹ Cf. TEDLOCK 1983, chapter 1.

⁹⁰ ONG 1982, p. 12.

⁹¹ Histories written in 1988 at Australian universities belong to particular genres. Looking at the genre represented by Tolai narratives and at its stylistic features can make me more conscious of the stylistic features of my own history. Cf. Shelley Errington's illuminating comparison between Western history and Malay *hikayat* (ERRINGTON 1979).

⁹² Cf. ONG 1977, p. 21.

7: He Went Down in History as a Man of Faith and a Staunch Leader

I.

Abaram ToBobo has been mentioned several times, and that is no accident. People often talked about him, when I enquired about the past in villages around Kokopo. If there were a scale for fame, he would outdo Enos Teve, Tioti ToMataria, Kukubak or others from the Vunamami area whose names I cite in my history.

"This I heard from Mikael ToBilak", ToBilam began his story. "He preached at Vunamami and told it to support his sermon. After he left [the Methodist Mission's pastors training institution at] Vunairima, Mikael ToBilak was a pastor here at Bitapabeke¹. Abaram was still around at that time, he helped the *lotu* in Bitapabeke. One day Mikael came down from the pastor's house to Natule, where Abaram lived. There he heard people laughing and joking. He asked them: 'What are you laughing at?' Abaram replied: 'Nothing really, my children are just laughing at me.' 'But what for?', Mikael asked. 'They are laughing, because I have enacted my own death.' 'How did you do that?', asked Mikael. 'I just showed them how it would be if I were dead.' 'How did you do that then?' 'Easy, I lay down on the floor, I just lay down, and I demonstrated how it would be if I were dead. My body became rigid and cold.' Mikael was surprised and exclaimed: 'Ee! Is that really true?' Abaram nodded. Then he asked Mikael: 'What about you, Mikael, you want to see the death?' Mikael said: 'Oh well, why not. I will have a look at it.' He said that in his Raluana dialect, of course.² Abaram lay on the ground, with arms and legs stretched out. He died. There wasn't a spark of life in him. His body went cold, rigor mortis set in, just as when you are dead. He was as dead as a doornail. Mikael became worried, he cried: 'Oh what have I done! I have consented, I have induced him to do this. I have made him do it. Oh my mother, now he is really dead. I have encouraged him. I have persuaded him to die.' As Mikael lamented like this, Abaram woke up, and laughed: 'What are you worried about?' Mikael said: 'Oh, I was so frightened because I made you do this. I was scared that I might not hear your voice again, because you were stone-dead.' Abaram said to him: 'You think dying is hard. It is not.' Addressing all of them he said: 'I will not die. The day I die, I will not really die, and I won't be sick. It will be just as if I were asleep. You will be surprised to see that I will die just like that.'³

Such a man was Abaram ToBobo. "About him miraculous stories are told", Salisbury says in his biographical sketch.⁴ I recorded this particular story from Gideon ToBilam who is a trained pastor and in 1987 was the lay person in charge of the United Church congregation of Bitapabeke. Almost as famous in Raluana* as Abaram is around

¹ Bitapabeke is the name of the place where the United Church building in Vunabalbal Village stands. It is also the name used for the United Church congregation in Vunabalbal. Though there are a few Catholics living in that village (they belong to the Vunapope parish), Bitapabeke is used more often than the official village name when people refer to Vunabalbal Village.

² ToBilam told the story in his own (Vunamami) dialect but for the passages where he quoted ToBilak - 'in his Raluana dialect, of course'.

³ Gideon ToBilam of Vunabalbal on 3 November 1987 at Vunabalbal. Slightly abridged extract. Taped statement. Non-literal translation from the Tolai language on the basis of a transcript prepared by Helena Jacob and myself.

⁴ SALISBURY 1970, p. 315.

Vunamami, Mikael ToBilak was a charismatic leader of the Methodist Church during and after the Second World War. And people tell stories about Mikael's death, too.

II.

Stories about Abaram ToBobo show him in three different contexts:

- (1) Abaram as the political leader dealing with the colonial Administration,
- (2) Abaram as a big man of Vunabalbal *vunatarai*, and
- (3) Abaram as an apostle of Methodist faith.

In 1987 Vunabalbal *vunatarai* was represented around Kokopo by Eduard ToVavaur who led the *vunatarai* in the villages east of Kokopo, and Henry Tavul who was the *lualua* on the west. The ancestors of Vunabalbal came from New Ireland and went ashore at Balanamap near Cape Gazelle. From there the *vunatarai* migrated westwards. Abaram was born in Maudang, a *madapai* near Kokopo Town, which today is inside the boundaries of Kinabot Plantation. He and two brothers, Tolnamete and Tolringa moved further west to Vunabalbal. Named after a *balbal* tree⁵ where the clan's warriors hung the skulls of their enemies, Vunabalbal is now regarded as the *vunatarai's madapai*.⁶ It is part of today's Vunabalbal Village.

Little is known of Abaram ToBobo's early life. None of my informants could name ToBobo's parents. In fact, some introduced him in the same way as others had spoken of ToMarnakat, who had similar facial features: 'It is not known where he came from.' The Methodist minister Misiel Tiriman was said to have conjectured that Abaram was from Egypt.⁷ From ToVavaur I learnt the following:

The two brothers ToInamete and ToIringa had acquired a *malan* [magic to make somebody invulnerable], and after it had been tried out successfully by ToInamete on ToIringa in front of a large crowd (he shot at his brother with a rifle), they used it in war. Then the Germans arrived. They approached ToAbaram and kitted him out with trousers, a shirt, shoes and a large hat. They rigged him out this way so that he would steal the antidote to the *malan*. Indeed, he stole a *kabang* [lime] and blew it at them, thus offsetting the *malan's* effects, so that he would become the leader of the people. The people fled in all directions. ToInamete and ToIringa escaped to Toma, from there they went to Malakuna [No. 4] and from there to Katakatai where they died.⁸

ToVavaur, being a Catholic and not living near Vunabalbal, talked about one of his *patuana* only from the *vunatarai's* perspective. He presumed that the war in which Abaram intervened was the last *kamara*, the last war fought between groups of Tolai in the area, before peace was imposed by the Germans. He went on to explain that the *gunan* was depopulated ('the people fled') and that the Government issued an ultimatum: 'If the population has not increased significantly within the next five years, the people of Vunamami and Vunabalbal will be resettled in Toma. Their land will be

⁵ Coral tree (*Erythrina Indica*).

⁶ Eduard ToVavaur of Livuan in November 1987.

⁷ Bonnie laNamur of Vunamami in November 1987.

⁸ Eduard ToVavaur of Livuan on 12 November 1987 in Livuan. Gist of his statement according to my notes.

taken over by the planters.' Vunabaibal and Vunamami people were at that time squatting on plantation land. Abaram responded to the threat by imposing an upper limit of ten fathoms of *tabu* for bride price payments and by arranging marriages for his people as he saw fit: the bloke with the gammy leg was to marry the lame woman, the smart girl was given a clever husband. Thereafter the birth rate went up and the population increased dramatically. The German Administration kept its word and let the people stay in 'native reserves'.⁹

ToVavaur: 'They approached Abaram and kitted him out with trousers, a shirt, shoes and a large hat. They rigged him out this way so he would steal the antidote to the malan.'

The Tolai I met remembered little about what is dubbed in the literature the 'war-of-the-bullet-proof-ointment'.¹⁰ This is remarkable, for in the German sources the war of 1893 is portrayed as the only organised attempt on the Gazelle Peninsula to drive out the colonial masters and their imported labourers.

According to Administration sources,¹¹ Tingनावुदु was the centre of the unrest which was caused by the alienation of customary Tolai land ('they fear for their landed

⁹ Eduard ToVavaur of Livuan in November 1887. In March 1897, Albert Hahl, Imperial Judge since early 1896, reported that he dissuaded the planter Queen Emma from evicting the people of Vunamami (Hahl to v. Hagen, Herbertshöhe: 22 March 1897; RKA 2276). ToBobo must have reached an agreement with the Administration at about that time.

¹⁰ Cf. SALISBURY 1970, pp. 79f; SACK 1973, pp. 88f and 107f; HEMPENSTALL 1978, pp. 128-31; FIRTH 1983, pp. 60f.

¹¹ See: Schmiele to Direktion NGK Berlin, F.-W'hafen: 26 December 1893; Kolbe to Schmiele, Herbertshöhe: 19 Sept. 1893 (both in RKA 2983). At that time, German New Guinea was a protectorate administered by the Neu-Guinea Kompagnie (NGK) (New Guinea Company).

property"¹²) and sparked by the imprisonment of a healing woman, "interference" with local women, and stealing of market produce by labourers, in particular by members of a boat crew employed by the New Guinea Company. The authors in the Catholic Mission's journal *Monatshefte* had less reason to be careful in their assessment of the reasons underlying the unrest than those on the Company's payroll; they reported that the plantation labourers, who were nearly all from New Ireland and the North Solomons, dictated the prices on the local markets and forced the trading women to sell their goods below their real value. Furthermore,

they abused the Sunday rest period to rove the bush where they took by force the sole riches of the natives, their *diwara*¹³ (shell-money), this country's currency. They also committed other crimes, which call even more loudly for redress.¹⁴

The latter remark is presumably a circumlocution for rape of Tolai women, committed by labourers.¹⁵

In the 1890s the Methodist and Catholic Missions on the Gazelle Peninsula regarded each other rather than the heathen Tolai as the embodiment of the Anti-Christ. It is no surprise therefore, that the head of the Catholic Mission in the area, Bishop Louis Couppé, put the blame on a Methodist pastor-teacher ... and on a Methodist Tolai convert, ToBobo:

"ToBobo" is an insolent fellow of the kind that is needed by the teachers in order to inspire the natives with *awe* (I). He and the said catechist were at the bottom of the war because they had been blackmailing the inland kanakas whom they threatened with the judge and the police at the slightest provocation.¹⁶

On 18 July 1893, following many rumours of an intended uprising of the "districts" in the hinterland of Herbertshöhe,¹⁷ the New Guinea Company's Herbertshöhe plantation was attacked by warriors from Tingnavudu, Ulagunan and Malakuna (No. 4).¹⁸ Among the leaders of the uprising was ToNgaru of Ulagunan, who, nine years later, was arrested as an alleged supporter of ToVagira and ToKilang.¹⁹ The attackers were said to have

¹² Kolbe to Schmiele, Herbertshöhe: 19 September 1893 (RKA 2983).

¹³ On the Duke of York Islands, the Tolai's shell-money was called *diwara* (also spelled in the literature: *diwarra* or *diwara*); this term is used in most early colonial sources.

¹⁴ *Monatshefte* 1894, p. 103.

¹⁵ Margaret Mead quotes the planter Phoebe Parkinson as saying that they were "flirting" with the local *maries*, but the term apparently used by Phoebe Parkinson to describe the flirting, "pulling" (the Tok Pisin *pulim*) indicates that it was not as harmless as Mead thought (MEAD 1960, p. 195).

¹⁶ *Monatshefte* 1896, p. 70 (emphasis by Couppé). The "said catechist" is called Eparaamo in the *Monatshefte* and possibly identical with the Fijian pastor-teacher Eparama Vuraliso. The Catholics put some of the blame also on the Mission's archfiend, the Protestant Administrator Schmiele (cf. Weber, in: *Monatshefte* 1896, p. 107), who, in the wake of anti-catholic government policies in Berlin, detested the Sacred Heart Mission because it was catholic and because its leader was French.

¹⁷ "This new event dominated every conversation, every meeting" (*Monatshefte* 1894, p. 134).

¹⁸ For this and the following three paragraphs see: Kolbe to Schmiele, Herbertshöhe: 31 July 1893; Kolbe to Schmiele, H'höhe: 18 Sep. 1893; Schmiele to Direktion NGK Berlin, F.-W'hafen: 9 Nov. 1893 (enclosure in: Hansemann to Caprivi, Berlin: 11 Jan. 1894); order Schmiele, H'höhe: 13 Dec. 1893; Schmiele to Direktion NGK Berlin, F.-W'hafen: 26 Dec. 1893; Parkinson to Ms. Rose, Ralum: 21 Nov. 1893 (all: RKA 2983); Arnoldi to Kommandierender Admiral Berlin, Singapore: 26 Jan. 1894; Schmiele to Arnoldi, H'höhe: 12 Dec. 1893; Arnoldi to Ahlert, Matupi: 13 December 1893; report Ahlert, H'höhe: 16 Dec. 1893 (all: BMArch: RM 3/v. 3186); (Parkinson in: *Norddt. Allg. Ztg.* of 8 Jan. and 22 Feb. 1894; BISKUP 1974, pp. 112-116; MEAD 1960, pp. 195-197; Chambers, in: *AMMR* of 4 Jan. 1894, p. 2; Oldham, in: *AMMR* of 4 Jan. 1894, pp. 2f. and 5 Feb. 1894, pp. 2f; *Monatshefte* 1894, pp. 102f, 133-37, 166f; Couppé, in: *Monatshefte* 1896, pp. 68-71. (The evidence in the *Monatshefte* provides some interesting details, but by and large their account tends to be more "fictive" than "factual". Still, it constitutes a distinctive catholic missionary reality as an outcome of the Mission's specific perception of the events.).

¹⁹ See chapter 1, p. 14.

paid 1000 fathoms of *tabu* for a magic body ointment which, they believed, would repel bullets.²⁰

On 24 July and on 5 September, the Administration mounted punitive expeditions against the enemy who sustained heavy losses. The Administration's troops, comprising European volunteers, New Guinean policemen and plantation labourers, suffered only two casualties, one of them being ToBobo, who was wounded. Nevertheless, the rebels' force gathered strength as warriors from Painapuru,²¹ Bitarebarebe and others joined the alliance. On 15, 16 and 17 September, they attacked Herbertshöhe Plantation repeatedly. The attacks were repelled; by then the Tolai were said to have lost at least forty-three men. Though defeated several times, the Tolai did not admit that they were beaten and did not pay the shell-money compensation demanded by the Administration. But neither did they attempt another attack on Herbertshöhe. The situation became increasingly difficult for the Administration. "Districts" other than the ones mentioned before were said to be ready to join the alliance. The markets, where Tolai women sold garden produce to the plantations to feed their labourers, were no longer attended. On 18 September the New Guinea Company's station master in Herbertshöhe, Paul Kolbe, wrote to his superior, Administrator Schmiele:

It is not possible to express a reliable opinion about the likely state of affairs in the very near future, because previous experiences are of no use in trying to make predictions.²²

Unable to end the conflict by force, the colonial side sought a solution at the negotiating table. In early October, the Methodist missionaries Oldham and Taufa, through the Raluana* big man ToKinkin, offered to advocate the rebels' case and urged them to give in by paying a nominal fine to the Administration. Both this attempt and another, undertaken by Couppé, failed. The Germans still insisted on the payment of a fine, while the Tolai themselves demanded the surrender of the colonial ringleader, the Company's stationmaster. On 26 October, Schmiele made an appointment with the big men concerned to meet at Giregire. The outcome was embarrassing for the Administrator because the big men did not turn up.

A state of war prevailed again. On 18 November a man from Ulagunan shot a plantation labourer - the only death on the side of the colonial forces during the whole conflict. Schmiele made another attempt to talk to the leaders of the Tolai alliance and failed once more. Two big men from Bitarebarebe paid a meagre fifty fathoms of *tabu* and were given a German flag so that in the event of another punitive expedition, they could signal that they were under imperial protection. On 14 December the German man-of-war SMS *Sperber* shelled the hinterland of Herbertshöhe, the targets being indicated by Richard Parkinson. According to the commander

²⁰ For the supposed production of the ointment see Mouton's account (BISKUP 1974, p. 112). The colonialists rationalised the trials the "inventor" of the ointment made to prove its effectiveness; see: BISKUP 1974, p. 116 and CAYLEY-WEBSTER 1898, p. 82. Cayley-Webster visited the Gazelle about five months after the end of the hostilities. Perhaps to impress his readers, he claimed to have been there at the time of the uprising. For a description of the alleged purchases of the ointment see Phoebe Parkinsons's account (MEAD 1960, pp. 195f; cf. *Monatshette* 1894, p. 134).

²¹ Painapuru (spelled "Bainabur" or "Bainaburur" in the Government records) must have been a "district" at that time. Today the name is only used to refer to a *madapai* in Bitarebarebe and to the *vunatarai* identified by it.

²² Kolbe to Schmiele, H'höhe: 18 Sep. 1893 (RKA 2983). Schmiele's title was *Landeshauptmann*.

of SMS *Sperber*, only one Tolai was killed, and 'one native who heard the explosion turned his head in fright so abruptly that he dislocated his neck with the head remaining sideways.'²³ Nevertheless, some writers afterwards attributed the Tolai's preparedness to seek peace three days later to the warship's gun fire.²⁴ In the past, German warship-commanders had shown no desire to dispatch their crews into what they perceived as a hostile country - populated by treacherous natives and infested with lethal fever vapours and poisonous snakes.²⁵ In this case, urged by Schmiele to inflict a 'vigorous and persistent chastisement'²⁶ upon the resurgents, SMS *Sperber*'s commander Arnoldi on 14 December sent a detachment of forty marine soldiers ashore. They did not encounter the enemy, but were shot at by a party of Europeans and New Guineans led by Kolbe. Though the concerted efforts of the German navy, the European residents on the Gazelle Peninsula, and their New Guinean supporters were pathetic,²⁷ sixteen Tolai were shot dead and several *gunan* burnt. This final punitive expedition was also said to have persuaded the Tolai to give up their fight. I believe that Kolbe's precipitate punitive expeditions in July and September had cut the Tolai's potential strength and lowered their aspirations; they prevented other groups from joining the alliance and hindered the development of the ointment's dynamic.²⁸

At an earlier stage of the war, Schmiele had suspected that the Tolai would discontinue the unrest for other reasons. 'The men are so accustomed to trade goods that they cannot do without the whites,' he wrote. 'In fact, they already suffer considerably from a lack of tobacco.'²⁹

A compensation payment eventually sealed peace shortly after the Tolai's initial request. The Administration refrained from putting the surviving 'ringleaders' on trial. Conveniently, the man who had shot dead the labourer in November, had been killed in the last punitive expedition on 14/15 December.

The 'insolent fellow' ToBobo is not credited with the outcome of this conflict in any of the colonial sources. The planter Mouton was a competent observer, as he was fluent in Kuanua, had good contacts with villages around Takubar and took part in the punitive expeditions; in his assessment the ineffectiveness of the magical ointment was

²³ Arnoldi to Kommandierender Admiral Berlin, Singapore: 26 Jan. 1894 (RM 3/v. 3186).

²⁴ So did Heinrich Schnee (1904, pp. 18f). Warships had frequently called at places around the northeastern Gazelle Peninsula to punish insubordinate Tolai - with little effect. The dispatch of warships and the shelling of 'unruly' areas had been a feature of nineteenth century imperialism in other colonised parts of the world. In *Heart of Darkness*, Joseph Conrad's character Marlow gives a masterly description of this practice (CONRAD 1973, p. 20).

²⁵ See, for example: Hansemann to AA-KA, Berlin: 28 April 1893; Fischer to Kaiserliches Kommando der Marinestation der Ostsee, Kiel: 14 July 1893 (both in: RM 3/v. 3003).

²⁶ Schmiele to Arnoldi, H'höhe: 12 Dec. 1893 (RM 3/v. 3186).

²⁷ The party led by Schmiele, made up of three whites, some plantation labourers and police, had to encamp in Toma because the mate of the New Guinea Company's recruiting vessel *Senta*, Senf, was so drunk that he endangered the whole party. Later he was still too intoxicated to walk on his own; one of the New Guineans leading him was shot in the leg and had to be carried on a stretcher. The police were, according to Schmiele, no good either. The man who had allegedly trained them, a certain Hasse, was apparently not able to communicate with them because of his poor knowledge of Tok Plisin. The force led by Schmiele was also attacked by Kolbe's men.

²⁸ It seems that Kolbe was quick to react because the German Navy was engaged in the Samoan Civil War at that time and not available until late that year.

²⁹ Schmiele to Direktion NGK Berlin, F.-W'hafen: 9 Nov. 1893 (RKA 2983).

responsible for the Tolai's surrender. The colonial sources give Tavalai (or Taulavai) as the name of the "inventor" of the ointment,³⁰ and, according to Mouton, it was his death that "settled the matter to a certain point".³¹ Tavalai was said to have died for the first time on 5 September, when Kolbe led the second punitive expedition against the rebellious "districts".³² Mouton himself referred to the expedition of 14/15 December when he allegedly cut off the dead "wizard's" ear to show to Tolai and shake their faith in the magic.³³ After reportedly having died twice already, Tavalai had enough vigour left to meet the travel-writer Cayley-Webster in Ralum after the hostilities.³⁴

Knowledge among the Tolai about this war is limited. I came across no-one who knew much about the scope of the war or its course. There were no material relics which people wanted to show me. Those whom I asked - and they were supposed to be the most knowledgeable ones - could not recall many names of people or places in conjunction with the war.

I was told of two pieces of evidence:

- (1) William ToKavivi of Vunamami and Tio Taia of Vunabalbal had seen a scar on ToBobo's upper arm and were told that ToBobo's brother, possibly Tolringa, had shot ToBobo through the arm, because he was furious about his act of treachery.³⁵
- (2) Several people cited the words of a song which had been chanted in the background by women supporting the warriors: *A bol i alir / Timan i alir*. The song was part of the magic which repelled bullets. It was called either (*malira na malan* or *malira Baining*). The first line means: "the bullet drips (off the body)"; however, my informants could not agree on the meaning of the second line. Some said that Timan (or Timon) referred either to the Germans (*Tiaman*) or to the Europeans (*waitiman*). Others claimed that Timan/Timon was the name of a *fabalivana*, or, more likely, of a *turangan*, a spirit which was called on for help.

According to my Tolai informants, the distributor of the *malira na malan* and/or leader of the alliance was the big man ToVoa of Tingenavudu who later invited the Catholic Mission to set up a station at Takabur where his name is mentioned on a memorial.³⁶ The *malira na malan* had been purchased from the Baining, possibly via people in Viviren, some say via Tolnamete. ToBobo, good friend of the Germans as he was, neutralised the *malan's* effects with a *kabang na palapala*.³⁷

³⁰ He was described by Mouton as "a young man of no more than twenty-five or thirty years old" (BISKUP 1974, p. 116). Kolbe reckoned that he was from Viviren (Kolbe to Schmiele, H'höhe: 18 Sep. 1893; RKA 2983); Salisbury (1970, p. 79) claims that he was from Paparatava but does not make clear from where he got this piece of information; Mead (1960, p. 195) quotes Phoebe Parkinson as saying he belonged to the Paparatava people.

³¹ BISKUP 1974, p. 115.

³² Kolbe to Schmiele, H'höhe: 18 Sep. 1893 (RKA 2983).

³³ BISKUP 1974, p. 114.

³⁴ CAYLEY-WEBSTER 1898, p. 82.

³⁵ ToWilliam said he used a short-barrelled gun (*pupulegi*), substituting the tongue of a *ngap*, a jews' harp, for the bullet (William ToKavivi of Vunamami in December 1987). Mouton who mixes up the chronology of events, probably refers to ToBobo when he writes: "The only damage we had is a friendly native shot through the arm and only a flesh wound no bone broken." (BISKUP 1974, p. 115)

³⁶ A certain Towua Towiwino, big man of the "district" Tingenawuddu, is mentioned by Kolbe as one of those masterminding the uprising and probably identical with ToVoa.

³⁷ I suspect Salisbury has misunderstood his informants, when he says that ToBobo obtained some of the magic ointment and took it to the police and the labourers, who smeared themselves with it (SALISBURY 1970, p. 80). This would make no sense, as Peter Sack has already pointed out (SACK 1976a, p. 223, fn. 1). Even though today the course of the war has been forgotten, still many people know what a *malira na malan* is, and more

From the colonial sources it appears that the war in 1893 marked an important stage in relations between Tolai and Europeans. It was the first time that a large-scale alliance was formed. The punitive expedition on 5 September was a pre-emptive strike, since a force of 2000 warriors was expected to be ready to attack Herbertshöhe. Different clans and "districts" between Kokopo and Toma shared the same grievances: harassment by plantation labourers and alienation of land. Only through the ointment were they bound together.³⁸ The novelistic account in the *Monatshefte* reports the following exchange between the insurgents, and New Guinean police and labourers:

- Why are you going to fight your brothers?
- Because you have made common cause with our enemies who have repeatedly attacked the station.³⁹

The value of this piece of evidence is doubtful. Since the colonialists frequently equated German Social Democrats and unruly colonised, the latter were sometimes attributed with notions of solidarity which they did not yet display. Apart from ToBobo, no Tolai assisted the Administration's troops. Unlike in 1902, when the murderers of Hedwig Wolff were hunted by the police, this time the Tolai were on the offensive. Never in the history of German New Guinea were the colonial forces as vulnerable and close to defeat. Only this threat explains why thirty-seven whites took part in one of the punitive expeditions. Never before or after did the German Administration fail to punish the alleged leaders of a plot - this time they did not even insist on the full payment of the shell-money compensation.⁴⁰

In a way, the *malira na malan*'s effects were countered by those of the new *malira*, the *lotu*, which bound together Tolai and Europeans. In the past, Tolai warriors had always fought on the side of the colonialists against other Tolai, because they gained from such an alliance. But ToBobo supported the whites not only for political reasons. Richard Parkinson, more familiar with the situation on the Gazelle than any member of the Administration, proposed in a newspaper article to strengthen the new *malira*:

Perhaps the local missionary societies should be granted far-reaching privileges; they should be encouraged by allocating them land in suitable locations to establish stations and win the confidence of the natives. In cleverly using the missions and in co-operating closely with them, the unmannered native spirit would be curbed. We would then raise a tribe which would be capable of further spreading civilisation and culture.⁴¹

would have known when Salisbury did his fieldwork, hence it is unlikely that anybody told him what he later wrote in his book. Was he perhaps influenced by the belief shared in the Western world in the 1960s that war will be prevented if both sides have access to the same wonder weapons?

³⁸ The importance of magical devices and the role of magicians had a great impact in different colonial situations where the parochial nature of the colonised societies had to be overcome in order to mount a successful anti-colonial struggle, as the Isaacmans have shown for anti-colonial activities in the Zambesi Valley in Southern Africa, to give one example (ISAACMAN & ISAACMAN 1976). In 1986 and 1987, several thousand Ugandans rallied behind Alice Lakwena, a spirit medium who supplied them with a bullet-proof ointment and led them in a ten-months war against the government's National Resistance Army. At an early stage in this war, the government troops claimed victory and to have killed the magician, which turned out to be unfounded (*Niugini Nius* of 23 Jan. 1987; *Guardian* of 22 Jan. 1987; *The Observer* of 8 Nov. 1987; *The Independent* of 3 Nov. 1987; I am grateful to Wibke Rickers for sending me cuttings from the British press on this matter.).

³⁹ *Monatshefte* 1894, p. 166.

⁴⁰ Phoebe Parkinson recalled that she was, apparently about a year after the war, asked to negotiate the payment of outstanding fines; she declined (MEAD 1960, p. 197).

⁴¹ *Norddt. Allg. Ztg.* of 22 Feb. 1894. Note, that his last sentence indicates that Parkinson shared the belief of many other colonialists that the Tolai were superior to other New Guineans and could be used as mediators.

In the few Tolai versions I was able to collect, the war is not the beginning of a new age, but the end of an old one. Significantly, several of my informants claimed that ToVoa did not lead a war against the Europeans, but that it was an inter-tribal fight between groups around Tingenavudu and others who lived further north towards the coast.

In Tolai accounts, ToBobo stands for the new order, particularly for its unambiguously positive aspect, the *lotu*. Though ToWilliam and others are critical of ToBobo and emphasise his being shot, the story about the furious brother tends to become an account of ToBobo's penance; he paid for his treachery, the score is even. With the new forces represented by ToBobo, identification with the losers of 1893 has by and large disappeared, and this may explain the amnesia. ToVavaur is an exception; born around 1900 he was much older than all the others who taught me about ToBobo. He looked at ToBobo from the *vunatarai's* perspective, and in that respect, Tolnamete and Tolringa were after all important *patuana*, too. Significantly, in the Tolai histories told between Vunamami and Toma, only ToVoa stands out among the losers, because he came to terms with the new times. My history of the Tolai tries to pay tribute to the losers, since they were indeed at the beginning of the Tolai. It pays tribute to ToBobo as the most enigmatic personality in Tolai history in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

III.

The change Abaram ToBobo underwent in his own life-time is one of the topics all narrators emphasise, regardless of the perspective from which they tell their histories. It is as if the dramatic change the Tolai have experienced as a group since 1875 is, in an exaggerated fashion, condensed in one man's life-story.

ToBobo was baptised only in 1894. A few months later, the Methodist missionary William Chambers wrote about him:

(He) is decidedly the most whole-souled native Christian I have yet been brought into contact with. ... I have on several occasions felt my soul stirred and my heart filled with thankfulness to God for this trophy of redeeming grace.⁴²

Only a year later, the same missionary reported that ToBobo was "a very acceptable preacher".

I have had several people who have told me that they have been led to repentance through the instrumentality of his preaching.⁴³

Before he became a fervent adherent of the Methodist *lotu*, ToBobo was successfully preoccupied with secular matters. He accumulated a respectable amount of *tabu* and had at least two wives, one of whom he had carried off as booty in a war. He was a renowned *luluai*. Later he confessed to Mikael ToBilak to have once killed

⁴² Chambers, in: *AMMR* of 6 May 1895, p. 4.

⁴³ Chambers, in: *AMMR* of 6 May 1896, p. 8.

somebody by tearing the victim's throat open;⁴⁴ Henry Tavul said that he did this to a woman who discovered the secret of the *tubuan*.⁴⁵

"Abraham, the saint", caption by an unidentified Methodist missionary, c. 1925

The turning point came when, after ToBobo became acquainted with the *lotu*, he decided to learn to read the bible. There are many different versions of his efforts to learn to read. The one that conforms to the pattern of suffusing all his actions with the extraordinary, says that once he decided to read, he could read. The most conservative version says that, like anybody else with similar aspirations, he attended the Methodist village school; this seems an inappropriate rationalisation of his schooling given the importance which is attached to it. Most people would agree to the following description by ToBilam:

Abaram asked some of those in charge of the *lotu* to teach him the letters of the alphabet. They explained that if a "d" and an "a" and a "t" are joined together, it means *dat* ("we"). He grasped their teaching. "He did not attend a school, he taught himself like that, and afterwards he was able to read the bible. When he read the bible, he fully understood what God expected from the man who wanted to become a follower. He kept on reading the bible, and really took to it. He discovered some good sayings in the bible. One sentence he came across said something like: 'It is

⁴⁴ IaLuisa of Raluana in November 1987.

⁴⁵ Henry Tavul of Vunamami/Vunabalbal in October 1987.

forbidden for one man to have many wives.' When he read this, he said to his second wife: 'You are in my way. You prevent me from achieving everlasting life.' ... Later, he suggested an amicable solution, one of peace and loving kindness." He organised a *balaguan*, gave her presents and sent her back to her relatives. He kept IaPricilla IaUlata, who bore him several children.⁴⁶

Regardless of their version of ToBobo's schooling, most informants said that he swallowed one or several pages of the bible and thereby acquired knowledge.

ToBobo got also rid of his entire *tabu* riches, either by distributing them or by burning them. He went even further. His admirer, William Chambers, reported that he sold a boat to ToBobo who came forward with the five pound payment but would not take the boat after the Lord had advised him against it in a dream. He would not take the money back either.⁴⁷

IV.

"ToBobo was the first to believe in God."⁴⁸ "He was the first who understood the *lotu*."⁴⁹ "He was filled with the Holy Spirit."⁵⁰ Still, ToBobo did not become a pastor, but a leading layperson of the Methodist congregation in Vunamami and later Bitapabeke, when people in Vunabalbal built their own church. He is remembered as a stern guardian of Methodist principles, relentness with members of his congregation who were less quick to accept the *lotu*.

When George Brown, the first leader of the Methodist Mission in New Guinea, and his companions arrived at Molot, Duke of York Island, on 15 August 1875, they were met by people in canoes who were accustomed to visits by European traders and wanted to barter. The missionary made it clear that he would neither buy nor sell on that day. George Brown had arrived in Molot on a Sunday.⁵¹ The Methodist missionaries, Europeans and Pacific Islanders alike, regarded the observance of the Sabbath as one of the most important commandments and went to great lengths to make their Tolai flock realise what a sin its violation (*vilikete*) meant. So did Abaram ToBobo. Henry Tavul said:

"Abaram did not like it when people committed *vilikete*. Once, on a Sunday, those who had brought the *lotu* to Vunamami - some were his brothers or *matuana* or fathered by his *vunatarai* - planted fish traps on the reef. They caught some fish and roasted them together with bananas on the fire. Those leaders of the *lotu* in Vunamami now led young men to commit *vilikete*. They taught them to

⁴⁶ Passage in quotation marks from taped statement, Gideon ToBilam of Vunabalbal, on 3 November 1987 in Vunabalbal, translation from the Tolai language on the basis of transcripts prepared by IaHelena Jacob and myself. Other parts of the paragraph gist of statements by Gideon ToBilam of Vunabalbal, made on 18 October and 3 November in Vunabalbal. The Methodist missionary Chambers testifies that ToBobo learnt reading within two or three months (AMMR of 6 May 1895, p. 4).

⁴⁷ Chambers, in: AMMR of 7 October 1895, p. 2.

⁴⁸ Derlo Titi of Vunamami in August 1987.

⁴⁹ Isikel ToLuana of Takubar-Vunapalanger in August 1987.

⁵⁰ Gideon ToBilam of Vunabalbal in November 1987.

⁵¹ BROWN 1908, p. 88. This is an essential part of oral traditions told about the arrival of the Methodist Mission in the New Guinea Islands.

abandon the 'weird *malira*', the *malira na lotu* and to change back again. Abaram discovered them sitting on the beach, not far from the Vunamami church. He was furious. He chased them away. He took the fish traps and trampled them. He extinguished the fire with sea water. He kicked the bananas and fish around. Those who had sinned against the Sabbath were scared of Abaram. They were alarmed. They got together and considered their situation. 'What kind of *lotu* is this, where you are not allowed to collect food on a Sunday? Abaram is a bad man. He wants to prevent us from eating so that we will all die of hunger. Let's go to another place. Let's join the Catholic *lotu*, for the Catholics don't make a fuss about the Sabbath.' So they all joined the Catholics at Ulagunan. It was because of Abaram that the Catholics got a foothold here in Vunamami."⁵²

Abaram beat children who failed to attend Sunday School, and saw to it that everybody turned up for church. Tavul told me about Tolvat who was once working in the garden on a Sunday, while Abaram was looking for him, because he wanted him to hold an office within the congregation. The man saw Abaram approaching with a big stick in his hand. He got so scared that he immediately raced to the church, and attended the service, stark naked as he was.⁵³ In the light of these stories, Couppe's complaints about ToBobo and Eparaamo proselytising around Tingनावुदु could have been well founded.

Mikael ToBilak's widow laLuisa said Abaram was not popular with the people in Vunamami or Bitapabeke.⁵⁴ Not only did the sinners incur Abaram's wrath, they could not keep their sins away from him. To make Abaram angry, one only had to invite him to join in a meal which was prepared with leaves plucked on a Sunday. He would taste the sin straight away and not touch the food, even if there was no way he could have seen the sin committed. Men walking past Abaram with ingredients for black magic (*taring*) in their baskets, would be intercepted by him. He would demand that they dispose of the *taring*, although it should have been impossible for him to see inside the basket.

It is intriguing how much Tolai story tellers are fascinated by the power of big men and the despotic streaks in their characters.

ToBobo was capable of performing other miracles which were less menacing to those who did not live according to the Mission's teachings. For example, he could tell an eagle flying high in the sky to catch a chick running around on the ground near where he was standing. He could also manipulate the weather; however, he did not need the implements other rainmakers required: he did it just with his belief in God.⁵⁵

⁵² Henry Tavul of Vunamami/Vunabalbal on 8 and 24 October 1987 at Vunabalbal, conflation of two taped statements, translation from the Tolai language on the basis of transcripts prepared by laHennie Stanley, Joyce laUrua, laHelena Jacob and myself.

⁵³ Henry Tavul of Vunamami/Vunabalbal in October 1987.

⁵⁴ laLuisa of Raluana in November 1987.

⁵⁵ See chapter 1, p. 24: his belief (*nurnur*) let him climb unscathed down a liana which was much too thin to support him.

Glossary VI: *Nurnur*

The Tolai explanation for things which happen "supernaturally" is that they work because people believe in them. There are very few men left who are able to turn into a *minigulai* and fly, because these days it is so hard to believe unshakeably in the *ingiet*, since the *lotu* has become part of people's lives and Western science, which does not provide for the *ingiet*, is taught in schools. People who believe very strongly in God, may also be able to draw on energies which make them perform what ordinary people perceive as miracles. Taniel ToUratidir was also said to have been able to perform miracles,⁵⁶ and I am sure that in other parts of the Gazelle one would come across similar cases. It is intriguing how close this idea comes to the catholic concept of sainthood - saints perform miracles to prove their unimpeachable faith.

Another miracle performed by Abaram links his faith in God more directly with his capability to influence "supernaturally" the material world around him. Henry Tavul dramatised this most widely known of Abaram's deeds once at a circuit meeting. He tells it in this way:

"Once, Abaram sat at home, and he asked the Lord about his life and the destination of his soul: 'When I retire from this earthly life, will I see eternal life? If so, please make it known to me now, in this house, so that I can believe it.' As he said this, the lamp in his house shattered. He was surprised and from that moment, he believed. He rejoiced and exclaimed: '*Tumarang! Kalou i mat! Kaugu iat ra nilaun tukum.* [Look out! God is almighty! The eternal life is mine.]'"⁵⁷

Belief was thus reinforced by empirical evidence.

In 1893, ToBobo, by betraying the Tolai alliance fighting the extension of colonial control, proved that he was the first of a new generation of Tolai. He was the first to embrace wholeheartedly the *lotu*. But those who saw him about forty years later, shortly before his death, remember him as an anachronism, as a relic of times gone by. He was still wearing shoes and trousers and a shirt, although under the Australians a regulation forbade male natives to wear clothes on the upper part of their bodies; usually only *Luluai* and *tultul*, and people going to church were exempt. Abaram ToBobo was a reminder of the German times when everybody was allowed to wear a shirt; he had been vested with powers beyond those of the *waitpus* (paramount *Luluai*) of the Australian Administration.

One of the lessons the German Administration learnt from the war-of-the-bullet-proof-ointment was that they had to establish a system of colonial control beyond the one

⁵⁶ Gerson ToVue of lalakua in August 1987; Dokas laNalir of lalakua in January 1988. About ToUratidir see chapter 3, p. 53.

⁵⁷ Henry Tavul of Vunamami/Vunabalbal on 24 October 1987 in Vunabalbal. Taped statement. Non-abridged extract. Non-literal translation from the Tolai language on the basis of a transcript prepared by laHelena Jacob and myself. The first half of the exclamation quoted in Kuanua is normally used, when at a ceremony men call the *tubuan* to come out into the open (instead of "Kalou" they would then shout the name of the particular *tubuan* they are calling). The exclamation expresses joy, pride and awe. Literally, *Kalou i mat* means: 'God is dead'. In his *varvalaruai* at the circuit meeting, Tavul exploded a kerosine lamp, in accordance with the laws of Science, with gunpowder.

in force until then - which was 'one of non-intervention as long as all went well'.⁵⁸ Immediately after the end of the hostilities in December 1893, Schmiele renewed a proposal he had made two years earlier:

Confidential agents have to be retained in every district. They should be furnished with sufficient authority to enable them to uphold order.⁵⁹

A system of indirect rule, based on the appointment of village headmen (*Luluai*) and their assistants (*tultul*) was introduced in German New Guinea some years later by Hahl.⁶⁰ Though there was no equivalent to the *waitpus* in German New Guinea, Tolai oral accounts suggest that some *Luluai* were vested with far-reaching magisterial powers, or that the Administration tolerated the exercise of those powers by some of their most prominent allies. Among those were Pero Tokinkin of Raluana* and Abaram ToBobo, who both owned a horse and a carriage, which was regarded by my informants as the insignia of their office. It seems that before the official introduction of the *Luluai*-system, ToBobo and others assumed the unofficial function of intermediary between large groups of Tolai on the one hand,⁶¹ and the Administration and planters on the other. Those intermediaries were sometimes referred to as 'governor' by my informants.⁶² As a 'governor', ToBobo was said to have been as stern with the Administration as he was with his subjects. He raised the 'land question' with Hahl and protested vehemently whenever plantations encroached on customary Tolai land. Once he erected a fence to confine a plantation to its own land.⁶³ He led the people of Vunamami and Vunabalbal in raising money - either to pay a surveyor to mark the correct boundary with Ravalien Plantation, or to buy back some of the land. In 1927, ToVin remembered, Judge Phillips investigated land claims and complied with Abaram's wish and got the boundary with Ravalien realigned.⁶⁴

Those observing him from the political perspective credit ToBobo with persuading the people of Vunamami to engage in cash-cropping by planting coconuts, and being the first to have set up the *matanitu*, the western-style government, among the Tolai.⁶⁵ In fact, he **was** the first *matanitu*.

V.

Earlier I mentioned the different perspectives from which Tolai narrators look at ToBobo, which correspond with three layers of the historical personality Abaram ToBobo: ToBilam and laLuisa, and, through them, Mikael ToBilak, paint ToBobo as an apostle of the Methodist *lotu*. Vin ToBaining, William ToKavivi, Tamean and others from Vunamami or Vunabalbal who are or have been actively involved in politics themselves, portray

⁵⁸ REED 1943, p. 139.

⁵⁹ Schmiele to Direktion NGK, F.-W'hafen: 26 Dec. 1893 (RKA 2983). In 1892 Schmiele had appointed a man to be 'king' of the Nuguria Islands (FIRTH 1983, p. 61).

⁶⁰ FIRTH 1983, p. 64.

⁶¹ These groups comprised several of the units administered by one official *Luluai*, since the Administration was probably forced 'in the interests of comparative peace, to accept the demands of individual villages for the appointment of their own *luluais*' (ROWLEY 1958, p. 219).

⁶² Salisbury, following his informants, says the Germans used the Pidgin title *nambawan* (SALISBURY 1970, p. 316).

⁶³ Johannes ToMalom of Karavi in September 1987.

⁶⁴ Vin ToBaining of Vunamami in December 1987.

⁶⁵ Elias ToEnana and Kepas Lawo of Bitarebarebe in October 1987; Tamean of Vunabalbal in October 1987.

him above all as a local political leader who represented his people vis-à-vis the Administration. ToVavaur presents him as one of his *patuana*.

Henry Tavul is an exceptional case. He does not fit well into any of the three categories, nor does he generally have much in common with other narrators. Tavul is the only professional Tolai historian I met. To be precise: he is a professional culture worker, and History is one aspect of his job. In 1987 he was an energetic man in his fifties. His schooling had been limited to the Methodist village school in the vernacular. Later, he taught himself some English and became an expert on, amongst other things, education issues; in 1987 he was the chairperson of the Kokopo High School's Board of Management. Throughout the Gazelle, Tavul is regarded as the expert in the presentation of Tolai culture. Whether somebody wanted to have a choir, a traditional dance, or a drama at some function - Tavul would stage the production, and he would do it "Tavul style", in an original way. He would be efficient and reliable because he in turn could fall back upon a fair number of Vunamami/Vunabalbal men and women who enjoyed working (dancing, singing, acting) under him. In his histories, both the ones he tells and the ones he dramatises, he emphasises the sensational parts and leaves out much of what others regard as essential evidence: names of places and kinship ties between the actors in the past and people in the present. Tavul is highly innovative with the past he constructs, as well as with his other products, be they dances or carvings.

Abaram ToBobo is Tavul's *patuana*. His stories about ToBobo are different from others he tells because they have more to do with himself. He deals with all three perspectives, because Tavul himself is active at the political, the *vunatarai*, and the church level. He pays most attention to those aspects of ToBobo's past which, in his perception, reflect on him:

"I was strolling along, singing. I went away from Rusila, my mother. I was like that as a kid - always singing all kinds of songs, hymns and those sung accompanying traditional dances. I did not wear a loincloth. When I walked past Abaram's door, he asked his sons and daughters: 'Who is that little boy who sings so well?' They told him: 'That's a *matuana* of yours.' 'What's his name?' 'Tavul, he was born at Ratavul.' 'Bring him here.' They called me, but I did not obey. I was afraid of the man with the long trousers and shirt and the long beard who lived there. I thought if I go near him and he touches me, my life is finished. I was scared. Eventually they found me. They grabbed me and dragged me up to the house. They said: 'Put something on. You will go to Abaram ToBobo, he wants to see you.' I fastened a loincloth, and the three of us went, with me crying all the way. I came to Abaram, and he asked me: 'What's your name?' I told him. I didn't say my name well, I said it shaking all over, because I was afraid he would hit me if I didn't call my name quickly enough. He asked me: 'You know that you and I are one?' I didn't. He told me: 'We are *matuana*, your mother is my sister'.⁶⁶ He sent a boy to get some betelnut (*buai*) and *daka* leaves. I stood there, shivering and trembling with fear. 'What are they going to do to me?' ToBobo himself took the *buai* out of its skin, put lime on it, and wrapped it up. 'Open your mouth!' He put it in my mouth and said: 'Chew it!' I chewed it until it turned red; he said: 'Don't

⁶⁶ Abaram's sons and daughters are not necessarily his very own children; neither was Tavul's mother Abaram's full sister. In Kuanua it is not possible to distinguish between a full sister and a cousin-sister on the mother's side.

spit it out! Swallow it!' I swallowed it in one go and managed quite well doing so. Then he spoke to me and during his talk laid his hand on my head: 'You won't learn things, you will just do them, and you will know how to do them. ... We are *matuana*.' We shook hands, he withdrew his hand from my head, and I left.

Henry Tavul at the tombstone for Abaram ToBobo on the Vunabalbal cemetery, claiming his *patuana*

I brooded over it; I was also afraid: 'What kind of big work would that be?' Later, when I had grown up, I realised the fruits of his talk, and I praised him and was glad about it. I do carvings and drawings. I have done big jobs and held important offices. I did not learn how to do them at school, neither at primary nor at high school. But I do them as if I have been to university."⁶⁷

Tavul did not know what ToBobo did with the *buai*, whether he mumbled a chant or whether once again his belief alone accomplished the results he wanted to see, results

⁶⁷ Henry Tavul of Vunamami/Vunabalbal on 24 October 1987 in Vunabalbal. Taped statement. Non-literal translation from the Tolai language, based on a transcript prepared by Paul ToSinot. Slightly abridged extract.

of which Tavul can surely be proud. Before I left Ialakua, I gave a farewell party and invited many of those who had shared their histories with me. Several people gave speeches, among them Sir Paulias Matane. One of the last was Tavul. 'I couldn't care less about these Sirs', he said, referring to the title rather than to the person in question. 'I, Henry Tavul, I know so many things of which they have no idea. *lau a melem!* (I am an expert)',⁶⁸ he declared, and as if he were producing a piece of evidence for his claim, he handed me the model of a *dukduk*, Tavul-made, as a farewell present.

It will be interesting to see whether Tavul's way of looking at the past becomes more influential in future. I think that the forty-five to sixty year-olds who now retire from positions in the public service back to their villages on the Gazelle, are inclined to promote a view similar to Tavul's. They lay stress on the past as part of the Tolai identity. I believe that in the near future, histories will change, with more emphasis on the educational and the theatrical. The life of Abaram Tobobo is an excellent topic for such histories.

As one would have expected, when Abaram died, he was not sick. It was as if he were asleep. Abaram ToBobo died shortly after the 1937 volcano eruption. He did not really die, as I hope I have demonstrated.

⁶⁸ This is an assertive exclamation of triumph used by men in public, when they have staged a ceremony like a *balaguan* or *matamatam*.

8: History and the Control of Land

The narratives I have assembled so far have little to do with the way histories are mostly used in Tolai society. Pilipo ToDivona, Lui ToPainai, Eduard ToVavaur, and others have no significant audience for the stories about the Toma killings, ToMarnakat and Abaram ToBobo, and thus their histories tend to become homilies of disgruntled old men. This will be apparent again in chapter 9. In Tolai society a major function of histories, constructions of the past undertaken in the present, is to justify claims of land ownership. In village assemblies (*lain*), in sessions chaired by land mediators, or in the land courts, genealogies and stories relating to the clearance or usage of a particular piece of land are produced in support of claims.

During my field work I often witnessed this particular use of histories. It is difficult to write about, because I could easily expose the producers of such histories or accidentally publicise information given in confidence. I selected the following case, because it is more public than others and has yet to reach a conclusion. The conflict involves three big men from Raluana* who are more or less well-known throughout the Tolai community: Darius ToNamaliu of Raluana, Nelson ToPamel of Ialakua, and Theo ToVarkia of Ialakua. They are in their sixties and seventies, ToVarkia being the youngest and ToPamel the oldest. ToNamaliu is the most influential of the three. He heads the *vanatarai* Bonat or Vunaruga which is nowadays referred to by most people in Raluana* as *vanatarai* ToNamaliu. ToVarkia is the *lualua* of the much smaller *vanatarai* Vunabagur and exerts considerable influence in the *vanatarai* Tamtavul which is associated with Vunabagur. ToPamel is, strictly speaking, also a *lualua*, though he is the last member of his *vanatarai* Vunagogo. He is, however, the controller of his *vanatarai*'s land which is mainly worked by people who have been fathered by Vunagogo. Steps have been taken by ToPamel and ToNamaliu whereby ToPamel has become a de facto affiliated member of the *vanatarai* ToNamaliu. The rightfulness of this status quo is questioned by ToVarkia. On the basis of taped statements from the three big men and of several discussions I had with each of them, I will sketch their respective histories:

ToNamaliu:

My *vanatarai* is originally from Laur in New Ireland. Our *madapai* at Laur is called Namalu, and it was this my mother IaTukar had in mind when she gave me my name. *Mauragu kaveve madapai* - our *madapai* is my namesake. From Laur, IaTitigal and her two brothers, ToVoal and ToPiriringa, drifted on a bamboo trunk to Mioko, one of the Duke of York Islands, where they stayed a while. From there they moved on to the nearby island of Kerewara; again they stayed for some time. From Kerewara they went to Palakuvur. They stayed for a time, maybe a couple of months, on that small island. Then they came to New Britain. They came ashore at Vunaruga where the Raluana Community School stands today. Vunaruga is our *matanoi*, the piece of land on the shore where our ancestors first landed, and it is also our *madapai*, the plot first cleared by them. At that time there were no other Tolai in what is today Ialakua. The land belonged to Baining people who fled inland upon our arrival. Because our three ancestors were the only settlers in that part of the Gazelle, IaTitigal's children were fathered by her two brothers. Later, ToPiriringa and his brother

had an argument, and the former settled further inland, while ToVoal and their sister stayed at Vunaruga. Our ancestors reproduced, and the brothers and their children cleared many plots in Ialakua, along the shore and also further inland. They claimed a lot of land. Later the ancestors of ToPamel and ToVarkia arrived. Pamel's *patuana* had settled at Nodup and Tavui. When they came to Raluana, there was not enough land left which they could claim as their own, so our ancestors allocated them some. Ever since we have been one *vunatarai*, and with ToPamel's death the land once given to them will return to us.

Later, a woman from Vunaruga *vunatarai* married a man from Vunamurmur; one of her descendants was IaVakitarai. From Vunamurmur, our *vunatarai* spread to Takekel. From Vunaruga, another woman went to Vunatagia; one of her descendants was IaRami. From Vunaruga, another member of our *vunatarai*, IaVaingal, married and went to Karavi. Because she married an *uviana*, a rich man who controlled a lot of land, her sons Kula ToRokot, Tale, ToUratabu and ToKubau did not clear all that much land for themselves. One Vunaruga woman married a man from Kabakaul. When her husband died, she and her son ToInok moved on to Malakuna (-Ravalien) where the son cleared a lot of land.

ToNamallu addressing the crowd
at the *minamai* for Apells Tuvi

Today I am the leader of the descendants of IaTitigal, IaVaingal, IaVakitarai, and IaRami, and control our *vunatarai*'s land in the Raluana villages and Karavi. The other segments of our *vunatarai* take care of their own affairs. Our *vunatarai* owns land in the Raluana villages, Takekel, Karavi, Malakuna, on Kerewara and Mioko, and it owns the whole of Palakuvur.

Ever since Pamel's ancestors arrived, we have cooperated with their *vunatarai*. Our *tubuan* ToKila and their *tubuan* IaTakin have always worked together. We have jointly conducted ceremonies. We have, for example, staged *balaguan*, feasts to commemorate dead ancestors, together. Pamel's and my *vunatarai* have been tied together by our *patuana* through *tabu* payments on numerous occasions.

Pamel's *patuana* Tilom adopted IaKurai, the daughter of my sister Silina IaVavada. They sealed the adoption by making a *tabu* payment to her mother. When IaKurai was married to ToRangrang, his people paid the bride price to Tilom and Pamel. The *tabu* which was paid as a bride price stays with Pamel now. So when Pamel dies, IaKurai will inherit his land, and thus it will return to us.

I am only retelling what I learnt from my elders, especially from my mother IaTukar and my *patuana* ToDivai. I am not claiming that ToVarkia's *vunatarai* arrived after my own *vunatarai*. As a matter of fact, regardless of who came first, ToPamel's, ToVarkia's and my own *vunatarai* were the first to settle in Ratunguna, as Ialakua was called before the *lotu* came. We all belong to the Marmar side, and therefore I call both Pamel and Varkia my brothers. This was more obvious when

ToVarkia's elder brother ToGilgil was still alive. When I was young, he, Pamel and I often stayed with Gilgil's mother IaBata who told us: 'You are all brothers.' Whenever I am staging a ceremony, I am only too happy if ToVarkia shows up. ToVarkia, too, is happy to have me around.¹

ToVarkia:

ToVarkia in an assertive mood, challenging other big men at his balaguan

My ancestors, the *vnatarai* of my *patuana* Taniel ToUratidir, and Pamel's ancestors, the *vnatarai* of his *patuana* ToMulue, both came from Nakukur on Duke of York Island. Our *madapai* at Nakukur is called Kudukudu Liliaina. Until recently, we had close ties with our relatives in Nakukur. Rupen ToMaira and Daniel ToPuang, two of my *patuana* who belonged to the generation before my mother IaBata, could speak the Nakukur language. Our ancestors went ashore in Tokua. The first *patuana* I can think of was called Palimong. Probably he was one of those who migrated from Nakukur to New Britain. From Tokua one group went to Nodup, while another group stayed behind. Later a second group went from Tokua to Nodup. They knew that their ancestors had settled at Vunatui, so upon their arrival they asked people in Nodup: 'Where is Vunatui?' Those asked replied: 'That's right here, just where we are. So you must be our relatives.' From Vunatui they migrated to Raluana, and then one group went back to Nodup. Our *matanoi* in Raluana, in today's Ialakua, to be precise, is called Vevere. We have two more

matanoi in the Raluana area: Vunabogo and Tangiluarakudu. Vunabagur is the name of our *madapai*. During all those migrations, the *vnatarai* of ToMulue and that of Taniel ToUratidir stayed together. Their *tubuan*, IaTakin, who is controlled by ToPamel, and IaUlu whom I control, have always worked together. In Raluana* they shared two *taraiu*, Raula and Ralokor. IaUlu's present *taraiu*, Kikinakuru is another case which illustrates how close we were to each other. It was given to ToMulue by my *patuana* so that ToMulue became the caretaker of that particular piece of land. ToMulue was a contemporary of my *patuana* ToAlmatam and of Taniel ToUratidir. Taniel gave up the *tubuan* because he joined the *lotu*, but until then the three of them always worked together, jointly staging ceremonies and raising the *tubuan* IaUlu and IaTakin, sometimes using IaTakin's *taraiu* Ralokor, and sometimes IaUlu's Raula. In Nodup, my *patuana* ToKaut and Pamel's *patuana* ToBunbun jointly staged *balaguan* and jointly raised both *tubuan*.

¹ Darius ToNamaliu of Raluana on 1 February 1988, at Raluana, gist of his taped statement, and various statements made between September 1987 and January 1988; letter of 14 June 1988.

ToNamaliu's *vunatarai* never extended to Tavui or Nodup. Whereas Taniel ToUratidir and ToMulue always worked together, ToNamaliu's *patuana* ToMarum did things on his own. It was only very recently, in the 1950s and 1960s, that ToNamaliu and ToPamel began behaving as if they belonged to each other. In fact only with the death of Pamel's *patuana* Tilom in 1973, did the co-operation between the two of them and the split between Pamel and myself become openly manifest.

IaUreap and IaMinalom of Vunabagur adopted IaTamai, a woman from the *vunatarai* Tamtavul, to live here in Ialakua. She gave birth to ToMaranglik, Tamgoi, IaLitia, and IaVuneram. Today there are many members of Tamtavul living in Ialakua, who work Vunabagur's land. It was with this adoption that Tamtavul's *tubuan*, IaKiau, came to Ialakua and nowadays co-operates closely with IaUlu.

It is true that ToNamaliu's *matuana* IaKurai was adopted by Tilom. But that was not in order to secure the land for ToNamaliu's *vunatarai*, but to give ToPamel a sister, so that when he married, she could marry the brother of his wife. For until not very long ago, it was customary to exchange sisters in a marriage.²

ToPamel:

Our *vunatarai* is originally from Siar in New Ireland. Our ancestors drifted on a bamboo trunk to Tokua, where some years ago the new airfield was constructed.³ When Prime Minister Somare officially opened the Tokua airfield, I was asked to raise IaTakin, my *tubuan*, to mark the occasion. We migrated together with ToNamaliu's *vunatarai*. His ancestor was ToPiriringa, and my ancestor was ToAgavul. From Tokua we went to Raluana*. Those who came first to Raluana* are all dead, and their names nearly all forgotten. I only remember one: Oldam. ToNamaliu's *patuana* went ashore in Vunaruga, and we landed in Vunagogo; the *matanoi* of both of us are in Ialakua. One of my ancestors here was ToMulue, and his partner in ceremonies, particularly in the activities of the *tubuan*, was Namaliu's *patuana* ToMarum. When ToMarum died, ToDivai took over. When ToDivai died, ToNamaliu became the leader of his *vunatarai*. ToMulue's successor was Tilom whom I have succeeded. ToNamaliu and I belong together as members of one *vunatarai*. Some years ago, the two of us staged a big *balaguan* for our ancestors.

When ToNamaliu's sister gave birth to IaKurai, I went to ToNamaliu and gave him *tabu*. This means that I made her my heir. When I die, she shall take over the land of our *vunatarai*. My children, especially my eldest son Tiudat, will assist her and tell her exactly which land belongs to her and where the boundaries are.

But I have relatives also in Talwat, Nodup and Tavui. From Raluana*, IaPopoko set out to Talwat. She settled on the mountain at Talwat. Her brother Akokomo followed her in his canoe. He came to Talwat where he found his sister who had married there. Akokomo then went to Tomaaur. He greeted the people on the shore from his canoe and asked them where Vunatui was. The *patuana* of ToVarkia told him and said: 'We are one *vunatarai*.' He told him to stay nearby at Topilul.

² Theo ToVarkia of Ialakua on 3 February 1988 at Ialakua, gist of taped statement, and various statements between June 1987 and January 1988; letter of 30 June 1988.

³ Tokua airport was designed to replace Rabaul airport at Rapidik, when Matupit volcano was about to erupt some years ago. Since the volcano is no longer seen as an immediate threat, the moving of East New Britain's major airport has been postponed.

Akokomo went to Vunatui, then to Rau, and from there to Vunakarakum at Tavui, in search of his *tubuan* IaTakin. Akokomo met up with IaTakin who had come from Raluana to accompany the *tubuan* IaKilkilia to Tavui. The latter is also connected with my *vunatarai* but no longer raised in Raluana*. At that time, the segment of our *vunatarai* at Tavui moved up the mountain to Rabuana, because they were afraid of people on the shore - that was still the time of darkness, when they killed each other. The founding ancestor of our *vunatarai* in Tavui was IaMete. Later, Akokomo escorted IaTakin back to Raluana*.

It is true that in ToMulue's days, IaTakin was not only closely associated with ToKila, but also with IaUlu. But ToVarkia deserted me and since then, IaUlu and IaTakin are no longer raised together.⁴

ToPamel, attending a *balaguan* co-sponsored by ToVarkia, that was held in lalakua for IaPiPe's son ToMai and others in January 1988.

The three statements are interesting in themselves. Both Namaliu and Pamel refer to a bamboo trunk (*vuna kaur*) on which their ancestors drifted to the Gazelle. This cliché is mentioned in nearly all Tolai accounts of migration from New Ireland and the Duke of York Islands to New Britain. Both Varkia and Pamel tell a story about a man who came to Vunatui and, unaware that he was at that very place, asked a Vunatui man for directions. Both fragments are obviously part of the same tradition. Generally, chance meetings with related travellers are common in Tolai migration histories: the Tolai

⁴ Nelson ToPamel of lalakua on 4 February 1988 at lalakua, gist of taped statement and various statements made between August 1987 and January 1988.

migrated in waves and endeavoured to get ashore at the *matanoi* of those who had set out in previous generations.

The statements are in themselves contradictory. ToNamaliu initially⁵ claims that his *vanatarai* arrived in Raluana first but later retreats and does not insist that ToVarkia's *vanatarai* came later. Namaliu thinks that his ancestors came first, but he knows that he can't prove it and that the question of when Varkia's ancestors arrived is not crucial to his story. Other statements seem to be contradictory, too, but in fact illustrate the point I tried to make in my glossary of the term *vanatarai* (chapter 3). When Namaliu refers to his *vanatarai*, he clearly means Vunaruga. But he also says that he and Pamel are members of one *vanatarai*, and furthermore, that he, Pamel and Varkia are all brothers. The concept of the *vanatarai* is flexible and can be applied to the *papar* as well as to a group whose members can all be traced back to one common ancestor.

Neither of the three big men has a reputation for being meek. But all try to be conciliatory. This is in line with the Tolai idea of the right way to conduct a dispute: the opponents should avoid blunt verbal attacks on each other.⁶

It is no accident that the above statements were made by men. Even where women are more knowledgeable (which they often are on genealogical matters)⁷ or where they are the *lualua* of their *vanatarai*, it is rare for a woman to speak in public on political issues, the most important of which is land.⁸

It is too simple to say that, anticipating ToPamel's death, ToVarkia and ToNamaliu are trying to secure his land for their respective *vanatarai* by constructing the past in a way which suits them best. Though the control of Pamel's land may be the most tangible item at stake in the arguments between the three big men, the conflict has wider implications. For ToVarkia, for example, it is a matter of defending his *vanatarai*'s corporate identity, as he has been taught it by his elders. If ToNamaliu's history is recognised as the truth, ToMulue, who plays an important role in ToVarkia's understanding of his *vanatarai*'s past, might not be mentioned in the next generation and over the years be expunged from Vunabagur's oral traditions. And what happens if Pamel survives the other two big men? He would have no more say in Vunaruga's affairs after Namaliu's death than he has now, and now he has none. He might find an association with his relatives in Talwat more attractive than joining Namaliu's

⁵ In my representations of the three viewpoints I keep basically to the order of the big men's respective taped statements.

⁶ When Tolai want to express, This is not true, they say something like, "It is true, but I don't agree". When they want to express, He is a bad man, they say, "He is a good man, but he has some unfavourable character traits". I soon learned that when listening to public speakers, I had to pay most attention to what followed the word "but" (*lakaka*).

⁷ When I taped Pamel's statement, he paused several times to ask his wife laLivuana for details he could not recall.

⁸ In a land dispute I witnessed in 1987, an elderly woman, who was the *lualua* of her *vanatarai*, argued against a well known big man. She was seconded by her brother who for biographical reasons could not contribute much to the point discussed, and by a *lualua* from a different *vanatarai*. Though she was known as knowledgeable, determined and outspoken, the proceedings put an immense emotional strain on her, because she had to act in a man's arena.

successor(s). If Vunaruga's position were decisively weakened, e.g. through the death of their outstanding *lualua*, histories might change.

Though accounts of the clans' past and present obligations and affiliations and their migrations - the Tolai summarise all these under the term *kini na vunatarai* - may change over the years, none of the three big men consciously makes up the past, because *a pia i panganga*.

Glossary VII: *A Pia i Panganga*

Land (*pia*) is perceived as an active subject. When ToVetenge talked about the Supreme Court ruling concerning Tokota, he said: 'Our land returned.' More importantly, land has the power to harm human beings. If somebody wrongly claims a piece of land, he could die. *A pia i panganga* literally means: 'the land opens wide its mouth'; it can swallow the person who wrongly claims it. Since the validity of this statement is widely accepted, it would be rare for participants in a land dispute to lie consciously - those who wrongly claim a piece of land would do so believing that they have a reasonable case. Most Tolai know at least one incident where somebody who wrongly claimed a piece of land became sick or died as a result of his or her wrongdoings. One of the most dramatic of such accounts was told to me by John Vuia and confirmed by William ToKavivi; they both worked as land mediators for the Land Title Commission. The dispute involved the big men and clan brothers ToBonga and Turbat from Ulagunan who claimed a piece of land named Marutnapal. The proceedings started on a Thursday. ToVuia was chairperson; ToKavivi was not actively involved because the contestants were closely related to him. ToBonga and Turbat produced versions which did not match. The proceedings were adjourned after no agreement was reached. On the next day, both expounded their respective points of view again, but this time Turbat's account differed from the one he had given the day before. ToVuia cautioned him strongly to tell the truth. The proceedings were adjourned till the following Monday. On this same day, Friday, Turbat fell ill. During the night he had shivering fits and was admitted to hospital. On Monday, when ToVuia went back to Ulagunan, he asked where Turbat was. 'We buried him yesterday', they told him. 'Before he died he told one of his relatives: "Tell John Vuia, the land belongs to ToBonga."' ToVuia commented on this incident by citing another saying: *A pia a tena vartakun* - the land is a prosecutor. Stories like that have a didactic function. Now, with land disputes increasingly decided in the courts, with the assistance of lawyers, and by registering titles, the stories stressing the land's propensity to cause illness and death uphold an ideology which seems anachronistic. Interestingly, none of the Europeans who took over Tolai land by deceit is said to have suffered because of his or her wrongdoings. The planters obviously stand outside the Tolai ethics of *pia*. Today, the severity of the *pia*'s wrath is sometimes linked with the idea that human beings were created by God and that they were allocated land as part of Creation. Eventually, this may mean that claimants will no longer have to establish how they migrated to a certain place, only that they have always been there.

Although much land is at stake and histories are constructed in order to secure control over it, Namaliu or Varkia are not necessarily driven by short term material interests. If one of them inherited Pamel's land, he would not be able to evict its present users and turn it into a cocoa plantation of his own. He would also inherit Pamel's obligations, towards people fathered by Pamel's *vunatarai* for example. He would be morally obliged to grant usufructory rights to landless *niuruna* (relatives) - and the term *niuruna* can be stretched nearly as much as the term *vunatarai* - if they observed the customary procedures.⁹ It is true, though, that the more immediate consequence for whoever inherits control of the land, would be an increase in the number of people who have obligations towards him.

Tolai society is like other Melanesian big men societies dynamic because of its competitiveness, especially among big men. The conflicting histories should be seen as contributions to a competition. Note not only that ToVarkia contradicts ToNamaliu, and ToPamel contradicts ToVarkia, but that Pamel's and Namaliu's accounts do not add up to one coherent history. Each one pursues his own goals by telling his history - for himself in the present, for his *vunatarai* now and in the future, for himself in the future: who will organise and sponsor the appropriate ceremonies for him after his death (see chapter 10)?

Not only do all three have independent viewpoints, the ways they perceive the relationships amongst themselves differ decisively, too. ToNamaliu calls both Pamel and Varkia his brothers, though he does not seem to see Pamel as an equal: "Pamel's *vunatarai* came later, and we allocated land to them." On the whole, Namaliu argues like someone in full command of the situation. Pamel does not mention Varkia as somebody to whom he has to relate, whilst Namaliu is his brotherly equal. Varkia does not want to mention Namaliu, whilst Pamel is his brother; once ToVarkia went so far as suggesting that Pamel could have been his *lualua* had he accepted that they belonged to the same *vunatarai*.

Land is controlled through control of the past. The past is controlled through the disposal of a certain fund of knowledge. Interestingly, the three accounts are not detailed. All three histories are sketchy, and somewhat incoherent. The account of Akokomo's travels, for example, is highly confusing and appears to be a condensed fragment with many ingredients (*tubuan*, progenitrix, landings, place names), but the thread connecting them is hard to follow. Knowledge relevant for the control of land is passed on less casually than the content of the histories I have quoted in previous chapters. Elders brief their relatives, especially the ones likely to become the leaders of their *vunatarai*. These "briefings" are called *varvateten* in Kuanua.¹⁰

Because I talked with the three men separately, their accounts are not necessarily the ones later produced in court. In land disputes, the disputing parties often try to reveal crucial pieces of knowledge at a strategic moment and tend to keep some trump

⁹ Cf. A.L. EPSTEIN 1969, pp. 130ff; SALISBURY 1970, pp. 72ff.

¹⁰ Cf. A.L. EPSTEIN 1969, pp. 127f.

cards up their sleeves. But from what I was told I conclude that none of the three big men actually controls the past by having a commanding knowledge of it.

All three big men base their respective claims on four pillars:

- (1) the migration of their *vanatarai*,
- (2) the co-operation between big men in the past,
- (3) the co-operation between *tubuan* in the past,
- (4) shell money transactions in the past.

If it came to a direct confrontation between them, the claims made in the above histories would have to be substantiated. Each contestant would name witnesses who support his claims by giving evidence. The number of witnesses a big man can produce indicates his relative power.

Map 4: The Migrations of Vunaruga, Vunabagur and Vunagogo *vanatarai* according to ToNamallu, ToVarkia and ToPamel

(1) The contestants or those supporting them would have to go into as much detail as possible, that is, furnish the names of ancestors and of places visited, cleared or settled. They would have to try to put their stories into historical context. Namallu does that by mentioning that his ancestors settled in Ratunguna and not in Ialakua, because the latter name was previously only used to refer to the piece of land on which the church stands today, and only in this century applied to the whole village. By using Ratunguna, ToNamallu demonstrates that he is knowledgeable about the past. Maybe none of them would be able to say significantly more than what I have retold above.

It is possible, however, that others would testify on their behalf. The story of Vunaruga's migration, for example, is widely known in Raluana* and beyond. I have heard it from ToRavien and ToBing, who were both fathered by Vunaruga, with at least as much detail as the above account. ToNamaliu's relations on the Duke of York Islands or ToVarkia's relations in Nodup might know more detailed versions of their *vunatarai*'s respective migrations.

(2) It would have to be explained **which** big man was assisted by **whom** when he organised **which** particular ceremony. Those claims would need to be accompanied by references to contemporary events and people. Whilst Raluana* villagers could acknowledge that ToNamaliu as a *lualua* must be competent to talk about the migration of his ancestors to Raluana* and would therefore respect his account, he would not necessarily be expected to know more about certain *balaguan* or *mata-matam* in the past than others. Thus his knowledge would be open to challenge from anybody who thinks he or she has information about the past. It is not enough to say that ToMarum and ToMulue co-operated in the past: Which particular *balaguan* did they stage, and when was it? Who lived at that time? How are those contemporaries of ToMulue and ToMarum linked with the present?

(3) The same applies to the co-operation of *tubuan*. People would want to know at which particular occasion laUlu and laTakin appeared together. One example: At Bitapolapolo in lalakua, there was until about twenty years ago a coconut tree (*lama*) called Lama laTakin. The *tubuan* laTakin was said to have planted it when ToMulue and the *patuana* of Vunabagur staged a *balaguan*. Bitapolapolo belongs to the *vunatarai* Vunabagur, and ToMulue would not have staged a *balaguan* there without Vunabagur's participation, nor would laTakin have planted a coconut tree without laUlu around. This story is known by several people in lalakua. The coconut tree served as a mnemonic device to commemorate a certain ceremony. It is however unlikely that either of the three big men would come up with many such stories relating to the co-operation of big men or *tubuan*.

The *tubuan* laUlu kneels down and is presented with *tabu* by people at ToVarkia's *balaguan* on 2 May 1987 at Bitapolapolo. laTakin is not around.

(4) The most crucial transactions in this dispute are the bride price for laKurai and the shell-money distributed at the *minamai* for Pamel's *patuana* Tilom (and, to a lesser extent, other *minamai* prior to Tilom's death). ToVarkia on the one hand, and ToNamaliu and ToPamel on the other, tell conflicting versions about the first payment. This would have to be determined by calling in witnesses, which at the moment would not be difficult since many of the participants are still alive. It could be delicate for ToVarkia to make this a big issue, because people might argue that laTamai was adopted under similar circumstances as laKurai.

When Tilom died, Pamel made sure that only he and ToNamaliu distributed shell money. ToVarkia and some of his clan brothers from Tamtavul had to return home with their *tabu* because they were prevented by Tilom's successor Pamel from taking part in the ceremony. By distributing a lot of *tabu* at Tilom's death, ToNamaliu claimed his right to Tilom's land. Who will distribute *tabu* when Pamel dies?

The situation is further complicated by a fourth person who could also have rights to Pamel's land: Gerson ToVue, who is about ToVarkia's age, was born in Talwat as the son of laVunait of Vunatali *vunatarai*, who died when he was very young. When he was a small boy, his relatives let Sister Mary Woolnough, who worked at the Methodist Mission's headquarters in Raluana, look after him, particularly in her capacity as a nurse. When the people from Talwat arrived in Raluana, they were intercepted by Alice laPatete, the mother of Pamel's mother laLute, who told them that they belonged to one and the same *vunatarai*. Young Gerson was allowed to be attended to by the nurse in the daytime, but he would live with laAlice. Alice reared him as her own son and when some years later his relatives from Talwat made an attempt to take him back, she successfully objected. Thus Gerson became closely related to Pamel. All participants in the dispute concede that theoretically, Gerson would be the obvious heir if Pamel died, but practically, there are a number of obstacles: Gerson is not a big man and he has no intention of becoming one by actively interfering in the relationship between Pamel and Namaliu. Though only as a small boy he lived at Talwat, he is still an immigrant to Raluana* where he has no female relatives. If he took over from Pamel, he would again be the last of his clan in Raluana*. Furthermore, he and Pamel do not always get on well personally. Gerson has been given land by Varkia, of whom he has become a strong supporter. This might be related to the fact that Varkia is married to the elder sister of Gerson's wife. Thus Varkia's and Gerson's children are brothers. Varkia being a big man enhances the position of his sons. His eldest son may well become a big man himself. Gerson's children who are still very young, seem to gain more at this stage from their father's association with Varkia than from the precarious association with Gerson's actual *lualua*. Gerson's position is delicate. I found him in many respects to be more knowledgeable about migrations and past co-operations between big men or *tubuan* than ToVarkia or ToPamel, though he, too, had spent most of his adult life outside lalakua. It is not the lack of a rich store of shell money alone which makes Gerson decide that he does not want to be a big man. He is also deterred by one element of social relationships on the Gazelle which is an essential ingredient in big man rivalry and in the big men's relations with ordinary people: the *varngu*.

Glossary VIII: *Varngu*¹¹

The term *varngu* has wholly negative connotations. It can mean envy, or jealousy which is not sexual in origin. Out of *varngu*, people take measures to bring about the downfall of more successful opponents. People say that to become a big man you need good protective magic, because your rise will create *varngu*. It is the notion of *varngu* which makes personal relationships so crucial in Tolai politics. Since the people who speak Kuanua, who are organised in two exogamous moieties, and who live, or are related to people living, on the northeastern Gazelle Peninsula, became the Tolai, they have shared the belief that they are outstanding among the 700 language groups of Papua New Guinea. But no matter how antagonistic they felt towards others, they never united under a single banner or recognised a single political leader. If they had, the Tolai might have long ago tried to secede from Papua New Guinea. The notion of *varngu* guarantees that no Tolai leader or movement can become too dominant. *Varngu* equally leaves its mark on politics at the village level. When illness is attributed to sorcery, more often than not *varngu* is said to be the motive behind it. Sometimes, the notion of *varngu* also helps explain conflicts between Tolai and Europeans in the early years of colonial rule on the Gazelle.¹²

Personal animosities and sympathies are of great importance in the origins and development of this dispute, though they will not be discussed here out of respect for the persons involved. The biographies of the main protagonists are also important for the outcome of the conflict in that they give some clues as to why none of them has the commanding knowledge which would help him to decide clearly the dispute in his favour. ToNamaliu grew up with his *patuana* ToKula in Tabeovaira (Karavi). Both he and Pamel went to the Methodist secondary school in Raluana and from there to the pastors' training institution in Vunairima. Neither ended up as a pastor, though their education made them less receptive to parts of the "traditional" lore in their youth. ToNamaliu and ToPamel were both appointed *Luluai* in the 1950s. Namaliu was recognised *lualua* of his *vunatarai* when he was still young and when his elder and allegedly more knowledgeable brother ToWalom was still alive.¹³ The knowledgeable man in Pamel's *vunatarai* was Tilom, and apparently neither Pamel nor Namaliu have inherited their respective elder's full knowledge. Varkia went to the Administration's school at Malaguna-Coalwharf in the late 1930s and became a teacher after the war. He taught for many years outside the Gazelle and for most of his time as a teacher he lived outside Ialakua until he resigned from teaching in 1981.

A.L. Epstein offers another explanation as to why some *vunatarai*'s genealogies are particularly shallow: "in the Matupit context, the depth of the genealogy seems to be closely related to the number of patrilocally attached groups over whom the domi-

¹¹ Cf. A.L. EPSTEIN 1979, pp. 176f.

¹² Schütte (1986, p. 74) says that the big man Talili, who was behind the killing of four Fijian missionaries in 1878, was a warrior and trader who perceived Brown as a rival, a threat to his political and economic interests. I was told by many Tolai that it was Talili's *varngu* more than anything else which made him take on Brown.

¹³ A.L. Epstein writes that "the *lualua* is in a sense the official 'remembrancer' of his group" (1969, p. 128). As the case of Namaliu and his brother shows, this is obviously not always (or no longer?) the case in Raluana.

nant lineage seeks to wield authority."¹⁴ However, in this case, the necessity to assert the links between Vunabagur and Vunagogo, and Vunagogo and Vunaruga never arose previously, so that it was not a matter of preserving a fund of knowledge which had been in use before. But even in the case of ToNamaliu who is the *lualua* not only of Vunaruga proper, but also of other associated lineages represented in Raluana or Ialakua, the extension of Vunaruga's dominance was so recent that it is not possible to prove by genealogy the link between him and most of his followers. Instead Namaliu can refer to a record of *tabu* payments made to seal the affiliation of those lineages to his own *vunatarai*. Comparing the genealogies I collected with Epstein's Matupit ones, I suspect that genealogical knowledge in general must have declined since Epstein undertook his study nearly thirty years ago. Most of the type of elder Epstein interviewed have died - at least in the coastal, Rabaul-oriented villages like Ialakua or Matupit. There are a number of reasons for that. One I tried to illustrate above - the pastors and teachers who have become clan leaders, know less than their predecessors, who had a different socialisation. In 1988, neither in Raluana nor in Vunamami was any old-type *lualua* still alive. In December 1986, I attended the *minamai* for ToPawa of Turagunan, who could well have been the last *lualua* of his kind in the Raluana area.¹⁵ The share of clan land (*pia na vunatarai*) in the land a big man controls is declining. Increasingly, land is bought and registered, and then, at least in the first generations, inherited patrilineally within the family. In Raluana and Vunatagia, a lot of people live on "blocks", plots of land carved out of the former Kuradui Plantation which was bought back in the 1960s. Both Namaliu and Varkia bought parts of Kuradui, and this land will be passed on to their children; genealogical knowledge is, at this stage at least, irrelevant for this kind of land. Some *lualua* keep a record of their relations by writing down genealogical information. But for a convincing statement more than just a name is required. An ancestor's name without reference to where the ancestor lived, which land he or she worked, and who were his or her contemporaries, is of doubtful value if produced in the context of a land dispute.

In a situation where knowledge about the past becomes sketchy, the control of the present gains more weight in a dispute about the past. ToNamaliu is more powerful (he controls more land and more people and has more access to money) than ToVarkia, and at this stage he is more likely to be "right" than the latter.

Until the dispute is aggravated by the death of either ToNamaliu or ToPamel, it simmers whenever a customary ceremony involves more than one of the three big men. On each of these occasions, points can be scored and so each becomes a politically sensitive event. In January 1988, Tilom's daughter IaDelma organised a ceremony to commemorate her father by putting up a tombstone with a brass plaque at his grave. She enlisted the help of Tilom's successor Pamel, but had no intention of getting involved in the dispute between Pamel and Varkia. She asked Varkia to play a major role by being the master of ceremonies. But Varkia fell sick on that very day. On the plaque, as well as her own name, are those of Pamel and Ephraim Tali, with whom Tilom had lived the years before his death. Both Tali and Gerson ToVue joined Pamel

¹⁴ A.L. EPSTEIN 1969, p. 193.

¹⁵ According to his son James Agi of Raburua, a lot of ToPawa's knowledge was lost at his death. None of his relatives is likely to take his place and maintain the deceased big man's wide network of relationships.

and laDelma in preparing the ceremony. Both Tali, who is of Tamtavul vunatarai, and Gerson are affiliated with Varkia. laDelma intends to stage soon a *balaguan* in Tilom's honour. ToVarkia has vowed to make a substantial contribution. He could thereby enhance his own position as one of Tilom's heirs. Histories might be told differently in a few years' time.

9: The *Kivung*, Enos Teve, and the Urge to Do Something

kivung¹ n. 1) assembly, meeting, gathering, council, conference
2) group that meets
>> **ki vung** v. to meet, to confer

ToWilliam: "If you want to know something about the *kivungu*..."

"If you want to know something about the *kivung*, you have to learn a lot about Enos, because he started it", said William ToKavivi, and he was seconded by his brother Noa ToVura. Enos Teve was their half-brother. Of course, I thought, they will put their brother in the limelight. I knew about him from Salisbury's book on Vunamami. That sounded interesting enough, so if they did not tell me much about the *kivung*, I could still learn something about Enos Teve. ToWilliam was not the kind of person who would just tell me what I wanted to know. He would tell me what he wanted me to know and he would direct the occasion: "You will pick up me, Noa and Tiunga (Enos Teve's son) in the afternoon and we will talk about Enos and the *kivung* at your place, because there we won't be disturbed. We will have to work hard." The afternoon lasted for more than ten hours and turned out to be the beginning of a series of sessions I had with ToWilliam and others about the *kivung* - and about Enos, of course.

We will start with Enos' father, Levi ToLingling. He was the son of IaRat of the *vunatarai* Kabalup-Vunaibu and of ToVava who was of Takaptar *vunatarai*. IaRat bore Noa ToLangit, Levi ToLingling, IaLavinia, IaTuap and IaNeina, in that order. ToLangit married IaKukua from Barovon and that's how our father's relatives ended up in Raluana*. For IaTuap married ToDario, IaKukua's brother. In those days it was common to exchange sisters. Vunakoai is the *vunatarai* of the late ToPitalai, a big man from Barovon, just in case you do not know. IaTuap gave birth to Temet ToVuaina and four women: IaDesi, IaLina, Maria IaTavol and IaBaba. IaLina and Maria IaTavol again had many daughters, so that our father's clan became strong. Maria IaTavol bore ToPakuk, IaRachel, IaVilimaina and IaTepenia. IaRachel bore IaGagui who was bought for IaPatataina's son Tulia who lives somewhere in your immediate neighbourhood.

¹ Please note that I am neither referring to the pre-war *kivung* mentioned by Downs (1980, p. 103), Fenbury (1978, p. 47, fn. 17) or McCarthy (1963, p. 231), nor to the co-operative business ventures described by Salisbury (1970, pp. 239ff).

IaGagui was indeed one of my closest neighbours, but what had that to do with the *kivung*?

Levi ToLingling married first IaRange of Vunameram *vunatarai*. She bore him two sons: Enos Teve and ToVue ToMavok. After IaRange died, Levi married our mother, Melat IaVavina of Vunakua *vunatarai*, who had five children: ToMainge, Tiuta, IaRodi IaAva, Noa ToVura and me, the youngest. Enos married several times. His first wife was IaTutupua of Matupit *vunatarai*, she had no children. The next one was IaVole of Kabamui, who bore IaRange who bore ToKapul who lives at Vunamami-Rarot. The next one was IaIva, the sister of my neighbour Walter Diuvia's mother IaKurangenge of the *vunatarai* ToNganga. She bore Tiunga and IaAva. Ovin IaLaval is Enos' fourth wife. She had no children. She is still alive and lives at Rarot. He then married again, yes, he had two wives at the same time. His fifth wife was IaKau. She had one son, our father's namesake. They are both dead. Enos also adopted ToBibirang, the son of IaLaval's sister.²

Genealogy: Enos Teve

² Based on statements made by William ToKavivi of Vunamami in September and October 1987, and confirmed by Eliken Tiunga and Noa ToVura, both of Vunamami.

I will spare you the comprehensive listing of Enos Teve's relations. Tolai accounts of events in the recent past are embedded in a network of kinship, linking actors in those events with their descendants in the present. The Tolai discourse about the past is foremost a discourse about genealogical links. Tolai men and women can discuss for hours how people are related to each other. Women are generally more knowledgeable than men, older people know far more than younger people, those who have stayed all their life in the village are obviously better informed than people who have lived for long periods in the diaspora. Knowledge about past relationships can help determine a person's place in the present, inform them about obligations and construct ties.

In Tolai society a dynamic tension exists between the matrilineal ordering of kinship and ties between fathers and their children. For Enos to become a big man it was crucial that his father Levi was one. Because Vunameram did not own much land in Vunamami and hence did not play much of a role in Vunamami politics, and because Enos' mother had died when he was still a child, it was obvious that Enos would orientate himself to his father. Levi was an entrepreneur who would fit well into the anthropologists' text-book image of the Melanesian big man. He was a *tena ubene*, an expert in net fishing. His fishing grounds extended to Kabagap in the east and Vunakia in the west. His contemporaries Pero ToKinkin, ToVungia and ToEron had staked out claims further to the west at Raluana, Davaon and Valaur respectively. Levi was behind the establishment of a market at Vunagalip (near the shore at Vunamami) where fish was sold for *tabu* and which played an important role in supplying the plantations with garden produce. Levi's sons were involved in the net fishing, and Enos in particular became a renowned *tena ubene* himself. He commissioned people from as far away as Ratunguna (Ialakua) to make nets, paying one *pokono* (fathom) *tabu* per every five *pokono* of net.³

Net fishing was not introduced by the Europeans but it may be assumed that pacification allowed Tolai big men to expand such enterprises. *"Pa dia nuknuk bulu ure ra papalum, dia purpuruan vatikai* (they were too occupied with warfare to think deeply about work)", remarked Enos' half-brother Noa. In today's Tolai perception, warfare was the evil that hindered development. In contrast to that Scarlett Epstein depicts a pre-colonial Tolai society preoccupied with trade and accumulation of shell-money.⁴ But the early European accounts of markets should be treated carefully: to observe chains of markets it had to be safe enough for the observer to travel across the Gazelle Peninsula; by then the intruders had stimulated trade.⁵

³ IaNglok and IaAlice who lived at Bitapolapolo were among those working for him.

⁴ T.S. EPSTEIN 1968, pp. 22ff.

⁵ Contemporary European observers noted the upsurge in local trade since the establishment of colonial rule (PFEIL 1899, p. 116; HAHN 1897, p. 71). In 1894 Gregorius Huser reported that only Europeans were buying foodstuffs on the local markets and that Tolai were growing food especially to meet the European demand (In: *Monatshefte* 1894, pp. 137f). However much of an exaggeration the first part of Huser's claim may be, it still indicates at least a trend. This is not to deny the significance of pre-colonial Tolai trade, or its sizeable proportions in comparison with other parts of Melanesia; "these people are the greatest traders under the sun", George Brown remarked shortly after his arrival (letter to Waterhouse of 22 Oct. 1875, ML: MCh/OM A 1686-2). But many of those numerous large markets that were held every three days might have sprung into existence only at about the same time as Europeans wrote about them (see, for example: RICKARD 1893, p. 7).

Levi joined Abaram ToBobo in arranging marriages within Vunamami so that the population would increase and the land would not be taken over by the plantations. He used his shell money riches to buy wives for many young Vunamami men who were not necessarily related to him. He was the first Vunamami resident to have a *pal na kapa*, a house with a roof from corrugated iron. The land where he resided and where Enos was born, Tolong, is for that reason also called Palnakapa.

In 1928, Levi ToLingling died. Enos was probably in his early thirties then.⁶ With Levi's death the ties between Vunaibu *vunatarai* on the one hand and Levi's children and laMelat on the other were strained. At the *minamai* for Levi, the distribution of shell money immediately after his death, laMelat's relatives made the *vatut varpa* payment to Levi's *vunatarai* which is meant to be the signal for the woman and her children to return to her own relatives. In that case, she would have returned to Ulagunan. Theoretically, Enos would have been expected to join his mother's relatives at Balana-taman, though he was not directly affected by the *vatut varpa* for his step mother. Before 1928 Enos was a de facto member of Vunaibu. He was initiated in Levi's *tubuan* laMareve and laBagubagu. He participated in Levi's fishing and used Levi's land. With Levi's death, Vunaibu, and particularly Levi's *matuana*, Temet ToVuaina, began many years of bitter confrontation with Levi's children and last wife. Vunaibu claimed that Levi's children were illegally using Vunaibu land, that they had not distributed Levi's *tabu* (namely a *tabu* coil named ToBulmakau which was started with the proceeds from the sale of a large pig of the same name) but kept it for themselves and that they were squatting on Tolong, the family's home at Vunamami-Lumluvur. This dispute was further complicated by Levi's father's *vunatarai*. They claimed that some of their land had been seized illegally (they could not successfully claim back their land so long as their "son" was alive).

In 1929, Enos signed a one-year contract to work in "Okta" Mouton's store in Takubar. laMelat and her children left Tolong and stayed partly with Enos and partly with their relative Sakius ToPalabama in Vunamami. After his contract had expired, Enos stayed on and off in Takubar for about three more years to do net fishing, mainly in partnership with Ilias ToPuipui.⁷ By the time Enos returned to Vunamami he was wealthy. He was not yet a recognised political leader. He had been married three times by then and had a reputation as a 'womaniser' (*tēna al vavina*). Iosia ToKunai remembered that Tollias and his partner were regularly in trouble for seducing women during Enos' time in Takubar.⁸

⁶ Salisbury (1970, p. 317) claims that Enos was born in 1900. According to William ToKavivi and Polos ToPultima, Enos was only a little older than Eliuda Tatakai who was said to have been born in the year the Germans hanged ToRuruk in Kokopo for his alleged participation in the murder of Moses (ToRuruk was hanged in Kokopo on 2 September 1891). Enos' younger brother ToMavok would have been born at least two years after Enos. laMelat's daughter laRodl was born no later than 1907, which makes it unlikely that her two elder brothers and her half-brother would have been born well after 1900. Though Salisbury would most likely have based his claim on information provided by Enos himself, a date around 1894 for Enos' birth seems to me much more likely. As will be obvious from the following, my account and that in SALISBURY (1970) differ greatly. I see no point, however, in dealing with every one of Salisbury's claims which does not concur with my account of Enos' life. See also fn. 76 in this chapter.

⁷ William ToKavivi, Noa ToVura and Elken Tiunga, all of Vunamami, in September and October 1987.

⁸ Iosia ToKunai of Vunaulu/Turagunan in December 1987.

Enos returned to Tolong. Temet ToVuaina had died in 1932, and some of 'ToBulmakau' had been distributed at his *minamai*. 'ToBulmakau' had again been cut in 1934 by Levi's children to finance the last ceremony connected to their father's death, the *vunavuna*. laMelat and her children finally settled on land at Bitamuli which had been offered by Martin Tareu and was bought from Pero ToKinkin of Matupit *vunatarai* around 1935. Tensions eased. Enos felt the urge to do something.

Friends and examples

Iakim ToMemenga and **Lesley ToWeima** were brothers and lived on Moalim, Duke of York Islands. Their father was from Moalim, whilst their mother laTingpakuai was from King (New Ireland). ToMemenga was at one stage appointed Paramount *Luluai* (*waitpus*) by the Australian Administration whilst ToWeima had once been a *dokta* (probably an aid post orderly). From the 1920s until the Second World War, the two brothers were renowned for their wealth beyond the Duke of Yorks. They had servants who lived in labourers' quarters near their houses. They ran a plantation in Kabakai on New Ireland. They commissioned the building of boats, first sailing boats and then a motor boat (*King*) which they later sold to the Catholic Mission. The boats were built in Karias and Dalaus in New Ireland by a Chinese carpenter, Sinpuk⁹ who was married to their relative Ingaipel from Karias. Sinpuk worked with the help of his saw-man Dono. ToWeima also ran a trade store on Moalim. Both men wore shoes, trousers and shirts, which clearly distinguished them as big men.¹⁰

Mr Wallace was an Australian living in Valaur in the 1930s. Many of my informants described him as an adviser and friend of Tolai big men before the Second World War. Among those on friendly terms with him were many *waitpus* and *Luluai*. Enos must have been aware of his anti-Administration views and of his attempts to encourage Tolai to compete with Europeans and Chinese in business, though he might have met him only briefly. Mr Wallace has become a mythological figure who is most likely to be assigned a major role when older Tolai are talking about the beginning of organised anti-colonial politics.¹¹

⁹ Name is spelt phonetically.

¹⁰ Lesley ToManeo and Benjamin Titi of Moalim in December 1987.

¹¹ Thomas Valentine Wallace had worked for the *Rabaul Times* in the 1920s and lived with his mother Jane Todd Wallace, and for a while also with his sister Dorothy Fay, in Valaur some eight kilometers out of Rabaul, until they lost their house in the 1937 eruption of the Rakaia volcano. He was a friend of the influential *Luluais* ToPuak and Tingai and a mentor of ToManoa (who in the 1950s led the Navuneram tax boycott). The Wallaces tried to encourage Tolai big men to set up a co-operative, to get round Chinese or European intermediate trade when selling copra, and to run their own copra driers. Stanley ToMarita who went to school in Malaguna-Cowharf told me that the students were once visited by mother and son Wallace, and she asked them: 'Why don't you wear trousers? This is your country, we have just arrived recently. After all, the half-castes are wearing trousers, aren't they?' It was after this question that the students discussed for the first time their situation as 'natives' living under a colonial regime (ToStanley of Malabonga/Vunatagia on 30 Nov. 1987 in Malabonga). 'Mrs Wallace', concluded the authorities, 'has spread dangerous propaganda for some time, while Mr Wallace has undoubtedly advised natives along the lines of self determination in opposition to established orders.' (Melrose, Director of Dept. of District Services and Native Affairs in a letter to the Administrator of the Territory of New Guinea of 31 Oct. 1939, Australian Archives: CRS A 518, B.D. 840/1/3 PT3). 'The Government tried him because he passed knowledge on to us', Orlin ToVaragat of Ngatur remarked (on 28 November in Ngatur). Indeed, the Government decided to deport him. If he had been taken away in time by the Australians, his life might have been saved, as he was deported by the Japanese on the 'Montevideo Maru' which was torpedoed and sunk in 1942. (I am grateful to Donald Denoon for initially referring me to archival records on the Wallace family. Geeves' unpublished M.A.thesis deals extensively with the Wallace family: GEEVES 1979, pp. 601-630 and 727-730.).

Darius Tavune of Takubar was a *waitpus*. He had been in office from about the late 1920s. On his advice people in and around Takubar planted rice and peanuts as cashcrops in the 1930s.¹²

Father Müller was a German priest responsible for the parish of Vunapope in the 1930s. He was said to have been a friend of both ToDarius and ToEnos and critical of the Australian Administration.¹³

Ateng was an Asian man¹⁴ who worked for Mouton when Enos was staying in Takubar. He became Enos' friend and told him about the situation in his own country where the indigenous population was also subjected to colonial rule.

After Enos finally returned from Takubar he travelled to New Ireland to visit the boatbuilder Sinpuk and be instructed in his trade. He came back some months later and organised a group of men who went to Takabar to saw planks for a boat which could carry 30 passengers. It was named *ToLingling* after Enos' father and launched in 1933. It was used to transport women from around Vunamami to the market in Rabaul and patients to and from the Duke of York Islands to the hospital on the mainland. In 1934 Enos sold the *ToLingling* to ToBaliiai of Reimber for 500 fathoms of *tabu*. Whilst still in Takubar, Enos started buying coconuts with *tabu*, making copra and selling it to traders for money. Later he had his own copra drier. He did this partly in partnership with others.¹⁵

Near the time of his eventual return to Takubar, Enos started to talk about forming a group to get together and do something. He met with several other men who also wanted to do something. These meetings then developed into the *kivung na pidik*, the secret *kivung*. Neither Enos nor any of the others were sure, precisely what they wanted to do.

Polos ToPultima, magistrate, former councillor, one of the first New Guineans to receive an English education, was a government clerk in Rabaul before the war. In 1987 he was in his early seventies:

"I will talk about some things which hurt us:

The first was the jail. There was a guy at the jail in Kokopo, a big guy from the Sepik by the name of Iakipa¹⁶. He would stand at the gate and await a new prisoner and he and other policemen would then beat up the chap who entered the jail. Some were half-killed. The police would just beat them into jail. Enos had this and similar things in mind when he thought that we should raise money. They organised the *kivung na pidik* and said: 'Let us collect a bit of money and see what happens.'

Another thing was the wearing of trousers and shirts. It was taboo to wear a shirt or trousers. Strictly forbidden! Only us, who had been to school at [the Government school in Malaguna-]

¹² Alpon ToUmue of Ramale in November 1987. I am not certain when he became *waitpus*. He was at least a *Lulual* when Enos stayed in Takubar.

¹³ Paul ToVllie and Iosep Tokinanang of Ulagunan in October 1987.

¹⁴ Name is spelt phonetically. Most say he was a Malay.

¹⁵ William ToKavivi, Noa ToVura, Ellken Tiunga, Jack ToKanit and Polos ToPultima, all of Vunamami, in September and October 1987.

¹⁶ Name is spelt phonetically.

Coalwharf and worked in town were permitted to wear shirt and trousers. Enos saw this and thought about the Government. He thought that he should set up a government.

Another thing: It was forbidden to walkabout at night. Only until nine o'clock, and that was it. And no alcohol. That was strictly forbidden. Whoever was caught drinking - off they went to jail for six months. Six months in jail for every single time you were caught drinking. Enos saw all this and he thought of the Council, actually not yet the Council, but of the *kivung*. A *kivung* to collect money to have a say, so that a government would materialise, so that we would govern ourselves. That's how it went. Now we are in charge of our own affairs."¹⁷

Anti-colonial sentiment, still in embryonic form, was one factor which motivated Enos and others to get together. The other was the dissatisfaction with those appointed to represent the Tolai: the *Luluai* and *waitpus*. Enos Kauba, a former pastor who had worked many years as a *monamono* (superintendent) for the Methodist Mission in Malakuna No. 4, was *Luluai* for Vunamami in the early 1930s. ToMitam, son of Paula ToVurgilo (see chapter 1) was *waitpus* at the same time. ToKepas and ToEnana told me:

"Nelson ToVavaongo [the *waitpus* for Raluana*] and ToMitam thought they were really big. They pretended to be the biggest. They pretended to be white. They were always dressed smartly with shirt and neck-tie. They helped themselves at the markets without paying. Their houses looked like the houses of Europeans. The people were annoyed with them. The Tolai don't like it if somebody who has been chosen for an office puts himself much higher than everybody else."¹⁸ The people did not like Mitam and Nelson because of their unfavourable character."¹⁹

Before about 1935 not a great deal happened. Members of the *kivung* met and talked and agreed that the time was ripe to do something. Maybe they made plans. Meetings were informal and were not held regularly. They were not public because the participants were afraid of those who were in power. Participants were probably all from Vunamami and met on Enos' initiative. They were about Enos' age or younger, with only very few *patuana*. All of them were men.²⁰

In c. 1935 Enos was found guilty of misconduct and removed from office. In those days the Administration appointed the *Luluai*, but invited the villagers concerned to put forward a candidate. It was rare that their suggestion was disregarded by the

¹⁷ Polos ToPultima of Vunamami in Vunamami on 10 October 1987. Abridged version of taped statement. Non-literal translation on the basis of a transcript prepared by Paul ToSinot and myself. Geaves, who looks at the discriminating regulations under the aspect of their meaning in the European colonial context, rightly observes that "keen to preserve the distance between races, many Europeans saw such objects as shirts and alcohol as symbolic of the line of demarcation" (1979, p. 215). The obsession with defending the exclusiveness of European dress standards was such that New Guineans wearing long loincloths were considered to be "persons of insubordinate or even rebellious nature" (DOWNS 1986, p. 53).

¹⁸ "A tarai Tolai pa dia meinge pi a tutana di pilak ia pi la tikal na ngala taun diat" - an important statement on the precariousness inherent in relationships between big men/women and "commoners".

¹⁹ Elias ToEnana and Kepas ToLawo, both of Bitarebarebe, on 14 October 1987 in Bitarebarebe, verbatim notes, translation from the Tolai language.

²⁰ Participants included: Tinal, Toltorom, Robert ToKamara, Tilik ToLongmat, Tilik Gaur, ToGolom, Turuna, Tiuta Levi, Tiuta Temet, ToMainge, ToBel Kavavar, ToBel Gabriel, ToLote, Moseley ToVaruk, Kaminiet ToBitaoko (according to William ToKavivi, Noa ToVura, Elikan Tiunga, Jack Kanit, Polos ToPultima); Noa Teve, Iosep ToValom, ToPeneia, Tionatan ToPalaur, Demat Tinure, Kamel ToPin (according to Vin ToBaining of Vunamami, who also mentioned some of the names the others gave). Of those, only Demat Tinure was still alive in 1988, but he was no longer able to recall anything.

kiap. Enos became Enos Kauba's successor. In the same year Enos, accompanied by ToGideon and ToVilem from Vunamami, travelled to New Guinea to visit contract labourers from Vunamami who were working in Salamaua and up on the Wau goldfields. Enos levied a once-only tax of ten shillings per head on them. At about the same time, he and Darius organised the *kul bung* (or *tokom*), an institution to raise money. Whoever wanted some work to be done by a group of villagers (clearing land for a garden, thatching a roof with *kunai* grass, etc.) supplied the helpers with food and paid one shilling or half a fathom of *tabu* into a fund which was administered by a trustee (*tena varbalaurai*).²¹ At around that time the *kivung* probably imposed an annual head tax of three pence per adult male.²² A *kivung i ga dekdek vanavana* - the *kivung* gradually gained strength.

Matupit 1936

"We kept it kind of secret. Because we were still anxious then", John ToVuia explained. "We set up the *kivung na barmana* [*k.* of the young men]. Just us, it did not include all of Matupit. Only us here at Kikila.²³ Daniel Kaputin, John Rumet and I, we had called together the young men. We spoke to them: 'By gosh. These leaders of ours, they are not really any good. They don't initiate anything which serves the village. They just follow the obsolete policies of the Government. They don't set up anything here at the village to improve the life of the people. ... In fact they make things worse. Therefore, we should get together and think about those things and discuss them. And then we should translate into action what we have thought up.' The young men agreed: 'Yeah, that's true.' We told them: 'Don't just sit here, nobody should hide his thoughts. This will be our secret. We will keep it for ourselves.' Some revealed their ideas, and we did not agree with what they said. Then I talked about the [wild fowl] eggs of which our *Luluai*, the *waitpus* Anton [ToMana] was in charge.²⁴ He had told the Government that he was supervising the digging of the eggs. Whoever dug for eggs had to go to Anton. Once, we took him to court, because he had been taking eggs from other people's land. The *kiap* would not listen to us. Afterwards, we had approached the Government on that matter. I had helped some of the *patuana* to take the case to the Government, though I was quite young at that time. I was then staying with some of the *patuana*. One of them was Livai ToNga who was leading us in the affair. We told the Government, and the Government informed the superior of the *kiaps*, a Mr Girgiri²⁵, and he came to the office where we had lodged our complaint. The clerk said to him: 'Don't listen to them.' ... We told them: 'We don't want this man to be in charge. He lays his hands on other people's land, he sells other people's land.' We got Anton removed from office. I thought of the eggs and that we should now take care of them. [I suggested that to the others and] they agreed. We told the *Luluai*: 'We are now in charge of the eggs.' That was in 1936, before the eruption. When we were in charge of the eggs, we ruled that one part of the proceeds from selling the eggs had to go to the person who had been digging, one part to the owner of the land where they had been dug, and one part to us

²¹ The *tena varbalaurai* in Vunamami were Iosep ToValom in Vunamami-Lumluvur and Tiuta Temet in Rarot.

²² I received contradictory information regarding the imposition of a tax. For the last paragraph I relied on William ToKavivi, Jack Kanit, Polos ToPultima, Vin ToBaining, Noa ToVura, Eilken Tiunga (all of Vunamami), ToUmue of Ramale and ToMoseley of Takubar.

²³ Kikila is officially called Matupit No. 1. The area Kikila comprises the southeastern part of the island. The people of Kikila comprise the greater part of the United Church congregation on Matupit.

²⁴ Matupit men dig around the base of Tavuvur for eggs of the *ngiok*, a small bush turkey which lays brown eggs more than double the size of hen eggs. For a detailed description of the process of egg-gathering see: A.L. EPSTEIN 1969, pp. 73-75.

²⁵ Name is spelt phonetically. Mr. Girgiri was most likely H. Gregory.

who were supervising the digging, to us of the *kivung na barmana*. That was how we did it. We accumulated money. Mind you at that time, the price of eggs was not like it is today. Maybe one shilling for ten eggs.²⁶ Therefore the money we collected grew only slowly. ... Then the volcano erupted in 1937, and that set an end for the time being to our project. When it was all right to dig for eggs again, we set up our scheme again. That might have been in 1938. We were then again in charge of the eggs.

By 1939 quite some money had been accumulated, and we thought: 'We should deposit it at the bank. If it is kept here [in the village], somebody might steal it.' ... We had eighty pounds then. We took the money to the *kiap*. The *kiap* asked us: 'Who told you about this possibility? Who pointed out to you that it is possible to pay the money into the bank?' 'Nobody.' 'I want to know who told you to take the money to the bank?' 'No, that was our own idea.' 'You are lying; a European or a Chinese or a half-caste told you about it, and you tell me now who it was.' 'No, it was our idea, the idea of us *barmana*.' The *kiap* kept on questioning us, and we steadfastly insisted that it had been our own idea."²⁷

The formal difference between the history of the *kivung na pidik* and the history of the *kivung na barmana* results from one being my construct made up from bits of oral tradition and oral history, the other one being oral history produced by one of the main protagonists of the events we are dealing with. The history of the Vunamami *kivung* and Enos Teve is not based on narratives but on many discussions I had with individuals and, more often, with small groups of people. As in the other histories told so far, there were different versions, but differences were rather locally defined (e.g. a Vunamami version vs. a Takubar version). None of my informants felt comfortable enough to be a lone voice in supplying me with a *kidoloina pipir* about the *kivung*. In fact, I was the one who was expected to supply the full story after having been furnished with the raw material. John Vuia had a coherent account of the origins of the Tolai's *matanitu* on Matupit, which consisted of between two and six episodes, one of which deals with the attempt by Daniel Kaputin, ToRumet and himself to bank the *kivung*'s money.²⁸

John Vuia said he was thirty-four years old when they started the *kivung na barmana*. John Rumet and Daniel Kaputin were about the same age. ToVuia had worked briefly as a teacher at the Seventh Day Adventist school. He had quit his job after his headmaster held him responsible for the theft of stores which he had not taken. He then worked for a short while at a printing press in Rabaul. At the time of the attempt to bank the *kivung*'s money, ToVuia had been working for several years as a laundry clerk in Rabaul. He was the only one of the three who had a job in town. None of them was in a position to know Mr Wallace or other Europeans who mingled with Tolai *Luluai* and *waitpus*. ToVuia had only a vague idea what a bank was.

²⁶ In 1987 the price was 50 toea for one egg at the Rabaul Market.

²⁷ John ToVuia of Matupit-Kikila on 30 September 1987 in Matupit. Abridged extract. Taped statement. Non-literal translation on the basis of a transcript prepared by Paul ToSinot and myself.

²⁸ I listened to accounts of all episodes at least twice and taped most of them. ToVuia would always tell them in exactly the same way (of course not with the same wording). They included "How we banked the *kivung*'s money" and "Fenbury's visit to Matupit and my subsequent talk with the Administration" as the essential episodes, plus "An account of how I quit teaching", "Why I did not want to become a Local Government Councillor" and "How the police were bashed up on Matupit when they intruded on the Council's territory".

The Administration, tormented by the thought that their work was sabotaged by subversives of the like of the Wallaces, and unable to accept that some nobody came to deposit eighty pounds in a pass book, dealt with ToVuia and ToEnos differently. ToEnos was somebody. He was to be reckoned with. It was also a matter of different *kiaps* being in charge. Vunamami was part of the Kokopo Sub-District, where the government officers concerned were apparently sympathetic to Enos' ideas. In spite of different initial positions in Rabaul-Matupit and Kokopo-Vunamami, and in spite of the formal differences between the two histories, there are striking parallels which relate to the nature of colonial rule in the 1930s and with the way this is perceived today by people who were involved in politics which led to independence.

Parochialism is still an important feature of Tolai society in 1988, and was even more so fifty years ago. Before the war, there was no relevant communication between ToEnos and his group on the one hand and the *kivung na barmana* on Matupit on the other. ToVuia knew of course of Enos Teve. But he was not related to him, and he found it difficult to bridge the gap in status. Since the two *kivung* developed independently, I will let ToVuia get on with his story and deal afterwards with what happened in Vunamami:

"Then the *kiap* said: 'The three of you will stay inside the wire fence for thirty minutes. Think well [about my question]. *Polis boi*, get the three men out of here to the wire fence to give them time to think carefully. In thirty minutes you bring them back again.' We sat there until the thirty minutes were over. '*Polis boi*, show them in!' The police man came and told us to get back in again. There we stood again. 'So what? Did you come up with any good thoughts? Who instilled the idea into you to deposit the money at the bank?' I was standing in front of the other two. I replied: 'Neither a European nor a Chinese nor a half-caste did. It would not be straight if we just named one of those three groups for nothing. That would indeed be quite bad of us.' The *kiap* fronted ToKaputin: 'What about you?' ToKaputin told him the same. The *kiap* asked ToRumet who replied: 'No, this is just what we, the *barmana* said.' Then the *kiap* demanded: 'Who is your *Luluai*?' 'ToKuru.' 'And the *tultul*?' 'ToDapal.' 'At this time and on this date you will bring the *Luluai* and the *tultul* here.'

We arrived back home. We told the *Luluai* and the *tultul*: 'You will just point at us. This is our, the *barmana*'s, business. Don't you dare say that you knew about it. You did not know anything about it.' We sort of conspired to make it appear that it was entirely our thing. I had instructed the *barmana*: 'If they are trying to pin something on us three, all of us shall insist that it was the idea of us as a group. Nobody must say it was his idea. It was ours. If it means that all of us have to go to jail, why not. If it is all of us, it won't be hard.' They kept those words in mind.

On the appointed day we went again to Rabaul, the three of us, the *Luluai*, and the *tultul*. We lined up with me standing in the front, then Daniel Kaputin, then John Rumet, and the *Luluai* and *tultul* at the back. 'Well, how is it? Did any useful thoughts come to you in the meantime? Did you remember whether it was a *masta* or a Chinese or a half-caste?' 'No.' 'And you?' 'No.' 'What about you?' 'No.' 'Well then, *Luluai*!' 'No, I did not know anything about this. It was entirely their thing, it was the *barmana*'s idea.' '*Tultul*!' 'It was the *barmana*'s thing.' 'Ok. You go along there. *Polis boi*, take them to the room of the *nambawan* [highest-ranking] *kiap*.' We entered his room and lined up with the *Luluai* and the *tultul* standing at the back. I was at the front. 'Ah, that's you,

ToAn?²⁹ 'Yes.' 'And you are Daniel Kaputin?' 'Yes.' 'And you John Rumat?' 'Yes.' 'Well then, who gave you this idea?' 'Nobody, it was our own idea, the idea of us *barmana*.' 'There was not perhaps a *masta*?' 'No.' 'Or a Chinese? Or a half-caste?' 'No.' 'Hmm.' He looked hard at me. He gazed at me and thumped on the table. 'The Government can't just throw things after you.' He was pointing only at me. 'They can't supply you with something just like that. You have to pester the Government for it,³⁰ and the Government will give it to you. Now, this money, we will deposit it at the bank.' He thumped on the table. 'This money will stay at the bank. It will make the hospital, and it will make...', he named a whole lot of things, like all the Government departments. He named them and said that the money would make them. We did not have a clue what he was talking about. Now we know, because of the school. Today we know about the different departments which make up the Government. But at that time we did not. He asked: 'How much money have you got?' 'Eighty.' 'Put it over here.' He called a *kiap* who then counted it. 'That's correct.' They talked to each other in English: 'These Tolai know a thing or two.' I could understand what they said. 'They must have picked up a few things.' They lowered their voices, maybe because they were afraid that we could follow their conversation.

They appointed me and ToKaputin and a *kiap* as the ones to sign if we wanted to withdraw money. Only ToKaputin and myself needed to sign if we wanted to make a deposit. We then went to the bank and put the money into an account and gave them our names. When we were leaving the bank we pondered over what the *kiap* had said, that the money would make the hospital and many more things. We did not know what he had meant by that, because at that time, we were not yet informed. We said: 'Let's keep our ears open. Later we will find out what this is all about.' We returned to Matupit, and we told them: 'Well, it has turned into quite something now. From now on, it is taboo that anybody steals eggs or kills a fowl.' We worked out a rule later, and it was authorised by the *kiap*. This rule was applied in court. Ten shillings fine for stealing eggs, and ten shillings for killing a fowl."³¹

In the context of 1987's Papua New Guinea politics where the Fijian putschist Rabuka is praised for saving Melanesians from foreign domination,³² stories about the *kivung* could easily be built up into the oppressed organising themselves against colonial rule. In fact, if stories about the *kivung* were told by young Tolai (and they are not) I would expect them to emphasise the role of the *kivung* as cells of anti-European resistance. Nothing could be further from the truth. ToVuia did not storm into the government offices after not having been allowed to open a bank account. He went first to see the *kiap* and politely enquired how to proceed further. But still the *kivung* is the nucleus of the Tolai politics of independence, in which the nobodies of 1936 were to take a leading role.

²⁹ He would have asked: "John Vuia, that's you, isn't it?", but ToVuia would not use his own name in a narrative like this.

³⁰ Literally he said: "You have to drill a hole in the Government's head."

³¹ John ToVuia of Matupit on 30 September 1987 in Matupit. Abridged extract. Taped statement. Non-literal translation made on the basis of a transcript prepared by Paul ToSinot and myself.

³² See for example *The Times of Papua New Guinea* of 21 May 1987 ("Koroma's Corner"). This was also a recurrent theme of the 1987 national election campaign on the Gazelle.

ToVula: "I did not become rich by being a Council President."

ToVue: "I have told Klaus many times that one day people will be fed up and burn down the House of Assembly."

(John ToVula of Matupit-Kikila, left, and Gerson ToVue of Ialakua, right, in June 1987, discussing the past in the present.)

There was "little clamour for an end to colonial rule" in Papua New Guinea.³³ In the early 1970s most Papua New Guineans would have opted for Australia to stay in charge for some years beyond 1975. The Mataungan Association was the most radical of those movements which could be classified as nationalist, although the Mataungans fought primarily for a Tolai nation, and only secondly for an independent state comprising today's Papua New Guinea. It was Daniel Kaputin who coined the name for this movement: Mataungan (*mata ungan* = watch out) at a mass meeting on 18 May 1969 in Malaguna-Tavuvutavur. And for those present that day, it was important that it had been him.³⁴

Vunamami 1936

That year, ToMitam and ToNelson were caught drinking. Somebody had apparently told the authorities who were said to have been reluctant to prosecute high-ranking Tolai officials appointed by the Administration. Both *waitpus* were subsequently removed from office and jailed. It is not clear who became Mitam's immediate

³³ David Hegarty, in: AMARSHI et al. 1979, p. 187.

³⁴ Esau ToAmen of Matupit in October 1987. The name was subsequently endowed with emotional meanings by others, so by ToKaputin's son John, who declared with a pathos that has now an ironic ambivalence to it: "The word 'mataungan' is as old as our Tolai history" (John Kaputin, in: *PIM* 41.2, p. 34); or by Heinz Schütte, who in his enthusiasm for the Mataungans suggested that the word means "to make sure that the fire is kept burning" (SCHÜTTE 1973a, p. 19, fn. 4).

successor. It seems Darius must have been put in charge of the villages around Vunamami in addition to his own paramountcy. With Mitam imprisoned, Enos felt encouraged to make his activities public and widen them. He took Emos Kauba to court for misappropriating *tabu*, and Emos joined Mitam in jail. At the end of 1936 Darius died. In the first months of 1937 there was no *waitpus* in either Takubar or Vunamami. In May 1937, the volcano at Rakaia erupted. The Administration was quick to appoint a new *waitpus* who could help organise their measures to shelter and feed refugees from around Rabaul in villages near Kokopo. Enos was appointed *waitpus* for an area comprising approximately today's Kokopo-Vunamami constituency.³⁵

It was the *waitpus*' job to convey the Administration's policies to the *Luluai* and *tultul* who then had to put them into action at the village level. The *waitpus* was also administering justice, probably with the tacit approval of the colonial authorities. It seems this was a relic from German times, when men like Pero Tokinkin in Raluana and ToVungia in Davaon had run their own prisons and had referred only major cases to the German courts. Enos declined to accept this new responsibility. He delegated it to Kukubak of Vunabalbal, a *Luluai* and highly respected *patuana*. Enos might have done this because he felt that he was too young and would not command the respect essential to have his judgments recognised. But it was also a clever political manoeuvre. Kukubak fined people who did not turn up for the *kul bung*, something which would have been difficult and certainly unpopular for Enos to do. Relying on a big man from Vunabalbal strengthened the alliance between Vunamami and the neighbouring village to its southwest. The *waitpus*, freed from court work, could do other things - widening the *kivung* for example.

Gone were the times of the *kivung na pidik*. As Enos acquired the white cap of the paramount *Luluai*, the *kivung* was becoming a public institution. From 1937 there were two catchment groups for the *kivung*. First there was the group of Vunamami men who had decided "to do something". From about 1936 men from other villages, first from Vunabalbal, then from Bitarebarebe, Tingenavudu and Ulagunan, and eventually from other places joined the group. Secondly there was the "conference" of *Luluai* and *tultul* who were in charge of villages in Enos' paramountcy, and which Enos had to convene from time to time. Over the following years, the village officials were integrated into a *kivung* which became more formalised. *Tena kivung*, members of the *kivung*, were appointed. They were responsible for fund-raising activities.³⁶

ToUmue was a *tena kivung* in Ramale. He travelled regularly to Vunamami to meet his colleagues. They would report on the money or *tabu* they had collected. Enos suggested that the villages should try to raise money as a group; this created a competitive incentive. A village would, for example, buy coconuts with the *tabu* collected through the *kul bung* scheme, make copra and then sell it with the proceeds going to the *kivung*.³⁷

³⁵ William Tokavivi, Polos ToPultima, Vin ToBaining, all of Vunamami, ToMoseley of Takubar, ToEnana of Bitarebarebe, in September and October 1987.

³⁶ Vin ToBaining of Vunamami in November and December 1987.

³⁷ Alpon ToUmue of Ramale in November 1987.

ToUmue, *tena kivung* before the war

"Enos Teve always admonished the members of his *kivung* to be honest and not to pocket any money belonging to the *gunan* or *kivung*",

stressed ToWilliam, ToPolos, ToJack, ToVilie, ToKalula, ToKau, ToVin, ToVavaur, ToNoa, ToEnana, and others. The histories told in 1987 about the *kivung* are statements about the present. They reflect a dissatisfaction with political leaders and party politics. Again and again the narrators emphasised that the *kivung*'s funds were not misappropriated or that the *kivung*'s leaders were trying hard not to let that happen. 1987 was election year in Papua New Guinea. Two out of four Tolai national parliamentarians were suspected of having been bribed to swap parties after the election. Alleged misappropriation of funds was a main theme of Tolai opposition to another long-time member of the national parliament during the campaign. In the same year, the Provincial Government

faced a vote of no-confidence; the tabling of that motion was justified with allegations of misuse of public office. In 1986 the Vunamami-Kokopo Community Government had to respond to accusations of gross mismanagement and misappropriation of funds which led to the dismissal of its chairperson. In 1987, only five out of twenty Community Governments were regarded to be trustworthy enough to be handed their budget subsidy by the Provincial Minister for Community Government.³⁸ To the best of my knowledge, none of the allegations concerning provincial or national parliamentarians has been proven in court, but Tolai villagers nevertheless widely believe them to contain a grain of truth. Tolai politics in the 1930s and 1940s are pitched against Tolai politics post-1975.

Around 1939, Enos Teve took over Kukubak's responsibilities. At about the same time, the *kivung* built a house (*pal na kivung*) for their meetings at Talimut, on "native reserve land" belonging to Vunamami, Vunabalbal, Ulagunan, Tingenavudu and Bitarebarebe.

³⁸ Ereman ToBaining, the member for East New Britain in the House of Assembly, and Esorom ToBurege, the member for Gazelle, both left the Pangu Party amidst speculation in their electorates that they had been promised financial gains by the People's Progress Party's Julius Chan (ToBurege) or United Party strongman Paul Torato (ToBaining). ToBurege was alleged to have been heavily in debt and to have followed the highest offer. Rival Tolai contenders for the Rabaul Open seat and their supporters accused John Kaputin, the member for Rabaul Open since 1972, of having misappropriated funds belonging to the business arm of the Mataungan Association, the New Guinea Development Corporation. The Premier for East New Britain Province, Sir Ronald ToVue, was accused on the floor of parliament by his former Minister of Finance, Sinai Brown, and by his deputy Luke Longposael of having, in his capacity as a Premier, unduly favoured a company in which he had an interest.

The place where the *pal na kivung* was built, was called thereafter Tavulapal (*tavul a pal* = site of the house). The *pal na kivung* was opened ceremoniously with dances and choirs and a large crowd present. ToKinanang and ToVillie still recall the first lines of a hymn that a choir from Ulagunan presented on the occasion: *Amana iat da ga rara / Amana ta ra kamara / Ma pa da varubu mulei / a malmal da ti gugu tan*.³⁹ The verse is about peace being established and pre-colonial warfare discarded. Little did the Tolai know then that their wars were peanuts in comparison with the impending catastrophe which was to bring to a halt all attempts to set up a political structure.

There was opposition to the *kivung*. Some of the older *Luluai* considered Enos to be a young usurper. Some villages made only meagre contributions to the *kivung*'s funds. The *tena kivung* were accused of using the *kivung* funds for their own ends. When the *pal na kivung* was officially opened, somebody reported Enos and Kukubak to the police for drinking liquor. Both were acquitted. It seems that for a short time during the Japanese occupation those opposing Enos succeeded in replacing him with Kaminiei ToBitaoako (as *Luluai*) and ToMitam (as *waitpus*).⁴⁰

Vin ToBaining: born in 1914; son of a pastor; trained to be a Methodist pastor himself in Raluana and Vunairima but did not complete training; 1938 *tena kivung* in Vunamami; 1939 worked with the Methodist Mission's printing press in Raluana; after 1945 *tultul* of Enos Teve; 1951 elected first councillor of Vunamami; 1952 elected President of Vunamami Local Government Council (until 1961); 1960-64 member of the Legislative Council; 1964-67 President of the Gazelle Council, supported multi-racial council; 1967 founding member of Pangu Party; 1969 beaten up by Mataungan supporters for his support of Administration policies.

³⁹ Paul ToVillie and Iosep ToKinanang of Ulagunan in October and November 1987. The song had been adapted from a German or Latin hymn. (Before we were wrong / In those times when we killed each other / Now we no longer fight / We rejoice about the peace.).

⁴⁰ Vin ToBaining, Polos ToPultima and William ToKavivi, all of Vunamami, October, November and December 1987. Kukubak stated succinctly at the court: "*Mi no drink* (I did not drink)". He did not elaborate on this, nor did he expect anybody to ask him for an elaboration, ToWilliam explained.

At about the same time that ToKaputin, ToRumet and ToVuia were told to think carefully inside the wire fence, the *kivung* in Vunamami apparently had no difficulties in banking its money. I do not know the amount, at any rate it must have been more than the *kivung na barmana's* eighty pounds.

From a Vunamami perspective, the *kivung* gradually expanded, with Vunamami as its centre and Enos as the moving force behind it. From a Takubar perspective, the *kivung's* core, the *kul bung* or *tokom* scheme was initiated by Darius, first tried out in Takubar, Ramale, Livuan and Bitagalip, and copied by Enos.⁴¹ From a Nanuk perspective, the *kivung* did not start anywhere near Vunamami but had its roots in Nanuk: Luis ToRia, a *tultul* from Nanuk, worked in Vunapope for the Catholic Mission. He became friendly with a German *Bruder*, a Catholic lay missionary, who told him what had happened to the Aboriginal Australians, a fate the Tolai should try to avoid by any means, and about a revolution in Germany. ToRia was less concerned with overthrowing a government than with taking over Malapau Plantation which was established by Queen Emma and Richard Parkinson on land formerly belonging to people in and around Nanuk. ToRia initiated a *kivung na pidik* with people from Nanuk, Balanataman and Tingenalom. Later, membership extended to Gunanba, Ngatur and Ngunguna.⁴² Their interpretation of the brother's advice inspired the *tena kivung* to plan a take-over of Malapau. They would remove the plantation's *cement*, bring them to the Sub-District Office at Kokopo and pay the markers off with five shillings for each *cement*.⁴³ The plan was never put into action, but the *kivung* collected money by imposing a head tax of six pence or one shilling.⁴⁴ Tiligur said that his brother ToRia and Nanuk's *Luluai* ToBabate went to Kokopo to show the *kiap* the funds collected.

The *kiap* asked: "What do you want to do with the money?" - "This is for the *gunan*." They pointed to his chair. "We will buy off this chair so that it belongs to the *gunan*." The *kiap* kept the money and referred them to Enos Teve.⁴⁵

Savenat Tika was a participant in the *kivung*, and his son Elison ToLotu confirmed the wording of that conversation, though he claimed that it had been after the war and that there had been 200 pounds, 50 of which had been collected before 1942 and buried during the Japanese occupation.⁴⁶ Timele of Gunanba said that Tutubang, who played a crucial role in that *kivung*, told him that he and ToRia were imprisoned for a few days in Kokopo when the *kiap* found out about their activities.⁴⁷ A *pal na kivung* was built at Bitakua in Balanataman. After the war, ToRia and his friends joined the *kivung* in Vunamami.

⁴¹ A.L. Epstein (1969, p. 235) writes that ToRumet introduced the *kivung* to Raluana, "whence the idea gradually spread to other Tolai communities." So much for a Matupit-Raluana perspective.

⁴² Among the *tena kivung* were ToMas, Tutubang, ToEreman, ToRia, ToDaka, ToDirole, ToSavenat Tika, and ToNgaongor.

⁴³ The *cement* are symbols of foreign domination (see also chapter 3, pp. 43f), not only for the Tolai, but also for other groups in Papua New Guinea. The Yaliwan cult movement in the Sepik awaited the arrival of cargo after its followers had removed boundary markers.

⁴⁴ ToMangana of Ranguana, ToDukduk of Ngunguna, Tiligur of Nanuk, Timele of Gunaba and ToLotu of Ngatur, in October and November 1987.

⁴⁵ Paulo Tiligur of Nanuk on 24 November 1987 in Nanuk. Verbatim Notes. Translation from the Tolai language.

⁴⁶ Elison ToLotu of Ngatur in November 1987.

⁴⁷ Jakob Timele of Gunanba in October 1987.

In other parts of the Gazelle Peninsula, too, *kivung*-like structures were set up before the war. People in Nodup also built a *pal na kivung*. Members of the Matupit *kivung na barmana* were invited by Anton ToMeli of Ratongor to advise him on setting up a *kivung* in his village. On Matupit itself the *kivung* played an important role in village politics before the war, and more money was deposited.⁴⁸

At what were the *tena kivung* aiming, when they collected the money? A *tinorom na longlong*, an obedience which did not question anything, replied ToUmue, the *tena kivung* from Ramale, who seemed to disapprove of the question, for *i tar vuai, go da kiki* (it bore fruit as is evident today).⁴⁹ Apparently Enos Teve was somebody people believed in, a charismatic leader whose motives were not of primary concern to those who followed him. The *kivung na barmana* had more tangible aims. It regulated the digging of eggs and was a forum in which young men who tended to be excluded from political power could voice their opinion. ToRia raised expectations of salvation - the *tena kivung* in Nanuk, Balanataman and Tingenalom code-named their project 'the search for Noah's ark'. Both in Matupit and in Vunamami the *kivung* were a vehicle for younger men to challenge the power of village elders and of *Luluai* and *waitpus*. Enos Teve and those who shared his ideas were not removed from colonial realities, but were they thinking in terms of short-term goals? Enos was said to have remarked that one day the Tolai would have their own wharf and their own ships berthing there. "We need the money to become strong", Kepas of Bitarebarebe quoted him.⁵⁰

Today most Tolai villagers produce cash crops (cocoa and copra) for the world market. It is generally understood that the fluctuations in the price for these commodities are not controlled to any significant extent by anybody in Papua New Guinea. Many Tolai infer from this that they have not gained independence yet, and that the political independence granted by Australia in 1975 has been of dubious value, as it was not linked with economic independence. To all of my informants raising money was the most obvious thing to do for the *kivung* - as was the promotion of coconut and cocoa planting for the Local Government Councils after 1950.⁵¹

One of the ways the funds were supposed to be spent was on education. Enos and other *kivung* members who all had only rudimentary schooling in the vernacular in mission schools, urged young men to attend the Methodist Mission's secondary schools

⁴⁸ This money survived the war and was used, for example, to contribute to the building of the Administration's Primary School on Matupit.

On the Duke of Yorks ToMemenga and ToWeima introduced an annual head tax of ten shillings after 1937. They were arrested and made to stand in the sun outside the Administration's offices in Kokopo. They were later released after somebody of high standing (names mentioned in this context: District Commissioner of years to come Keith McCarthy; Enos Teve) was said to have intervened on their behalf. Their imposition of a head tax had been a solo effort, however. (ToWilliam of Vunamami in September and December 1987; Lesley ToManeo of Moalim in November and December 1987).

⁴⁹ Alpon ToUmue of Ramale on 4 November 1987 in Ramale.

⁵⁰ Kepas Lawo of Bitarebarebe in October 1987.

⁵¹ The Tolai were not the only New Guineans who set up funds for vague destinations before the war. On Baluan (Manus) Paliu initiated a collection which, according to his own evidence, had brought \$ 2000 by 1942. The fund was started when Paliu devised a scheme to lend money to those who couldn't pay the 10 shilling head tax, so that they would not be jailed for tax default. Maybe Paliu was influenced by what he saw in Rabaul, where he served as a policeman. (Cf. SCHWARTZ 1962, pp. 242-246). I am indebted to Ton Otto for drawing my attention to this case.

in Raluana and Vunairima or the Administration's school at Malaguna. In 1947, they organised a small, unofficial village school in Vunamami-Tovuruk with Hosea Tokankan as teacher. One of the first major projects of the Vunamami Local Government Council was the purchase of land at Ngangalaka to set up a school (today's Vunamami Farmers' Training Centre).⁵²

I am indebted to ToBilam for an interesting perspective: he remarked that the *tokom* was a means of welding together the people.⁵³ Indeed the *kivung* and later the Council were based on alliances of a hitherto unknown scale.

In the late 1930s, the people of Talwat were told that Rabaul might have to defend itself against the Germans. The Australians installed two large coastal guns at Praed Point, which was of great advantage to Talwat since it resulted in a road linking the village to Rabaul. On 22 January 1942 the Japanese bombed Talwat and destroyed the guns, and one day later they landed at various places on the Gazelle Peninsula. Thus began a three and a half year long ordeal for the Tolai. Neither the Vunamami nor the Matupit *kivung* were convened or in any other way active during the Japanese occupation.

The Japanese accepted the system of indirect rule on the Gazelle, which had already been tolerated by the Australians. Enos Teve co-operated with the Japanese officer (*kempei*) Pukata who was based in Tatuvalu on the border between Vunamami and Vunabalbal. And Pukata co-operated with the local big man Enos Teve, for the convenience of the Japanese occupying forces and the benefit of Vunamami villagers. Pukata became another of Enos' expatriate friends. Communication does not seem to have been a problem. Pukata knew some English and did not find it hard to pick up Tok Pisin. When the war was over, he gave a feast for which he slaughtered all his pigs. Vunamami staged a *balaguan*, a feast with a dance, in return.⁵⁴ Other villages were less lucky.

One incident during that time, which involved Enos, is reported by Leadley. I could not get confirmation of it from my informants, but still it sheds more light on Enos and how his position was perceived in Vunamami. After the Japanese munitions dumps in Vunamami had been blown up by a Tolai from Rapolo working for the Allies, Enos was said to have blamed two Japanese soldiers whom he accused of throwing cigarette butts out of the window of their vehicle. The soldiers were executed.⁵⁵

After a civilian Australian Administration took over again in the late 1940s, it decided to establish Local Government Councils which would be elected by Papua New

⁵² In 1954 the Vunamami Local Government Council still had an "Overseas Education Fund" of 454 pounds with money that had been collected in *kivung* days "with a view to sending young men to Australia for their education" (McAULEY 1954, p. 884).

⁵³ Gideon ToBilam of Vunabalbal on 18 October 1987 in Vunabalbal: "A tokatokom pi diat a vi guve ra tarai."

⁵⁴ William Tokavivi, Polos ToPuttima, and Vin ToBaining, all of Vunamami, in October, November and December 1987.

⁵⁵ LEADLEY 1976, pp. 77f + 132; cf. SALISBURY 1970, p. 319. The munitions dumps were blown up by ToPidik who set the *kunal* grass near Bitamuli ablaze, laMelat's house and the house where the family stored the *tabu* burnt down. Enos lost about 500 fathoms, and laMelat lost about 1000 fathoms of *tabu* (ToWilliam and Tiunga of Vunamami, October 1987).

Guineans. Hanuabadans and Tolai were selected as guinea pigs for the new policy. David Fenbury⁵⁶ was put in charge of 'establishing a new era of native administration on the Gazelle'.⁵⁷ Fenbury did not give his blessing to the 'native administration' already established and functioning in Vunamami. He chose to start in Reimber on the North Coast, because the Reimber paramount *Lulua* ToPoe had been recommended to him and particularly because

my wartime henchman Tolat came from Rakanda, a Reimber village. ... I felt irrationally confident that if I started council work in Reimber, the nice lies Tolat would tell his pals and kinsmen about both of us would facilitate developing friendly relationships with the Reimber 'big men' - the people I hoped to inspire with local government fervour. Tolat was also an excellent bush cook.⁵⁸

ToBallilai, who once had paid 500 fathoms of *tabu* for Enos Teve's boat, was a 'genial elder and close crony of ToPoe's' (Fenbury)⁵⁹ and the father of Tundo who, upon ToPoe's request, was made Fenbury's driver and became his indispensable aide in contacts with Tolai.⁶⁰ The relationship between ToPoe and Fenbury was sealed when Fenbury moved temporarily to the Tolai big man's place.

In 1950 Fenbury went to Matupit and convened a meeting of the big men. He explained the Administration's project and expected a positive reaction. After he had conferred with them twice to no avail, he announced that he would come once more and if they had not come up with a good answer, he would ignore Matupit and not include it in his scheme for the time being. The elders sought help from the *kivung na barmana*. None of its members had been invited to the first two meetings, but now they asked two representatives of the *barmana*, Daniel Kaputin and John Vuia, to help them to give an adequate reply to Fenbury's proposal. ToVuia asked the big men to brief them on what Fenbury had said. That proved difficult. They had not quite understood what he was getting at. 'He mentioned that we would have one flag, and that all of us would sit in its shade, and that we would have one king, and that there was to be a *pikinini gavman*, a small (children) government, where the Tolai would be taught how to govern themselves.' As the *barmana* discussed the impending meeting with Fenbury among themselves, ToKaputin thought of the *kiap*'s talk when they had deposited the *kivung*'s money and that this must be the answer to his riddle. At the meeting with Fenbury, ToVuia let the big men have their say first, then rose and addressed the Administration's envoy:⁶¹

"What you have said is fine with us, *kiap*. You said there will be one king for all of us, and all of us will be ruled by him. That sounds all right. And then you said we would have one flag, and it would cover all of us. You said those two things, but they have one and the same meaning. I am

⁵⁶ Who called himself Flenberg then.

⁵⁷ DOWNS 1980, p. 31.

⁵⁸ FENBURY 1978, pp. 47f. After the war, ToPoe had been associated with Enos Teve, and through his close relatives ToDaka and ToRia, also with the *kivung* in Nanuk. Honour where honour is due: ToPoe was reported to have said in 1952 at the official opening of the Vunamami Council chambers: "A *tarai Vunamami dia mut ra oaga, ave kao ke tana* (the people of Vunamami built the canoe, we only boarded it)". (Josia ToKundi of Vunaulul/Turagunan on 13 December 1987 in Turagunan).

⁵⁹ FENBURY 1978, p. 48.

⁶⁰ This is not only what I gathered after having talked to Tundo himself, but what John Vuia pointed out to me several times. Actually, he insisted that I find Tundo because he could confirm his (Vuia's) account and because he had played such an important role in setting up the Councils.

⁶¹ John ToVuia of Matupit in August and September 1987 in Matupit.

telling you what it means: All of you, *masta*, Chinese and half-caste, will stand at the bottom of the flag-pole. And we, the *kanaka*, we will hang at the flag's rope. We will look down on you and we will ask ourselves: 'How are we going to stand together with them?' That's all I have to say."⁶² Fenbury did not reply. He asked: 'What's that fellow's name?', made a note of it and, saying nothing further, sped off in his car.

After Fenbury brusquely left them there was much consternation among the elders about John Vuia's irreverence. The next day the Administration sent a car to whisk off John Vuia to its Rabaul headquarters on Namanula Hill. Everybody, including John Vuia, was afraid that he might be put in jail for his disrespectful speech. But on the contrary, he was invited to explain his remark to a gathering of Administration big shots whom he had not seen before and who even beckoned him to sit down, something he had not previously experienced. He told them about the humiliations endured by those subjected to Australian rule in New Guinea - much along the same lines of what ToPolos had briefly mentioned. The war had changed the colonial situation, not the least because of the experience of men like Fenbury who had fought alongside New Guineans against the Japanese. ToVuia was asked to assist Fenbury to establish the Council system on the Gazelle and later in other parts of New Guinea.⁶³

In Vunamami, the *kivung* had moved into full swing again, with all villages within Enos' paramountcy being represented. Enos won the crucial support of a retired Methodist pastor, Napitalai Tolirom of Ngatur, who had begun planting cocoa during the war and encouraged many Tolai to follow his example in the late 1940s and early 1950s. The co-operation between Enos and Napitalai had an important bearing on the establishment of the Tolai Cocoa Project in the 1950s, of which Enos later became a president. In 1950 the Government organised a ceremony at the prospective site of the council Chambers at Vunamami-Bitatila, where the *tultul*, Luluai and Enos himself handed back the insignia of their office, the cap. It was here that a number of my informants heard the term *tibuna varkurai* mentioned for the first time (in Enos' speech on that occasion.). When the first elections were held in late 1950 for the Vunamami Local Government Council, the Administration bowed to the wishes of the newly elected councillors and made a provision for somebody who was not a councillor to be eligible for the office of Council President. Enos Teve was elected unopposed.⁶⁴

⁶² John ToVula of Matupit on 8 and 30 September 1987 in Matupit. Conflation of two taped statements. My translation from the Tok Pisin and from the Tolai language.

⁶³ John ToVula of Matupit in August and September 1987 in Matupit. ToVula became the first President of the Rabaul Local Government Council and in 1952 a member of the Legislative Assembly in Port Moresby. He retired from these offices in 1958 and 1960 respectively and was recruited as a member of the Land Titles Commission. He did not join the Mataungans like his friend of *kivung* days, Daniel Kaputin, did. Neither was he one of those assaulted or beaten up by Mataungan supporters because of their allegiance to the multi-racial Council which had been introduced by the Administration.

⁶⁴ Vin ToBaining, William ToKavivi, and Polos ToPuttima, all of Vunamami, October, November and December 1987. Enos Teve stayed in office for one term (one year) only and then handed over the reins to Vin ToBaining of Vunamami. In the 1950s and early 1960s he largely failed in his attempts to establish *vunatarai*-based co-operatives for the planting of cocoa or to organise the Vunamami Resettlement Scheme at Warangoi on a co-operative basis. He was again elected councillor for Vunamami in the 1960s, when the purchase of a plantation which had been established on Vunamami land was negotiated. Enos Teve was a staunch supporter of the Mataungans and endorsed Oscar Tammur's stand. He died in Vunamami in 1981.

In 1951 the *kivung* handed 3900 pounds to the Vunamami council.⁶⁵

This is not meant to be a comprehensive history of the *kivung*. I have touched the post-war period only cursorily, and places other than Matupit and those connected with Vunamami I have not mentioned. I also chose this particular sequence to become part of my history of the Tolai, because it has never been written down⁶⁶ and is about to become part of the forgotten Tolai past. In the way my informants see themselves it was the political development on the Gazelle Peninsula which started Papua New Guinea. "*Enos a vunapaii ra niboina. Enos iat i ga pait ra niboina ure ra kidoloina kantri Papua New Guinea* (Enos was the source of the betterment of Papua New Guinea)", said ToBilam.⁶⁷ This is, of course, a statement made from a Vunamami perspective. But Tolai across the Gazelle Peninsula share the belief that it was they who were the first to move towards political independence. People in Raluana*, for example, point out that the Varbete Kivung, the anti-Council movement put in the limelight when District Commissioner McCarthy was hit by the one-legged school teacher Apelis Tuvi with a crutch in 1953,⁶⁸ was the first anti-colonial movement in PNG. People younger than those who told me about the *kivung* referred to the Council or to the Mataungan Association. Being among the very first of those developments,⁶⁹ the Vunamami and Matupit *kivung* deserve special attention.

The history of the *kivung* is also a statement about the present. "Everything began in Vunamami", said the retired pastor ToNoa, "and in Vunamami we see the first signs of the end."⁷⁰ He was referring to the demise of the Community Government in Vunamami and to the disillusionment of the people. At the last Community Government elections in late 1987 very few Vunamami villagers turned up to cast their vote. The blame was put on the old councillor (who was confirmed in office). But then people had not bothered to find out for themselves when the council elections were going to take place. The disenchantment with political leaders, institutions and procedures of parliamentary democracy is shared by a lot of people, most of whom would not know anything about the pre-war *kivung*. Men such as John Vuia or William ToKavivi knew a lot about the *kivung* and by talking about it they voiced a profound and differentiated critique of the present. Their histories are subtle messages of discontent with the way the *tibuna varkurai* is administered now, and by no means advocate radical solutions.

⁶⁵ This is the amount Fenbury mentions ("non-recurrent revenue in hand from village funds that had been voted into the Council") (1978, p. 67). None of the people involved in the running of the Vunamami Council was sure about the precise amount, but it was clear that it had been a substantial sum and more than the 300 pounds cited by Salisbury (1970, p. 319). ToVin mentioned a passbook owned by the *kivung* with 490 pounds, but this could well have been the "Overseas Education Fund" (see fn. 52 in this chapter).

⁶⁶ But for Epstein's account of the Matupit *kivung na barmana* (A.L. EPSTEIN 1969, pp. 253-255).

⁶⁷ Gideon ToBilam of Vunabalbal on 18 October 1987 in Vunabalbal.

⁶⁸ Cf. MCCARTHY 1963, p. 234.

⁶⁹ It was preceded by the Rabaul Strike 1929, in ToStanley's words "the first rustle of a wind" of discontent with the colonial situation (Stanley ToMarita on 30 November in Malabonga). The Rabaul Strike was a remarkable event also in so far as Tolai did not take part in it (cf. GAMMAGE 1975; WILLIS 1970).

⁷⁰ Noa ToVura of Vunamami on 6 January 1988 in Vunamami.

Noa ToVura:
"Everything
began in
Vunamami..."

The history of the *kivung* is a contribution to a debate about participation in political decision-making. From Fenbury's and Downs' point of view, the Tolai gradually gained more say in the running of their affairs, and the introduction of the Local Government Councils was a vast improvement for the Tolai. But oral evidence shows that the *Luluai* were hardly ever imposed on the villages and that the colonial system of administering justice gradually interfered more in the affairs of the villages. In the late 1930s the Administration established councils of village elders, which were also called *kivung*, with some officially sanctioned magisterial powers, in the Sub-District of Rabaul.⁷¹ They were to be controlled fortnightly by government officials and might have been designed to

⁷¹ Cf. MAIR 1970, p. 74. It were these *kivung* McCarthy (1963, p. 231), Downs (1980, p. 103) and Fenbury (1978, p. 47. fn. 17) referred to.

counterbalance the influence of the *barmana*. By introducing an element of formal self-government, the Administration gained better access to village politics. The first council elections by division (the villagers lined up behind their preferred candidate) or whisper ballot (the voters whispered the name of their preferred candidate to the *kiap* acting as returning officer) were not necessarily more democratic than the selection of *Luluai*, but they certainly extended the Administration's control:

The (whisper) ballot is secret in respect of the natives but the officers concerned are able to get some general notions of how people vote, which is sociologically useful.⁷²

Stories told about the *kivung* often emphasise the participants' urge "to do something". Though it was not evident what was to be done and how they were going to proceed, it is this perspective of something which has to be tackled which makes stories about the *kivung* (or the Mataungans, for that matter) attractive today, where the lack of a sharp and inspiring vision is made responsible for "rascalism"⁷³ and other problems.

The histories about the *kivung* are told by men about men. The men who credited Enos Teve with the honour of being one of the first to have set up an anti-colonial political structure, presumed that political organisation was the natural domain of men. The establishment of a formal political structure enhanced Tolai male domination. German, Japanese and Australian colonisers always appointed men as *Luluai*. Coming from male-dominated societies themselves and being men, they were looking for male leaders to mediate between the colonial administration and the colonised population. Until the early 1970s Tolai women did not take part in any aspect of *matanitu*. Tolai men also assumed control of most cash cropping activities. This again was supported by the colonial administration, because the agricultural extension officers, who were men, dealt exclusively with Tolai men when advising on the planting of cocoa. The gender contradiction and tensions resulting from it have played a crucial part in the making of today's Tolai society. In a way, the forming of the *kivung* could also be interpreted as means to ensure the continuance of male dominance. Judging from Polos' list, the grievances which made Enos and other men deliberate, were primarily their grievances. In those days Tolai women did not drink, they were not compelled to walk around bare-breasted, and they were less likely to be beaten up in jail. "*'lau ga kuk adia nian...* (I prepared their meal...)", replied laMaria when asked about a visit of Daniel Kaputin and others before the war, after her husband Meli had requested their advice with regard to setting up a *kivung* in Ratongor.⁷⁴

Histories about the *kivung* centre around personalities, not only around Tolai big men, but a major role is assigned to Mr Wallace, Father Müller, Ateng and others⁷⁵, as if the

⁷² McAULEY 1954, p. 883.

⁷³ A *raskal* is anybody violating customs and law, but more specifically, a male youth who is unemployed and/or without land and, in the eyes of those applying the term, spends his time being a nuisance to others.

⁷⁴ laMaria laKavanamur of Ratongor on 22 November 1987 in Ratongor. For a detailed and informed discussion of Tolai male dominance see BRADLEY 1982, esp. chapter 8.

⁷⁵ Others include a Captain Johnson (or Johnston) who was said to have known Enos before the war and who came back to the Gazelle as part of ANGAU after 1945; the German manager of Malapau Plantation who lived at Butuvu before the war; a Mr. Berril (Barril?) who owned a store in Rabaul and employed a number of Tolai from the Nanuk area. It is somewhat surprising that the list does not include any Methodist missionary; many of my Tolai informants stressed that the Methodists were less racist than any other group of Europeans in Rabaul.

kivung was such a radical idea that it could not possibly have come from within but had to be injected by a *vaira* (Non-Tolai).

Tolai men have claimed the *matanitu* as their domain. laMarla, big woman of Ratongor: "*lau ga kuk adla nian.*"

My history has Vunamami-centric leanings. Most likely the developments around Takubar before 1936 are under-rated, and generally the *kivung* was probably less centralised than it appears to be in my painting. The Vunamami-centrism is partly the result of my attempt to make this also a history of Enos Teve. Writing the history of a Tolai big man smells of reactionary and out-of-fashion 'history-is-made-by-kings' stuff. In a way I have given in to the Tolai narrators' predilection for that kind of history, not surprising in a society structured around bigmanship. However, I agree with Salisbury⁷⁶ that Enos Teve's biography, which I could only sketch, reveals a lot about social

⁷⁶ Cf. SALISBURY 1970, pp. 313f. Salisbury's "vignette" of Enos Teve takes up more than one third of his description of six Vunamami leaders. Salisbury was immensely sympathetic towards Enos, "a polished white-haired gentleman, modestly dressed and living in an undistinguished house, yet respected by government officials and Tolai alike as one of the prime movers in Tolai modernization from the 1930s to the present" (1970, p. 317). Salisbury is apologetic when he explains that his story about Enos "makes no attempt to conceal ... negative aspects", although he does not mention any negative aspects. In my history of the Tolai, I am trying not to discredit those who helped me by providing information, telling me stories or just being friendly. This would violate my interpretation of a fieldworker's moral code. I think it is perfectly all right for Salisbury to conceal embarrassing aspects, and there should be nothing wrong in principle in getting carried away in praising a friend. But Salisbury's statements about Enos Teve say more about Salisbury and his relationships in Vunamami than about the Tolai big man. If Salisbury were more explicit about his relationships in the first place, we could learn more about Enos Teve from the anthropologist's portrait (cf. chapter 6, p. 95). I should point out that I do not want to give the impression that I am indulging in an attack on one of my predecessors, whose contribution I still value after learning a fair bit about Vunamami and after having been told many stories about the anthropologist who worked there.

change on the Gazelle, and I hope to have made this implicit in this chapter. After all, it is also a forgotten history. Enos Teve, I understand, does not warrant an entry in the Papua New Guinea Dictionary of Biography which is in the making whilst I am writing this. He should, for if you want to know something about the *kivung*, you have to learn a lot about Enos Teve.

"Enos a vunapail ra nibolina...." Enos Teve around 1970.

10: Of Money, Work and Death

In previous chapters I have sketched Tolai concepts in "glossaries". Articles and chapters have been, and whole books could be, written on some of them. In this chapter I deal with three concepts which cannot be confined to brief glossaries. In describing the uses of shell-money, the activities surrounding death, and the Tolai concept of 'work', I try to give an idea of how Tolai regenerate¹ their own society, and to what extent the past is accounted for in the Tolai present.

1. *Tabu*²

The Tolai's use of *tabu* has intrigued not only those anthropologists who have written monographs on Tolai society, but also eminent scholars of such diverse backgrounds as Mary Douglas and Géza Róheim.³ I will confine my analysis to what is essential for my own argument. A.L. Epstein and Christine Bradley have already made valid points at length, which I do not intend to repeat.⁴

Tabu is made from *nassa* shells,⁵ which are less than one centimetre in diameter. The shell's whorl is cut off, today by snipping it off with pliers, in the last century by breaking it off with another shell. Shells are then threaded on to rattan, about two per centimetre. Usually pieces of rattan, about one metre in length, are spliced together to a length of ten fathoms, one fathom being the length between the fingertips of an adult's outstretched arms. Lengths of threaded rattan are also coiled and wrapped in leaves; coils contain usually at least one hundred, and up to one thousand fathoms. Those coils (*gogo*) are only unwrapped and cut in ceremonies. When *tabu* is used, it is divided into the lengths required by twisting it and pulling it apart. Small pieces of *tabu* are then again unstrung, rethreaded and made into skeins of several fathoms' length, or coils.

It seems that at about the time of the first permanent settlement of Europeans on the Gazelle, *nassa* shells were either collected along Blanche Bay and North Coast shores, or traded from the west coast of the Gazelle Peninsula or the north coast of West New Britain.⁶ People speaking a dialect of Kuanua who lived at Massava and on Massikona-puka Island either dived for shells in their area or travelled further west to obtain shells

¹ I use this term with the meaning it carries in Annette Weiner's discussion of mortuary ceremonies (WEINER 1976).

² On the North Coast of the Gazelle Peninsula people say *tambu* and spell the word accordingly. Danks (1888), A.L. Epstein (1969; 1979), ToVaninara (1979) and others also call it *tambu*.

³ DOUGLAS 1967; ROHEIM 1923. A.L. Epstein (1979, p. 150) suggests that *tabu* is "perhaps the best known and best understood among primitive currencies". According to Einzig (1949, p. 83) "most ethnologists agree" that *tabu* "is the most highly developed form of currency in the Pacific area."

⁴ For A.L. Epstein see: A.L. EPSTEIN 1969, esp. pp. 230-245; for Bradley see: BRADLEY 1982, esp. pp. 84-124.

⁵ According to Salisbury (1970, p. 281) they are of the *nassa callosa* variety; according to Brown (1910, p. 294) they are of the *nassa immersa* variety; Schneider (1905, p. 13) and Finsch (1914, 12) call them *nassa camelus*; Parkinson (1907, p. 82) says it is the *camelus* variety of the *nassa callosa*.

⁶ Cf. PFEIL 1899, pp. 105 + 110; FINSCH 1914, p. 13. A myth recounted by Meier (1909, p. 93) suggests that *nassa* shells were formerly found near the area inhabited by the Tolai. Sack refers in passing to "eye-witness accounts of pre-colonial *nassa* snail expeditions" (SACK 1985, p. 16). If he means European accounts, they can hardly describe anything pre-colonial. I would be surprised if there were others.

from Nakanai⁷ and then traded them to Tolai living on the North Coast. The Nakanai people exchanged *nassa* shells for *pele*, a shell-money manufactured on the Duke of York Islands.⁸ It is highly unlikely that before the late nineteenth century Tolai living along the Blanche Bay travelled to shell grounds outside the Northeastern Gazelle Peninsula. Different degrees of access to *tabu* led to a regionally unequal distribution of *tabu* among the Tolai.⁹

From the 1890s Tolai men living along Blanche Bay themselves ventured as far as the Nakanai Coast¹⁰ in boats which were either built by Watom Islanders who copied European sailing boats,¹¹ or purchased from the Chinese carpenter Ah Tam who had set up a ship yard on Matupit,¹² or bought or rented from Europeans.¹³ From the 1890s Europeans went to Nakanai to obtain *nassa* shells, as Tolai demanded *tabu*, rather than other currencies or trade goods, in exchange for coconuts, copra or garden produce from traders and planters.¹⁴ Because of the tedious process involved in collecting *nassa* shells and turning them into money and because of Government intervention in 1900/01, European involvement in the supply never had such dramatic consequences as it did in the New Guinea Highlands from the 1930s when shells were flown in by the planeload.¹⁵

Today *nassa* shells are obtained from various locations in New Britain. With many Tolai working at the Panguna mine on Bougainville, the North Solomons and the Solomon Islands have become a major source. *Nassa* shells found outside the Tolai area have always been collected by locals. The Tolai alone have been the manufacturers of *tabu*.

Tabu can be measured in various units. The smallest is a *pal a tabu*, one shell. The most common is a *pokono*, one fathom of *tabu*. One *pokono* is not the equivalent of a given number of *pal a tabu*;¹⁶ *pokono* can differ in length as well as in the number

⁷ The Nakanai Coast was one of the main sources for *nassa* shells. However, the Tolai apparently referred to all the people living on the coast between Open Bay and the Willaumez Peninsula as "Nakanai"; it is not always clear when the early European observers refer to Nakanai proper and when to the whole coast.

⁸ *Pele* was made from flakes of pearl shells which were broken into pieces to the size of a shirt button, holed and threaded upon string. In the 1880s, four to five strings (from the nipple of one breast to the nipple of the other) of *pele* were bought for one fathom of *tabu* and could buy raw material for two to three fathoms of *tabu* in Nakanai (DANKS 1888, p. 306). Hellwig reported in 1897 that by then *tapsaka* traded from Lavongai (New Hanover) was another item traded for *nassa* shells in Nakanai (quoted in SCHNEIDER 1905, pp. 16f).

⁹ Parkinson reports that the Tolai living in the Bitapaka area had less *tabu* than others. They kept it in baskets and did not make it into coils (PARKINSON 1907, p. 87).

¹⁰ For a description of such a trip see: *Monatshefte* 1912, pp. 343-350.

¹¹ HAHN 1897, pp. 71f.

¹² Cf. WU 1982, pp. 20f. According to Baumann (in: *Monatshefte* 1902, p. 394) Tolai from Watom bought Ah Tam's boats for between 300 and 500 fathoms of *tabu*.

¹³ SCHNEIDER 1905, p. 19. Stephan and Graebner (1907, p. 67) report that around 1904, Tolai big men purchased sailing boats for between 1000 and 1200 Mark, that is the equivalent of c. 5 tons of copra at 1904 export value (SACK & CLARK 1979, p. 262).

¹⁴ DKB 1898, p. 141; MACKELLAR 1912, p. 151. In 1897 Europeans paid one *pokono* per 120 coconuts (SCHNEIDER 1905, p. 30).

¹⁵ Cf. HUGHES 1978, pp. 312ff.

¹⁶ Like Scarlett Epstein and Christine Bradley I did not come across Tolai who claimed to know how many *pal a tabu* make, or should make, up one *pokono* (cf. T.S. EPSTEIN 1968, p. 148; BRADLEY 1982, p. 89). *Tabu* is divisible (cf. A.L. EPSTEIN 1969, p. 230), but the units are not compatible. There are fractions of one *pokono* (e.g. two *papar* equal one *pokono*) and units several times one *pokono* (e.g. one *arip* equals ten *pokono*) on the one hand, and various multiples of one *pal a tabu* (e.g. one *kilak* equals eight *pal a tabu*). The terms for those units

of shells threaded. I found that average *pokono* have between 320 and 350 shells threaded on them.¹⁷ In 1987/88 one *pokono* was said to be worth about two kina. Tolai consider it inappropriate to convert *tabu* straight into kina, and it is hardly ever done. It is possible though to buy goods with *tabu*. In 1987/88 a packet of cigarettes worth 90 toea sold for 160 pal a *tabu*. Today, *tabu*-prices for food-stuffs are not fixed, but neither do they vary significantly.

At least since the time of the first written accounts in the late nineteenth century, men and women have owned and controlled *tabu* independently of each other.¹⁸ Until about the Second World War it was common practice to leave *tabu* with a big man of one's *vunatarai* who stored it in a *tabu* house. Danks suggests that people rallied around their "banker" in times of war, not least to protect their *tabu*.¹⁹

Pal na tabu, house to store shell-money. This type of house is no longer built on the Gazelle. (Photograph taken around 1900)

Tabu had at the time of the first European settlement and still has today two main functions:

- (1) to pay for goods and services,
- (2) to establish, sustain or manipulate social relationships.²⁰

(1) *Tabu* has acted from at least the time of its earliest description around 1880 as a "definite and common medium of exchange", it has served "as a measure of values" and as a "standard of value with reference to past or future payments", and it has

differ regionally.

¹⁷ Figures given for the number of shells threaded on a fathom around 1900 vary considerably. Bley counted 300-400, Pfeil counted 320, Hellwig even 470 (quoted from SCHNEIDER 1905, p. 20); Finsch estimated an average number of 430-450 shells per fathom (1914, p. 17). In about 1960, T.S. Epstein (1968, p. 150) calculated an average number of 360 shells, as did Christine Bradley (1982, p. 89) in the late 1970s.

¹⁸ Cf. DANKS 1888, p. 308; FINSCH 1914, p. 16. Scarlett Epstein (1968) did not take that into account, a mistake of considerable consequence, as Christine Bradley has already pointed out (BRADLEY 1982, pp. 101f).

¹⁹ DANKS 1888, p. 309.

²⁰ I follow the distinction made by Tolai when they use *tabu*, but I am aware that paying for goods and services is also a means of establishing, sustaining, or manipulating social relationships.

allowed 'stores to be condensed and held in reserve.' As such it has been 'true money' according to Raymond Firth's criteria.²¹

In the 1890s it was not only a medium of exchange in transactions involving only Tolai, or Tolai and other New Guineans,²² but also in trade between Tolai and Europeans:²³ as such it was far more important than the currency introduced by the New Guinea Company, or trade tobacco which initially had been the most common medium of exchange between Europeans and Tolai.²⁴ The colonial regime would not tolerate the fact that the production of village copra depended on the availability of a currency beyond its control,²⁵ and that the Tolai hoarded money which they were not prepared to spend on European products.²⁶ In 1900/01 the Administration outlawed the use of *tabu* and similar media of exchange in transactions between New Guineans and non-New Guineans.²⁷ It also prohibited trips to Nakanai, partly because some were also raids where Tolai traders abducted people to sell as slaves. The raids ceased, but that prohibition was not (or could not be) enforced. In 1905 the Government introduced a head tax payable in *Mark* and thereby forced the Tolai to earn European money by selling garden produce, copra or their labour for German money.²⁸

Today in transactions among Tolai a number of goods and services can be purchased only with *tabu*. Magic is bought with *tabu*. The composer and performers of a dance have to be paid in *tabu*. At the village level nearly all other goods that can be bought with kina, can also be bought with *tabu* - which makes *tabu* in that sense the 'truer' of the two currencies used on the Gazelle.

By attending ceremonies where *tabu* is distributed, by selling garden-produce, or by performing tasks which are paid in *tabu*, villagers find it easier to accumulate *tabu* than Tolai who work in full-time paid employment and/or live outside the village. Most of the latter still identify themselves as Tolai and need *tabu* to take part in Tolai society. Only Seventh Day Adventists and followers of the Pentecostal Churches, together about one tenth of the Tolai population, regard *tabu* as in-essential, although most still

²¹ R. Firth (1969, p. 912) denies that; cf. T.S. EPSTEIN 1968, pp. 21f + 26; A.L. EPSTEIN 1969, p. 230.

²² By the late 1880s *tabu* was also in use in the south of New Ireland, but at that time European observers claimed it had been introduced recently (cf. PFEIL 1899, p. 110; STEPHAN & GRAEBNER 1907, p. 68).

²³ A remark by Schneider suggests that *tabu* was also used as a currency in transactions among Europeans, even to pay duties to the New Guinea Company (SCHNEIDER 1905, p. 21).

²⁴ Finsch quotes a trader, Koning, who reported in 1905 that *pele* was also used as a currency in dealings between Europeans and non-Europeans around Blanche Bay (FINSCH 1914, p. 34). For the prominence of tobacco see: Danks to Rooney, Port Hunter: 8 May 1883 (ML: MCh 41). The earliest reference to *tabu*'s predominance I found also in Danks' writings: 'The people are so fully supplied with every other article of trade that we can no longer get our food in Kambakanda (Kabakada) for the articles of trade we brought down with us, because the people want Diwara (*tabu*) and Diwara only' (Danks to Chapman, Kabakada: 6 Sept. 1880; MCh 617).

²⁵ A European attempt to introduce forged *tabu* proved a failure (cf. PFEIL 1899, p. 119).

²⁶ The Methodist missionary Rickard wrote about the Tolai big men: 'wealthy misers are more numerous by far than among Europeans - men who are mean, and who live miserably, for no apparent purpose other than that of dying rich' (RICKARD 1893, p. 8).

²⁷ The prohibition of the use of *tabu* seems to have been enforced over the next few years without major repercussions for the copra trade (cf. Stephan & Graebner 1907, p. 67; SCHNEIDER 1905, pp. 42f).

²⁸ Pfeil, who was in charge of the Bismarck Archipelago part of the colony in the 1880s, suggested the introduction of a head tax payable in *tabu* (PFEIL 1899, pp. 257f). That could have made *tabu* the predominant currency in the New Guinea islands. His suggestion indicates how important *tabu* had been as a currency during his term in New Guinea. I have found no evidence which supports T.S. Epstein's claim that the Tolai competed to pay a higher tax (T.S. EPSTEIN 1968, p. 10).

use it in both its monetary and social functions. Tolai living or working in towns try either to purchase the raw material for the production of *tabu* or sell goods they bought with money, for *tabu*. Since *tabu* is in demand, it is possible (and not uncommon) for villagers to buy basic food items like rice or tinned fish with *tabu*, either at the village store or from wage earners who thereby convert money into *tabu*.

Villagers who have little access to money incomes tend to emphasise the function of *tabu* as a currency. 'If we run out of money, we will not starve - we could still buy food with *tabu*', is an argument they offer frequently in discussions about the usefulness of *tabu*.²⁹

(2) The shell-money's second function becomes most apparent in ceremonies accompanying marriage and death. In most parts of the Gazelle, the groom or his relatives pay a standard brideprice of 100 *pokono* to the bride's parents or relatives.³⁰ In some cases the brideprice payment (*varkukul*) is made unceremoniously at the Community Government offices, in others it is performed as part of an elaborate ceremony, or cycle of ceremonies, which include the ritual abduction of the bride by the bridegroom's relatives, the distribution of *tabu* to onlookers, the collection of *tabu* for the newly-weds, and the presentation of a large amount of cooked food to those coming to collect the bride from her family. The *varkukul* can be preceded by a farewell meal (*nian vartulai*) organised by the bride's family for her and some of her relatives. Then *tabu* is again distributed, and the bride is presented with *tabu*, money, raw food and household goods. The *varkukul* and related ceremonies precede marriage in church (*varbean*), which seems, at least to Tolai in Raluana*, to be of less significance than the former. There is no standard procedure for a 'proper' ceremony to seal marriage; *varkukul*-ceremonies differ considerably throughout the Gazelle. The amount of *tabu* paid as a brideprice, the scale and number of distributions to others, the presentation of bride and/or groom with *tabu* vary regionally.

Two contradictory developments have taken place recently with regard to the *varkukul*. In some cases the bride herself receives the brideprice, or she can lay claim to the *tabu* which is kept by her parents or relatives.³¹

The other innovation is a sharp rise in the brideprice payable by non-Tolai men for Tolai women. In 1987 the Vunamami Community Government decided that up to 3000 kina could be demanded by the bride's family from the *vaira* groom. This development

²⁹ A.L. Epstein (1979, p. 159) quotes his informants as saying: *a mani ure ra nian, a tambu ure ra minat* (to buy food, we need money; to distribute at a person's death, we need *tabu*). This suggests that in 1960 people on Matupit saw the use of *tabu* primarily in its second (ceremonial) function. If this could be confirmed by other evidence from the anthropologists who worked around 1960 among the Tolai, it would suggest an interesting trend.

³⁰ In the area under the jurisdiction of the Raluana Community Government this amount only applies if both parties are from the area, if the bride has not been living with a man before, and if she has not joined her prospective husband before the completion of the brideprice payment. If the man is a Tolai from outside Raluana, it might be higher. In the other two cases it may be lower. In 1987 the highest *tabu* brideprices were demanded on the Duke of York Islands (200 fathoms). In accordance with common usage in Papua New Guinea (cf. LAW REFORM COMMISSION ... 1986) I use the term 'brideprice' throughout the thesis notwithstanding the debate among anthropologists about bridewealth vs. brideprice.

³¹ Bradley (1982, p. 117) reports that in 1978, 57 % of all married women and 80 % of the twenty to twenty-nine year-olds kept or claimed the brideprice which had been paid for them. Cf. BRADLEY 1982, pp. 168ff.

which is influenced by marriage customs in other parts of the country,³² in particular in Papua, is highly controversial.³³ Its opponents argue that not only are women turned clearly into commodities, but also a greedy father or maternal uncle could try to dissuade a woman from marrying a local lad who would earn them only 100 *pokono*. The crucial difference between a cash payment of 3000 kina and a *tabu* presentation of 100 *pokono* is not the value of the kina against the *pokono*, because in the *varkukul tabu* is used in its second capacity, as a means of establishing and securing ties between groups. In this function it is not considered to be money, and it is not convertible into kina. But when a Papuan man makes a cash payment for a Tolai bride, there is no possibility of interpreting this as one element in an open chain of transactions guided by the principle of reciprocity.

In its second function, *tabu* has also been used as compensation between Tolai, and between Tolai and Europeans. In the late nineteenth century, Europeans extracted large amounts of *tabu* from Tolai in fines or compensation, apparently to meet their demand for *tabu* as a currency to purchase goods.³⁴ Today *tabu* still plays an important role in the settling of conflicts among Tolai themselves on the village level. Village courts, councillors or other mediators set the amounts to be paid.

For any payments of *tabu* in its second function, the crucial question is always: who spends *tabu* for whom? The timing of *tabu* payments and the amount involved depend on obligations incurred in the past and on a decision about the desired course of relationships in the future.

I was not able to find out much about the use of *tabu* before 1875. Mutually corroborative Tolai testimonies suggest five trends:

- (1) *Tabu* prices for garden produce have risen considerably over the last few generations.
- (2) The amount of *tabu* required in brideprice payments has been stable for a few decades in most areas, in some for at least sixty years.³⁵ It was once as low as three or five fathoms, although that must have been before the turn of the century when ToBobo drastically lowered the brideprice in the Vunamami area to ten fathoms.

³² Not necessarily because the Tolai copy these customs: In 1987 I got to know the son of a big man from Baluan (Manus Province). For some years he had lived with a woman from Vunamami. Both worked in a Highlands town. The Tolai's father insisted that a brideprice be paid for his daughter. The young man had delayed the payment not because he did not want to pay, but because he could not pay as much as he wanted to. Since for his brother's wife a brideprice payment of about 8000 Kina had been made, he strove to pay as much for the Vunamami woman, thereby enhancing his status on Baluan. Because of the recent payment for his brother's wife, his relatives were not prepared to contribute as much as he would have liked them to. Eventually in early 1988 he paid 1000 Kina, as that was all he could afford. The idea of obtaining shell-money and trying to make a brideprice payment in the Tolai way (which would have "saved" him more than 500 Kina) appeared understandably very strange to him.

³³ Not only among the Tolai: With marriages increasingly formed between members of different ethnic groups, and growing feminist awareness among women, marriage customs are a popular and highly controversial topic in public discourse throughout Papua New Guinea; cf. FILER 1985.

³⁴ During the financial year 1896 the Tolai paid a total of 923 fathoms of *tabu* in compensation to the German Administration (*Nachrichten* 1897, p. 50). See also chapter 1, p. 15, and chapter 7, p. 112. Individual Europeans used *tabu* to mediate their relationships with Tolai. In 1892 a Tolai speared the planter Mouton who demanded ten fathoms of *tabu* in compensation (BISKUP 1974, p. 97).

³⁵ In about 1927, 100 fathoms of *tabu* were given as brideprice for the marriage of Eruel ToPal on Matupit and for the marriage of IaDarutila in Palvarkuvo (Eruel ToPal of Matupit in October 1987; Darutila IaMatuana in Palvarkuvo in August 1987).

- (3) *Tabu* was much more scarce the further one goes back in time with the exception of those years when stocks were depleted as a result of the Second World War.
- (4) *Tabu* is more evenly distributed now than it was a few decades ago, and individuals now have more control over their own *tabu*.
- (5) The amount of *tabu* spent in mortuary ceremonies has increased over time, particularly over the past twenty years.

The first two claims are confirmed by written sources. In 1887 Parkinson noted that the brideprice for a young woman amounted to 50 to 100 fathoms of *tabu*.³⁶ Prices of other ceremonial payments (for example, initiation fees) have also remained fairly stable since the late nineteenth century. Prices for food stuffs have about trebled from the 1880s to 1960,³⁷ and doubled again since then.

The third claim is highly plausible. In the past there were at least two major influxes of *tabu*: from at least about 1890 until the early twentieth century; and after 1945, when *tabu* destroyed during the war was replaced (the raw material could be bought with money from war damage payments). There has been another massive influx since the late 1960s which has more than compensated for population growth. That makes sense in terms of the *tabu*'s accessibility. *Tabu* is actually cheaper now in relation to cash than it was during German times (when it equalled two Mark) or in 1960 (when it equalled ten shillings), and money is more readily available now than it was twenty or thirty years ago. Of course the accessibility does not in itself explain why *nassa* shells are bought in larger quantities now, nor does it provide for the last two trends which are both confirmed by anthropological research around 1960 and written sources from the German period. I will return to these questions later.

Tabu's money function was always subsumed under its other functions. Today the fact that nearly everything can be bought with *tabu* reflects the high demand for *tabu* as a means of maintaining, creating or manipulating social relationships. In the 1880s *tabu* had also a very important spiritual significance because its distribution in mortuary ceremonies established relations with ancestral spirits.³⁸ The Tolai "love for money", which early observers attested,³⁹ has never been an end in itself,⁴⁰ but a consequence

³⁶ PARKINSON 1887, p. 104. Cf. SCHNEIDER 1905, p. 25; DANKS 1889, p. 293. The lower amount of 10 fathoms quoted by Schneider could have been from Kininigunan. A lower figure is also given by Jack Crump, a Methodist missionary stationed in Kabakada, who in 1894 bought a wife for Peni ToDadati for 17 fathoms (CARTER 1975, p. 17). According to Pfeil (1899, p. 28) the brideprice could be as high as 200 fathoms.

³⁷ T.S. EPSTEIN 1968, p. 153. *Tabu* prices for food stuffs in the 1880s are quoted by Danks (1887, pp. 307f). Salisbury (1970, p. 178) says the prices had doubled by 1961, but that is a miscalculation as his own figures show.

³⁸ PARKINSON 1907, p. 79. In 1979 Caspar ToVaninara, then a seminarian at Bomana, wrote that Tolai still believe *tabu* guarantees proper relationships with the ancestral spirits (TOVANINARA 1979, p. 37). This does not conform with what I know about United Church followers in Raluana* and Vunamami, but I have to acknowledge that they might not have told me. In a more practical sense ToVaninara's statement is of course true: mortuary ceremonies tie the dead to the living through exchanges.

³⁹ DANKS 1888, p. 316.

⁴⁰ T.S. Epstein's idea that the pre-colonial Tolai big men were "primitive capitalists" is based on several wrong assumptions; that the accumulation of *tabu* was done under the same rationale as a capitalist's accumulation of capital is a major one. In her critique of T.S. Epstein, Douglas suggests replacing "primitive capitalism" with "primitive commerce", and claims that the economy "was dominated by production for exchange and as thoroughly commercial as any in Western Europe or the United States" (DOUGLAS 1967, p. 126). Both T.S. Epstein and Douglas reach some of their ahistorical conclusions by taking Danks' account (DANKS 1888) at face value. The missionary was looking for parallels with his own society and was not able to interpret the phenomena he saw other than in concepts of his own culture.

of Tolai beliefs as well as an expression of a Tolai way of regenerating society. Yet Tolai do not generally sell goods for *tabu* only to acquire shell-money for ceremonial exchanges. Nor is the *tabu* that is hoarded as a valuable withdrawn for good from the market sphere. Once it has been distributed at a mortuary ceremony it can again be used to buy lollies and betelnuts. The conceptual distinction between *tabu* as money to buy lollies and as a valuable to distribute at traditional exchanges does not coincide with a material distinction which would restrict its free movement from one sphere to the other.⁴¹

Tabu plays an important role in the *tubuan*. Hefty initiation fees were and are paid to the *tubuan*; however, the extraction of *tabu* fines through the *tubuan* from violators of taboos was more significant in the late nineteenth century than it is in the 1980s.

Nineteenth century drawings and photographs of Tolai men show that *tabu* was also used as ornament; men wore it in ruffs around their necks. This use declined from the 1880s; in the twentieth century *tabu* ruffs were no longer worn.⁴²

Scarlett Epstein assumes that eyewitness-accounts from the 1880s say something about the situation in the 1860s. I suggest a different sequence of events: Before the arrival of the Europeans, *tabu* was scarce and its availability limited. Market-place trade was carried out also through direct exchange (fish, saltwater, and lime for taro).⁴³ The arrival of the Europeans stimulated production for exchange and market trade. The traders offered tobacco, cloth, iron tools and fire-arms for garden produce and coconuts.⁴⁴ When the sale of fire-arms was prohibited in 1885, and the Tolai demand for the other items declined from about the mid-1880s⁴⁵ and the traders' and planters' demands for Tolai produce and land increased, the Tolai asked increasingly for *tabu* (what would they buy with money, if not tobacco, cloth and iron tools?), until the Administration prohibited its use. *Tabu* stocks in relation to the rapidly growing population increased after the Europeans' arrival, first along Blanche Bay and in Kabaira (because European trade items were traded to inland areas and to Nakanai, and because those coastal Tolai had an initial advantage through their firearms), and later throughout the Gazelle. This may have led to soaring prices demanded in the *varkukul*, so that Parkinson's figures already reflected the result of *tabu* depreciation. I am however inclined to believe that the brideprice was much higher in real terms before 1875, that the big men effectively controlled access to marriage through their *tabu* riches, and that the price was not increased because of mission influence and a realignment of power in the Tolai social structure.

⁴¹ Once *tabu* is coiled, people will not break it up to use it as money. However, the coil in itself is not a valuable that can be used in traditional exchanges, but it contains valuables and restricts their convertibility. Once the coil is cut, and the *tabu* distributed, the *tabu* is no longer associated with the coil that contained it, even if the coil has its own history, an individual name, or has been protected by magic.

⁴² Cf. PFEIL 1899, pp. 107 + 115.

⁴³ According to mutually corroborative Tolai evidence.

⁴⁴ NB: Danks does not say that food items were only sold for *tabu*.

⁴⁵ Cf. PFEIL 1899, pp. 120f.

II. *Minat* (death; deceased)

As with marriage ceremonies, there is no standard procedure to deal with death. The order in which ceremonies are held, their content, and the terms used differ significantly throughout the Gazelle. Although I attended many Tolai funerals and mortuary ceremonies, I decided against giving an account of any particular one of them, because I would then have to reveal details which could be embarrassing for people involved who are still alive, or detrimental to the memory of the deceased. The following draws on what I observed in Raluana*,⁴⁶ but any similarity between persons living or dead is coincidental.

ToAn was about sixty years old when he died at his house in Bitavudu, a Tolai coastal village. He was not a big man, but a respected member of the community which in this case is roughly identical with the United Church congregation of Bitavudu. The first indication of ToAn's death was the crying of women who were with him when he died. People flocked to his house, the women keening as they approached. An older neighbour went to ring the death knell, a bomb shell hung at a tree near the church and beaten with a piece of iron. For the first few hours there was a continuous stream of mourners who arrived, cried, and then sat around the house. All those living in the neighbourhood, whether or not they were related to ToAn, came to his house. All women went inside the house to cry over the body. The crying (*tinangi*) of the bereaved, which sometimes continues right through until the funeral service, is the first activity in Tolai mortuary rites and its performance is regarded as a customary obligation for women.

During these first hours after ToAn's death many decisions were made by those close to him. All parties involved, including the councillor of Bitavudu and the retired pastor in charge of the United Church congregation, had to strive for a consensus about the organisation of the funeral and ensuing mortuary ceremonies. Two groups of people could claim most say: the *bartamana*, his family, and the *barniuruna*, the relatives of his *vunatarai*. Especially when the deceased is younger, members of the father's *vunatarai* have some say, too. People fathered by his *vunatarai* could play an important role. If the deceased is a woman, her *vunatarai* which includes of course her children, usually outweighs other groups.

ToAn was survived by his wife, IaAn, and five children. The only son worked at the Ok Tedi mine near the West Papuan border. He was contacted by phone; upon his insistence the funeral was put off for three days to give him time to reach Rabaul. Once that decision was taken, arrangements were made to take the body to the morgue at the nearby hospital.

All welcomed a suggestion by the pastor to hold a service in church, preceeding the one at the gravesite, because ToAn had been an active member of the congre-

⁴⁶ I am indebted to Gerson ToVue of lalakua who spent many hours patiently explaining to me Tolai cultural practices related to death. I am also grateful that the *bartamana* and *barniuruna* of the late Eilken ToNgatia of lalakua invited me to join them when they prepared and conducted the ceremonies following ToNgatia's death; particularly helpful were Elipas ToLar and Rusiat ToWakit, both of lalakua. See also: A.L. EPSTEIN 1969, pp. 232-236, where he gives a detailed account of a *minat* on Matupit. The *minamal* he describes is frugal by 1987 Raluana* standards, but nevertheless it followed the same pattern.

gation. All participants in the impromptu meeting, which was informally chaired by the deceased's *lualua* from a neighbouring village and by Turana, the eldest son of ToAn's brother who had married a woman from laAn's *vanatarai*, agreed that ToAn should be buried at the Bitavudu cemetery (instead of at his house or his *vanatarai's madapai*).

As often happens, some tension developed between the *bartamana*, who had the strongest emotional bonds with the deceased, and the *barniuruna*. The deceased had lived on land which his father had once bought from his own *vanatarai* for ToAn and his brothers. The *niuruna* argued successfully that the distribution of shell-money (*minamai*) should be held on clan land and suggested the nearby *madapai* where the *lualua* happened to reside. It was also decided that the ensuing *ul a ubu* should be held at the same place, not least because it was much closer to the main road; the *bartamana* led by Turana consented only reluctantly. But when ToAn's son arrived, the last decision was overturned.

It had also to be decided whether the *tubuan* should be involved. Since ToAn had participated in the *tubuan's* activities and had been *dok*, that is initiated to the final stage, the *tubuan* of ToAn's *vanatarai*, which was controlled by the *lualua*, was raised. In Raluana* until about twenty years ago the *tubuan* was only raised for a bita *tubuan*, a controller himself. Since about the mid-1970s it has sometimes been raised for women, if they had contributed significantly to the *tubuan's* funds, or for men who had not yet been *dok*.⁴⁷ The more important the deceased, the more *tubuan* will be raised. If ToAn had been involved with the *tubuan* of his father's *vanatarai*, that one could have been raised, too.

Before the funeral, several tasks had to be completed, among them the construction of a covered platform (*pal tuturup*) to display the coffin, and the digging of the grave. The impromptu meeting mentioned earlier had appointed friends, relatives or neighbours of ToAn to perform these tasks, some of which would be paid for in *tabu*. ToAn's children bought a coffin.

After ToAn's son arrived, a group of more than fifty people went in a convoy of cars to the morgue to collect the body which was brought to ToAn's house whereupon the women cried again as they had done immediately after his death. From there the coffin was taken to the *madapai* and was displayed on the *pal tuturup*. The *tubuan* bid the deceased farewell and in its grief cut down part of a hedge planted by ToAn. People said 'the *tubuan* cries' (*a tubuan i takin*).

At the service in the packed Bitavudu church the life of the deceased was honoured by a big man and friend of ToAn who stressed his contribution with regard to *lotu*, *matanitu* and *balanagunan*. Another speaker recounted ToAn's last words. From the church the coffin was taken by car to the cemetery, where another short service was held. At most (United Church) funeral services I attended the preacher talked about John 11:25-26 in church and read a passage from Revelation (21:1-6), remarkable for

⁴⁷ In Raluana the first woman to be buried by a *tubuan* was laKulati of Vunatagia, the wife of the big man Kepas Tlotam, who died in the mid-1970s. In the Vunamami area the *tubuan* was raised for laVava of Ulagunan, the wife of ToBonga and mother of the politician Oscar Tammur, around 1977.

its chiliastic flavour, at the open grave.⁴⁸ At the end of the service the coffin was lowered into the grave and those who had been appointed gravediggers started covering it with soil. The bereaved family mourned the dead, whereas the *niuruna* kept in the background. Before the grave had been completely covered with soil - the gravediggers were still shovelling soil, the choir of Bitavudu's Women's Fellowship was singing a hymn, the preacher and members of the family were standing near the grave - the *tubuan* suddenly appeared, jumped into the grave, trod down the soil, and rushed off. The *tubuan*'s appearance lasted only a couple of minutes during which women and children, as if in panic, hurried a few steps from the grave. The circle around the grave closed again after the *tubuan* had gone. The gravediggers then finished their job. The councillor announced in which order flowers were to be put on the mound: first the *bartamana*, then the church elders, then the *barniuruna*, then the Women's Fellowship etc..

Two *tubuan* in Eiken ToNgatia's grave. *Dir rua taun ia*, they step over him.

⁴⁸ I found the message of John 11:25-26 in Kuanua is, perhaps because of the scarcity of the wording chosen and the contrast between *nilaun tuna* (true life) and *mat muka* (really die), more powerful than in German or English editions of the Bible. ("Iau ra nilaun mulai, ma iau ra nilaun tuna; ... ma nina i laun ma i nurnur tagu, pa na mat muka"; those lines read in English: "I am the resurrection and the life. ... Whoever lives and believes in me will never die.") This is the passage ToBobo must have had in mind, when the lamp in his house shattered. The passage from the Apocalypse is remarkable, because preachers I heard only quoted the verses referring to the dawning of the Millenium ("There will be no more death, no more grief or crying or pain" etc.), but omitted the notion of a punishing and vengeful God, as in Revelation 21:8 ("But cowards, traitors, perverts, murderers, the immoral, those who practise magic, those who worship idols, and all liars - the place for them is the lake burning with fire and sulphur, which is the second death." The Kuanua version, by the way, makes the fine distinction that sorcerers, and not just anybody practising magic, should burn in hell. (quotes from the 1976 British Edition of the *Good News Bible*, and the latest edition of the *Buk Tabu* (THE BIBLE SOCIETY ... 1983)).

On the next day the *minamai* (literally, the chewing of betelnut) was conducted. Whereas the funeral was dominated by the immediate family and others close to the deceased, the *minamai* was dominated by the *barniuruna* and co-ordinated by their *lualua*. It was attended by several hundred people, more than had gone to the funeral. This surprised nobody but was later criticised in one of the speeches. After *barniuruna*, *bartamana* and others involved in the proceedings had welcomed the guests (neighbours, friends, affines or kin) with parcels of betelnut and pepper, several *tabu* transactions took place.⁴⁹

First men and women close to the deceased threw pieces of *tabu*, up to one *pokono*, on a pile as a contribution for the payment of those who had dug the grave or performed other funeral tasks. Those people were publicly paid.

Tabu coils belonging to the deceased, and to *bartamana*, *barniuruna* and others close to ToAn were collected. The *tubuan* brought its own *gogo*. All those coils were then cut. The owners or trustees of the *tabu*, or people appointed by them, distributed *tabu* to onlookers: men to men and women to women. Women outnumbered men as distributors and as receivers. Everybody received according to their status: elders received more than others, adults more than children. At such a distribution, several thousand *pokono* can be distributed. On average, every adult not distributing her- or himself would end up with at least two *pokono*, often considerably more. Like other European observers I was struck by the contrast between the Tolai's parsimonious dealing with *tabu* in everyday life and their lavish spending at the *minamai*.⁵⁰

Next *tabu* was distributed to men only, together with parts of the decorations of the *pal tuturup*; the rationale is that it can't be given to women, because the *pal tuturup* has been touched by the *tubuan*.

Then most of the men and women present gave the *tubuan* small pieces of *tabu* (less than half a *pokono*) as a token of reverence (*varlapang*). Larger amounts of *tabu* were ritually thrown at the *tubuan* by the *lualua* of ToAn's *vanatarai* to replace the *tubuan*'s *tabu* which had been distributed for ToAn.

Those fathered by ToAn's *vanatarai* presented members of his *vanatarai* with small pieces of *tabu* in recognition of their privilege to climb their "fathers'" coconut palms for green coconuts or to take food from their gardens.

For the *vatut varpa* those of the same *papar* as laAn threw pieces of *tabu*, up to about half a *pokono*, on a pile to be kept by the *lualua* of ToAn's *vanatarai* for further ceremonies for ToAn in years to come.

If ToAn had lived on clan land, arrangements would have been made and announced at the *minamai* about laAn's and her children's future residence. Normally they would stay for some time on his land and then move back to their own. As ToAn had bought the land where the family lived, it was passed on patrilineally to his children.

In speeches big men of various *vanatarai* honoured ToAn's life and took the opportunity to talk about the necessity to take part in customary ceremonies, and about certain aspects of them and correct procedures. In the *minamai* ceremonies I

⁴⁹ Tolai and scholars writing about them refer to the cutting of *tabu* coils and distribution to guests also as *kutu tabu* or as *bibliu*.

⁵⁰ Cf. BRADLEY 1982, p. 95.

witnessed, usually one of the speakers talked about the relationship between customary ceremonies and the *lotu*, emphasising that participation in one did not relieve one from the duty to take part in the other. Ceremonies like the *minamai* may be ended with a prayer.

Besides the ceremonial transactions, people were buying and selling with *tabu* being used as the currency. During and after the distribution of *tabu* to guests, many women sold sweets, cigarettes, ice cream, cakes and other items. They had bought these goods with cash and sold them for *tabu*. Many children parted immediately with all the *tabu* they had received to buy sweets.

The distribution of *tabu* is like a text which is read carefully by those present. People register who distributes how much *tabu*.⁶¹ Somebody using ToAn's land or intending to use it, might cut a lot of *tabu*. A woman remembering that ToAn had cut *tabu* at her brother's *minamai* would now cut *tabu* for ToAn. The *lualua*, to assert that ToAn and his immediate matrilineal relatives were part of his *vanatarai*, would cut *tabu* in support of his claim. The children would cut *tabu* and thereby claim the right to stay on their father's land. The *minamai* and other Tolai ceremonies involving *tabu* exchanges are series of give-and-take, in which obligations which might have originated many generations back, are honoured, and new obligations are created.

That *tabu* is now distributed for nearly every adult and to all on-lookers is a new development. People remember that the *minamai* is now much bigger in scale than it was before the war with more people taking part and more people cutting *tabu*.

For several nights after the funeral, people met at ToAn's house to sing hymns and to drink tea. Neighbouring villages came en bloc and stayed for several hours, the women in particular singing hymns without respite. Guests contributed tea, sugar, biscuits or rice for the *ul a ubu*. Unless the donor objected, the quantities were written down in an exercise book so that the organisers of the *ul a ubu* (the family) could reciprocate when opportunity arose. The *ul a ubu* was terminated with a *ki kutu*, where parcels of cooked food were distributed and eaten on the spot. The cooked food was contributed by a variety of people. As often nowadays, the *ki kutu* was followed by a dance where a string band played Tolai pop music. In recent years, the amount of money spent for the *ul a ubu* and the *ki kutu* has increased significantly.

Sometimes tensions between *bartamana* and *barniuruna* cannot be solved. I witnessed one *minat* in lalakua, when two *minamai* were organised and the nightly singing (*ul a ubu*) was held simultaneously at three different places.

In years to come, the deceased can be honoured through various other ceremonies which involve high expenses for those organising them and numerous presentations of cooked and raw food, *tabu* and cash. All those ceremonies direct people's attention to their relationships with others. I do not go into detail about them, since I hope to

⁶¹ See chapter 8, p. 135, and chapter 9, p. 142, where I have already mentioned the implications of *tabu* payments made at the *minamai*.

have made my point sufficiently clear by sketching the activities which a *minat* entails so far.

For Tolai living outside the Gazelle mortuary ceremonies are often a financial strain: they are expected to attend the *minamai* for close relatives, and domestic airfares are expensive. Tolai put enormous energy into constantly regenerating their society, that is the network of relationships of its living members. They are aware and often critical of the fact that the amount of *tabu*, money and time spent on these efforts has greatly increased over the past twenty years.

From the accounts of Europeans who observed Tolai mortuary rites during the first few decades after the establishment of permanent contact,⁵² the following picture emerges:

If a big man died, his body was decorated and displayed. Until his funeral, often for a long time afterwards, a *garamut*-drum was beaten. His *tabu* coils were exhibited on a scaffolding. People flocked to his *gunan* to mourn his death. The body was buried together with some *tabu*. The dead man's relatives distributed *buai* and some of his *tabu* to the mourners. Parkinson took part in ceremonies where a total of 2000 fathoms was distributed.⁵³ Big men would receive up to five fathoms each, others as little as one quarter of a fathom. In some cases *tabu* was not distributed publicly but sent to certain individuals at their homes.⁵⁴ In those rare cases when the *tubuan* was involved, any *tubuan* displaying their respect to the deceased was remunerated from the dead man's *tabu*.⁵⁵ Mourners might linger after the funeral and sleep on the grave; they would later be rewarded in *tabu*. Other mortuary ceremonies, financed with the remaining *tabu* of the deceased and with contributions from relatives, could follow, involving the distribution of *tabu* and food, the raising of the *tubuan* and the performance of dances.

Shell-money was not distributed at all funerals. Those poor in *tabu* could be buried without much public accounting. Some authors suggest that shell-money was distributed only after the death of a big man.⁵⁶ But there is sufficient evidence to prove that *tabu* was distributed, in smaller quantities, for "common" women and men.⁵⁷ *Buai*,

⁵² BISKUP 1974, pp. 108-110; BURGER 1913, pp. 31-33; PARKINSON 1887, pp. 101-104; PARKINSON 1907, pp. 74-82; SCHNEIDER 1905, pp. 36-40; WINTHUIS 1926; PFEIL 1899, pp. 70f + 79-81.

⁵³ PARKINSON 1887, p. 103. Pfeil (1899, p. 71) thought he witnessed a major distribution, when he attended a ceremony where only 400 fathoms were handed out. The Catholic missionary Winthuis (1926, p. 62) says that he witnessed a distribution of 10,000 fathoms of *tabu* on one occasion. Parkinson is generally much more reliable; the difference could however also reflect regional differences or an increase in the amount of *tabu* distributed over time.

⁵⁴ Burger (1913, pp. 31f) witnessed this practice around 1910 on Matupit. According to Meyer's review of Burger's book, in other places, too, big men were presented with *tabu* even if they did not attend the distribution (*Anthropos* 1914, p. 351).

⁵⁵ PARKINSON 1907, p. 76; Brown, in: *AMMR* of 2 Nov. 1891, p. 3.

⁵⁶ So do Parkinson (1887, p. 103) and Winthuis. But the latter concedes that women owned shell-money (WINTHUIS 1926, p. 60). So what happened with it after their death? Given the way most authors perceived Tolai women, they probably did not bother to attend *minamai* held for them.

⁵⁷ Pfeil (1899, p. 71) and Romilly (1887, p. 26) both describe a *tabu* distribution for a woman. Meier (1909, 100) recounts a myth which tells of a boy for whom shell-money is distributed.

and perhaps also food, were distributed in any case. According to most accounts the *tabu* distributed at the time of a funeral belonged to the person who had just died.⁵⁸

The *tubuan* pays its respect. (behind the deceased four coils of *tabu*; photograph taken around 1900, in or near Raluana)

Around 1960 A.L. Epstein and Richard Salisbury observed different practices. Salisbury never witnessed a funeral and ensuing *minamai* during his fieldwork in Vunamami, but estimated an average 100 *pokono* would be distributed at five out of six *minat*. At every sixth *minat* 1000 *pokono* would be handed out.⁵⁹ Salisbury also stressed that after the *minamai* other ceremonies took place, which included *tabu* exchanges and involved the *tubuan*.⁶⁰ During A.L. Epstein's fieldwork, *tabu* was still scarce on Matupit.⁶¹ He observed cases where there was no *minamai*, only a *kubika*, that is small portions of *tabu* were sent round to leading elders.⁶² On Matupit the *tubuan* had not been raised between 1949 and 1961, and no *balaguan*, a large-scale ceremony to honour a particular deceased several years after his or her death, had been staged during that time.⁶³

When Christine Bradley conducted her fieldwork in Pilapila in 1978, no *tubuan* had been raised since the war, most of the men had not been initiated, and she concluded that "the cult is dying out in many areas of the Gazelle, especially in those

⁵⁸ Winthuis mentions in passing that the type of funeral depended on the "shell-money which the deceased or his relatives owned" (WINTHUIS 1926, p. 60, my emphasis), but does not elaborate.

⁵⁹ SALISBURY 1970, p. 296.

⁶⁰ SALISBURY 1970, p. 295; cf. pp. 297ff.

⁶¹ Cf. A.L. EPSTEIN 1969, pp. 32 + 239.

⁶² A.L. EPSTEIN 1969, p. 238.

⁶³ A.L. EPSTEIN 1969, p. 239.

closest to Rabaul".⁶⁴ Three years later the *tubuan* was raised again in Pilapila, and she noted a 'recent upsurge of interest in the *tubuan*'.⁶⁵

During my fieldwork there were four *balaguan* in one year in Raluana* (the six villages have about the same population as Matupit). In 1987 six *tubuan* were raised on four different occasions in Raluana and Ialakua (which have together about Pilapila's population).

III. *Papalum*

When people gather for a ceremony and there is a general feeling that it should be started, usually by distributing the *varlapang* (betelnut and pepper), the master of ceremony will say: '*Dat a tur pa ra papalum* (let's get on with the work)'. The distribution of shell-money at a *minamai* is also called *papalum tabu*, work with shell-money. Conducting or attending this or any other customary ceremony is work, *papalum*. The same word is used to refer to tending one's garden or building a house. Occasionally it is used to refer to the achievements of a deceased.

As has been observed in many non-capitalist societies,⁶⁶ among the Tolai there seems to be still no conceptual difference between material production and an activity undertaken for the regeneration of society. Tending one's garden and tending one's social relationships are both work, and both are perceived as equally essential for one's reproduction.

Wage labour, however, is a different matter. When it was introduced in the last century, most notably on plantations, the Tolai had no word in their own language which could be applied to something conceptually so different from their *papalum*. They used the Tok Pisin term *vok* to denounce this particular activity. As a noun, *vok* could mean 'labourer'; *vokvok* was the term used for 'plantation'. By now, the linguistic distinction between wage labour and *papalum* has faded, and the latter term includes all the meanings of the English words 'labour' and 'work'.

IV.

There has never been a uniform Tolai culture, nor have certain customs been followed to the same extent in different places. Tolai society was parochial and diverse before 1875. After 1875 certain elements (for example the language)⁶⁷ tended to become more standardised, while different 'contact histories' resulted in regional disparities.

Among the Tolai, all aspects of their culture can be debated. An exchange as such, as well as its performance, may be criticised both in public discourse and even more in private conversations. In Raluana* and Vunamami many Tolai question the point of

⁶⁴ BRADLEY 1982, p. 106.

⁶⁵ BRADLEY 1982, p. 260, fn. 6.

⁶⁶ Cf. THOMAS 1964, pp. 51f.

⁶⁷ Cf. A.L. EPSTEIN 1979, p. 152.

having *tabu* exchanges at the *minamai*. Upon Reverend Mikael ToBilak's request, no *tabu* was distributed when he died in Raluana in 1978. His choice was respected and is often cited in discussions about the function and future of *tabu*. People in Ialakua often talked about the burden of customary *papalum* which prevented them weeding their gardens or pursuing other forms of *papalum* to make a living. I found the Tolai and other Papua New Guineans much more prepared to question basic components of their society and experiment with innovations, than for example Germans. Although a certain ceremony might serve the interests of a minority of people who succeed in introducing or maintaining it, it is also the object, and partly the result, of intense discussions, indeed struggles, within the entire community.

Earlier I explained that in the understanding of most Tolai their society and their lives are based on three foundations: *lotu*, *matanitu* and *balanagunan*. Funeral practices in Raluana* draw on both the *lotu* and the *balanagunan*. In describing the entrance of the *tubuan* during the funeral, I have tried to convey my impression that the separation is fine but sharp. The juxtaposition of church service and shell-money distribution, of hymn singing and traditional exchange, is subtly balanced.

As long as *tabu* continues to prevail, forecast the Catholic clergyman ToVaninara in 1979, "Christianity will never become a way of life for the people."⁶⁸ From a United Church point of view Williams was as unhappy about the persistence of traditional beliefs and customs.⁶⁹ In the "indigenisation" of the *lotu*, which he demanded, the *lotu* would take over other spheres, leading to the establishment of a theocracy as had emerged among the Kotte after about 1910 and is now promoted by Pentecostal Churches operating on the Gazelle. But so far, most Tolai are content to be also Christians.

Ceremonial and profane parts of Tolai life also co-exist in close proximity. Tolai women do not miss a chance to hold markets, and so at the *minamai tabu* is used also in its commercial function. The Sunday service is actually the only public event in Ialakua when marketing is restricted (but not altogether prohibited); I attribute this to the stress Methodist teaching put on the observance of the Sabbath.

V.

In the 1970s and 1980s mortuary rites have increased in scale and number. Over the past twenty years other types of ceremonies like the *varkinim* (initiation ceremony for boys), or the *varkukul* have been performed with increasing frequency. The increase in *tabu* stocks is clearly related to a growing demand due to the increase in *tabu*-related *papalum*.

ToVaninara, although perceiving *tabu* as an obstacle to the final success of Christian religion, makes an important observation: *tabu* "draws the people together".⁷⁰ Over the

⁶⁸ TOVANINARA 1979, p. 35; cf. p. 44.

⁶⁹ WILLIAMS 1970, pp. 673ff.

⁷⁰ TOVANINARA 1979, p. 34.

past few decades, the dispersal of Tolai has increased in two ways: more Tolai work, attend schools or live with their families outside the Gazelle; and more Tolai marry outside their own village. Those living in the diaspora or far from their *vunatarai* sense the need to enforce ties with their home. People living outside the Gazelle define themselves as Tolai through their participation in Tolai culture, which is most explicitly articulated in ceremonial *papalum*.

Because of an increasing number of marriages outside the village, the *vunatarai* themselves become more scattered. This means that large-scale ceremonies like a *balaguan* are often the only means to draw together a *vunatarai*. Tolai stress that a *balaguan* is an opportunity to assert one's *vunatarai*'s identity,⁷¹ and to bind together (*vi guve*) the *vunatarai*. Through participating in *tabu* exchanges, Tolai living among other Tolai but away from their home village align with a matrilineage at the new residence.

The trend to live outside one's own village has disrupted the sensitive network of relationships maintained through exchanges. As if the fabric of Tolai society had been overstretched and its thread needed to be reinforced, an increase in ceremonial *papalum* tries to balance the disruption caused by the growing importance of *vok*.⁷² Today the share of the *tabu* distributed by kin and affines at the *minamai* is larger than around 1960 or in the late nineteenth century, which may be explained by the growing concern for the maintenance, extension and repair of the fabric of social relationships.

Tolai attach enormous emotional and spiritual significance to their land.⁷³ Land is scarce, particularly that owned by *vunatarai* (Tolai do not fiercely compete for any land as the response to resettlement schemes shows). Those working outside the Gazelle or in Rabaul forfeit their share of *vunatarai* land when they cannot work it. The current Prime Minister would, as long as he occupies that position, find it difficult to claim land belonging to his Vunakua *vunatarai*. And if he wanted to retain his right to claim *vunatarai* land in future, he would have to continue cutting *tabu* at the *minamai* of close maternal relatives.

Colonial rule affected villagers on the Gazelle more than most other Papua New Guineans. The Tolai witnessed the influx of large numbers of Europeans, Chinese, and other New Guineans. Through confrontations with intruders and immigrants and as emigrants living in the diaspora, the Tolai came into being. Today the emigrants identify strongly with their native country and strive to return even if they have lived most of their lives away from it. They acquire shell-money to participate in ceremonies at home, and thereby establish the right to come back and strengthen the ties with the source of their identity.

⁷¹ In former times this has also been an important aspect of a *balaguan*; cf. the anecdote told by Winthuis (1914).

⁷² Christopher Healey gives an illuminating account of a similar tendency in the Maring society of the New Guinea Highlands (HEALEY 1985).

⁷³ Cf. A.L. EPSTEIN 1969, pp. 198f.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s the Mataungan Association, a movement which could claim the support of about half of the Tolai population, fought against land alienation and foreign domination, for self-government, and against the Tolai supporters of the Multiracial Council system introduced by the Administration. The Mataungans promoted a cultural revival: they established a body, the Varkurai Nigunan, which administered "traditional" Tolai law, and involved the *tubuan* in their activities.⁷⁴ The division of the Tolai into Mataungans and "Multis" was overcome partly because followers of both camps asserted their Tolai identity, based on a common cultural heritage manifest in Tolai customs.

VI.

The closing gap between the shell-money millionaires (*uviana*)⁷⁵ and the have-nots (*luveana*) has to be explained in terms of a changing social structure. The *luluai* of the late nineteenth century who had lost his role as the warrior on whom people depended for physical protection, but who profited from dealings with the Europeans, who had several wives, who controlled the young men of his *vunatarai* through his access to *tabu*, became the *Luluai* of the early twentieth century, whose power depended on his alignment with the colonial regime, who still controlled other people's *tabu* riches, but who found it increasingly difficult to hold back young men who wanted to work outside his influence. The unique concentration of political and economic power in the hands of *Luluai* of the calibre of a Pero ToKinkin in Raluana*, and Anton ToMana on Matupit eroded in the 1930s and finally ended with the proclamation of councils and the opening of new avenues to education (and financial independence) in the 1950s. This erosion was assisted by the process of christianisation. In the sphere of the *lotu*, especially its Methodist variant, women and young men could achieve status and could bypass the traditional avenues to power in the village.⁷⁶

Today the leaders of *vunatarai* and big men/women in the village are often involved in business ventures: they run buses, own copra driers, trucks or trade stores, and produce cash crops. Capital intensive businesses are often financed by the *lualua's* children who were sent away to receive an education and eventually a salary. But recognised Tolai leaders still do not have to be prominent in business, whereas today, with very few exceptions,⁷⁷ business people, public servants, or politicians find it crucial to participate prominently in the ceremonial Tolai *papalum*, if they want to be recognised as leaders by Tolai outside the towns. They can quite easily "buy themselves in" by converting money into *tabu*. But they still have to invest time and effort, since

⁷⁴ John Waiko (1976) describes an anti-colonial movement in Oro Province, PNG, that was also connected with a revival of "traditional" culture.

⁷⁵ Some *uviana* have been virtually *tabu* millionaires by owning several thousand *pokono* (with more than 300 *pal a tabu* each).

⁷⁶ The Methodist missionaries deliberately tried to weaken the power of male elders. See, for example, their policy of "boy-getting" (Rickard, in: *Advocate* of 26 Sept. 1885, p. 215).

⁷⁷ Saimon Gaius, the former long-serving bishop of the United Church, is a recognised *rangrang na tutana*, a prominent big man in his capacity as a church leader. But he, too, participates in customary *papalum*.

the arena where such recognition has eventually to be sought, is in the village.⁷⁸ It appears that Tolai villagers are interested in maintaining or extending ritual *papalum*, which gives them an edge over those who receive cash incomes but do not live in the village, since they have easier access to *tabu* and to the body of knowledge relevant for this *papalum*.

In Raluana* two groups actively promoted ceremonial exchanges. First, educated Tolai men in their forties and older, who have worked for a long time outside the Gazelle and have now come back home, are most vocal about reviving or preserving particular customs.⁷⁹ The first generation of former Tolai school teachers and other public servants returned home in the late 1960s, at about the time when the revival of customs started.⁸⁰ However in the implementation of their ideas they rely on men and women who have not stayed away from the village for long periods and are therefore more knowledgeable in matters concerning the *balanagunan*. Secondly, village women are the driving force behind customary exchanges, as those who perform most of the labour involved (preparation of *tabu*, cooking of food) and increasingly as sponsors and promoters. Whilst I was staying in lalakua, the topic discussed most often at the village assembly (*lain*), which was held about once every month, was the *varlapang*:

A man or woman would invite their neighbours, kin and affines to see something they have acquired or built recently (house, watertank, car, lawn-mower, trade store etc.). The guests donate at least one *pokono* each, some (children, spouses) give ten times as much. People working in town sometimes give cash. An average *varlapang* in lalakua would net at least 200 *pokono*. The organiser in turn presents the guests with cooked food, which may involve slaughtering a pig and certainly includes fish or chicken.⁸¹ In addition, the organiser can hold a *vuvuai*, that is buy goods like loincloths, spades, axes etc. and give them to people to receive a delayed payment in *tabu* following the *varlapang*.⁸² In 1987 the *varlapang* exchanges were intensified in lalakua and held about every two months. The women successfully argued that they should be held more often, as long as people wanted to organise them (organisers were

⁷⁸ One might argue that Oscar Tammur, John Kaputin and Rabble Namalliu, those young Tolai leaders who rose to prominence in the late 1960s and early 1970s, were then not prominently involved in customary *papalum*, although recognised as leaders beyond their villages. However, all had fathers (ToBonga, ToKaputin, ToNamalliu) who were at that time powerful big men in the villages and who backed their sons.

⁷⁹ When A.L. Epstein was conducting his fieldwork on Matupit between 1959 and 1961 he already noted that 'some of the teachers at times would express markedly traditional attitudes; they would urge, for example, that such institutions as *tambu* and the *tubuan* should not be allowed to disappear' (A.L. EPSTEIN 1969, p. 243).

⁸⁰ The public service, in particular the teaching service, in the Territory of Papua and New Guinea was in the 1950s and early 1960s dominated by Tolai. Among the c. 400 people of lalakua in 1988, there were twelve men who had been policemen, professional soldiers, government clerks or teachers. Finney (1971, p. 52) calculated that in 1967 there were 472 primary school teachers per 100,000 population in East New Britain compared with 2 in the Western Highlands and 67 in Madang. However, by then 75.9 % of all Tolai teachers were working in the East New Britain District (FINNEY 1971, p. 97).

⁸¹ I once attended a *vuvuai* on Duke of York Island. The organiser, an Islander who had married to lalakua and set up a trade store in his home village, had invited his in-laws from lalakua as well as his own people. He received much more than 200 *pokono*, but he also sponsored three traditional dances to be performed for his guests, and bought cartons of beer for the men.

⁸² Parkinson describes this second aspect in some detail. According to his calculation, one organiser had expenses of 300 fathoms of *tabu* and received 420 fathoms in delayed payments. He does not say, whether he included the expenses for food given to guests and dances held on that day in his calculation (PARKINSON 1907, pp. 91-94). See also: Eberlein, in: *Monatshefte* 1901, pp. 251f.

never short of occasions, as the 'new acquisitions' were often quite old). Because the women did most of the work related to these exchanges, the men who tried to limit their frequency, gave in and in 1988 they were held twice a month. At the village level, eventually everybody could benefit from his or her own *varlapang*. But through the *varlapang* villagers enlisted the support of their children with cash incomes and converted the children's cash into their own *tabu*.⁸³

Christine Bradley has shown that women across the board have increased their *tabu* wealth: whereas the early European observers and Salisbury noted that women had little *tabu*, Bradley found that in 1978 women in Pilapila owned an average 157.1 *pokono* compared with 145.8 *pokono* per man and that more women (57.8 %) owned *tabu* coils than men (52.7 %).⁸⁴ Bradley argues that women had better access to *tabu* in 1978 than twenty years before:⁸⁵ they sold garden produce in order to make profits (which they did not do yet around 1960); they had direct access to the raw material (until the 1950s trips to *nassa* grounds were only undertaken by men); and they tended to claim the brideprice paid for them; whereas men's *tabu* incomes through fishing, the performance of specialists' skills or through the *tubuan* decreased. I can confirm the trend she sketches because of what I found in Raluana*. By granting women more access to *tabu*, Bradley argues, men try to protect their predominance in the spheres they had claimed for themselves over the past one hundred years: business in cash, and politics.⁸⁶

The competition between big men and between *vunatarai* have been regarded as prime movers of changes in Tolai society. But there are other moving forces such as the contradictions between young men and their elders, between subsistence farmers and earners of cash-wages, and between men and women. If Bradley's point were re-interpreted along those lines, it would concede the women a more active role in Tolai politics. *Tabu* still can give women power, although it is only one of several sources of power, and although *tabu* can be obtained through achievements in other spheres.⁸⁷ The importance of *tabu* in Tolai society today is the outcome of the active efforts of two groups to increase their power: villagers (*vis-à-vis* townspeople with cash incomes) and women (*vis-à-vis* men).⁸⁸

Since Christine Bradley completed her fieldwork, two new developments have taken place: more women have gone through the system of Western education and taken the places of men in the lower ranks of the public service, and the activities of the *tubuan* have increased. The increase of *tubuan* activities may be seen as an attempt by men to regain lost ground, especially after women have intruded into the spheres

⁸³ A similar exchange is the *pinapoko na borol*, the slaughtering of a pig and the "sale" of pork for *tabu*. Recipients pay a "price" for the pork which has to be understood as a gift which would be later reciprocated (cf. BRADLEY 1982, pp. 104 + 116). In Ialakuia, the *varlapang* could be combined with a *pinapoko na borol* instead of a *vuvuai*.

⁸⁴ BRADLEY 1982, pp. 97f.

⁸⁵ For the following see: BRADLEY 1982, pp. 108ff.

⁸⁶ BRADLEY 1982, p. 121.

⁸⁷ This is not an attempt to reconcile Bradley's prediction (1982, p. 123) with that of Salisbury (1970, p. 278) but reflects another twist in the trend after twenty-seven and ten years respectively.

⁸⁸ Feminist anthropologists such as Annette Weiner and Christine Bradley may have underestimated female agency.

men had monopolised: politics and the cash economy. But at the same time, the *tubuan* is more often raised for women. The *tubuan* extracts *tabu* from women, but the more a woman contributes to a particular *tubuan*, the more she creates obligations towards her.

Because *tabu* is still accumulated to be distributed after one's death and access to *tabu* has widened, there are markedly more and larger *tabu* distributions at the *minamai* than twenty years ago. But this development did not take place automatically. It reflects efforts by people in the village to offset the advantages of those who receive cash incomes.

In this chapter I have tried to shed some light on customs as non-verbal texts linking past and present. By centering on certain customs I have attempted to sketch and explain aspects of a process of social change in Tolai society from the 1880s to the 1980s. I will return to the questions raised here, when talking about customs and *kastom* as statements about the past.

Three Tolai big women: laKaludia of Viviren, laloan of Raluana and laRodi of Vunamami (from left to right)

11: Dark Ages

When I first enquired about the Tolai past prior to George Brown's and the traders' arrival, I was told that before the coming of *matanitu* and *lotu*, the age of darkness (*ena bobotoi*) prevailed. That was when the stupid ancestors (*tarai na tuptup*) went about naked and killed each other for meat.¹ Often in the course of the same conversation the person who made such a statement later expressed reservations. Then I learned that the ancestors were not really thought of as stupid, that they in fact knew a lot not known today. Then I was told that in the days before the coming of the *lotu*, men and women were ashamed to expose their genitals in front of the other sex. They would kill their own kin only if they had committed a crime, notably incest, which in those days called for the death sentence, and then sell their bodies to other people who would eat them. They would of course kill their enemies, but had sophisticated and effective means to settle conflicts between individuals and groups.²

Once I was able to ask my questions in Kuanua and was perceived as somebody seriously interested in the Tolai past, people often said with a grin: 'You know, our ancestors were running around naked, killing each other', and then, taking on a more serious expression: 'Of course that's bullshit.' But if I had pretended to be a Seventh Day Adventist missionary, I might not have heard much beyond the first statement.

The picture drawn of the 'dark ages' depends not only on the person questioned, but also on the one asking the question. We have to keep this in mind when evaluating the findings of Peter Sack, who wrote about the Tolai *bobotoi*, and Frederick Errington, who described the analogous concept of *momboto* among the Duke of York Islanders of Kerewara:

men looked and behaved like wild animals. ... they were cannibals and ate even those now considered to be their kinsmen as though their kinsmen were animals. There was no kinship; there was no regulation of sex.³

Sack's description is as graphic as Errington's:

Bobotoi is timeless, primordial chaos, when people lived like animals, grunting like pigs and fornicating with their mothers, daughters, and even sisters.⁴

These condensed and definitive statements about the time of darkness are abstractions, which may have been provided to Sack and Errington, because informants got the impression that the two researchers asked for them. In Tolai public discourse varied images of the time of darkness are discernible. In the following I shall

¹ Ulrike Mosel quotes a fairly typical statement by the catechist ToVur of Rakunai (MOSEL 1977, pp. 10).

² Interestingly, some of the first European observers also described the Tolai in paradoxical terms. They emphasised that they were atrocious savages, but explained the Tolai concept of the stranger as the natural enemy who could be eaten (PFEIL 1899, p. 131; PARKINSON 1887, p. 121) and seemed to admire the Tolai way of settling conflicts with a minimum of casualties and damage (PARKINSON 1907, pp. 59f + 124ff; PARKINSON 1887, pp. 75ff; BISKUP 1974, pp. 104f; BROWN 1910, p. 153). Finsch (1882, p. 298) was intrigued by the women's 'exemplary chasteness' and 'decent behaviour', which he could not bring into accord with their nudity - which he seems to have appreciated, judging from his praise for the breasts of young Tolai women (1882, p. 303). Only the Catholic missionaries were unambiguous in their equation of nudity with immorality (cf. Couppé, In: *Monatshefte* 1892, p. 22).

³ ERRINGTON 1974, p. 21.

⁴ SACK 1985, p. 15.

look at images of the pre-colonial past, that have little in common with those described in the above quotes.

In traditional ceremonies people often explain in speeches that many customs date back to the pre-colonial past. Rarely do they talk about customs which are no longer practised. In land disputes claimants mention ancestors who lived back in the pre-colonial past, pieces of land they worked or places where they lived. They may also refer to events which happened then and which place their claim in an historical setting. In both cases the continuity between past and present is stressed. There is no mention of an anarchic state of warfare.

In church the *bobotoi* is mentioned often. Here the term refers to the darkness associated with those living in sin or ignorance. In the latest edition of the United Church hymn book,⁵ 29 out of 444 hymns contain the word. In those hymns the *bobotoi* is often identified with the past and contrasted with the *malmal* (peace) and *kapa* (light) of the present. In some hymns, the word *tuptup* (ignorant) is used instead of *bobotoi* to contrast the present. In older hymns, composed by the first white Methodist missionaries, *bobotoi* refers to a state before the coming of the *lotu*; whereas more recent compositions, like a hymn composed by Saimon Gaius,⁶ have individual salvation as the theme when they mention the *bobotoi*. Very few authors spell out features of the *bobotoi* before the coming of the *lotu*, as the German Methodist missionary Fellmann does:

In the olden days killing each other made us blind
Our country was torn by warfare
When the *lotu* brought the Gospel,
The *bobotoi* fled to the four winds.⁷

As in the Catholic hymn I quoted in chapter 9 when talking about the opening of the *pal na kivung* at Talimut, the past before the coming of the *lotu* is equated with a state of permanent warfare. This was also the case in most sermons I heard: *bobotoi* was contrasted with *malmal*, and the Tolai past pre-1875 was characterised by abundant but erratic violent death.⁸

The Tolai and the Wamira both claim that they were pacified by the *lotu*.⁹ Whereas the Anglicans in Papua were in fact preceded by the Administration's punitive expeditions, the British and German navies and the German administration were primarily concerned with protecting Europeans from Tolai attacks and only at a later stage with pacifying the Tolai.¹⁰ In the fifth chapter I argued that the *lotu* provided a framework which allowed the Tolai to change their interpretation of the world from one which made the stranger an enemy. Methodist missionary accounts also suggest that not only

⁵ THE UNITED CHURCH IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA ... 1984.

⁶ THE UNITED CHURCH IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA ... 1984, No. 275. Saimon Gaius, now Sir Saimon, was bishop of the United Church from 1968 to 1978 and again from 1986 to 1987.

⁷ THE UNITED CHURCH IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA ... 1984, No. 139, verse 2 (*Amana ra vinirua i tup dat / i purpuruan ra gunan, pa i kat; / Ba i pot ra lotu ma ra varval, / i vilavilau lral ra bobotoi*).

⁸ That is what the word *vinirua* in the first line of Fellmann's hymn actually means. Today it is also used in the sense of "perdition". Cf. chapter 9, p. 153.

⁹ Cf. KAHN 1983, pp. 103ff. See also: BECKETT 1987, pp. 94ff.

¹⁰ Systematic attempts to pacify the Tolai began only with Governor Hahl in the late 1890s (see Tappenbeck's graphic account of Hahl's efforts: TAPPENBECK 1901, p. 82).

did the missionaries frequently act as peace-makers,¹¹ but their flock valued the *lotu* because of its pacifying impact.¹² In that sense, the image of the *lotu* lighting up the darkness and bringing peace is true. But in church the *bobotoi* is very vaguely defined: sermons and hymns evoke a blurry ensemble of *vinirua*, *kamara*, and *purpuruan* (war) where a state of ignorance prevails.

Certain events which happened in the *bobotoi* are the subject of popular stories - "true stories", as the narrators never fail to stress. They may be about warfare or the *ingiet*. Most of those I heard were about incidents of attempted or accomplished cannibalism. The best known of such stories in the Kokopo area is about Tadakai, a man who taught his would-be killers a song.¹³ In Raluana* people tell and enact stories about ToKinkin's *tubuan* laVangabuabua eating the leg of a Fijian missionary killed in 1878 at Tungnaparau. The following I recorded in 1986 from ToBalaguan of Raluana, a retired school teacher in his early sixties who has been involved in various projects to preserve or revive aspects of Tolai culture:

"This story is about the people from Raluana and those from Kininigunan, as Vunamami was called in those days. They were one people and related to one another. It happened at the time of Pero ToKinkin. The German government had appointed him "Governor" of the people here in Raluana*; he ruled from here to Vunamami and Vunadidir-Toma. He and the leader of the Germans later appointed *Luluai* in the villages under Pero ToKinkin's direction. At that time, our people did not yet live in peace; they were still killing each other.

A man from Vunamami had married a woman from Raluana. He conceived the insidious plan that the people from Vunamami would kill a man from Raluana to eat him. It looks as if that was the kind of thing they did in those days. The man from Vunamami told his father-in-law in Raluana: 'I want you to make me a fish-trap.' For here in Raluana, they make a special kind of small fish-trap, called *puidam*.¹⁴ ... At that time people were not much at ease with each other, but they frequently met at Vunaibika, at the beach near Mrs Parkinson's place. People from Vunamami, Toma, Raluana* and Matupit gathered there to hold a market.¹⁵ The man from Vunamami used to meet his father-in-law there and one day he told him: 'When you have made the fish-trap, we will meet at Ravuira, near the market, when it is still dark. Make sure that you come before the sun rises.' He was afraid of their enemies. He would then collect his fish-trap and take it to Vunamami. The Raluana man was old and so he said to his son, the brother-in-law of the Kininigunan man: 'At

¹¹ When in 1881 the missionary Rooney visited the pastor-teacher Anasa, who was stationed in Raluana, "his (Anasa's) wife told us that he was away making peace between two tribes who were fighting, and on his return we found that he had succeeded in putting an end to the war" (*Advocate* of 17 Dec. 1881, p. 300 (letter of 9 Sept. 1881)). Ten years later Iona ToGigi of Raluana told a Methodist congregation in Australia: "War was formerly a constant thing and prevented the intercourse of the people. ... (After the coming of the *lotu*), when a difficulty arose and the people could not settle it, they called a missionary to arbitrate or to direct them" (*Advocate* of 16 May 1891, p. 487).

¹² In 1887 the Fijian missionary Aminio Bale wrote: "they know the value of the *lotu* to themselves - in preventing wars and hatred to each other and cannibalism and heathenism, and that it ensures peacefulness" (*Notices* of April 1888, p. 15).

¹³ Peter Sack (1985, p. 21) provides a summary of the plot.

¹⁴ In the recording, ToBalaguan explains how fish-traps work and what kind of fish-trap people in Raluana* made. See: PARKINSON 1907, pp. 95-100; MEYER 1913.

¹⁵ In the late nineteenth century, there were several market places (*tavul a bung*) along the Blanche Bay coast at Rabinigiti (Karavia), Raburua, Vunaibika (Ranguna), Vunagalip (Vunamami) and Vagavagal (Takubar), of which the one at Vunaibika might have been the most important one. Takarongon (Vunadidir Crossing) was then the most important inland market place.

that particular day we will go to Ravuira to deliver the fish-trap to my son-in-law. We will leave here at night to arrive there before dawn.'

The day had come. The Vunamami man deceived his in-laws and went with many warriors. They went in big canoes to Vunakabi, where today Ereman ToBaining's place is. There they left their canoes and walked along the beach to Ravuira, where they awaited the arrival of the man from Raluana with his fish-trap, keeping a look-out for him. The canoe from Raluana had to go round the reef which is situated quite a distance from the shore. When the canoe was still being paddled around the reef, the men waiting on the beach saw the two: 'There they are. They will come here.' The man who had ordered the fish-trap, whispered: 'Go and hide in the bush, all of you. I will wait here on my own.' So the others hid in the bush. But the father and son had already seen them. Their hearts were pounding. They were scared. They didn't talk, but thought: 'That's not only him, there is a large group of men.' When they came closer, the man from Kininigunan saluted them: 'Ih'. The two Raluana men replied: 'Ih.' They went ashore. The Kininigunan man went down to the beach to pull their canoe up. At that moment, the others came out of their hiding and ran down to the beach. They grabbed them to kill them. The younger man was strong, and he fought bravely. But he could not do much against so many opponents, and eventually they killed him, too. They went to Vunakabi to announce their two victims. They took the ribs of coconut palm leaves, split them in the middle, then all of them counted: 'one, two, three' and hit them on the sand so that it made a bang. That sign told the people in Raluana: 'Your enemies have killed one of you.' Afterwards they went to Vunamami.

In Raluana they got up and rushed down to the shore to see where their enemies were. They found blood and other traces of the fight and said: 'Oh, some of our people have been killed by those from Kininigunan.' They returned to Raluana and approached Pero ToKinkin: 'When are you next going to Kininigunan to buy coconuts?' For at that time Pero ToKinkin bought coconuts for Mrs Parkinson to make copra.¹⁶ 'The day after tomorrow', he told them. He used to go in a boat. Two fight leaders from Raluana, ToMarakan and another one whose name I have forgotten, said: 'ToKinkin, I, ToMarakan and this man, ToAn, we shall accompany you.' 'Why is that?' 'The Kininigunan people have killed two of our men and we are going to take revenge. They seem to think they are the only men in this world.' Pero ToKinkin agreed. ...

On the appointed day they went with their boat towards the beach below the Mamapua Social Club, where the Kininigunan people had gathered to sell their coconuts to ToKinkin. They dropped anchor a fair distance from the shore. The people on the beach recognised their *wantok*¹⁷ ToKinkin. For ToKinkin was born there, and he was at home both in Vunamami and Raluana*. 'ToKinkin is accompanied by two fight leaders', they said. 'They have not come for fun. They came because we killed the two men from Raluana. Now they are after revenge. What are we going to do? Who dares to go out there?' One fight leader got up and said: 'I'll take the risk, but somebody has to accompany me to sit behind me and paddle the canoe.' The others were scared: 'Whoever goes with him will be finished. Certainly not me.' They looked around among themselves and their eyes

¹⁶ In the late nineteenth century several Tolai big men acted as sub-traders for Europeans.

¹⁷ This is a Tok Plisin term which means "somebody who speaks the same language"; on the Gazelle it is often used to describe somebody who comes from the same place.

fell on a man with a gammy leg: 'You and this cripple, the two of you shall go.' What could the lame bloke say? They forced him to accompany the fight leader. They loaded some coconuts for selling into their canoe, paddled across and pulled alongside the boat. The cripple took a bunch of six coconuts to sell them to ToKinkin. The two fight leaders [from Raluana] said: 'Take those two big ones, too.' They wanted the fight leader [from Vunamami] to take some coconuts too and hand them over. He did, and when he gave the coconuts to them, they pulled him aboard their boat. Seeing that, the cripple jumped into the water and dived towards the beach. When the people on the beach realised that their fight leader had been captured, they ran into the bush. Pero ToKinkin heaved the anchor. They did not buy any more coconuts; they had already bought one very big 'coconut'. They returned to Raluana.

Pero ToKinkin in 1896 in Berlin

Here in Raluana, they heard the sound of the conch shell and knew that the revenge had been accomplished. They gathered at Vunakorkor, near Parkinson's landing stage, and awaited the arrival of the boat. It landed, and they took delivery of the victim and went with him up to a little hill near Tolom where they rested. The captive looked across to his place Vunamami and said: 'I poor devil, there is my village where I left my two wives behind.' 'Those two women will be theirs, and you will be ours, we will eat you.' 'Oh, I am sorry for all my chooks.' 'They will be theirs now, and you will be eaten by us.' They then went a bit further to Tolom. ... There they bound his hands and feet and tied him to a tree. Then they left for their gardens. Some gathered firewood, some collected taro and bananas. Others picked *valangur* and *kagua* leaves to wrap their 'pig' in. Experts looked for a special plant and a particular *buai* to administer, wrapped in the leaves of the pepper plant, to their victim.

They returned and gave the drug to him. He became sort of drunk. The purpose of this magic was to stop him feeling any pain when they cut him up. For they would cut him alive, with knives made from bamboo. They danced around him. We call this particular dance *gua*. While dancing they marked parts of his body for themselves with a piece of charcoal or with *tar*.¹⁸ Someone said: 'This is for me' and marked the arm for himself. Another of the dancers said: 'That part is mine.' Thus they danced around him, men and women. One women said: 'That's for me' and marked the penis and testicles for herself. When they had finished dancing, they had divided his body between them. Next, they started to cut him up. They cut off his arm. He asked: 'What part of me are you cutting?' The person cutting his arm replied: 'Your right arm, that's now mine.' In that fashion they cut him up. When he felt that they were cutting something, he asked them: 'Which part is that?' 'Your left arm. That's mine now.' One women cut off his testicles and before going on, said: 'That's your penis now, that's for me.' So they continued until they cut out his heart, and then he died. They wrapped the various parts of his body in leaves in the way you do it with pork and baked them with taro and bananas by covering them with hot stones in an earth oven. After some hours their 'pig' was ready. They ate it. That's the end of my story."¹⁹

Strictly, this story is not set in the pre-colonial past; neither are the one about Tadakai, or others of this genre. As in other stories about the *bobotoi* I heard, the narrator reveals in passing a lot of information about the past, here about the late nineteenth century: about Tokinkin, about markets, about specialised skills (production of fish traps), about Tolai middlemen, about cannibalism and its prolongation,²⁰ about the nature of indirect colonial rule.

It might well be that at the time of Sack's and Errington's fieldwork, around 1970, Tolai were less interested in the *bobotoi* than they were between 1986 and 1988, and that the rich and elaborated stories I heard contrast with unambiguous and brief descriptions offered to my predecessors. Today the interest in the pre-colonial past is growing. Unlike histories of the colonial period, stories about the *bobotoi* are disseminated. They are enacted as dramas, broadcast on the provincial radio station, told by elders invited to community schools, or just recounted in front of friends or family. Especially when told in public, they are educational in that they deliberately inform about elements of the Tolai past (specialist skills of the Raluana people, means to ease physical pain, etc.). But they never stress the continuity between the past and the present as much as those I quoted in previous chapters, as they accentuate features which are incomprehensible or unacceptable today. ToBalaguan's story, for instance, emphasises the gross violation of a taboo, the betrayal and killing of an in-law.²¹ They still evoke the notion, however faintly, that there was a permanent state of war, and a degree of lawlessness and erratic cruelty before the *lotu* became one of the three pillars of Tolai society. Stories about the *bobotoi* often reveal a fascination with the violence which is now outside the ethical norms of Tolai society. To a lesser degree,

¹⁸ Paint made from red clay.

¹⁹ Joseph ToBalaguan Logo of Raluana on 19 June 1986 at Raluana. Taped statement. Slightly abbreviated version. Non-literal translation from the Tolai language on the basis of a transcript prepared by Helena Jacob and myself.

²⁰ Early Europeans commented frequently on the "cannibalism on their doorsteps" (see for example: Rooney to Kelynack, Port Hunter: 27 Oct. 1883, Gunson: Rooney letterbook).

²¹ See Chapter 1 (p. 22), where ToPele says that Mrs. Wolff was killed because Tokilang could not direct his anger against his in-law Tokitang.

but in the same way as hymns, stories about the *bobotoi* contrast the present (peace) with the past (war).

In Tolai perceptions of the past, material achievements belong to the recent past after 1875. Neither the lack of a certain technology nor the lack of a certain type of knowledge, but the precariousness of relations in the pre-colonial past and the erratic violence, are made responsible for the absence of such achievements.²²

Historical narratives about the *bobotoi* underscore this notion, but they are, unlike Methodist hymns, detailed images of the past, in which the actors if not the plots are 'real'. Tadakai is of a particular *vunatarai*, he was born, he lived, and he died at a particular place, and he is thoroughly human. As a person he is familiar, and not a stranger. Although the actions of the protagonists may be beyond the experience and grasp of the narrators, and the stories may involve spirits and phenomena Western science cannot explain, the actors themselves do not come across as anonymous, mythical beings of pre-historic times.

The *bobotoi* is a label which missionaries and their converts used to denote a time they were glad to have left behind. Stories about cannibalism or pre-colonial wars are reclamations of a past hidden under that label. The stories could incite questions about the nature of Tolai society at the moment of the arrival of Europeans and of the dramatic changes which followed. Depending on how they are applied by their narrators or the institutions promoting their dissemination, they could encourage attempts to come to terms with the incomprehensible and the traumatic aspects of the changes.

One reason why older Tolai now reflect on the past is their concern about the present and the future: the present is perceived as insecure, and they look to the future with few guides and many doubts. Tolai have contrasted the present *e na pupukuai* (times of change) with the *bo na bung lua*, the good olden days before the war.²³ A growing dissatisfaction with the present may lead them to re-interpret the *bobotoi* in more positive terms.

Apart from historical ('true') narratives, Tolai, especially the younger generation, are now interested in 'myths and legends' - stories about the culture heroes ToKabinana and ToPurgo (ToKarvuvu) for example,²⁴ or fables about animals.²⁵ Those tales are commonly often referred to as *akakur vakuku*, just stories.²⁶ When told, they are often

²² Cf. Noa ToVura's remark in the chapter 9 (p. 141) that the ancestors were too occupied with warfare to think deeply about work (= development, progress, material achievements).

²³ Cf. LEADLEY 1976, p. 14. This is a common image in Papua New Guinea; see, for example: BURRIDGE 1969, p. 26, fn. 1.

²⁴ See MEIER 1909, pp. 13-81; KLEINTITSCHEN 1924, pp. 18-89; PFEIL 1899, pp. 150-52; PARKINSON 1907, pp. 683-86 + 689f for examples of stories told around 1900.

²⁵ See MEIER 1909, pp. 262-91; KLEINTITSCHEN 1924, pp. 493-504; PFEIL 1899, pp. 146-48; PARKINSON 1907, pp. 690f.

²⁶ Literally: void or meaningless stories. Unlike other Papua New Guineans, the Tolai have no distinctive terms for different genres of oral narratives in their language. Tolai living around Raluana or Vunamami refer to stories as *varveai* (or *varavai*), *piplir*, *mimiri* or *akakur*. *Akakur* has more than the other terms the connotation that events featured in the story are 'mythical'; *varveai* has more than the other terms the connotation that the narrator vouches for the factuality of the story.

removed from the Tolai culture: ToKabinana and ToPurgo become just 'the two brothers', or stories which were once full of place and spirit names, are reduced to plots. Creation myths become folklore, if not children's fairy tales.

Innovative narrators like Henry Tavul tell new creation myths which blend the Genesis with stories about the emergence of the two moieties and other parts of Tolai lore.²⁷ They are earnest and effectual attempts to redefine the cosmos of Tolai identity and to reconcile its sources. They, and not the publication of myths told one hundred years ago,²⁸ keep the "traditions" alive.

²⁷ SHERET (1976, appendix no. 23) quotes a creation myth told by Tavul in 1973. Some of the early Europeans, particularly missionaries, were delighted that the Tolai already had ideas about creators and deities. They assumed that they would receive Christian religious teaching favourably, because the teachers could draw on parallels. Later the missionaries were at pain to explain that the Genesis resembled certain stories about ToKabinana and ToPurgo, but should not be mixed up with the latter (cf. FELLMANN 1984 pp. 2ff).

²⁸ JANSSEN 1973 is such an edition.

12: Tami *Kastom* and Tolai Ways

In this chapter I look at attempts to revive, retrieve, reinvent or foster components of society said to have been part of a pre-colonial "traditional" past. To contrast the Tolai case, I tell how some years back the Tami¹ came to build a two-masted trading canoe.

I.

"We are sea-faring people, versed in building sea-going canoes", was the essence of what many Tami told me. Their past day-to-day life evolved around the sea: the sea provided animal protein, the Tami long-distance traders were subject to its vagaries, and it offered protection from belligerent neighbours on the mainland. It is their past the Tami of the mainland village of Malasiga confront when standing on the beach behind their houses. In the distance they see Idjan and Kalal - they mask the other Tami islands - as two spots close to the horizon. They claim that their way of life changed drastically when they came to live on the mainland. But they would not admit to having lost the traditions concerned with trading voyages and canoe building.

The two-masted trading canoe symbolises these traditions. Proudly the people in Malasiga tell how they built such a canoe, the *Tami Island*, between 1979 and 1983. They showed it to me the day I arrived in Malasiga in February 1986. It was exhibited next to the "Cultural Centre" which is supposed to serve as showroom and shop for carvings. It was an impressive looking boat with wonderfully painted planks, carved stem and stern. But it was not laid up as it seemed from a little distance; instead it was laid out - a corpse that would never put to sea again. It had been exposed to sun and rain and was rotting. The body had holes visible to the naked eye. The ropes which had held together the outrigger and the platforms were broken.

The *Tami Island* reminded me of the New Guinean artifacts I had seen in European museums: taken out of its context and environment, it had clearly lost its original utility. And since there was nobody to ensure its conservation, it so obviously lacked the timelessness of artifacts in museums. With the ravages of time its historical qualities were more obvious than those of artifacts which are subjected to dusts. In November 1986 only the decaying hull was still on exhibition.

If sailing canoes stood for the Tami tradition, the sad disintegrating evidence of communal enthusiasm for the past would have to be a precious relic. Besides it, Tami living in Malasiga had a few paddle canoes for fishing and to reach the nearby sago swamps. If they wanted to go to the Tami Islands, they relied on motor boats, or on one-masted canoes owned by their kinsfolk from the islands or from Tamigidu.

¹ See chapter 3, pp. 55ff.

Disintegrating evidence of communal enthusiasm for the past: the *Tami Island* in front of the Malasiga Cultural Centre in March 1986

The idea of building a new two-masted canoe had been around for some time in Malasiga.² The Tami were urged to keep on practicing their skills as canoe-builders by outsiders such as the Australian High Commissioner who visited Malasiga in 1979. But the immediate inducement seems to have been put forward to the Tami people by the American adventurer Terry Linehan who visited Papua New Guinea in 1979.³

In recognition of his contribution as a church leader, Sem Reuben had earlier been offered a suitable tree for carving a hull by the elders of Apo, a village near Lae. With the assistance of Apo villagers, Sem Reuben, Terry Linehan and a few other men from Malasiga felled the tree in October 1979. The Provincial Government sent a cultural

² Many people in Malasiga, on Wanam and on Kalal told me about the building of the *Tami Island*. I am particularly indebted to Sem Reuben, Alisi Jakobus, Jakobus Tom, Ruben Jabim, Malimbu, Sosten Doalau (all of Malasiga), and Martin Alisi (of Wanam).

³ Linehan's commitment to the project is in itself intriguing. It reflects his fascination with a romantic fantasy of what Pacific islanders' culture is like, a perception that has attracted many white anthropologists, tourists, and other temporary guests of Pacific Islands societies before him. He wrote in 1984 about his motivation to be involved in building a Tami trading canoe: 'I first heard of the Tami Islands in 1979, my imagination captured by the outrigger canoes of the Marshall Bennett Islanders of the Milne Bay Province in Papua New Guinea. Set on the beach against a backdrop of tall, vine-covered cliffs, the canoes, decorated with white cowrie shells, were straight from the pages of a South Seas novel. It was history alive. A vision of building and sailing one struck me immediately and at that very moment I knew this was what I must do. The Tami Islanders of the Morobe Province, I learned, had a strong heritage of building large outrigger sailing canoes called *uang saliu*. But the outboard motor had replaced traditional pandanus sails and the folding *kina* the need for barter. Thus, no new *uang salius* existed at that time. Furthermore, I discovered only six men in their mid 60s and 70s who still retained a working knowledge of the craft's construction. I felt strongly that their knowledge of canoe building must be transferred to younger men before these few elders passed on. I went to their mainland village of Malasiga to ask if the villagers were interested in the idea of building a new canoe for use on several voyages. These voyages, I suggested, would be both historic and cultural in nature. We would sail along the ancient trading routes of their forefathers while celebrating and stimulating a part of the rich culture in the process' (LINEHAN 1984, pp. 34f).

officer to attend this ceremonial act which ended with a large feast. It also provided transport to move the trunk from Apo to Malasiga. Terry Linehan returned to the United States in 1979, where he hoped to raise funds for the venture. He left counting on Tami commitment to the project and on continuing support from the Provincial Government.

From 1979 to 1982 the trunk lay untouched in Malasiga. The beginning of a second phase of work coincided with the stay of a student from the University of Hull, who in mid-1982 undertook research on the Tami trading canoe. He helped Sem Reuben to draw up an estimate of costs which was presented to and approved by the Provincial Government. It listed the envisaged expenditures for building material as well as a moderate sum to buy food for the working parties.

According to Sem Reuben, the people in Malasiga had never been overtly enthusiastic about the whole project, and had not as a community wholeheartedly and actively supported it. Apparently that attitude changed in late 1982 when Terry Linehan returned. He brought along another white man, Peter "Spider" Anderson, an artist and sailor from Australia. By then the Provincial Government had become worried about this concerted European involvement.⁴ In April 1983, the Morobe Premier, Utula Samana, wrote a strongly worded letter to the Tami big men. Samana disapproved of the fact that the initiative was taken by foreigners and in particular he prohibited a planned canoe trip to Vanuatu. Since his Government had contributed 2000 Kina to the costs of building the canoe, Samana categorically declared that "this canoe is now the property of the Morobe Provincial Government".⁵ The bulk of the costs however were met by Linehan's funds, and with people in Malasiga supplied with fresh pork and other delicacies the building of the canoe went ahead with speed and enthusiasm. Three years afterwards Tami still recollected the abundance of *abus* (meat) during the period of canoe building. The process of building also involved people who lived on Wanam and Kalal. Old men, namely Sem Doalau and Daniel Akade, supervised the finesse of Tami craftsmanship. Some materials were difficult to obtain: to acquire the right kind of rope Jakobus Tom travelled to Mandok, one of the Siassi Islands. But when a crack appeared in the timber, the carpenters made shift with a modern resin, marine epoxy, to contain it.

After completion in April 1983, the canoe was sailed to Lae where it was a major attraction at the Morobe Provincial Show. Soon after, its hull developed a leak which would have required major repairs, possibly a new hull. As it had become unsuitable for sailing, the canoe was laid up on shore. By then the white people had returned to their respective home countries. Terry Linehan wrote several articles and is about to publish a book on the venture. Peter Anderson did some oil paintings of the Tami and their canoe.

⁴ The granting of permission for Linehan and Anderson to stay in Malasiga was delayed, though they were eventually allowed to participate in the project. In 1983 four more white people arrived, and in one case the Provincial Government pressed successfully for an American participant to leave Malasiga. Linehan commissioned Brisbane film producer Michael Stent and the *ex-kiap* Bob Willis to produce a documentary on the venture (see *Niugini Nius* of 5 August 1982), but the crew had to return to Australia having achieved nothing.

⁵ Letter Utula Samana to Ol Blkman (S. Reuben, L. Maliaki, L. Soten) of Malasiga Village of 5 April 1983 (in Tok Plsin), original in possession of Sem Reuben, Malasiga. Samana wrote the letter after he had learnt that Frank and Joanna Esson from England stayed in Malasiga without official approval. Esson was a senior sail training instructor with the British Army Air Corps and was supposed to be involved in the canoe trip to Vanuatu.

In 1986 some Tami would have liked to sell the *Tami Island* to an American company which showed some interest in it, but were afraid of the repercussions this would have caused in Lae. Several men advocated the building of a new *Tami Island*, but under the condition which applied in 1982/83, that is, with sufficient funds provided by an outsider. They would like to build canoes for museums overseas, but to 1986 there were no such requests.

Tami living on Wanam and Kalal maintained that it was never really their canoe, so that they should not be held responsible for its present state. They argued that it would be still in use if their relatives in Malasiga had handed it over to them after completion. The last two-masted canoe which was based on the Tami Islands was destroyed in the cyclone which devastated Kalal on 10 January 1976. During my first visit to Tami in March 1986, the islanders relied heavily on one-masted canoes for trips to the mainland, as there were no motor boats in working order on either Wanam or Kalal. But like their kin in Malasiga, Tami living on the islands have no apparent use for a two-masted trading canoe. The fact that the canoe which fell victim to the cyclone in 1976 was not rebuilt, suggests that the fate of the *Tami Island* might not have been that different had it been stationed on Kalal or Wanam.

It is striking that the pride of the Tami in Malasiga as members of a people stemming from traders and canoe builders is not shared to the same extent by the island people. The sea-faring tradition is stressed more in Malasiga than on Kalal or Wanam, and this aspect might explain best why the *Tami Island* was not built on the Tami Islands.

Once Sem Reuben asked me to record a personal statement. In his statement, which he partly read from a script, he outlined his own position towards history and *kastom*. He stressed the importance of *kastom* and its divine origin: God had created human beings with different languages, different histories, and different customs. He pointed out that he, like many elders, was worried that the Tami traditions would be lost because the young people were not interested in them. He distinguished three features of the Tami *kastom*:

1. good relationships with the people on the mainland;
2. "cultural" activities: canoe building, carving and women's handicrafts;
3. hospitality.⁶

Carved bowls and mats produced by the women were major trade items in the Vitiaz Strait trade.⁷ The Tami Islanders traded bowls, mats, coconuts and fish for taro, tobacco and various craft goods. They were dependent on this exchange because the islands did not provide enough staple food for their population.⁸ The voyages necessary to carry out the actual exchanges in the Vitiaz Strait were primarily under-

⁶ Sem Reuben of Malasiga on 19 March 1986 in Malasiga.

⁷ Cf. HOGGIN 1947; HARDING 1967; LEHNER 1911, p. 428; BEALE 1982, pp. 11f. For information about the Tami traders I am particularly indebted to Yatengec Akade of Kalal, Lukas Yucago Akade, Martin Alisi and Banabas (all of Wanam), and Alisi Jakobus, Sem Reuben, Ruben Jabim, Theophil I., Sosten Doclau, Manase Kamakeng and Jakobus Tom (all of Malasiga).

⁸ According to a Tami myth recorded by Bamler, the Yabim had once upon a time stolen all Tami taro and thus forced the Tami to trade mats, umbrellas, pearls, bowls, and canoes for taro which the Yabim grew on the mainland (BAMLER 1911, p. 547).

taken by island traders from Tami, Bilibili and Siassi. Canoes were the only means of transport, with the two masted trading canoes, which had a cargo capacity of two tons of taro, being the most prominent.⁹ Underlying the exchange between island and mainland communities was a network of precarious individual trade partnerships. With every new exchange the pacts of mutual non-aggression had to be renewed. Sem Reuben had named the three essential characteristics of the trade system from a Tami point of view: the fabrication of exchange goods; the availability of means of transport; and a continuous flow of goods unhindered by warfare.¹⁰

This trading system no longer exists. The Tami Islanders are still heavily dependent on staple food which is grown elsewhere, but their former trading partners on the mainland have become less interested in Tami products. The Tami monopoly of coconut-growing was lost due to the successful efforts by the New Guinea Company and the Lutheran Mission to plant coconuts on the mainland on a large scale. In pre-colonial times the Tami traders exchanged the coconuts only in halves to prevent the mainland villagers from using them as seeds.¹¹ With the Lutheran missionaries' opposition to competitive feasting and bride price payments, and the availability of metal cooking ware, the mainlanders' demand for the oval-shaped large wooden bowls declined in the long run.¹² The prominence of the Tami traders also diminished with the changing nature of the goods exchange. Carefully constructed trade partnerships became less crucial when interaction between various mainland groups was facilitated in the course of pacification. The Mission operated more reliable means of transport for long-distance journeys by sea. The introduction of a new exchange medium and the changing nature of the trade goods towards commodities placed the Tami Islanders on the periphery of the emerging new trade networks. Mats are now sold at the markets in Finschhafen, Lae and Madang; and carvings are sold in shops in Lae and Port Moresby or directly to tourists passing through.¹³ The traditional mode of exchange as described by Harding has not yet ceased to exist, but it is of minor importance in comparison with the prevalent commodity exchange: individual trade partnerships moderate the occasional exchange of mats and fish for taro and sweet potato with Yabim and Kotte villagers. Dealings on the Finschhafen market still have an ambiguous nature: taro and yams as well as mats are in most cases sold for fixed prices, and though money as a universal commodity equivalent steps between the taro-grower and the mat-maker, the relative prices seem to be influenced by the traditional exchange value of the goods. Obviously the nature of Tami as a centre in the long-distance trading network has become obsolete. So has the canoe as a medium to

⁹ Cf. HARDING 1967, p. 22.

¹⁰ Several Tami also stressed that their ancestors were not versed in black magic, but had to pay sorcerers from the mainland if they wanted to kill somebody. Cf. letter Hoh of 6 June 1900 (ArchND 52/21).

¹¹ This was stressed by many Tami informants. None of the Yabim people I talked to could confirm it. Nineteenth century European observers mention that the trade in coconuts was important for the Tami Islanders, but do not mention that there were no coconut tree on the Yabim Coast.

¹² In the short run the Tami Islanders might have been unable to provide for the needs of trading partners, because the Mission withdrew too much labour-power from the islands in using Tami men as boatscrew and evangelists, so that the Siassi Islanders began to produce bowls themselves to meet the demand (cf. HARDING 1967, pp. 194f).

¹³ The Tami Islands are a stop-over for the passengers of the "Melanesian Explorer" and an excursion-destination for Lae's expatriate community.

carry out the trade. Why should the features of the trading community still be used as components of the Tami Islanders' identity?

The late Ruben Jabim, a renowned Tami carver

Papua New Guinean groups may have several characteristics which distinguish them from others: a language or dialect, distinctive cult practices or ceremonies, physical features or ornamentations (e.g. tattoos) or special skills. In the 1880s, the Tami Islanders had a cult, the *tago*, which distinguished them from all mainland people.¹⁴ They had their own language, though they were often also fluent in languages of their trading partners. All Tami Islanders had their ear lobes pierced as children. These holes were widened when they grew up. They were skilled carvers and canoe-builders. Occasionally marriages with people outside Tami were arranged to establish or secure trade relationships with people in New Britain, on Siassi and in Tamigidu.¹⁵

Today those distinctions are less evident. Like all other cults around Finschhafen, the *tago* was suppressed by the missionaries. So was the practice of ear-piercing; today only some very old people still have those distinct ornaments. The mission introduced Yabim as the lingua franca in church and as the language of instruction in its schools;¹⁶ today Yabim has been replaced officially by English and unofficially by Tok Pisin in schools, whilst in church services and in the Sunday school Yabim is still used instead of Tami. Writings are done in Yabim, Tok Pisin or English, since Tami has never been developed as a written language. Tok Pisin is used often in communications in Malasiga; and it is widely believed in the Tami community that Tami will disappear as a distinct language in the near future. Their carving skills are no longer unique. Young people marry frequently outside the Tami community, much to the disdain of their elders.

¹⁴ They also adopted the mainlanders' cult which regulated male initiation - the Tami called it *kanic*, the Yabim referred to it as *balum*, whilst among the Kotte it was known as *ngosa*. For the *kanic* see: Bamler, In: KM 1891, cc. 65-70; KM 1894, cc. 44f; KM 1896, cc. 69-71; BAMLER 1911, pp. 493-507; for the *tago* see: BAMLER 1911, pp. 507-512; letter Tremel of 20 June 1894 (ArchND 52/21); letters Bamler of 3 Oct. 1894 and 15 May 1895 (ArchND 52/21).

¹⁵ Today Tami Islanders claim that it was taboo to intermarry with other mainlanders, allegedly a precaution against conflicts which might result from marriage ties.

¹⁶ The Neuendettelsau Mission intended to replace Tami with Yabim altogether, but did not succeed.

The Tami emphasise their trading past to compensate for their loss of other distinctions. One of the main effects of colonialism was the extension of "space". Contacts with other groups became more frequent and less precarious. This led to the widening of the units with which people identified - the Tolai or the Tami were less important or non-existent notions in pre-colonial Papua New Guinea, although rarely have those larger units replaced clan or village allegiances.

This observation does not explain the seemingly urgent need of the landlubbers in Malasiga in particular, to empathise with traditions belonging to a sea-faring people, thereby demarcating their identity from their Yabim neighbours. Malasiga was established in 1930 by the Australian Administration. Land was bought from clans in Kasanga, a Yabim village a few kilometres from Malasiga. By the 1960s most Tami lived on the mainland. On the islands both the school and the aid post have been closed down. The rationale behind the establishment of a mainland colony, provision of sufficient garden land for the Tami population, proved to be a miscalculation. The Administration neither secured enough land for the new settlement,¹⁷ nor provided it undisputable claims for the land occupied by Tami colonists. In 1986 neighbouring Yabim threatened to evict Malasiga villagers from the contested land, and demanded a payment of five million Kina from the Provincial Government.¹⁸ Thus the resurrection and sustenance of a trading history by people in Malasiga is explicable in terms of their economically precarious situation as subsistence farmers, although thereby they do not strengthen their position *vis-à-vis* their Yabim neighbours.

In Malasiga, customs of the past have been revived as *kastom*. The ideology of *kastom* serves to distinguish them from their neighbours and to create a local identity. The two-masted trading canoe symbolises the distinct Tami history and *kastom*.¹⁹ The carved wooden bowls which are still produced in Malasiga and on Kalal and Wanam represent this *kastom*, too. In fact, their association with *kastom* partly disguises their commodity character. But on the other hand, the profanity of the commodity makes them less suitable as symbols for the perseverance of features of the pre-colonial past. The Tami Islanders' *kastom* is based on their trading history, which they prefer to other characteristics of their pre-colonial past (for example, the *tago*), which Sem Reuben did not mention, to avoid collisions with their Lutheran identity.

The Tami people's pride in their canoe contrasts sharply with the seemingly essential role outsiders and their funds played in the building of the *Tami Island* and with its visible decay. People in Malasiga explained the latter with the truism that nobody was looking after the canoe. The councillor, the *kalsa komiti* (responsible for the sale of

¹⁷ Cf. Patrol Report No. 4 of 1968/69, conducted by Eric Bruce Johnston in August/September 1968, vol. Finschhafen & Siassi 1968-69, ArchPNG.

¹⁸ The Provincial Government had offered to pay a few thousand Kina, but by the time I left Finschhafen in November 1986, the landowners had not yet collected the money from the District Office. Ironically, the Malasiga's position *vis-à-vis* its Yabim neighbours would be better if the Tami had not lost knowledge they still possessed about ninety years ago: Then Tami Islanders told Bamler that they had originally lived at Num, a place in the immediate neighbourhood of Malasiga, before migrating to the Islands (BAMLER 1911, p. 523). Sem Reuben had heard this being mentioned by some of his Yabim relatives, who would however not reveal the "full story".

¹⁹ The Tami are not the only ones who claim the two masted canoe as part of their unique identity. Mandok Islanders allege that they exchanged the knowledge to construct and lash the two masted canoe for the knowledge to carve wooden bowls in the 1920s (cf. POMPONIO 1983, pp. 59+114f).

carvings), the *komiti* (a sort of village council), and a separate *komiti* which supervised the building of the *Tami Island* - all could have been, but none was, responsible for it. At a time when trading canoes were still used, they were owned by groups whose members were closely related and who were defined through their place of residence (*malac*) on one of the islands. Canoe names belonged to particular *malac*. For example the people who lived at Ngulenai on Kalal owned a canoe by the name of *Samuc*. Designs carved on stem and stern and painted on the planks and sails symbolised the name.²⁰ Only the Ngulenai people were allowed to build the *Samuc*, though during the process of construction their big man could enlist the help of other residential groups. *Samuc* could be hired by other groups for trading voyages, but the ultimate responsibility to maintain it or to replace it with a new *Samuc* was with the Ngulenai people. This system was by no means as static as Tami claims today imply. New *malac* could appear and old ones vanish. The name of a canoe might migrate from one island to the other when men left to marry a woman from another island. Since Malasiga is not organised along the traditional Kalal and Wanam divisions, most of its inhabitants have difficulties identifying with a particular *malac*. Elders often dispute each others' claims of *malac* allegiance, not the least because they can't agree whether matrilineal or patrilineal descent is *kastom*.

Tami trading canoe in Finschhafen, around 1910

Tami society around 1887 was highly segmented. The allegiance to a certain *malac* was more important than the allegiance to "Tami". Although traditional descent and residential groups have lost their significance for Malasiga, people invest labour only if it is either accurately compensated for or part of a cycle of mutual indebtedness and reciprocity. In the past a big man sponsoring the building of a particular canoe could enlist the help of carpenters because of his status and existing obligations. His prestige would increase with the successful completion of the canoe's construction. Terry Linehan took the role of the sponsor who remunerated the carpenters. The Tami had

²⁰ BEALE 1982, p. 10; cf. BAMLER 1911, p. 524. See BEALE 1982 and BAMLER 1911 also for the following; Bamier's and Beale's accounts were confirmed in principle by my Tami informants.

no obligations to Linehan, nor did they create any. This new relationship between the people building the canoe and the sponsor made redundant elements which had been an integral part of the production process: the performance of rituals and of magic, and the adherence to taboos. They changed the meaning of others: the design which signified a name became a decorative pattern.

In Malasiga leaders frequently conjure up the notion of *komuniti*, of a community embracing all villagers. The reluctance of Tami in Malasiga to take part in the weekly community work, and the fate of the *Tami Island* show that within Malasiga the village is an artificial unit which is not sustained through the means of reciprocal obligations.²¹

G. Sem Reuben, Tami, Lutheran, producer of histories: "*Istori o kastom - em i bilpela samting tru. God i bin putim man i kamap long dispela graun na strongim laip bilong man bilong kainkain tokples na istori bilong ol na kastom bilong ol - olesem laip bilong dispela graun ol i mas bihainim.*"²²

²¹ In Ialokua the "village" is the group of persons who are members of the Ialokua United Church congregation. Ialokua villagers do not have to reside in Ialokua. Malasiga villagers are clearly all those who live in Malasiga. But even the Lutheran Church congregation is nearly as artificial a notion as the *komuniti*. During my stay several church elders said they were going to ask the mission to help them build a bigger church which could accommodate all people in Malasiga. But on Sundays, many different church services were held at various church elders' houses at the same time as the "official" service in the church of Malasiga.

²² "History or custom, that is something very important. God has created people with different languages and different histories and different customs to show them the direction they have to follow in life on earth." (Sem Reuben of Malasiga, transcript of statement made on 19 March 1986 in Malasiga).

II.

The case of the Tami confirms the findings of anthropologists who argue that Melanesians reinvent and use *kastom* to demarcate boundaries with competing groups.²³ The Tolai, too, have relied on traditional features of their culture to define their corporate identity. Their shell-money in particular has played a crucial role in fostering that identity,²⁴ and it is reasonable to credit the fact that *tabu* is still widely used in part to that role.

Tonkinson writes that throughout Melanesia *kastom* is also used to unite at the national level.²⁵ Maybe because they perceive their relationship with Highlanders or people from the Sepik provinces too much in terms of domination and subordination, Tolai rarely interpret elements of their culture as part of a Papua New Guinean or Melanesian *kastom*. Still, they use the ideology of *kastom* also in the second sense, to unite a Tolai "nation" often divided by internal rivalries.

In many Melanesian societies, the emergence of *kastom* means the reinvention of supposedly pre-colonial cultural practices or traditional knowledge. Tolai elders often complained to me that so much of their ancestors' knowledge had been irrevocably lost or would be lost very soon. But compared with people around Finschhafen, Tolai have retained a large share of "traditional" knowledge related to the performance of magic, dances, songs, ceremonies, healing, and the raising of the *tubuan*. Tolai are more familiar than Tami Islanders with genealogies. Tami argue among themselves, whether patrilineality or matrilineality is *kastom*.²⁶ Tolai now allow for patrilineal inheritance under certain conditions, but have retained the overall matrilineal ordering of their society. Hardly any aspects of the Tolai *balanagunan* are reinventions, although many are radical modifications of pre-colonial patterns. And of course, much knowledge has indeed been lost.

Many authors have noted the cultural continuity of Tolai society.²⁷ As I have already mentioned, the policy and impact of missions differed considerably in the Finschhafen area and on the Gazelle. Although in the nineteenth century the Tolai were subjected to the concerted influence of planters, traders, labour recruiters, missionaries and government officials to a greater degree than most other Papua New Guineans, they did not become dependent on the intruders, as is obvious from the role *tabu* played in the first thirty years of colonialism. On the other hand the large-scale alienation of Tolai land threatened the very foundations of their cultural identity; this could have let them emphasise other features of their culture.²⁸ Because they involuntarily hosted Europeans, Chinese, and other Pacific Islanders in great numbers, Tolai became conscious of their own distinctiveness before other Papua New Guineans. Long before

²³ TONKINSON 1982, p. 302; cf. LINDSTROM 1982, p. 328.

²⁴ Cf. A.L. EPSTEIN 1969, pp. 243 + 311f + 317.

²⁵ TONKINSON 1982, p. 302.

²⁶ I had the opportunity to witness a dispute about the *kastom* of descent during a lengthy land mediation on Wanam Island in November 1986.

²⁷ Cf. A.L. EPSTEIN 1969, p. 311ff; A.L. EPSTEIN 1979, pp. 155f; FINGLETON 1985, p. 299.

²⁸ Among coastal Tolai, the land-impooverished Methodist communities of Raluana and Vunamami experienced comparatively little erosion of traditional culture.

them, Tolai developed an anti-colonial ideology which promoted the revival of Tolai traditions.

The Tolai are, by Melanesian standards, a fairly large culturally homogenous group.²⁹ On the Gazelle colonialism helped to create significant regional disparities, which meant that the erosion of cultural practices and "traditional" knowledge in some areas was paralleled by their flourishing in others. Men in Pilapila, although they had not raised a *tubuan* for forty years, were not permanently estranged from the knowledge associated with the cult. They could be initiated in other Tolai villages where the *tubuan* had survived. If their own *tubuan* had been occasionally raised over these forty years by another segment of their *vunatarai* elsewhere, they could obtain the knowledge associated with it from their relatives. Or they could acquire a new *tubuan*. Any piece of "traditional" knowledge could be purchased with *tabu* from those who had retained it.³⁰

The Wamira contrast their customs with the *lotu*.³¹ The development of *kastom* in opposition to other spheres of life or to other ideologies has been noted by several anthropologists working in Melanesia. In South Pentecost (Vanuatu), Christian women wear dresses or skirts and blouses, whereas adherents of *kastom* wear grass skirts: "cloth has become the emblem of Christianity".³² Tolai women wear what Papua New Guineans refer to as *laplap* (loincloth) and *meriblaus* (blouses) in church, when performing a traditional dance, when working in their gardens, at work in offices, when distributing shell-money, and in the disco. Fashion-conscious Tolai living in Rabaul or Moresby may buy tailored designer blouses, whereas village women buy them in a standard size off the peg in the Chinese trade stores in Kokopo and Rabaul or from villagers who make an extra kina or *pokono* from sewing. Which type of *meriblaus* a woman wears depends on the occasion. Tolai women do not claim to follow a *kastom*, but they wear blouses as part of a tradition, which is at least as old as the Tolai. A particular cloth has become the emblem of Tolai women's identity.³³

In April 1987 the East New Britain Council of Women and members of the Provincial Government organised a rally in Rabaul against the increase in crime. The protesters implied that *vaira* (non-Tolai) had to bear the responsibility for the increased lawlessness, and many demanded the immediate expulsion of all unemployed migrants from the province. The protest was also directed against a *vaira* who contested the Rabaul Open seat in the national elections. The previous day vigilante groups from Tolai villages around Rabaul had raided the settlements of other Papua New Guineans, supposedly looking for prison escapees. The protest march, probably the largest Rabaul

²⁹ In 1887 Flierl counted 170 Tami (FLIERL 1909, p. 38); T.S. Epstein (1968, p. 51) estimates that the Tolai numbered about 15,000 in 1883.

³⁰ The *tubuan* symbolises the continuity of Tolai culture and the perseverance of its traditional elements. From the 1880s, missionaries, patrol officers and others claimed that the *tubuan* had been abolished or was about to die out on the Gazelle Peninsula and on the Duke of York Islands (see, for example, Rickard, In: *Notices* of July 1886, p. 14; Abishai Domolailai, In: *Spectator* of 14 March 1890, p. 921).

³¹ Cf. KAHN 1983, pp. 97ff. See chapter 5, pp. 88f.

³² JOLLY 1982, p. 340.

³³ During the first years of missionisation, clothing distinguished *lotu* people from others on the Gazelle, too (see: Rickard, In: *Advocate* of 14 Nov. 1885, p. 270). But in 1891, George Brown noted, although somewhat overenthusiastically, that cloth was worn by all women (In: *AMMR* of 2 Nov. 1891, p. 7).

had seen since Mataungan days, consisted of two parts: women, singing Methodist hymns and dressed in their Sunday best (white *meriblaus*); and men, armed with bush knives and sticks, dressed in *laplap* and sometimes bare-chested, their faces marked with lime (which is associated with men's activities at the *taraiu*). The outfits complemented each other. Both were chosen to symbolise distinct Tolai identities.

Tolai protest against the increase in crime (on 25 March 1987 in Rabaul)

At the 1987 Tolai Varvagira, a festival that has been held several times already in Rabaul, sections where performers of Tolai culture competed for prize money included "choirs", "traditional dances" and "electric bands". Most village women in Ialakua, regardless of their age, would know by heart all "Tolai rock" numbers of the Painim Wok Band, **and** most hymns in the United Church hymn book, **and** the texts of many songs sung in traditional dances. Not only does Painim Wok's Telek use *buai* to write his songs as much as ToKabakavir did to compose *tapialai*, Tolai pop has become part of the same culture that is represented by the *tubuan*. Unlike the Tami, the Tolai do not need to revive a supposedly pre-colonial tradition to define their distinct identity, but rely on a well-established ensemble of modified traditions, and modified innovations brought in by colonialism.

Many Papua New Guinean groups have incorporated the Tok Pisin word *kastom* into their languages. Tolai refer to their culture as *mangamangana kavevet*, our ways, or

mangamangana kai ra umana tubuivevet,³⁴ ways of our forebears, when they want to exclude the *meriblaus* and denote the pre-colonial Tolai culture. There are conflicting opinions about what the 1988 Tolai ways should be. Pentecostals and United Church followers, men and women, young and old, business people and subsistence farmers have different ideas about the right way. There are conflicting opinions about what the forebears' ways were, when they are called in to support arguments in favour or against current ways. Tolai are less inclined than other Melanesian groups to model their *kastom* on the image of a static pre-colonial past,³⁵ although they share this image with others.

The current ways of the majority of Tolai, which outsiders might mistake for the Tolai culture, are the result of struggles within Tolai society about the right way. These struggles have been influenced by developments on which Tolai have had no bearing. Still the performance of particular ceremonies or the transmission of "traditional" knowledge to others is not so much a reflection of outside developments as a conscious response.

Today very few *ingiet* adepts are still alive. In a way it is correct to say that the *ingiet* largely disappeared because it was prohibited by the Administration and fought by both missions. But when Tolai predicted that the *ingiet* will disappear altogether soon, they gave me more concrete and meaningful explanations.³⁶ *Ingiet* magic only works if the right knowledge is paired with a strong belief in the effects of magical formulas contained in the knowledge.³⁷ Christian religion and Western science have eroded this belief. The more powerful a magic, the more dangerous it is for the person applying it. Some of those who were offered knowledge about the *ingiet* or about sorcery did not want it because they did not feel confident that they could handle it without endangering themselves. Men who could pass on to others the knowledge relevant to the *ingiet*, often refuse to do so for a different reason. They experience the waning of their authority as elders, and they see young people who defy rules and laws of *matanitu*, *lotu* and *balanagunan* alike. They are afraid that young men would not use the knowledge responsibly but cause havoc among their own people.

Another case is the revival of the *tubuan*. After it had disappeared from many parts of the Gazelle, from the 1960s the *tubuan* has come back. Many new *tubuan* have been conceived, and *vunatarai* who had thirty years ago only one *tubuan*, have now half a dozen of them. This revival is first of all an assertion of male dominance. It is also a means by which elders create followings of young men, and an arena where villagers can outdo the wage-earners who live in towns.

The 'ways of the forebears' with regard to the *tubuan* are interpreted differently, and the dominant interpretation is the result of a power struggle. Women, it is now gene-

³⁴ *Kavevet* is an exclusive pronoun, that means, the speaker does not include the addressee. If Tolai are talking about their culture with other Tolai, they would have to say *kadat* instead. Instead of the exclusive *tubuivevet* they would say *tubuidat*.

³⁵ Cf. LARCOM 1982, p. 336.

³⁶ In this particular case I am for obvious reasons not able to reveal the names of informants.

³⁷ See chapter 7, p. 120.

rally assumed, were always excluded from the *tubuan*. The late nineteenth century European observers, nearly all of them men, painted the role of Tolai women in gloomy terms.³⁸ They were the beasts of burden and could be sold, beaten or killed by their husbands or relatives; their *tabu* was taken by the *tubuan*, a male institution to oppress women. Interestingly, this perception is almost identical with what most Tolai men would say today about the role of women before the Europeans' arrival.³⁹ Scattered pieces of evidence suggest a slightly different picture. Some women sold land to Europeans,⁴⁰ they could be the *lualua* of their *vunatarai*, and in exceptional circumstances women controlled the *tubuan*.⁴¹

The definition of the powers of the *tubuan* again depends on an interpretation of past practices. In 1986 the *tubuan* destroyed houses and cars on Matupit. Elders called in to mediate successfully argued that wanton destruction of property was never a feature of the *tubuan*; that today's property could not be compared with forebears' property, because it could not be replaced as easily; that during German times a consensus had been reached with leaders of the Methodist *lotu* resulting in the curbing of some of the *tubuan*'s practices: instead of destroying property the *tubuan* was obliged to demand a compensation in *tabu* first, if its rules had been violated or the *tubuan* had been slandered; never should the *tubuan* be misused to settle scores between individual men, as in this case it appeared the *tubuan*'s anger had been directed against particular members of the island's Seventh Day Adventist community.⁴² The case became a subject of public discourse, because the victims were men and could muster public support.

During the *nidok*, the third phase of initiation into the *tubuan*, it is strictly taboo for women and uninitiated men to walkabout (or drive around) after dark near the place where the *nidok* is held. If the *tubuan* avenged a violation of this taboo, there would be no public outcry and no village court hearing, since the *tubuan* acted according to its customs.

Tolai ways are disputed between young and old. Elders often claim that the young people do not care for the traditions - which of course often help them to exercise some form of control and authority over the young generation.

Earlier I mentioned that the *tubuan* has lately been raised for women. During my stay in Raluana*, the *tubuan* was raised twice in Vunamurmur and once in Raluana for

³⁸ See for example: DEANE 1933, pp. 172ff; Rooney, in: *Advocate* of 15 April 1882. The Europeans' attitude regarding the position of women was not without ambiguity; another Methodist missionary, Rickard, complained after a trip to Nakanai in 1889: "there will be two great obstacles to mission work (in Nakanai), the immorality of the people and the lack of real chiefs with authority. The women mix freely with the men, sit around the fire with them, exchange the cigar with them, and talk without restraint" (Rickard, in: *Spectator* of 17 Jan. 1890, p. 745).

³⁹ Christine Bradley has implicitly endorsed the view put forward by European male observers around the turn of the century (1985, p. 34).

⁴⁰ DANKS 1888, p. 315.

⁴¹ IaTotogo of Ralalar *vunatarai* is said to have controlled (*kure*) IaPatarai (Paulin IaMaitop of Ngatur in August 1987). IaPiapiam was the renowned leader of Tapau *vunatarai* and staged *balaguan* and owned a *garamut*-drum (Apellis ToMarakan of Bitabaur in November 1987). Both women lived in the second half of the nineteenth century. Pero ToKinkin's maternal grand-mother IaRat was another powerful *lualua* who lived at that time.

⁴² Willli ToKutu of Tomariga/Matupit in August 1987; Nelson ToPamel of Ialakua in September 1987; John ToVua and Eruel ToPal, both of Matupit, in October 1987.

women. Now women have considerable *tabu* wealth, and they may contribute significantly to a particular *tubuan* without themselves being initiated. They thereby create an obligation by which the *bita tubuan* is compelled to raise the *tubuan* after that woman's death. The renaissance of the *tubuan* is connected with its participation in mortuary rites. Because of the *varlapang* the *tubuan* gains from taking part in the *minamai*. The *tubuan* could not reclaim its full "traditional" magisterial powers.

The material presented about Tolai customs so far shows that they are fostered, abandoned, or revived because of or in the course of shifts within the Tolai social structure. Although the Tolai use parts of their culture to foster their identity as Tolai, they do not have to revive or reinvent Tolai *kastom* to demarcate the boundary with other groups in Papua New Guinea, as they are in a strong position *vis-à-vis* other Papua New Guineans anyway and in no acute danger of losing their distinctiveness. That makes their case so different from that of the Tami.

Let us consider a last aspect of Tami *kastom*. Both the *Tami Island* and the wooden bowls are reifications of the Tami tradition. Tolai do not make a living from selling their traditions to others. Tourism has no significant impact outside Rabaul. But in the past, Tolai have often presented items of folklore to outsiders, which among themselves are alive as customs. The secret of the *tubuan* was revealed to European women both in and outside the Gazelle. When Pero Tokinkin took his *tubuan* laVangabuabua to Berlin, he explained details of the mask to visitors. Europeans were allowed to take pictures of things at the *taraiu* which are taboo for Tolai women.⁴³ At the request of *kiaps* and other Europeans, Tolai have raised *tubuan* to entertain spectators.⁴⁴ But whereas for Tami in Malasiga the *Tami Island* seems to have represented Tami traditions, Tolai only laugh at the faked *tubuan*. Whereas Tami insist on their traditions as a sea-faring people *vis-à-vis* their neighbours, the fame of the Tolai *tubuan* depends more than anything else on the significance attached to it by Tolai women.

A display of missionary trophies or of Tami cultural heritage? (*tago* masks; photographed in about 1910)

⁴³ I am surprised that the anthropologist Errington was allowed to take the picture in ERRINGTON 1974, p. 179, plate 3; I am even more surprised that he decided to publish it.

⁴⁴ In about 1954 the District Commissioner in Lae asked some Tolai who worked there to "make a *tubuan*" on the occasion of a visit by the "Duke" (of Edinburgh?). They had to decline that request since the *tubuan* can't be fabricated like a doll. But they raised two *tubuan*, Alirpukai and Apenatava at a *taraiu* near Lae. As in all other such cases, the two *tubuan* were not real ones, that is the names were made up. The District Commissioner financed the *tubuan*.

13: Variations on the Alienation of Land

I.

For European visitors to Rabaul it is, in the clichés of the tourist brochures as well as in the eyes of their Tolai hosts, a must to see "Queen Emma's cemetery" near Karavi, and "Queen Emma's steps" descending from the Ralum Club, near Kokopo's golf course. Queen Emma, also known at different times as Emma Eliza Coe, Emma Forsayth or Emma Kolbe, is famous far beyond the Gazelle and New Guinea. She was born in 1850 in Samoa as the daughter of a Samoan woman and an American, and in 1878 came to New Guinea as a trader and partner-lover of the infamous Thomas Farrell. She settled first in Mioko (Duke of York Islands) and in about 1883 moved to Gunantabu (near today's Kokopo). She acquired, greatly assisted by her brother-in-law Richard Parkinson, vast areas of Tolai land and had it cleared and planted, mainly with coconut palms, by her workforce imported from New Ireland and the North Solomons. She was renowned for her flamboyant life style, and her house became the social centre of German New Guinea with herself as the colony's outstanding socialite. As the wealthiest and biggest individual planter in New Guinea until 1909, when she sold her plantations to Rudolf Wahlen and his Hamburgische Südsee Aktiengesellschaft, she was also "the local establishment".¹

Clearly Queen Emma was a fascinating personality in her own right. But clearly her lavish champagne parties were financed through her profits from unequal exchange in trade with New Guineans, through the exploitation of her New Guinean workforce's labour and through the use of land which, so it is generally assumed, she had acquired for a song. Richard Parkinson and Queen Emma together took more Tolai land than anybody else: Ralum Plantation, Kuradui Plantation, Malapau Plantation, Giregire Plantation, to name some of their acquisitions, and forced thousands of Tolai speakers to live in "native reserves". Queen Emma "made personal contact with the chiefs around Blanche Bay, and induced them to sell large defined areas to her," writes her biographer Robson.² Each purchase was sealed by a contract, signed by the big men in the presence of witnesses.³

The chiefs did not really understand the Europeans' system of buying their land, but they did learn much from frequent visits by the tall, thin, bearded Parkinson, who came armed and horsed, and guarded by eight or ten implacable black devils who were always ready to shoot; and they learned something also from occasional calls by little English and German warships which liked to let off their big guns.⁴

Robson's "black devils" refer to Parkinson's private guard of North Solomon Islanders. Robson depicts an image widely shared today by Papua New Guineans and expatriate historians alike: land was acquired cheaply by means of deceit and coercion.

¹ BISKUP 1974, p. 28; his emphasis. The best account of her life (and in my opinion one of the best histories concerning the "white" aspects of Papua New Guinea's colonial past) is Geoffrey Dutton's novel *Queen Emma of the South Seas* (DUTTON 1976). Robson's biography (ROBSON 1965) might contain more "factual" information on her life, if one put up with the author's overt racism regarding the "ferocious local natives" on the Gazelle Peninsula who "every now and again would pounce, and kill, and often eat, the thrusting traders" (p. 127).

² ROBSON 1965, p. 123.

³ ROBSON 1965, p. 126.

⁴ ROBSON 1965, p. 127.

'This is the story of Queen Emma of New Guinea. It has drama, comedy, high adventure and colourful romance. It has the added merit of being true,'⁵ begins Robson's biography. How do Tolai today accommodate aspects of the drama concerning them, and what do they regard as being true? They give one of three answers when asked how Queen Emma acquired Tolai land. Those who do not know make a guess along the lines of Robson's statement: she bought the land cheaply. The 'uninformed' would be in the majority now, even in those places which were most directly affected by Queen Emma's plantations. Others know of details, that is stories about certain big men who sold land to Queen Emma which did not belong to their *vunatarai*. Stanley ToMarita told me that the big man ToGorop of Tingenabuai *vunatarai* sold a lot of land which became part of Kuradui Plantation. He received a gun in return. 'He gave away land which did not belong to his *vunatarai*, but who would have wanted to complain when he had a gun?' Another big man, Tapuk, ToStanley said, had sold the whole of today's Balanatanaman (which became part of Malapau Plantation) by making a sweeping movement with his outstretched arm when asked which land he controlled.⁶ IaUvol Tavanaot was another powerful *luluai* from that area who reputedly sold land which did not belong to his *vunatarai*.⁷ The third group of people, most of them elderly knowledgeable men, would rarely reply straight away: Researcher: 'Do you know anything about Queen Emma's land purchases?'

Informant: 'Hmm.'

Researcher: 'I sort of heard something about it, but I am not too sure yet whether it is really true.'

Informant: 'So you know already?'

Researcher: 'Hmm.'

Informant: 'Well then, why shouldn't I tell you. *I ga kul ra umana piapia ma ra palapakana*.'

Queen Emma bought the land 'with her body'. In clear English: the big men had sex with her for the price of land which belonged to them and their clan, or sometimes to their (unrelated) neighbours.

This is not a piece of public knowledge. It is articulated on the quiet, and it is referred to obliquely, often by using the ambiguous Tok Pisin term *pren* (friend) to describe the relationships between Queen Emma and the Tolai big men. I have never heard anybody using the Tolai term for sexual intercourse,⁸ which is a metaphor and can be used in day-to-day conversations, let alone more blunt Tok Pisin or Tolai words. Mentioning sexual intercourse, however, is not the crucial part of the statement, but that Queen Emma sold her body in exchange of land. It is not publicly discussed because it is an embarrassing statement - embarrassing for the descendants of those *patuana* who gave away their *vunatarai*'s land. Incidentally, with one notable exception (see below), none of these *patuana* was mentioned to me by name, which means that the statements lack precisely the kind of circumstantial evidence which is considered to be

⁵ ROBSON 1965, p. 7.

⁶ Stanley ToMarita of Vunatagia/Malabonga on 30 November 1987 in Malabonga. Gist of his statement according to my notes.

⁷ IaDokas of Ialakua in June 1987.

⁸ E.g.: *dla ga pait ra nirara tana*, or: *dla ga pait ra purpuruan tana*, literally: they did a wrong to her, or: they attacked her.

so important to establish the truth (*dovotina*) of a history. I was, in all but one case, neither told of any particular big man who slept with Queen Emma nor of any clearly defined piece of land which was thus acquired by her. When men made this statement, it was obvious that despite being embarrassing it also had its fascinating aspects. They were intrigued, because Queen Emma neither conformed with the role assigned to women in either Tolai or white colonial society. By having sex with her, the big men denied her a rank outside the Tolai order, which would usually have come with her being a planter and white - at that time the difference between a half-Samoan and a European was perceived as negligible in comparison to the gap between a half-white and a Tolai. I was told that a big man could, if he wanted to have extra-marital sex, elicit the woman's consent by offering her *tabu*;⁹ if that had really been the case, it would put Queen Emma on par with Tolai women who also might have to be paid for their services.

The attitude of my male informants towards the power of big men is ambiguous. On the one hand, the idea of the *patuana* who yielded enough power to dispose of his *vunatarai*'s land holds an attraction for men who feel that they can never gain that much power themselves and that women have intruded into their "traditional" sphere of power. On the other, they despise the misuse of power, which had dramatic consequences for the big man's *vunatarai* and their descendants.

Again, the point is not to determine whether these statements are factually correct. For an understanding of Tolai history it is more important to know that today Tolai reputed for their knowledge believe that both Queen Emma and the big men prostituted themselves, the former by selling her body, the latter by selling their land, than to know whether the planter actually had sex with Tolai big men. Besides, even if it were factually not correct, the statement might be an appropriate caricature of something else - that Tolai big men were enticed and bribed to give away their land. ToBobo was kitted out and given a horse and a carriage, so were others, like ToVungia of Davaon of whom it is said that the Germans built him a *pal na kapa* and that he sold land belonging to various other *vunatarai*.¹⁰

II.

A different case is that of the planter Octave Mouton who acquired a vast area of customary Tolai land east of Kokopo.¹¹ Octave Mouton was born in 1866 at Namur, Belgium, into an "impecunious *petit bourgeois* family".¹² He was apprenticed as a barber and wig-maker. In 1882 young Octave and his father arrived in New Britain as flotsam of the ill-fated attempt by the Marquis de Rays to set up a settler colony in

⁹ Henry Tavul of Vunamami-Vunabalbal in October 1987; William ToKavivi of Vunamami in December 1987. Cf. SCHNEIDER 1905, p. 31, where he says that such was the practice on the Duke of York Islands.

¹⁰ ToKial of Raburua in September 1987, who remarked that many of today's land disputes in Raburua, Bitatita and Nguvallen reach back to ToVungia's land sales.

¹¹ For the following I drew on Biskup's introduction to Mouton's memoirs (BISKUP 1974, pp. 1-29) and the short biographical sketch in WHITTAKER et al. 1975, p. 407.

¹² BISKUP 1974, p. 1.

New Ireland.¹³ They went into trading, first as employees of Farrell, then of Hershman. Some years after the older Mouton's death in 1888, Octave set up his own trading business, for a while with the traders Rondahl and Monrad as partners, and in the beginning with financial backing from the Catholic Mission. As early as 1891, Octave Mouton started his Kinigunan Plantation, unlike other planters before and after him with Tolai labourers recruited from nearby villages. From 1892 he recruited labourers outside the Gazelle, and a few years after he had started his plantation, all labourers came from New Ireland and the North Solomons. By 1898 he had 350 hectares planted with coconuts and become one of the most successful planters of German New Guinea. He sold his plantation in 1929 to the Catholic Mission for £ 80,000 and retired to Bellevue Hill in Sydney. He was owner of the Rabaul Times from 1930. He married twice in Australia, in 1903 and 1913, and had two sons, Octave Max and Jean Leopold, from these marriages. Octave Mouton died in Sydney in 1946.

Among the Tolai living around Kokopo in 1987, virtually nothing was known about Queen Emma in 1987 but for her liaisons with big men, excluding those stories which the people I talked to had learnt from books or newspaper articles. In villages east of Kokopo, many stories are told about Okta, the name by which Mouton is known there.

ToMoseley:

Okta was born on a ship which was on its way to New Britain. He went ashore in Mioko and was brought up by the Catholics in Vunapope. He worked for a while for Kapen Rodal [Rondahl] in Kabakaul, where the latter ran a plantation. After he had saved up some money, he set up on his own and established Kinigunan Plantation. He did not pay for the land because he was on good terms with the people at Takubar, Palnakaur and Kabaleo. He was a member of the *tubuan* and often stayed with the men at IaTuap's *taraiu*. He contributed significantly towards the *tubuan* and was always helpful to the village people. He had two children, Makit [Max] and Lepon [Leopold]. He sold his plantation to the Catholic Mission but wanted to reserve the land at Ulapia for his sons who, however, never returned to the Gazelle after they left Kinigunan together with their father around 1930.¹⁴

Some disputed the claim that Mouton did not buy the land but said he paid the usual trade goods: beads, axes, tobacco, and guns some of which did not work.¹⁵ Others added a detail ToMoseley did not recall, that Okta was at some stage married to a Tolai woman by the name of IaLiute who bore him one son. IaLiute later married a Tolai, ToKarukai of Tabuna *vunatarai*, the father of her second son, ToKina. Okta sent his half-caste son to his own country.¹⁶

All of those who told me about Okta emphasised that he was essentially good in

¹³ Baudouin (1883) gives a detailed contemporary account of the Marquis de Rays' scheme (BAUDOUIN 1883). See also: NIAU 1936. For summary accounts: BISKUP 1974, pp. 6-20; REED 1943, pp. 292-298; WHITTAKER at al. 1975, pp. 398-400.

¹⁴ Moseley ToVringe of Takubar (Ravallen) on 19 August 1987 at Takubar, gist of his statement according to my notes.

¹⁵ ToEreman Tamean of Kabaleo in September 1987; Isikel ToLuana of Takubar-Vunapalangar in August 1987.

¹⁶ Sylvester Tokau, Timi ToPapal, Marko ToMatlaun and Eduard ToVavaur of Livuan; Alpon ToUmue and Paulo ToVura of Ramale, all in November 1987. Biskup mentions that Mouton had a Tolai wife from Nodup by the name of Yekanavo (IaKanaVo?) whom he called *ma femme canaque* (BISKUP 1974, p. 28, fn. 36).

character and a friend of the neighbouring villagers. A case to illustrate this was a conflict between some of Okta's labourers and men from near Kinigunan. The essentials of the story are known by perhaps twenty men and women of villages east of Kokopo. The following version is based on separate accounts by ToEreman of Kabaleo and ToUmue of Ramale, who both have reputations for knowing much about the past. I met the two men through Moseley. In 1987, both men were about eighty years old. They had known Okta personally, but the incident they described happened before they were born.

Okta recruited labourers in Buka, Laur and Siar.¹⁷ He told them to clear the land he had acquired, but while doing so to be careful not to trespass on Tolai land. The labourers started at the beach and worked their way inland. They felled trees and cut the undergrowth. They cleared at Palnakaur. They got near the *taraiu* Tuntunkabang. They started clearing land which did not belong to Okta. Men from Ramale, Takubar, Bitagalip and Livuan, led by two *tubuan*, IaMalimol and IaKulap, assembled at the *taraiu*. ToMalakit of Rakubul *vunatarai* was the owner of the two *tubuan*. The people said: 'If they fell those three trees nearby' - one was a *kapiaka*, one a *ton*, and one was a *galip*¹⁸ - 'that will be the sign for us to attack them'. The labourers closed in on the *taraiu*, but on the first day did not touch the three trees mentioned. The next day they returned. The men on the *taraiu* repeated their pledge. The labourers felled one of the three trees which pulled down the other two, and all three went down with a loud bang. The *tubuan* killed 150 labourers by brandishing pieces of wood above their victims' heads. They spared only one to break the news to Okta. The victorious men, fearing the *masta*'s revenge, fled to Vunabago where the victims were cut up and prepared to be eaten. Some of them were sent to friends as far as Rainau and Birar. From that day, the *tubuan* IaMalimol and IaKulap have lived at Vunabago. The one labourer who was spared, a Buka, ran to Okta. 'Masta, all my mates are dead. I am the only one who survived, because I escaped the Tolai's magic'¹⁹. But Okta only scorned his labourers' fate: 'I told you not to trespass on the villagers' land. You have only got yourselves to blame.'²⁰

The story about Okta and the deadly *tubuan* stresses the protective element of the planter's bigmanship. In a way, Mouton paid for the right to run a plantation on Tolai land by sacrificing 150 of his labourers. The incident is mentioned neither in Mouton's memoirs nor in contemporary colonial sources.

Unlike Queen Emma, who had dubious sexual links with a few Tolai big men, Mouton is perceived as someone who fitted into Tolai categories. He was truly a big man,²¹ a *lualua ure ra vunavunatarai ma ure ra matanitu* (a leader of clans and government),

¹⁷ When Tolai say Buka, they refer to the North Solomons. Buka Island is called "Small Buka". Laur and Siar are places in New Ireland.

¹⁸ The *kapiaka* is a breadfruit tree (*Artocarpus incusus*); the *ton* is a *Pometia pinnata*; the *galip* is a tree which bears almond-like nuts (*Cerinarium indicum*).

¹⁹ ToEreman, retelling the dialogue between the *masta* and his labourer in Tok Pisin, let the labourer say: *Mi ronawe long samting bilong ol Tolai*. Among other Papua New Guineans, Tolai have a reputation for being experts in black magic. When other Papua New Guineans asked me about my field work experiences, they were most curious to know how much I found out about this particular *samting bilong ol Tolai*, because they knew of cases where they themselves, close friends or relatives had been affected by it.

²⁰ Gist of two statements by ToEreman Tamean of Kabaleo on 7 September 1987 in Kabaleo, and Alpon ToUmue of Ramale on 4 November 1987 in Ramale.

²¹ Cf. SALISBURY 1970, p. 77, where the big man Tinal reports a similar relationship between the Parkinsons and Tolai living near their plantation.

said ToMarko.²² As a big man he was allocated land to work it for the benefit of the owning clans. But he did not necessarily have the right to sell the land to a third party, namely the Catholic Mission. In Ialakua, the big man Pero ToKinkin, who had very good relations with several prominent Europeans, like Hahl and the Parkinsons, gave land which did not belong to him, to Phoebe Parkinson. When she got into financial difficulties she sold "her" land to W.R.Carpenters and Company. Only then did the original owners of the land realise that they now had lost for ever what they considered to be the subject of a temporary arrangement between ToKinkin and Phoebe.²³

III.

An account of a defeat, the loss of land, was at the beginning of my history of the Tolai, and another is at its end. The cases are markedly different. In the first chapter I stressed the contribution of Tolai (oral) histories to a (written) history of the Tolai. In this chapter I argue that the Tolai histories themselves have to become the subject of a discourse in order to overcome an erstwhile defeat. The view that Tolai customary land was purchased in accordance with law, surveyed and "developed" and therefore belongs to the descendants of those who purchased it, is as much a mystification as the view that land was acquired in accordance with custom or by allowing the Tolai land owners to massacre and consume 150 plantation labourers.

I shall return to Queen Emma and present a story concerning her land at Vunatagia, which she later handed over to her sister Phoebe. ToVue Napnap of Bitabaur supplied the following account of his two *patuana* ToPupua and ToKavuan:

The island Radilima (in the Duke of York Islands) where our ancestors lived, was flooded and sank. Two of our ancestors, IaKinavai and her brother ToKavuan, went to Pigeon Island, where ToKavuan got into trouble because of a woman. He fled to New Britain. His sister followed him. She married ToVoal of ToNamaliu's *vunatarai*. They settled at Tolom and divided it into Tolom Ngala [Big Tolom] which belongs to the *vunatarai* Vunaruga, and Tolom Pede [Little Tolom] which belongs to us, the *vunatarai* Tolom. ToPupua was ToKavuan's brother. He, too, came at some stage from the Duke of York Islands. He was a *tena buai*, and unlike ToKavuan, did not live with a woman and had no fixed abode. He was a friend [*pren*] of the *misit* [Queen Emma] and sold her land which belonged to his *vunatarai*. He also sold her land which belonged to his in-law ToVoal. ToKavuan was angry with him. He had not agreed to his brother giving away their land. 'You think only of yourself, and not of the future when our *vunatarai* will be big', he rebuked his brother. ToPupua went to the *misit* and told her about his brother's objections. He advised her to send her labourers to beat ToKavuan to death. The *misit* complied with his suggestion and instructed her labourers accordingly. At a place near the beach, they battered the life out of ToKavuan. The people were outraged. They prepared drums and other instruments to make noise and thereby chase ToPupua away. He turned into a *kaia* and lives now at the big ficus tree near Tungitokavuan, the place where they killed his brother.²⁴

²² Marko ToMatlaun of Livuan on 12 November 1987 in Livuan.

²³ Theo ToVarkia of Ialakua in June 1987.

²⁴ ToVue Napnap of Bitabaur on 6 and 10 November 1987 at Vunatagia-Tungitokavuan, gist of his statements according to my notes and a transcript of the story taped on 10 November.

Glossary X: *kaia*

Several decades after the arrival of the first Europeans, the Sacred Heart missionaries Meier and Kleintitschen collected narratives about various *kaia*²⁵ and gave a detailed description of the Tolai's belief in them.²⁶ According to the two missionaries, a *kaia* was, at the beginning of this century, the Tolai's Supreme Being. In most cases, a *kaia* appeared in the form of a giant snake (*valvalir* or *kaliku*), but could take different shapes.²⁷ The most prominent *kaia* were those who lived inside the craters of volcanoes and caused eruptions. When in 1878 Tavurvur erupted and an island emerged near Valaur, it was called Rakaia (*ra* = "a" or "the"). Kleintitschen, who collected his *kaia* stories mainly in the Toma area, mentions a class of "white *kaia*" who live at the Keravat River and have adopted a "European" life-style. In his interpretation those narratives reflect the first encounter between whites and people from New Britain in that area and the subsequent information gained from coastal Tolai about the Europeans.²⁸

People from Raluana*, Vunamami and Matupit, who discussed the *kaia* with me, said that the term *kaia* should have been used instead of "Kalou" to translate "God". This view has been popular in the Methodist/United Church for some time.²⁹ But they stress that those *kaia* who are still around, had been human beings before they became *kaia*. The most prominent *kaia* in Raluana* is ToVup who lives on the reef at Tagirgir; he is said to have been the son of laMakail and born at Pagol (Nangananga).³⁰ Though some volcano craters are still said to be inhabited by *kaia*, it is not necessarily they who cause eruptions.³¹ Often a *kaia* is associated with a particular *vunatarai*, as is ToPupua with Tolom. Most people who have actually seen a *kaia* say that it was disguised as a snake. People stress that the *kaia* are more benevolent now than in the olden days; many Tolai would agree with ToNamaliu and laloan who explained to me that the *kaia* are part of Creation and should be respected as such.³² According to their interpretation one does not believe in the *kaia* in the same way as people believe in Kalou; as part of Creation, *kaia* are on a different level from God. Though basically benevolent, many *kaia* are said to avenge heinous deeds. The *kaia* ToValung, who lives at Raluana, does not like to see people get drunk, swear or steal, and occasionally inflicts punishment upon wrongdoers.

²⁵ MEIER 1909, pp. 174-237; KLEINTITSCHEN 1924, pp. 318-397.

²⁶ MEIER 1908; KLEINTITSCHEN 1924, pp. 304-317.

²⁷ There seems to be no one-word translation for *kaia* in English. The equivalent in Tok Pisin is *masalai*.

²⁸ KLEINTITSCHEN 1924, pp. 315ff.

²⁹ The Methodist Dictionary, for example, says apologetically that the Fijian word for "God" was introduced by Fijian teachers "before the merits of the local word *Kaia* were known" (METHODIST OVERSEAS MISSION 1964, p. 66).

³⁰ Henry ToLeima of Uvuan in August 1987. Meier has two stories about ToVup in his collection (MEIER 1909, pp. 210-217).

³¹ In 1987 I asked Eruei ToPal, then probably the oldest man on Matupit, about the *kaia* associated with the Tavurvur volcano. He laughed, "Don't you know that eruptions are caused by an excess of pressure in the bowels of the earth?" He went on to lecture me about the geological causes of eruptions.

³² Darius ToNamallu and laloan laUtu, both of Raluana, in November 1987.

ToPupua, too, has become a benevolent *kaia*. Some years ago he was seen, in the form of a snake, attending the Christmas Eve service in Bitabaur; he is said to respect the *lotu* and to harm only those who make him justifiably angry.³³ The land which ToPupua sold to Queen Emma and which became part of Phoebe Parkinson's Kuradui Plantation, has since been bought back by a group of villagers from Raluana, Vunatagia and Ialakua.

ToVue's story accommodates ToPupua's wrongdoing because he turned into a *kaia*. ToPupua's actions were so outrageous that they were barely comprehensible within the parameters of Tolai social behaviour. They made him part of the 'undomesticated' outside. The story about ToPupua is remarkable in another aspect. It connects the story of a *vunatarai*'s migration with that of ToPupua's relationship with the *misit*. ToVue told me two separate stories but made it clear that ToPupua was the brother of the first ancestor. Hence in my construction, this particular group of Tolai arrived on the Gazelle only shortly before the whites came. This raises a few questions. Were later arrivals allocated land, or were there still large plots of land in the nineteenth century on the Gazelle, which belonged to somebody but could be claimed by anybody cultivating them? Did European planters establish rights of ownership by having land cleared?

Today Tolai stress that their ancestors came from New Ireland as conquerors and that the northeastern part of the Gazelle Peninsula formerly belonged to the Baining people, although most of them would not be able to retrace the migration of their own *vunatarai*. They don't find this history embarrassing, but are rather proud of their past as conquerors. The Baining were first driven away, then Tolai missionaries brought them civilisation,³⁴ and today they are being developed. In Tolai migration stories, the fact is often stressed that the ancestors arrived from New Ireland on fragile craft, but fully equipped with all their customs, with a coil of *tabu*, with the *ingiet* magic, and sometimes accompanied by their *tubuan*. Neither did they develop any new technique, magic, custom etc. on the Gazelle, nor did they adopt anything from the Baining; at best their women were abducted and taken as wives. Today, many Tolai would still regard themselves as superior to the Baining who, they feel, were rightfully pushed further inland - and who have been pushed further inland by the Tolai since the arrival of the Europeans. In fact, I suspect that the emphasis on the New Ireland origins could be as recent as the large-scale eviction of Baining people from their land. The Tolai myths collected by Kleintitschen and Meier hardly mention New Ireland.³⁵ An analysis of the Baining-Tolai relationship cannot be accomplished within the scope of this history which deals foremost with the Tolai-European relationship; therefore I merely point out the problem, for in a less narrowly defined history of the Tolai it should deserve particular attention. And like the stories about Queen Emma and other planters, this part of a Tolai history should in itself entail a critique of Tolai histories.

³³ Lasiei ToRavien of Bitabaur in November 1987.

³⁴ "We chased away the Baining; later (the Methodist Tolai missionary) Aquila ToNgarau made them come out of their caves and brought them the light", William Tokavivi of Vunamami told me. A History of the United Church is illustrated by the photograph of a Tolai minister, Esau Teko, and a Baining woman, which apart from the colour of Teko's skin resembles similar pictures, taken of European missionaries and newly converted savages (WILLIAMS 1972, opposite p. 148).

³⁵ Cf. JANSSEN et al. 1973, p. xvi. George Brown (1910, p. 352) says that the Tolai "believe themselves indigenes in their land, that they 'grew there', that is, in their present location."

14: The Resurrection of the Past

The utilisation of dream elements upon awaking is ... an exigency for the historian.
Walter Benjamin¹

The even chapters of this dissertation sketch contexts: chapters 2, 4 and 6 describe the contexts in which I have produced this dissertation; chapters 8, 10 and 12 put Tolai narratives into the wider context of the past in the Tolai present. In the next chapter I conclude the odd numbered chapters by outlining how histories of the Tolai could be produced. In this chapter I talk about remembering and telling the past, and thereby furnish a final, philosophical context. I overemphasise certain notions of Tolai histories in order to sketch a philosophy of history. As in previous chapters, I construct a context by impudently taking arguments out of their respective contexts.² I ride several disconnected trains of thought which aim for the same destination. First I ponder about memory and memories, by drawing on Halbwachs' classical study on that subject. Then I talk about histories as opposed to history, using some of Peter Bichsel's ideas. That brings me to more opposites: between remembering and re-remembering, arresting and resurrecting the past. In the course of this chapter I proceed from the particular to the general, and from what is, to what could be.

Tolai oral histories are not fixed texts. When they are produced, what is remembered is not the actual words but the elements which make up their content. In the act of remembering the past in the present, Maurice Halbwachs has convincingly argued, the mind operates within a series of social frames (*cadres sociaux*). The most important *cadres sociaux* are the conventions of language.³ Those socially conditioned frames belong to the present. The narrator of a history, whether he/she remembers someone else's memory (and produces an oral tradition) or an event (and produces an oral history) does not revive an aspect of the past, but (re-)constructs it anew through the present. "It is therefore not necessary that the memories (*souvenir(s)*) remain, because in the present the mind possesses and may retrieve the means to construct them."⁴ This observation seems to me of crucial importance, although I do not intend to endorse everything Halbwachs concludes from it. And I fall back on him to make my point by twisting some of his arguments. "There is no memory (*mémoire*) possible outside those frames (*cadres*) which people living in society use to fix and retrieve their memories (*souvenirs*)."⁵ Those frames continually change, and so does collective memory. For Halbwachs there are different sets of social frames, and the

¹ BENJAMIN 1982, p. 580 (N 4.4).

² The list of those I have misused or misrepresented in this respect is long. Consider poor Leopold von Ranke, to whose intention to show the past "*wie es eigentlich gewesen*", the way it really was, I allude in the title, and to whom I have assigned the role of the historicist bogeyman. When Kittsteiner (1986), trying to prove that Benjamin was himself an historicist, quotes Ranke, he instead shows that Ranke does not represent those who have rallied behind his *wie es eigentlich gewesen*. And Paul Veyne (1987, p. 184, fn. 200) reminds me that Momigliano has established that Ranke borrowed his motto from Lucianus. But so what? The irreverent treatment of authorities has to apply of course also (or in particular!) to those authorities who themselves advocate such a treatment of others; cf. BUCK-MORSS 1986, p. 101.

³ HALBWACHS 1952, p. 82; cf. *Ibid.* p. 68.

⁴ HALBWACHS 1952, p. 92.

⁵ HALBWACHS 1952, p. 79.

memory can be organised through a combination of them. Those sets of frames can contradict each other, and they can have and assume different value. As the frames are socially defined, so their presence and value depends on the relationship between different social groups, on contradictions and struggles between them. Memories (*souvenirs*) are dependent on memory (*mémoire*) that is organised along social frames (*cadres sociaux*) which are related to the distribution of power between social groups. So does the distribution of power **determine** memories? Not necessarily: the construction of memories (which is one aspect of the production of knowledge) can obviously have effects on the *cadres sociaux* themselves.

But there is more to it than just the dialectics of memories/memory and social frames. Halbwachs defines the conditions under which human beings remember, by contrasting a mode of thinking when they are awake (and evoke memories) with one when they are asleep. In his interpretation of Freud he suggests a basic distinction:

In the waking state the images we perceive are what they are, each of them representing only one person, every object being only at one location, every action having only one result, every word having only one meaning, because otherwise people could not find their way around the things nor understand each other. In the dream realities are replaced by symbols for which all those conventions do not apply, precisely because we are not in contact with exterior objects or other human beings, but only with our selves.⁶

But Halbwachs makes two reservations: dreams contain fragments of memories and so the dreams' images are to some extent socially conditioned,⁷ and it is possible to captivate the dreams' images in the moment of waking up.⁸ For Halbwachs dreams are essentially individually conditioned, whereas memory is socially conditioned. I suggest another distinction: that between images of the past which are entirely socially conditioned by the realities of the present, and those which are not.

A few more words about the "realities of the present": they are both what I referred to in the second chapter as *Verhältnisse*, real conditions, and cultural constructs which are real because they are taken for granted. These two aspects of reality cannot always be neatly separated. Both are made and thus have **become** real. Their being real is linked with the distribution of power: each pair of dominance and subordination has corresponding sets of real and unreal.

Do Tolai histories contain images that cannot be interpreted in term of the *cadres sociaux* of the present? Few Tolai stories that I quote are recollections of moments in the life of a narrator. The man whose personal reminiscences feature most prominently in my thesis is John Vuia of Matupit. To interpret John Vuia's memories (*souvenirs*) about the beginnings of local government on the Gazelle, we would have to identify the conventions within which he constructs the past. ToVuia tells his story as part of a collective memory (*mémoire*). He appeals to my memory and seeks to establish points of reference for me which then help him to structure his narrative. He draws on conventions that are valid for both of us, most importantly on the fact that we share a language. ToVuia assumes that Daniel Kaputin, if he were still alive, would be able to recall the past likewise. ToVuia is a *patuana*, a village and clan elder; in a way it is his

⁶ HALBWACHS 1952, p. 17; cf. *ibid.* p. 39.

⁷ HALBWACHS 1952, pp. 36f.

⁸ HALBWACHS 1952, pp. 18ff.

role to produce a memory (*souvenir*) which is no longer held collectively. In his capacity as a retired political leader he understandably assumes the role of an angry old man whose images of the past stand at a refractory angle towards the present. Yet his history of the emergence of Tolai *matanitu* seems to be more than a product of the social reality of the present, because its images do not **go up** in the present. John Vuia's images interrupt the homogenous narrational rendering of the past. He persists in a perspective of the past that elevates momentous moments from a disintegrating collective memory. ToVuia has not forgotten his anger and his pain, and in his history he remembers how it felt when he and his friends made history. Historical progress has not redeemed the hopes and promises of the past, and by resurrecting the past into the present, John Vuia reiterates his claim for redemption. It is as if he pauses to dwell on a memory (*souvenir*) that he constructs outside the *cadres sociaux* that regulate memory (*mémoire*).

More than in ToVuia's case the memories of memories of Tokilang's death, that ToGideon, ToKele, and others construct, are sustained as parts of a collective memory. Again it seems the image cannot be delineated from the present (nor from any other point in time when it was created, encoded into memory, or recalled). And it transcends the present instead of being contained within it. The social frame that is most apparent in the conditioning of this particular memory is the *lotu*. The narrators see the past in the framework of the imported ideology of Christianity. Yet they re-interpret Christianity and apply its imagery in a way that contradicts the intentions of those who introduced it. Tokilang was hunted down and beheaded. But the recreation of his death in a story laden with the symbolism of the Passion guarantees that he lives on. The irony and subversion of this history erode the hegemony of colonial ideology and reality, not by escaping it, but by infusing it with sorrows and desires that have not been outlived. What those who view the world objectively from the academic ivory tower may term a myth, an ideological construct, or fiction, with all the derogatory connotations these terms carry, can be an attempt to produce history in order to make history. "To make history", Michael Taussig writes, "it is necessary to retain the empowered imagery of the past which condemns the distortions of humanity that are wrought normal by the objective pretensions of the present."⁹

To describe it in Halbwachs' terms: Tolai constructing their past not only remember within and through the conventions of the *cadres sociaux* of the present, but may retain images of dreams, which are less subject to the rigid frames of what "has become", that otherwise shape their perceptions. To illuminate my point about the latter kind of image, I may quote Henri Bergson, who has distinguished between a "more natural memory", "situated in the present and looking only to the future", and a "regressive memory" which records in the form of *images-souvenirs* all events as they occur:

To evoke the past in the form of an image, we must **be able** to disregard the present, we must **know** how to appreciate the useless, we must **have the will** to dream. Only human beings are capable of that kind of **effort**.¹⁰

With the stipulation that "disregard for the present" means neither abandoning it nor failing to recognise it, it is precisely this "effort" we employ when we retain images of

⁹ TAUSSIG 1980, p. 154.

¹⁰ BERGSON 1928, pp. 79f; my emphasis.

our dreams in the short-lived moment of waking up.

Neither of the two French philosophers necessarily meant what I have made them say in my eclectic assemblage. Let me summarise its preliminary result:

Memories of the past are created from and through a memory that is socially conditioned. Normally the conditioning takes place within and through the frames of the present. We have the potential to evoke images that are constructed outside the frames of the present. Those images do not reconstruct past events 'as they occurred', but they recreate a past that has not become part of the present.

In their stories Tolai try to come to terms with the past, that is with the conditions of their present and with past experiences. 'The point is that we have to **work at our history**', says the filmmaker Alexander Kluge about German history. 'When saying this I envisage something concrete. Telling each other stories about it, can be a starting point.'¹¹ Telling each other stories in this sense can take two forms: reconstructing the past to overcome it, and resurrecting the past in order to live with and through it.¹²

In our dreams we are able to make associations much more freely than when we are awake. That also means that a past which is not overcome but suppressed can visit us in our dreams. The past can haunt us in the present. Sometimes we try to stop the past from intruding into our present in the chaotic way of nightmares, by retelling it. Then the social frames tend to become the safety net which guards against the uncontrolled and unwanted flashing up of memories. But trying to put the past behind us aims at suppressing the past and eventually becomes a way of forgetting. So this first alternative is of doubtful value:

to forget past suffering is to forgive the forces that caused it - without defeating these forces. The wounds that heal in time are also the wounds that contain the poison.¹³

Creating memories in order to banish the recurring images of the past into the past often takes the form of romanticising or trivialising the past. When I went to high school, I, like many others of my generation, associated 'History', that is, a more or less authoritative version of 'what actually had happened', with truth, and 'histories' with deception. For many men of the generation of our fathers and grandfathers were fond of telling us 'histories' about the war, tales that left out so much and mystified, trivialised, or falsified their experiences. They could not name the terror of the fighting, nor the context of fascism in which the war was organised. They created a dream world of mateship and pleasures they had wrung out of the terror around them, so they would not confront the unspeakable experience. Histories that uncritically assemble oral histories in a collage of popular experience 'the way it really was', are in danger of reproducing the trivial and the mystifying. But it seems there are experiences that are so painful that any attempt to retell them leads only to evasion.

¹¹ Alexander Kluge in a speech when accepting the Theodor-Fontane-Preis in 1979 (quoted in KAES 1987, p. 45); my emphasis.

¹² It should be noted that either form of telling each other stories involves an effort that some people cannot spare. Those who do not perceive themselves in a position to make this effort include not only people fighting for their material survival, as Jeggli has shown in his study of a Swabian community (1977, pp. 12f; cf. pp. 280ff).

¹³ MARCUSE 1956, p. 232.

A particular kind of banishing what was into the past is the declared goal of many professional historians. Believing with Benedetto Croce that "The writing of history ... liberates us ... from slavery ... to the past",¹⁴ they convert the past into compartmentalised knowledge, reifying it in the process.

What I did not understand as a high school student was that histories need not necessarily be trivialising yarns (and expressions of incompetency with regard to working at history), and that the reconstruction of the past that I was taught only perpetuated the history which denied the alternative of histories capable of dealing with the past.

Peter Bichsel, a professional writer and teller of stories, talks about (hi)stories as opposed to history:

A revolutionary who envisages a goal that he wants to reach through and after the revolution, does not live just for his goal, he also lives in the revolution by telling it to himself. Life becomes meaningful as we are able to tell it to ourselves. ... The lives of those only living in the history ... and not in (hi)stories, become meaningless. This is, for example, a problem for the successful revolutionary: what had been his (hi)stories during the revolution, becomes history afterwards, that is, the history everyone, including himself, is sworn to uphold.¹⁵

Bichsel, appalled by the inability of old men in West Germany to retell their wartime experiences, gives a second example:

I am convinced that the (German) soldier who survived the Russian campaign got through also by telling it to himself. But years later, he no longer can tell his stories, for they are not just stories but also horrendous history.¹⁶

"The history is the (hi)stories' enemy, and only in (hi)stories human beings are recognisable", Bichsel finds.¹⁷ "The history" is a process which continually comes to ends, where things happen, time passes, and which progresses inexorably. In the history, history happens. It terminates (hi)stories which do not serve to delineate the present, and which do not fit through the frames of the present reality. In (hi)stories, human beings retain the chance to make history.

With Bichsel's two examples the agenda is set for the other alternative, for what I termed a "resurrection of the past". In his films and writings, Kluge has dealt extensively with the relationship between history and (hi)stories. For him war seems to have become the strongest synonym for history. Kluge has written about Stalingrad, the unspeakable, and has put together images and (hi)stories that take the form of *images-souvenirs*. In the introduction Kluge demands:

The reader must read this book about Stalingrad by brushing it the wrong way, in an **unpractical, irrelevant, tenacious** interest that is turned away from the West German present, and that is as antirealist as the desires and the certainty that the realities which produce Stalingrad are bad fictions. I insist on Stalingrad as a form of protest, for the absence of memory is unreal.¹⁸

¹⁴ CROCE 1941, p. 44.

¹⁵ BICHSEL 1982, pp. 77f. I choose to leave intact the ambiguity of the word *Geschichte*, which in German means both story and history. Bichsel's distinction is that between (hi)story in the singular and (hi)story in the plural. This is not meant to be a peculiarly German discourse. But I am using the material I am most familiar with. I realise that Bichsel's remarks will make more sense to the reader who can appreciate them in the light of his stories. Native English speakers could think of Grace Paley instead. (Yes, in Bichsel's text, the revolutionary is a man.)

¹⁶ BICHSEL 1982, p. 79.

¹⁷ BICHSEL 1982, p. 79.

¹⁸ KLUGE 1983, p. 7; his emphasis.

So remembering can be the antidote to a forgetting that buries the past. In its tenacious insistence it keeps the histories alive, even when they contradict the history. The unpractical and irrelevant interest resurrects the anachronism: the histories can disturb the inexorable progress of history. "Maybe histories are hostile to those who do not know anything else but the historic mission", Bichsel suspects. "I get the impression that those who know only the history are inclined to prevent histories." Telling stories is a political act: "the story-telling as such, telling stories to one's self, is subversive."¹⁹

Remembering becomes re-membering,²⁰ the appropriation of the past in the present. What is appropriated is the consciously lived experience and the 'not-yet-conscious knowledge of **what was**'.²¹ Instead of ridding ourselves of the past by converting it into pieces of knowledge, the past is resurrected in an act of knowing. Stories become tools against the forgetting. Telling stories as actualisations of the past in the present can be very painful, it involves the 'effort' Henri Bergson mentions, it is 'work' in Kluge's sense. It is *Erinnerungsarbeit*, the **work of re-membering**.²² There are two levels at which 'work' is done: one where the past is resurrected **into** the present, and one where it is emancipated from the social frames of the present. In other words: in the work of re-membering, the past is resurrected **through and beyond** the present. These two levels must not be separated: the first level on its own reduces remembering to the evoking of memories to escape from the past into the present; the second level on its own could mean an empathetic embracing of the past to escape the present.

To set out the last point, I return once again to the difference between remembering solely within and through the social frames of the present, and beyond them. In an attempt to interpret the 'work of remembering' in Ingeborg Bachmann's novel *Malina*, Irmela von der Lühe notes that the act of remembering may have two faces: a remembering complying with the norms and conventions, and a remembering that is chaotic with open-ended associations. In its chaotic form the remembering transcends boundaries of time and space and limits set by a rationally structuring mind. Thereby, she says, the process of remembering dissolves borders (including those of one's own identity) and destructs. "Remembering is destruction and decomposition; it is protest against and denial of a reality that is experienced as inadequate and unbearable."²³ In this mode of remembering the subjects let themselves be washed back into the past. In literature, Lühe argues, the narrative form and conventions of language usually prevent the literary subject from dissolving into what is remembered.²⁴ If, however, the

¹⁹ BICHSEL 1982, p. 79; his emphasis.

²⁰ I thank Sarah Williams for this word.

²¹ BENJAMIN 1982, p. 1058, his emphasis.

²² Cf. FREUD 1946, p. 133.

²³ LÜHE 1984, p. 135. Von der Lühe refers to Freud (particularly, FREUD 1946) for her ideas about remembering. I do not think she could rightly claim to have done an exegesis of Freud's concept of *Erinnerungsarbeit*, but I find her thoughts useful, never mind whether it is in line with Freudian orthodoxy. Ingeborg Bachmann, who was Austrian, has been one of the most influential writers of German after 1945. *Malina* has not yet been translated into English.

²⁴ LÜHE 1984, p. 135. For her last claim, she cites Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*. "I am Madame Bovary," Flaubert said that, as we know, and we have admired this remark for more than a hundred years. We also admire the tears Flaubert shed when he had to let Madame Bovary die, and his wonderful novel with its the crystal-clear calculation, which he was able to write despite his tears; and we should not and will not stop admiring him. But Flaubert was not Madame Bovary; we cannot completely ignore that fact in the end, despite all our good will and what we know of the secret relationship between an author and a figure created by art" (WOLF 1983, p.150; her emphasis).

work of re-membering entails the appropriation of the past through its construction, then the deconstruction of linguistic and epic linearity becomes possible.

Re-membering in the present, and in the present tense, instead of remembering the past, can still be deconstruction and decomposition, but it transcends the present instead of simply rejecting and escaping it. The destructive energy is directed outwards, towards the past and towards what constitutes the social frames of the present, instead of inwards, threatening the subject's identity.

Re-membering in the present tense, the articulation of resurrected memories, keeping (hi)stories alive is an effort whereby the subject strives for consciousness. It is a conscious effort in the sense that as the work involved is perceptible it is spent deliberately. But in consciously striving for consciousness, it is a gamble with what is not conscious. The work of re-membering taps the chaos of associations. In the dynamics of seizing this potential we can be hooked - hooked to escape, not to surface after diving in - and we can experience pain. There is no clear-cut alternative; the important point is that we cannot transcend the reality of the present through the frames of that present, and that any attempt to go beyond these frames is adventure on the border.

This is not meant to be a mind-game. It is an attempt to explore what lies beyond the reconstruction of the past as practised by mainstream historiography. This attempt has been encouraged and partly induced by a mode of producing history which does not fit into the aforementioned conventions: what for those entangled in a tradition of Platonian rationalism and post-Enlightenment science involves the effort of dis-entanglement, is for Papua New Guinean tellers of (hi)stories part of a praxis. Earlier in this chapter I said I would overemphasise certain notions in Tolai histories. Yet by moving from the specific (Tolai histories) to the general (the production of histories) I do not have to stretch these notions beyond recognition, nor do I need them as apologetic pretexts for forays into the realm of philosophy. After nearly two years among Papua New Guinean story-tellers, observing Walter Benjamin disentangling himself from the premises of historicist thinking feels sometimes like listening to a soprano exhausting herself when singing the high notes of an aria: it was all there already, and how much lighter had the motif been presented in the overture.²⁵

I do not suggest that Tolai narrators construct their past in a "pre-Platonian", "pre-Enlightenment" fashion, nor that their constructions of the past represent the "primitive" or "savage" mode of thinking of "cold" societies. The Tolai histories I quote have all been produced in a context which has little to do with that of pre-1875 Tolai society. I believe it is the advent of capitalist relations of production in predominantly non-capitalist societies that has historically always favoured tendencies to transcend the

²⁵ Michael Taussig, in his magical study *In terror and healing in Columbia*, conjures up the messianic historical materialism of Walter Benjamin but realises that Columbians practice what Benjamin theorises. Writing about popular images of the Virgin of Caloto and "the ways by which ... the icon serves as a means for the experiential appropriation of history" (TAUSSIG 1986, p. 190), Taussig remarks: "Here is no need to invoke the surrealist's heavy-handed art, no need to invoke as metaphor the messianic cessation of time, no need to go to any pains to contest the official view of the past evoked by the image, and, above all, no need to stretch a point by arguing that the image can function as a 'monad' All this exists as an everyday occurrence in the marvelous reality continuously evoked through the dialogical creation of the Virgin's life and life force" (p. 200). Taussig refers here to the seventeenth of Benjamin's "Theses" (BENJAMIN 1974, p. 702f).

present by means of resurrecting the past. E.P. Thompson has termed the context out of which these tendencies emerge, 'moral economy'.²⁶ The moral economy of sub-altern classes is often based on their radical definition of their own past - not as the better days whose passing they nostalgically mourn, but as an alternative present for which they yearn and for which they might fight. Sometimes this definition has taken spectacular forms and led to a chiliasm which aimed at the immediate coming of a future past, which was not delineable from the present. On the *Gazelle*, this definition has taken subtle, and sometimes feeble forms.

I shall now return to the ostensible contradiction between transcending the present and remembering the past. In the second chapter I quoted from a letter Marx wrote in 1843 to his friend Ruge. The world already possesses the dream of a thing, he says, all we need is the 'realisation of the thoughts of the past'. To phrase it in Wohlfahrt's words: 'One awakens from one's dream only by awakening to them, by an act of redoubled attention.'²⁷ We are about to know, but we do not know yet. Dreaming of it is the first step of knowing. But unless we capture the dream's image, that which can be known is inaccessible. Like the Sleeping Beauty, the dream of a thing lies dormant. Its resurrection is made possible by a simple kiss - which follows, however, the surmounting of a thorny hedge. The Sleeping Beauty, a nom de plume of Freud's unconscious? The unconscious is what is pushed back from the system of pre-consciousness to that of unconsciousness. Retrieving the unconscious surely involves the work of remembering. But what is retrieved, has been there, as past reality. Far from being a realisation of the thoughts of the past, it is their reconstruction. Freud's interpretation of the unconscious does not allow for the recreation of the past in the present tense. In *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, Ernst Bloch dismisses Freud's concept of the unconscious as well as Jung's idea of a collective unconsciousness that recurs on primal, archetypal memories. Bloch's point of departure is hunger, and he argues that 'the most reliable drive'²⁸ must be that of self-preservation, which in turn can lead to that of self-extension:

And **precisely** at this point **daydreams** are formed which stimulate the **wishful element** (*Wunschhafte*) in the expectant emotions that always arise from hunger, which may divert and fatigue us, but which may also activate and galvanise us towards the goal of a better life.²⁹

Bloch's dream is very specific; in the Marxian tradition it is about moving from the realm of necessity to the realm of freedom; moving from darkness to light, and from the bottom to the top. The better life is in the **future**, we are dreaming **forward**, towards it. The not conscious element of the daydream of a better future is the not-yet-conscious, which

Is only the preconscious of what is to come, the psychical birthplace of the new. And it keeps itself preconscious mainly because within it there is a content of consciousness that has not yet become wholly manifest, and is still dawning from the future.³⁰

What needs to be salvaged is Bloch's distinction between the unconscious and the not-yet-conscious. And I believe it is possible to salvage the idea of the not-yet-

²⁶ Cf. THOMPSON 1971.

²⁷ WOHLFAHRT 1986, p. 146; his emphasis.

²⁸ BLOCH 1985, p. 72.

²⁹ BLOCH 1985, p. 85; his emphasis.

³⁰ BLOCH 1985, p. 132.

conscious, that has been so passionately put forward by Bloch, and at the same time not accept the teleological and linear-progressive framework within which Bloch developed it. Bloch disregards the past and the dreaming-backwards not only because he is still captivated by the idea of progress, but because for him history is the knowledge of what has become, which deflects the knowledge of the becoming and coming-into-being.³¹ But the not-yet-conscious knowledge of what was, is exactly about that past that has not (yet) become present. By refusing to make a clean slate of the past, as the *Internationale* (and many marxists) demand, and re-membering and resurrecting the past into the present, the not-yet-conscious represents indeed what the mind can and does outside frames that are defined by the realities of the present.

It is here that the notion of the awaking resumes crucial importance. "The coming awaking stands like the Greeks' wooden horse in the Troy of the dream", Benjamin says.³² It is by awakening the not-yet-conscious knowledge of what was, a knowledge that comes as a flash (through the image in which what was and what is flash into a constellation) that the world **pauses and wakes up** from the dream about itself.³³ Now the dream from which we need to wake up fuses with the dream that contains the not-yet-conscious knowledge of what was, that needs to be retained in the moment of waking up.

That leaves one last point, which links with the next chapter. When Bichsel writes about listening to one's own (hi)stories, he means the making of histories, the conscious living of experiences. Retelling those (hi)stories is rarely a matter of an inner dialogue. More often than not it requires a social context. "Telling each other stories about it", is for Kluge a way of working at our history. The degree to which the resurrection of a memory is painful or not, and the amount of work involved in re-membering, obviously depend on the interaction between whoever is telling a story, and whoever is listening (and asking, amending, questioning). In a successful interaction the listener often becomes the story-teller, and the story-teller turns listener. To awaken what Benjamin calls the "not-yet-conscious knowledge of what was" (and what can be) is not necessarily a lonely effort either. Re-membering the past, and knowing towards the not-yet-conscious is dialogic and it is social. Retelling those stories and thereby saving the past from being left behind can be a social process that questions the social frames and changes them. As a political strategy dialogic re-membering intervenes on a level very different from that of Bloch's collective not-yet-conscious daydreams. It offers no elaborate utopias, nor does it organise people by offering them a coherent dream. It does not strive for overtaking the inexorable progress of history into the future, but suggests different directions on winding paths. It propagates dissidence, and it is, as Bichsel has said, subversive.

³¹ Cf. BLOCH 1985, p. 329. Elsewhere, when he talks about "historical material *a priori*", Bloch is more ambiguous about the realisation of the thoughts of the past (cf. BLOCH 1985a, pp. 168f).

³² BENJAMIN 1982, p. 495 (K 2.4).

³³ See chapter 2, p. 37; cf. BENJAMIN 1982, pp. 571f (N 1.9), pp. 494f (K 2.3), pp. 576f (N 2a.3), p. 608 (N 18.4).

15: Constructing the Tolai Past

Not **one** history but **many** histories.

Alexander Kluge¹

In the fourth chapter I made clear that the process of acquiring knowledge in the "field" involved dialogues about the flow of information between "informants" and researcher, and particularly about the eventual destination of the knowledge passed on to the researcher. Most Tolai I got to know during my stay on the Gazelle wanted me to accomplish two things: to "set the record straight" (*vatakodo*), in other words, prove the colonial histories wrong and reinterpret the Tolai past in terms of Tolai views of their history; and to "write down" (*tumu vake*) knowledge about the past, particularly the knowledge which was in danger of being lost (forgotten) and which was considered relevant in order to live the present.² The first expectation often meant that I should write a counter-hegemonical history, one that refutes colonial hegemonical constructions of the past. The second expectation often meant that I should contribute to the reification of the past, both by writing down events and by writing down manifestations of culture. I was asked to codify what was about to be lost or distorted because of the alleged inadequacies of the oral mode of transmitting knowledge. I do not strive for academic "purity" by ignoring the expectations raised by those whose voices talk in my history. The production of counter-hegemonical knowledge should be an important goal of historians. That culture is reified and history codified in the course of such a production might sometimes prove inevitable. In talking in more detail about Tolai expectations regarding a history of the Tolai, I sketch the potentialities of non-academic productions of history on the Gazelle, and end this dissertation on a positive, albeit utopian note.

The next few paragraphs might at first appear as a lengthy excursus, but they are a necessary introduction to the practical issues involved in producing histories of the Tolai. Not only to ward off the misunderstanding that the propensities of Tolai histories are those of oral (non-literate) cultures, let us have a closer look at what Goody calls the "interface between the written and the oral".³ Most of the Tolai histories which I have assembled in my history of the Tolai have been transmitted orally. But most of them were told to me with the expectation that I would write them down and that others, including other Tolai, would eventually be able to read them. Their recording took place in the context of a "literate" society. Among Papua New Guinean groups, the Tolai have had one of the longest records of acquaintance with Western education. On the northeastern Gazelle every child lives within walking distance of a primary school (Community School). Although school attendance is not compulsory,

¹ KLUGE 1979, p. 40. (*Nicht eine Geschichte, sondern viele Geschichten.*)

² Could it be that some oral historians found "their" people unconcerned with what happened with the results of their fieldwork (see, for example: VANSINA 1985, p. 112), because they were not consulted in the sense that the researcher did not explain his or her project and its possible results? It should be noted that, when the "subjects" of a historical research are made aware of its possible result, they do not necessarily want their histories published (see: PRICE 1983, pp. 21ff).

³ GOODY 1987.

with very few exceptions all children attend the first years of primary school. More than half of the students in Grade Six, the last year of primary education, continue their schooling in a high school (grades seven to ten), of which there are nine on the northeastern Gazelle. Education is not free in Papua New Guinea, but within Tolai means.⁴

The effects of Western education on Tolai society can be described in different ways. The differences in the wording immediately suggest that there is more to the implications of literacy than many of the learned treatises on the subject concede: one may say that a society that some 120 years ago had a purely oral culture, now has an oral and a written tradition; one may say that a formerly non-literate people is in the process of becoming a literate people. But one may also say that in the 1988 Tolai society the non-literates of yesterday have become the illiterates of today.⁵ Illiteracy is obviously not the same as orality, pre-literacy or non-literacy. Illiteracy denotes the lack of something that should be there. The adjective "illiterate" has derogatory connotations. The non-literate becomes the illiterate as the Other becomes the deviate. We must not naively compare the virtues, potentials and characteristics of purely oral cultures with those of cultures that have adopted writing, possibly in order to bemoan the ruptures caused by civilisation. Young Tolai who nowadays cannot read or write are illiterate, because they live in a world where the lack of access to literacy incurs exclusion from a whole range of other things.⁶ In the second chapter I have said that the making of One World has been an irrevocable process - there can be no niches where the virtues of purely oral cultures are retained, however much romantics may wish there could. But that does not mean that the form this process assumes is to be taken for granted.

What does "literate" mean? Are the majority of twenty-year-olds on the northeastern Gazelle literate? Most of them can read words and write words: they could read the sentence "in winter it is cold", and they could write the same sentence if it were dictated to them. For many of them it would not be a very meaningful sentence, because its content does not relate to their experiences. Many of them could read the sentence "*na marum ave ga manga mudian* (at night we were very cold)" and understand its meaning. Most of them would be able to write it, if it were dictated to them. If asked to name a certain feeling, some of them might write something like "*na marum ave ga manga cold*". The majority of twenty-year-olds would not be able to spell the Kuanua words correctly, that is, according to the standards adhered to in the most recent edition of the Bible. In East New Britain, both in primary and secondary state schools, the language of instruction has for more than fifty years been English. Informally teachers used Tok Pisin or Kuanua in the first years of primary school; recently they have been officially allowed to do so. Mission schools where children were taught

⁴ In 1987 school fees for Community Schools varied around 20 Kina per annum, a sum that most Tolai parents who have no wage incomes can easily raise by selling cash crops. For state high schools it was 130 and 250 Kina per annum for day schools and boarding schools respectively. The children of parents without wage incomes are usually supported by wage earning relatives.

⁵ Cf. GOODY 1987, pp. 142ff.

⁶ This is of course more evident in a country like the United States, where those sixty million adults who do not command the basic skills of reading and writing are definitely illiterate and not just simply non-literate (figure according to Jonathan Kozol's *Illiterate America*, quoted in FREIRE & MACEDO 1987, p. 120).

to read and write in Kuanua had been phased out by the time today's twenty-year-olds started their schooling.

Once I was asked by the teachers at the Raluana Community School to help them rehearse a song that some of the students were to perform in a competition. This day-long choir competition in a Rabaul park was the highlight of a provincial festival of arts, organised by the education department. Texts and notes for the songs for the compulsory section were sent to all participating schools. The song I was supposed to help with contained the line: "the sun is shining on the window still", which in the context of the rest of the lyrics made absolutely no sense. Presumably the line had to read: "the sun is shining on the window **sill**"; the officer in the education department, who had copied the text, not knowing what a sill was, had probably thought that this must have been a spelling mistake and inserted a "t". The song was to be performed by a quartette, four talented girls in grades five and six; they could read the words and pronounce most of them correctly (for they were "literate"), but the lyrics were to them incomprehensible. In the competition the quartette from Raluana, now singing "sill" instead of "still", and understanding the meaning of the lyrics to the extent that the teacher and I could convey them with our inadequate knowledge, came second. The four girls had excellent voices and sang beautifully. Maybe they would have come first, if they had been only functionally literate and sung "still" as required?

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13. A kaiser kadat.

Vilelm ia ra kaiser kadat. I ki ta ra pia na palpal Berlin aro Deutschland. Kana varkurai i gala tuna. I kure ra qunan Deutschland, ma i kure bula ra qunan kadat, Neu-Pommern. Iake ra luluai i ra lavur manua, dia bolo Kokopo. A kaiser i mari kana tarei ma i vaboina diat. I meige diat a murmur a bona magamagan ma diat a lotu tadap Deo. A kaiser, ia ra luluai na malmal. Ma tana i qa vaki ta qo ra qunan ta umana kiap, upi diat a balaure ra tarei, ma upi diat a vapidiket ra malmal. Dat kabila dat a mari ra bona kaiser kadat ma dat a ru tadav ia.

Last page from a Kuanua primer published by the Sacred Heart Missionaries early this century, featuring the German monarch, Wilhelm II. "Let us too love and respect our good *kaiser*."

Obviously learning how to read and write the word "sill" does not contribute to literacy on the Gazelle. To know the meaning of the word "sill" does, but only in a distant sense. Appreciating the lyrics of nineteenth century English romanticism would be one

of the least immediate concerns of Tolai who want to become literate. Although a situation may be envisaged where the skill to read, write and speak the word "sill" became crucial: a situation where literacy is a means for one particular class to gain and hold power by acquiring specialised knowledge and by monopolising access to it. Teaching students to read and write something that is not open to their experiences could also be a deliberate means to prevent them from reading and writing their own world. Or students for whom sills are not part of their experience are made to believe that they live in a world full of sills, where a house without a sill is not a proper house.

The politics of literacy are about the context and content of what is read and written. Enter Paulo Freire, the radical Brazilian educator, who in many parts of the world developed and implemented programmes to teach adults to read and write:

To acquire literacy is more than to psychologically and mechanically dominate reading and writing techniques. It is to dominate these techniques in terms of consciousness; to understand what one reads and to write what one understands; it is to **communicate** graphically. Acquiring literacy does not involve memorizing sentences, words, or syllables - lifeless objects unconnected to an existential universe - but rather an attitude of creation and re-creation, a self-transformation producing a stance of intervention in one's context.⁷

Becoming literate means to learn to name and transform the world. Literacy in this sense is not so much a state but rather a process with the emphasis on becoming, acquiring, learning, knowing. The skill to write the word "sill" cannot be a criterion for literacy, nor can simply acquiring the skill be a means to literacy. Freire says what could and should be done to embark on this process:

I have always insisted that words used in organising a literacy program come from what I call the "word universe" of people who are learning, expressing their actual language, their anxieties, fears, demands, and dreams. Words should be laden with the meaning of the people's existential experience, and not of the teacher's experience. Surveying the word universe thus gives us the people's words, **pregnant with the world**, words from the people's reading of the world.⁸

In Papua New Guinea illiteracy would have to be combatted with a bilingual approach. Only if students learn to name their world in their own language first, will the learning of the dominant national language empower them to communicate their experiences in a dialogue with other sectors of a wider society.⁹ Whereas in East New Britain there have been recent encouraging moves by the Provincial Government to introduce pre-schools in the vernacular, a more far-reaching strategy proposed in the "Matane Report on the Philosophy of Education" has been rejected by the national government, presumably because it feared that the encouragement of linguistic diversity would impede the process of nation-building, and that large linguistic groups and those with long traditions of "literacy" would have an unfair advantage over others. Because of the difficulties involved in using a language of instruction that is only the third language of the instructors themselves, the state schools now form a second class education system. The Papua New Guinean elite send their children to private schools or schools in Australia with the effect that their children learn to read their world in words pregnant with a world quite different from their own. But by acquiring

⁷ FREIRE 1983, p. 48; his emphasis. Freire is both practical and political. Too political? I am surprised to find that his writings are not even listed in the bibliography of Goody's latest book.

⁸ Paulo Freire, in: FREIRE & MACEDO 1987, p. 35; my emphasis.

⁹ Cf. Paulo Freire, in: FREIRE & MACEDO 1987, pp. 151f.

superior skills in reading and writing the dominant language they are destined to occupy the dominant positions in the "modern" sector of society.

Goody lists three modes of acquiring knowledge among the LoDagaa of Ghana, which can also be distinguished among the Tolai before the arrival of the first Europeans. First there is the knowledge that is acquired in interaction, by participation, by experience. Secondly there is specialised knowledge that is transmitted by instruction or in ceremonies. In the precolonial Tolai society, men could, for example, acquire knowledge in initiation ceremonies, in the *tubuan*, and in the *ingiet*. Thirdly, there is knowledge that is not mediated by humans, either informally or formally, but comes direct from powers, spiritual forces, agencies.¹⁰ Among the Tolai access to this form of knowledge (the skill to communicate with spirit beings like *kaia*, *tabalivana*, *ingal*, or *turangan*) often required instruction by other human beings. Since contact, the share of relevant knowledge that can be acquired by experience and interaction has shrunk in relation to that which can be acquired only through instruction. The traditional context of instruction has been largely replaced by the Western type of school. Because instruction in school takes up so much time, the quantitative amount of knowledge acquired through interaction has shrunk, too. The third mode of acquiring knowledge has become relatively less important (although it is still widely used by the *tena buai*). Knowledge acquired in the context of the *balanagunan*, either through experience or by instruction, is often less valued than knowledge acquired outside the village.

What consequences has this development for the attitude of Tolai to their past? The past is still "learned" through interaction/experience/participation as I tried to show in chapters 10 and 12. Knowledge about the Tolai past that is represented by stories is not transmitted by way of instruction, with the notable exception of knowledge that is relevant to the *lotu*. ToWilliam, ToVula, or ToVetenge do not "brief" (*vateten*) young people other than on aspects related to land tenure. Knowledge about the past is transmitted in nearly all cases either orally or audiovisually. Some forms of transmission (radio broadcasts or enactments) are more effective than others (informal story telling), but they are not often used. In a few cases, nearly all of them related to church history, knowledge is acquired by reading.

When talking with me about the differences between a purely oral culture and the present culture on the Gazelle, and about the lack of a sense of the past among the younger generation, Tolai suggested that the solution to the problem would be to teach local history at school, and to write down knowledge which is no longer transmitted orally, for others to read (preferably in Kuanua). The quintessence of those suggestions is to use the written word to open avenues for instructing Tolai about their past. I do not deny that a curriculum which sets out the local history that is to be taught would be an improvement, but my ideas of how the Tolai past could be constructed in the Tolai present, have a different point of departure.

¹⁰ GOODY 1987, p. 157.

Literate education must not simply be a 'matter of absorbing abstracted knowledge through mediators, either directly from books, or indirectly from teachers',¹¹ lest the students are reduced to imperfect stores of knowledge. If literate education is a means of gaining the consciousness Freire talks about, learning and knowing has to be more than what can be accomplished in a one-way process of transmission of knowledge from the mediator to the student.

Earlier I mentioned my high school experiences. I learnt **the** history, that is, what really had happened, because I accepted the authority of teachers and books, and because its own authoritativeness, which is gained by appearing to be concluded, finished and immobile, appealed as it contradicted trivialising tales. But most of what I was taught in history lessons, I could only learn by mechanically memorising it (for the next test), for the way it was taught did not relate to a process of knowing. And knowing (as opposed to storing pieces of knowledge) was neither required nor intended. When I was a teacher myself, in the West-German state of Hessen, I was required to make senior high school students learn by heart about twenty-five "historical" dates per semester. That was supposed to give them a sense of the past. In Papua New Guinean primary and high schools, where the degree of repetitive learning is even greater than in German schools, children are far too often made "literate" by letting them mechanically memorise vowel sounds,¹² or by teaching them to read words that are by no means pregnant with their world. If local history were added to the curriculum as simply another field of knowledge to be harvested by the students, accounts of the past would probably only add to the data which the students are expected to memorise.

Histories that are written down to be taught are in danger of becoming immobilised pieces of knowledge.¹³ In an oral discourse which relies on memory, the past is constantly recreated in the present. The authority of the written word could easily arrest the process of recreation. Knowledge that has been immobilised by writing it down is already awarded great prestige on the Gazelle: who wants to dispute the validity of a given statement, if *i ki ta ra buk*, if it says so in the book?¹⁴

But it is not a matter of weighing the advantages of writing down and preserving knowledge, in comparison with the oral transmission of knowledge. The process of writing down Tolai history started with missionaries writing pamphlets, administrators writing memoranda, explorers writing journals, or anthropologists writing monographs and articles. The history of the Toma killings has long been established by the 'other side', and Tolai demand that their side be written now. It is important, indeed essential to write counter-hegemonical histories. To refute the claim that "the history of Australia spans 200 years", a counter-hegemonical "the history of Australia spans 40000 years"

¹¹ GOODY 1987, p. 158.

¹² When observing or overhearing primary school classes in Papua New Guinea, I was sometimes strongly reminded of the way in which Abaram ToBobo was taught to read and write. Many Tolai assume that this method is appropriate and efficient. Since the vernacular is taught by volunteers who are not always sufficiently trained or qualified, the "a-ba-da" method is likely to be reproduced in the newly established pre-schools.

¹³ "If you take the stuff down and publish it you are also freezing it" (Tedlock, in: GRELE et al. 1985, p. 74). Yeah.

¹⁴ Cf. GOODY 1987, p. 163.

needs to be established. But to insist on the latter as The Truth makes sense **only** because of the challenge of the former. It makes sense to counter colonial History with anti-colonial History. But what does anti-colonial History do to anti-colonial histories? What happens to Tolai histories if Tolai History is codified, taught, memorised, and reproduced? So the crucial question is: how can the dynamics of knowledge, that are immanent in the oral mode of transmission, be guaranteed once knowledge is written down?

In short, I am proposing three things:

- firstly to produce counter-hegemonical histories as a means of reappropriating the colonial past,
- secondly to use Freire's ideas of how literacy can be learned for a programme of "learning" the colonial past, possibly by
- thirdly implementing such a programme within the context of a programme for literacy.

On the occasion of my farewell in Ialakua, Theo ToVarkia gave a speech which left me greatly impressed. Talking about my research in particular and the Tolai past in general he said: "What we now need is a **debate** about our past."¹⁵ The debate needs to be both about how to construct the past, and about what to construct. Since Tolai society is marked by conflicting and often antagonistic interests, the debate could be lively, heated, even vicious.

On a different level (which could unite those who want to *vatakodo*, to oppose the hegemonical history) what is needed is a dialogue. Learning and knowing and thereby constructing the past is a process. It needs to be a dialogue, propelled by the quest for a truth of things,¹⁶ in which the "truth" is not the final result which terminates the dialogue, but both a dynamic learning and knowing that **is happening** as the dialogue proceeds, and a transient knowledge that "flashes up" (Benjamin) or "flickers through" (Taussig) as "what was" fuses with "what is" in the moment the past is resurrected into the present.¹⁷

The process of knowing requires a non-authoritarian and non-hierarchical relationship between the one who knows and the one who is in the process of knowing more, that is, between teacher and student, or *patuana* and *barmana*.¹⁸ To put it in Tolai terms:

¹⁵ Being an ex-teacher he actually used the English word "debate" in an otherwise Kuanua speech.

¹⁶ See chapter 6, pp. 103f.

¹⁷ Cf. chapter 1, p. 20; chapter 6, pp. 102ff, esp. p. 104. Taussig writes: "The technique of criticism and of discovery imputed here is not bound to an image of truth as something deep and general hidden under layers of superficial and perhaps illusory particulars. Rather, what is at work here is an image of truth as experiment, laden with particularity, now in this guise, now as that one, stalking the stage whose shadowy light conjures only to deconjure" (1986, p. 445). The epitome of the antithesis to this concept of truth is Gottfried Keller's "*Die Wahrheit wird uns nicht davonlaufen*", The truth will not walk out on us, and leave us behind (cf. BENJAMIN 1982, p. 579 (N 3a.1)). The concept of truth I am using here is very different from Foucault's notion of truth; yet the reader may notice that Foucault's ideas have slipped into the next few pages.

¹⁸ "In truth, to retrieve the statement 'she who knows teaches those who do not know' from its authoritarian character, it is necessary for the one who knows to understand that no one knows everything and that no one is ignorant of everything. The educator, as one who knows, first needs to recognize those being educated as the ones who are in the process of knowing more. They are the subjects of this process along with the educator and not merely accommodated patients. Second, the educator needs to recognize that knowledge is not a piece of data, something immobilized, concluded, finished, something to be transferred by one who acquired it to one who still does not possess it" (Paulo Freire, in: FREIRE & MACEDO 1987, p. 41).

this relationship would need to be marked by *variru*, respect. Freire chooses a word which sounds simple but highlights the amount of work that needs to be done in (re)appropriating language: "Love is at the same time the foundation of dialogue and dialogue itself."¹⁹

The colonial past (and this is what I have been concerned with in the dissertation) needs to be told. Those who know something need to tell those who are in the process of knowing. Stories need to be told to prevent them from becoming immobile History. By claiming back their past in stories, people do not only tell stories to each other, but also to themselves. What is then learned is not a definite piece of knowledge, but the "work" - the work of remembering, and more importantly, of re-remembering. Re-remembering the past brings with it the naming of the present. Re-remembering the past is also a way of transcending the present. Becoming conscious of what was, means to sense a potential, or to articulate a desire for what could be. But it is not simply a matter of becoming conscious of the "not-yet-conscious knowledge of what was", as if this knowledge had a finite volume and shape. Resurrecting the dream in the moment of waking up *only* means that there will be other dreams, there will be a yet unknown "not-yet-conscious knowledge of what was". Only?

One of the weaknesses of Freire's concept is that he does not sufficiently account for the need to constantly redefine language, to push further the process of knowing-towards. For Freire emancipatory literacy can accomplish a situation where "there is no longer any separation between thought-language and objective reality",²⁰ as if thought-language catches up with reality, as the interpretations of reality are "demythologised". But thought-language can also be "ahead" of reality in that it transcends what is. In the previous chapter I have argued that memory has the radical potential to resurrect a past outside the conventions of the present. Even though this past might be mythology in Freire's sense, it is a mythology that names what is beyond the present and beyond present objective reality. It can be a means of appropriating the past and the present. So a programme of literacy has to aim also at re-writing the mythological.

Let me try to tie this utopian tirade to the ground by becoming practical. How can a **dialogue of knowing** be achieved that involves writing as one of its media? One of the obvious venues for that dialogue is the school, not because the Western-style education system has proven to be an apt arena, but because it is already there and likely to be there in the near future, and should be utilised. The starting point for "learning" the past is to learn the language in which to communicate about it. This language needs to be appropriated as well. A significant part of the Kuanua vocabulary as recorded around the turn of the century has become archaic, and, many older Tolai assure me, much of the richness and subtlety of the language is disappearing fast. So reading the world can in the Tolai context mean rediscovering the words.

¹⁹ FREIRE 1972, p. 62; my emphasis. Cf. Ann E. Berthoff in her foreword to Freire's latest book (FREIRE & MACEDO 1987, p. xxii). *Variru* has a deeper meaning than its literal English translation, "respect", which comes indeed close to "love" in Freire's sense.

²⁰ Paulo Freire, in: FREIRE & MACEDO 1987, p. 157.

Reading the word presupposes reading the world, and at the same time it accomplishes a re-reading of the world. To "learn" the past must be founded on literacy that is based on a reading of the world. "As a narrative for agency", Henry Giroux writes, "literacy becomes synonymous with an attempt to rescue history, experience, and vision from conventional discourse and dominant social relations".²¹ Learning the past does not then mean to memorise the history, but to learn the work of re-membering. Such a learning should start from the students' experiences. The students, by starting out from exploring their own, immediate past, learn to articulate history - through the spoken word, the written word, or nonverbally through art. A curriculum that devises the process of this knowing does not have to define the material content of what is to be learnt. Instead it must define a strategy, because as the teacher-student relationship loses its "narrative character" (narrating teacher-subject versus listening student-object), the knowledge that is learnt can no longer be "motionless, static, compartmentalized and predictable".²² So in the process of knowing the past in the context of school, the past is constantly redefined and recreated. It is coming alive (and becoming part of the knowing) as it is told: many pasts are to be told in many ways. The conventional historical narrative is only one of the many possible ways of telling histories, and a knowing and learning that draws on the teachers' and students' creativity will devise and explore others. Only if the primacy of a heterogenous plurality of histories in searching for a "truth of things" is learnt, the students' own interests will lead them to widen their experiences and to broaden their definitions of what is *their* history.²³

Eventually the knowledge that has been immobilised in written histories can be drawn into the process of learning and knowing the past. A lot of work needs to be done in making accessible those writings which deal with the Tolai, to resurrect the past through a critique of colonial history, that redefines meanings and reads what has been written down with great care and brazen irreverence. Such a critique will "brush the history against the grain".²⁴

Vatakodo, setting the record straight, could and should mean to encircle hegemonical History with a colourful diversity of counter-hegemonical histories. It should mean to contradict colonial History through anti-colonial histories, male History through women's histories, big man History through histories centered around the lives and experiences of the nobodies, *ol rabis man*, as they are called in Tok Pisin. It should mean to contradict the singular, "capital 'H'" History through a plurality of histories. *Tumu vake*, to write down, should mean to be able to write (hi)stories. *Tumu vake* can easily be misunderstood as the work of immobilising historical knowledge, so that it can be taught

²¹ Henry Giroux, in: FREIRE & MACEDO 1987, p. 10.

²² FREIRE 1972, p. 45.

²³ It is unrealistic to expect that a programme to promote literacy in Freire's sense is devised and implemented by a benevolent and enlightened administration, unless there is a decisive push for it among educators, and more importantly, among those determined to "know more". It is absurd to assume that a programme for learning the work of re-membering can be decreed. Nor can it be set in motion by transient foreign researchers. Although it is possible that innovations in the education sector (more emphasis on non-formal education; introduction of Kuanua as a subject in state schools; revision of the curricula for "community life" and "social sciences") encourage or stimulate wider attempts to construct the past, which will make those innovations redundant.

²⁴ BENJAMIN 1974, p. 697 (seventh thesis).

(narrated/dictated) and learnt (memorised/copied). But *tumu vake* could mean to embark on a literacy programme that has as its goal the creative writing of the past by many.

Writing is preservation. "Preservation leads to accumulation, and accumulation to the increased possibility of incremental knowledge", says Goody.²⁵ Knowledge in this sense is like a scree. Its volume can be defined; it consists of a finite number of particles which make up units of different volume and complexity (grains of sand or rocks); its components can be classified. But the crucial question is whether and how the knowledge is used, that is, how the accumulation of knowledge contributes to knowing. Not only that it must be possible that what is preserved is easily accessible and can be drawn upon, but also the boulders of the scree must not become dead weights that impede the knowing.

Placing the emphasis on *tumu vake* is justified only as long as reading and writing histories is not confined to a small circle of experts who command specialised skills. Other media might be better suited to preserve historical knowledge and enhance a knowing of the past. The local radio could assume a more important role than it plays now. Tavul has shown how effective an art form drama is. The "democratisation" of access to the medium film through video opens another perspective, which seems particularly appropriate, because screenings of videos are popular **social** events in Tolai villages, because there is some local expertise in producing videos, and because the graphic images of Tolai histories might be more easily recreated on celluloid than on paper. But what is true for written histories, holds for filmed histories, too; the goal should not be to increase the audience, but to enlarge the group of people skilled to produce films.

Knowledge of what was is not found only in books, but can be recreated through memory. The *tena buai* know how to escape the social frames of the present and see what is on the other side of the fence. This form of knowing, mediated, for example, through the poetry of a *tapialai* or a song accompanying a dance, could contribute to a dynamic recreation of the past.

As much as a common interest could lead people to enter the dialogue of knowing, the dynamics of that dialogue will help them to redefine their interests. Those once formulating a counter-hegemonical construction of the past may find themselves in a position where they cling to what has become a new hegemonical stance, attacked by others. When transcending the present and the past "the way it really was", a re-memorising of the past necessarily recurs on some of what it opposes and redefines it. "In great models we show to ourselves / The New that is difficult to imagine / As already operating", wrote Bert Brecht in one of his poems. "Since these new models are often / Made from the old ones, are formed from what is there / They seem wrong, but they are not / They became".²⁶

²⁵ GOODY 1987, p. 54.

²⁶ BRECHT 1965, p. 213. I thank Andreas Glaznik for his help with the translation of the quotes by Bert Brecht, Ingeborg Bachmann and Christa Wolf.

I have exhausted myself. After all, my writing is only part of an **imagined** dialogue. The argument of this and of the previous chapter can only be carried further in a real dialogue: between writer and audience, and between theory and practice. I hope it will soon be said of what I have written: "It **became** wrong." After having made "new models from the old ones", I have ideas how to make new models from **my** old ones. I could see myself producing a history of the Tolai that is based on the life experiences of *ol rabis man* - but that is indeed a next step that can only be taken once the real dialogue has resumed.

What have I learnt over the past four years about constructing the Tolai past? My most important initial misapprehension was that there would be **one** Tolai tradition that contradicts **the** colonial European history. But Tolai histories differ depending on who tells them when and where. They reflect the biographical past of the narrator, his or her identity (as someone belonging to a certain *vunatarai*, to a particular village, or living in the diaspora). They reflect his or her gender. In histories claims are established or refuted. Knowledge about the past can be a basis for power. The past can be subject to debates, and those debates are in the last instance often about the position of social groups in society. Tolai create their past not only by writing or telling histories, but also in dramatisations of events, occasionally in lyrics, and in rituals, especially those connected with death. Those recreations of the past serve ends in the present, they guarantee continuity and stability. They can be interpreted in terms of the social context of those performing them. But in many cases they are also appropriations of the past, and juxtapositions of the **dysfunctional** "what was" with the realities of what is.

Tolai histories differ depending on their listeners. I learnt hardly any of the Tolai histories I have quoted in this dissertation by accidentally listening to them being told to a Tolai audience. They were told because I wanted to know them or because Tolai wanted me to know them. They took particular forms because a European was among those listening. The decision whether one of those histories actually got written down in my history of the Tolai was influenced by discussions I had with Tolai, especially with those generously sharing their knowledge with me. But eventually it was my decision. By transforming the spoken word into the written word, by translating notes and transcripts into English, and by editing them, I have changed them again. So the history of the Tolai becomes indeed **my** history of the Tolai, and I needed to clarify what is hidden behind this possessive pronoun.

The thesis has been an exercise in translation and mediation. Tolai concepts needed to be translated so that non-Tolai could understand them. Papua New Guinean languages needed to be translated into English. And a way of thinking that had developed in a particular European culture, within the framework of its language, needed to be mediated for Tolai and for Australian academics. The previous chapter may seem at times disconnected from how Tolai construct their past but more closely connected to how I would want to construct my past. But it is meant to link the historian to his history. As with all the other exercises in translation that have been carried out during the course of this study, I do not claim that the Otherness of another culture can be entirely dissolved into the familiar, nor that this is desirable.

The thesis not only had to bridge cultures, it also had to bridge the different contexts in which it developed. In the course of this year, 1988, I have learnt in libraries and in casual conversations at men's secluded places on the Gazelle. I have typed my notes on a battered typewriter in the shade of an open hut, occasionally interrupted by my neighbours or by schoolchildren, and I have typed the drafts of my thesis on a microcomputer in the seclusion of my Canberra office. In the course of this year I have experienced long stretches of relaxed silence, sitting with friends on the beach or somewhere in the bush, when chewing *buai* was the only obvious activity, and I have experienced a tense silence during a frantic half year in which I wrote the first draft of this dissertation.

It is my task as a professional historian to construct a past that transcends the present. But this obligation is limited by my affinity to the past and present in question. Historians who recognise such an obligation for themselves have to find their position between claims such as that the Tolai past belongs exclusively to Tolai, and the need to contradict the progress of World History with a diversity of non-parochial and shared histories. They are torn between the desire to mediate Otherness, and the need to retain it. Professional historians working in Papua New Guinea are privileged to be able to construct the past from written material as well as from the histories women and men choose to tell. Both oral histories and traditions, and written accounts need to be brushed against the grain, but in a way which does not dissolve the colourful imagery of oral accounts into the rigidity of a historical narrative that knows only one truth, that of its author craving for an objective reconstruction of what really was.

Not the Way It Really Was - that requires questioning the seemingly obvious, resisting the historicist narcotics, and disentangling oneself from the 'really' that prevents knowing the reality. **Constructing the Tolai Past** must eventually be a dialogue of knowing involving those who re-member their past.

*I tar lolovina kaugu tinata. Kan ina ngo ko boko ati. Nam uka, i par.*²⁷

²⁷ Longpela toktok bilong mi i pinis nau. Ating bai mi malolo pastaim. Em tasol.

Glossary of Tolai Terms

This glossary lists only Tolai words, or words from other languages, which have been incorporated into the Tolai language. Most of the non-English words which appear only once in the text are not listed. Some terms are explained in separate glossaries or featured in chapter 10 (see cross-references in brackets). I always give today's meanings.

<i>akakur</i>	story; tale; myth
<i>apik</i>	a. section of a <i>vanatarai</i> b. part of a bunch of bananas
<i>babat</i>	a. magical power of the <i>tubuan</i> b. protective magic
<i>balaguan</i>	feast that includes dances, particularly to commemorate dead ancestors (sometimes used to denote any feast that includes dances)
<i>balanagunan</i>	home village; entity of traditions on which the Tolai draw to define their identity
<i>barmana</i>	young man
<i>bamiuruna</i>	relatives
<i>bartamana</i>	family; affines
<i>biŋa tubuan</i>	owner of the <i>tubuan</i>
<i>bobotoi</i>	a. darkness b. time of darkness; pre-colonial past
<i>buai</i> (ch. 5, p. 78)	betelnut
<i>bung na vartabar</i>	Thanksgiving Day
<i>cement</i> (spelling as in English)	permanent boundary marker put down by a surveyor
<i>daka</i>	a. pepper plant b. fruit of the pepper plant
<i>dok</i>	initiated to the third stage into the <i>tubuan</i>
<i>dovotina</i>	truth
<i>dukduk</i>	a being represented by a mask; "child" of the <i>tubuan</i>
<i>e</i>	times; period; age
<i>garamut</i>	slit-gong
<i>gogo</i>	<i>tabu</i> coil
<i>gunan</i> (ch. 1, pp. 11f)	village; hamlet; home
<i>ingiet</i> (ch. 1, pp. 8f)	set of magical devices; formerly possibly a male secret society
<i>iau</i>	l
<i>kabakavir</i>	kind of <i>tapialai</i> (song of the <i>tubuan</i>)
<i>kabang</i>	lime

<i>kaia</i> (ch. 13, p. 215)	spirit
<i>kakang</i>	a. section of a <i>vanatarai</i> b. part of a bunch of bananas
<i>kamara</i>	war between groups of Tolai before the arrival of the Europeans
<i>kapa</i>	a. light b. corrugated iron (different pronunciation)
<i>kidoloina pirpir</i>	complete account
<i>kivung</i>	a. assembly, meeting, gathering, council b. group that meets
<i>kunai</i>	long grass used for thatching roofs
<i>lain</i>	village assembly
<i>lotu</i>	a. church service b. Christian religion c. to worship
<i>lualua</i>	leader, particularly leader of a <i>vanatarai</i>
<i>luluai</i>	fight leader
<i>Luluai</i>	village headman appointed by the German or Australian Administration
<i>madapai</i>	piece of land which is of particular significance to a <i>vanatarai</i> , often the place first cleared by the ancestors
<i>maku</i>	in-law
<i>malan</i>	magic to make somebody invulnerable
<i>malira</i>	magical charm (especially love magic)
<i>malmal</i>	peace
<i>mangana/mangamangana</i>	customs, ways, habits, characteristics
<i>maravot</i>	secluded place used by <i>ingiet</i> initiates
<i>matamatam</i>	mortuary ceremony involving the <i>tubuan</i> , which a <i>vanatarai</i> stages for all its dead ancestors
<i>matanifu</i>	government; state
<i>matanoi</i>	place where ancestors migrating to New Britain went ashore
<i>matuana</i>	close maternal relative
<i>melem</i>	expert
<i>minamai</i>	a. chewing of betelnut b. mortuary ceremony which includes the distribution of <i>buai</i> to guests
<i>minat</i> (ch. 10, pp. 172ff)	a. death b. deceased person; dead body
<i>minigulai</i>	kind of sea eagle
<i>misit</i>	white woman

<i>mitinare</i>	Methodist or United Church pastor
<i>ngenge</i>	a. species of coconut b. name of a moiety c. fair-skinned person
<i>nian</i>	food
<i>niuruna</i>	relative, kin
<i>nurnur</i> (ch. 7, p. 120)	a. belief b. to believe
<i>pal</i>	house
<i>papalum</i> (ch. 10, p. 179)	work; labour
<i>papar</i>	a. side; half b. moiety
<i>patuana</i>	a. respected male elder b. ancestor
<i>pia</i> (ch. 8, p. 131)	land
<i>pidik</i>	secret
<i>pokono</i>	a. fathom (length from fingertips to fingertips of a person's outstretched arms) b. unit of <i>tabu</i>
<i>pua</i>	a. white b. white person
<i>purpuruan</i>	a. war; conflict b. illicit sexual intercourse
<i>raskal</i>	male trouble-maker
<i>tabalivana</i>	spirit
<i>tabu</i> (ch. 10, pp. 164ff)	a. shell-money b. holy; forbidden
<i>tapialai</i>	song of the <i>tubuan</i>
<i>tarai</i>	a. people b. men
<i>taraiu</i>	secluded place used by the <i>tubuan</i> , and on other occasions when men want to keep to themselves
<i>taring</i>	black magic; sorcery
<i>tēna buai</i>	person who can communicate with spirits; somebody who is knowledgeable about magic which uses <i>buai</i> as a carrier
<i>tibuna varkurai</i>	self government; independence
<i>tubuan</i> (ch. 3, p. 54)	a. being that is represented by a mask; b. male secret society
<i>tultul</i>	a. helper; assistant b. assistant of the <i>Lulua</i> ; appointed by the colonial Administration
<i>tumu vake</i>	to write down

<i>tuptup</i>	silly; foolish; stupid; ignorant
<i>turangan</i>	spirit
<i>ul a ubu</i>	nightly gathering to commemorate a deceased immediately after his or her funeral
<i>uviana</i>	rich person (esp. man rich in <i>tabu</i>)
<i>vaira</i>	non-Tolai
<i>vakuku</i>	in vain; void; meaningless
<i>varbean</i>	wedding
<i>varkukul</i>	a. bride price payment b. ceremony in which bride price is paid
<i>varlapang</i>	present given as a gesture of welcome or appreciation: a. betelnut and pepper given to a guest b. shell-money given to the <i>tubuan</i> c. money or shell-money collection for one person
<i>vamgu</i> (ch. 8, p. 136)	envy; non-sexual jealousy
<i>varvalaruai</i>	drama; enactment; demonstration
<i>vatakodo</i>	to straighten
<i>vatut varpa</i>	payment made at a man's <i>minamai</i> to release his wife and her children to return to their own <i>vunatarai</i>
<i>vi guve</i>	to bind together; to unite
<i>vilikete</i>	violation of the Sabbath
<i>vinirua</i>	a. violent death b. perdition
<i>virua</i>	a. human victim b. to have an accident
<i>vok</i>	labourer
<i>vunatarai</i> (ch. 3, pp. 42f)	group of same matrilineal descent with a common identity
<i>vunavuna</i>	ceremony performed after the death of a big man, which involves the <i>tubuan</i>
<i>vuvuai</i>	custom to give out goods to people who on an appointed day pay for them publicly
<i>waitpus</i> (spelling as in Tok Pisin)	paramount <i>Luluai</i>

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Acknowledgements for Illustrations

Chapter 1

– p. 1: from PARKINSON 1907, opposite p. 112

Chapter 3

– p. 51 (top): courtesy of Jimmy Malcolm of Ialakua

Chapter 4

– p. 69: Ton Otto

Chapter 5

– p. 84: NDArch: Collection of Photographs, A 739/11.

Chapter 7

– p. 117: from "Photographs New Britain No. 1", ML: MCh/OM 246, photograph no. 62

Chapter 8

– p. 127: Ton Otto

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Chapter 9

– p. 163: courtesy of Ovin laLaval of Vunamami

Chapter 10

– p. 166: from VERLAG KOLONIALPOLITISCHER ZEITSCHRIFTEN 1911, p. 34

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Chapter 11

– p. 190: from SCHWEINITZ et al. 1897, plate XVIII

Chapter 12

– p. 201: NDArch: Collection of Photographs, A 750/12

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Chapter 15

– p. 228: from MISSIONARE VOM HL. HERZEN JESU n.d., p. 94