MATUPIT

*Land, Politics,
and Change
among the Tolai
of New Britain*

A. L. Epstein

ONE of the most interesting aspects of the study of change among a people after they have had contact with an alien civilisation is not only how they change but also how much they retain of their traditional ways—continuity in change. This book examines the question as exemplified by the Tolai people of Matupit, a small island near Rabaul.

The Tolai of the north-eastern Gazelle Peninsula are among the most sophisticated and wealthy indigenous people of New Guinea and occupy a prominence in the affairs of Papua-New Guinea out of all proportion to their numbers. The Matupi are one of the largest groups of Tolai.

Despite their sophistication and close links with Rabaul the Matupi retain many of their old traditions and, though they may work for wages in Rabaul, land is still extremely important to them, for most still grow much of their own food and cultivate cash crops. It is not surprising, therefore, that they devote much time and energy to disputes over land, and a major part of this book is an attempt to understand the nature of these disputes and the part that land plays in their lives. To understand this the author has examined in detail the modern political and economic systems of the island and illustrated his findings by case histories of the often involved disputes over land use and ownership which may go back several generations.

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the Tolai of New Britain*

A. L. EPSTEIN

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For my mother
and in memory of my father

Foreword

INTEREST in New Guinea has increased dramatically during the last ten years or so. Anthropologists and other social scientists from many countries have been attracted to the Territory, particularly to the Highlands, by the opportunity of working among peoples whose parents or grandparents lived under Stone Age conditions, and the appeal of 'the last frontier' has stimulated innumerable travel books as well as a nascent tourist industry. The United Nations continually debates the progress of New Guinea as one of the very few remaining Trusteeship Territories. It is therefore salutary to be reminded by Dr Epstein that there is more to be discovered in New Guinea than pig exchanges and sacred flutes, and that adaptation to change is not limited to forming a new Local Government Council or planting some more coffee trees. We certainly have a clear duty to posterity to record the direct and rapid transition from traditional tribal autonomy to national integration now taking place in the Highlands and other frontier zones of New Guinea, for an opportunity of comparable scale is unlikely ever to occur again anywhere in the world. But the long-term needs of science, as well as the more pressing needs of the peoples of New Guinea who have to understand the complexities of their own ways of life, require us also to look elsewhere in the Territory at social situations and processes broadly comparable with those found in other developing areas. In social science we are a long way from being able to predict with any precision the way in which social institutions and cultural patterns will alter through time, and each new inquiry in the field can elucidate facts that deepen our understanding of events and processes that have occurred at other times and in other places. To understand what is happening in modern New Guinea, we can be helped by the findings of earlier investigations in

Africa, Southeast Asia, Latin America and elsewhere, and conversely these same findings may be seen more clearly because of insights gained from empirical inquiry in New Guinea.

Dr Epstein is well qualified for this task. The long apprenticeship he served in Africa established his reputation both as one of the first social anthropologists to operate successfully in an urban field environment, and as a writer able to report on his work with clarity and imagination. His studies on the Copperbelt of what was then Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia) are well known, and his analyses of urban courts, facilitated by his own legal training, are evidence of an interest in problems of consensus and conformity, of the establishment, maintenance and modification of norms, that are central to sociological theory. The palm-shaded paths of Matupit are far removed from the treeless gridiron of streets in a Copperbelt mine compound, and there is no industrial enterprise in Rabaul to match the technologically sophisticated mines and processing plants of Luanshya; there is even a major difference between the informal and administratively unrecognised village meetings held on Matupit and the formally constituted Urban Native Courts of the Copperbelt. But the problems of continuity and adaptation which human beings face under urbanisation in these two contrasted environments have much in common. Dr Epstein's earlier experience in Africa shows through clearly in the discussion of social life on and around Matupit which constitutes this book; he deals explicitly with this contrast in his final chapter.

Although he provides us with quantitative information about the social characteristics of Matupi and other Tolai communities, Dr Epstein's argument rests for the most part on a detailed examination of extended sequences of interconnected events, so-called case histories. This method of sociological analysis has come to be associated with the former Rhodes-Livingstone Institute, of which Dr Epstein was a distinguished member. It is a form of exposition which inevitably takes us straight to the front line of social interaction, and we can see innovations, decisions to do nothing, invocations of principle, attempts to manoeuvre and social ploys of other types occurring in response to situations in which actors find

themselves involved and from which they cannot easily escape. Thus, as Dr Epstein points out, we are studying tactics rather than strategy.

Indeed, we have no choice. There is no general staff drafting slowly maturing strategic plans to ensure that the people of Matupit survive as an entity in the contemporary world, but only the hardpressed people themselves, ill-informed about the economic future of Rabaul, the intentions of the Australian Administration, the prospects of the copra and cocoa industries, the intentions of overseas Christian missions, and so on. Some Tolai men and women, in some contexts, are able to step back and take a slightly longer view of the likely consequences of alternative courses of action; some aspects of Tolai culture, notably the institution of *tambu* shell-money, are defended more tenaciously than others. Yet by and large the picture is of a group struggling for survival, with Dr Epstein reporting from the battlefield. He provides no merely descriptive account, for the vividness of his reports is matched by his ability to see the battle historically and with theoretical and comparative insight. The pattern of change, such as it is, emerges from the largely unforeseen distant consequences of decisions taken in the hope of achieving short-term goals.

It is the continual pressure which partly explains why Dr Epstein is able to talk on the one hand about 'cultural erosion' on Matupit and, on the other, despite contrary statements by earlier writers, about the many ways in which Matupit is far from being just a suburb of Rabaul. The social, cultural, and economic pressures which threaten to 'erode' the identity of Matupit also bring into sharper consciousness those resources which can be used to resist the pressures, while the very existence of social pressure generates, at least in the short run, a heightened awareness of group identity. Dr Epstein shows how people who had no collective name and no name for their language came to see themselves as the Tolai tribe. He indicates how, within that group, differential access to the most important economic resource, fertile land, is linked to different views about the time-span within which tactics are to be worked out and to different perceptions of the long-term consequences of social action.

The people of Matupit have been in direct contact with the colonial world for nearly a hundred years, and Dr Epstein is able to give his analysis substantial historical depth, without which no study of social change can be satisfactory. But the most interesting point in his book, as I see it, is his contention that, at least for Matupit, the major analytical task is not to explain change: 'the puzzle in a sense is not so much to understand change but to explain why change has not been more radical and far-reaching'. Earlier generations of sociologists and social anthropologists tended to operate with models of society that gravitated naturally to positions of stable equilibrium. The notions of dynamic equilibrium, homeostasis and negative feedback were introduced later to bring these models closer to the complexities of reality. Now, living in a political and technological environment where sustained social change is taken for granted and social survival itself is questioned, we tend to react by assuming that change can be taken for granted sociologically, and that the important sociological problem is to understand the processes by which groups, such as the people of Matupit, survive as groups at all. In fact there are many problems in the sociological analysis of change still to be tackled, and it would be disastrous if shifts in our sociological interests reflected too quickly and too narrowly shifts in our social condition. Nevertheless, this shift of emphasis in Dr Epstein's work from the perspective of change to the perspective of continuity increases its relevance both for those grappling with problems that are of enduring as well as contemporary sociological interest, and for those who have to deal with the urgent social problems of contemporary New Guinea.

J. A. Barnes

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12 December 1968

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Introduction

THIS book is a report on fieldwork carried out on the island of Matupit, New Britain, in the periods November 1959 to September 1960, and April to June 1961 when I was a Research Fellow of the Australian National University, Canberra. I returned to the Gazelle Peninsula for a brief visit early in 1968 to observe the elections for the second Papua-New Guinea House of Assembly. By this time, however, the bulk of the manuscript had been completed, and save for one or two marginal comments the present analysis takes no account of developments in the area since my earlier visits there. The ethnographic present refers therefore to the period 1960-1.

If social anthropology were the more rigorous discipline that many of its practitioners wish it to be, the conditions under which fieldwork is undertaken might correspond a little more closely to those we are led to believe obtain in a laboratory: students would select their areas because they provided a suitable locale for investigating a particular problem, and for testing out hypotheses they had already formulated in their studies. In practice, such desiderata can only rarely, if ever, be achieved. Sometimes the situation in the area selected turns out to be very different from what had been anticipated, sometimes the problem can only be defined after a period of preliminary investigation; thus it happens frequently that the ethnographer is compelled by circumstances or some shift in interest to alter his original plans. Having studied the growth of towns in Central Africa for a number of years, I had decided that it might be interesting to examine a similar phenomenon in a different cultural setting. When therefore my wife and I first went to New Britain it was our intention that she would select an inland settlement in which to carry out a study of economic change, while I would

concentrate my attentions on the town of Rabaul. For a variety of reasons the study of Rabaul turned out to be impracticable and, having spent a couple of months together with my wife at Rapitok, where I began to learn the vernacular, I finally decided to settle on the island of Matupit, a few miles out of Rabaul. But my interest in towns was not thereby abandoned altogether, and the present book might well be regarded as a study of urbanisation viewed from the perspective of the village.

Clearly the kind of material which the fieldworker collects will be guided to a considerable extent by his training and theoretical interests, but what goes into his notebooks will also depend in large measure on what happens around him, and on the preoccupations and interests of the members of the community being studied. On my very first visit to Matupit I was at once made acutely aware of the importance the Matupi¹ attached to land, and of the tensions that could be generated when any question arose that seemed to touch on it. I was sitting with a small group of men, waiting to discuss the possibility of my doing anthropological research on the island, when a frail old man, supporting himself on a stick, hobbled out of his house to join us. Wasting no time on polite introductions, the old man at once embarked on a bitter harangue on the ways of the Europeans who came with sweet words about living with them in peace, but in fact only sought to acquire their land. Later, when my presence amongst them had gained acceptance, I found that land was not simply an issue between the islanders and the Europeans, it was also a matter to which the Matupi devoted a great deal of their public life and energies in acrimonious disputes amongst themselves. A major theme of this book therefore is the attempt to understand the part that land plays in the lives of the Matupi. A second and related theme is the elucidation of the political system of the island, and here I seek to show how, under present conditions, land control becomes central to the definition of leadership within the community, and land itself a major focus of competition and political struggle. This situation has its roots in what seems to me a conflict

¹ I drop the final 't' when referring to the people of the island, or when using the word as an adjective.

endemic in indigenous modes of social organisation, but it cannot be adequately understood without also taking into account a much wider network of relationships in which the Matupi have been enmeshed for close on a century. For we are dealing here not with some remote and untouched island society, but with a group that has had a closer and more complex experience of contact with the outside world than almost any other community in Melanesia. Underlying, and indeed permeating, the discussion of land and politics, therefore, is a third theme: that of social change. There is now of course an extensive literature devoted to analysing how tribal societies have changed as a result of contact with alien and technologically more advanced groups. Yet frequently what is striking in these situations is not so much the changes that have taken place in response to external pressures, but the tenacity with which many groups cling to their traditional ways and institutions in the face of those pressures. The Tolai provide an excellent case in point, for in spite of the highly disturbed character of their social history since the area was opened up to foreign influence, and the marked social changes this has brought about, they have nevertheless maintained a way of life that still remains, in many important respects, recognisably traditional. The problem therefore is not simply to describe the course of change, nor indeed to indicate the areas of persistence, but rather to understand continuity as part of the very process of change. We have to deal, that is to say, not with continuity *and* change, as though these were in some way opposed processes, but with continuity *in* change.

The assumption which underlies my approach to these problems is that the dynamics of change are to be sought in the choices that people are led to make as new opportunities and alternative courses of action open up to them. In line with much recent anthropological thinking on these questions, much of what we now perceive as change and continuity in the way of life of a people such as the Tolai may be regarded as the working out of their responses to a changing social situation, set in motion by the coming of the Europeans, and the incentives and constraints that situation offered and imposed upon them. How the new social environment is defined in varying contexts is a function of what I shall call a process

of involvement. Involvement is a term introduced by Mitchell (1964) to handle certain problems in the study of urbanisation: it refers to the various links established by migrant workers with the towns, as indicated for example in the fact that the migrant has brought his wife to town with him, or has in fact spent more time in the urban areas than at his rural home. My own use of the term, while embodying a similar basic idea, is somewhat broader: it refers to the means whereby and the extent to which a formerly autonomous group comes to participate in wider fields of social interaction than was previously possible. In the present context therefore involvement provides the necessary shorthand expression to characterise the links that have been established between the Matupi and the wider society that has developed over the years on the Gazelle Peninsula, for in my view any attempt to describe contemporary social life on Matupit that did not take full account of these links would make little sense.

The view that social life on Matupit today can only be adequately understood in the context of the islanders' relations with the wider society has dictated my presentation of the material, and at this point it may be helpful to sketch in the general framework of the analysis. Chapter 1 provides a background to the recent history of the Gazelle Peninsula in which I have sought to delineate the character of Tolai involvement in the wider society up to the period at which I began my fieldwork. In Chapter 2 I focus directly on Matupit, and discuss through the examination of a number of disputes with the Administration how the question of land has been crucial in defining Matupi relations with Rabaul. The continuing struggle waged by the islanders to resist the encroachments of the town on their own scarce land resources represents the negative pole of involvement, but the disputes themselves enable us to grasp Matupi attitudes towards their land only in a limited way. Chapter 3 therefore presents the obverse, and more positive, side of the coin by surveying Matupi participation in wage labour as well as their economic activities based on the village. What emerges is the way in which many Matupi, by their continued attachment to the land and the use they make of it, are able to participate

simultaneously in the wage, cash, and subsistence sectors of the modern economy. We have here, as studies elsewhere have similarly shown, an important clue to the strong element of continuity in Matupi social structure, the theme of Chapter 4, where I show how local grouping and organisation continue to be built around named hamlet sites, each of which is jurally linked with a matrilineal descent group under its acknowledged leader. I argue, however, that there is an ambiguity in the social structure, based on the combination of the principles of matriliney and patrivirilocal residence, and that in present circumstances this becomes a fertile source of disputes over land amongst the Matupi themselves. Following an exposition of the system of land tenure in Chapter 5, this line of argument is pursued and developed in Chapter 6: here through the detailed use of case-material I have sought to relate the nature and incidence of these disputes to the island's political system. The discussion of the system of exchange in Chapter 7 concerns not only relations between descent groups on Matupit itself, but also relations between the islanders and other Tolai groups; these relationships are mediated through marriage and the performance of various types of ceremony, but the main burden of the analysis rests on the bearing which these institutions have on the exercise of political leadership, and the way this is changing. This leads on in Chapter 8 to a discussion of the new political attitudes which are developing on Matupit, and the way in which the Matupi are coming to participate in more broadly based political institutions. Finally, in Chapter 9, I turn to the theme of continuity in change, where I seek to gather together the various threads of the argument, to set out more explicitly the underlying ideas that have guided my analysis, and to pose certain further questions which seem to me to arise out of my material about the relations between structural change, cultural continuity and the maintenance of group identity.

I have mentioned earlier the kind of reception I received on my first arrival on Matupit. After some discussion it was finally agreed that I might occupy an unused pre-school building provided I signed an agreement, to be witnessed by the District Officer, that I would remain in residence for no

more than a year.² In time I was able to establish my bona fides, and gradually my presence at meetings, ceremonies, and other village activities came to be accepted without question. Yet it would be idle to pretend that fieldwork at Matupit was easy, and it was only as the time approached for my departure that I felt that I had succeeded in stilling Matupi misgivings about the reasons for my visit. In the circumstances I am all the more keenly aware of the gratitude I owe to those Matupi who gave me their friendship: I recall here with deep affection and respect the elders Turpui, Anton ToMana, ToGarama, Kaputin, Rupen ToKalula, and John ToVuia. I recall too many enjoyable conversations with some of the younger Matupi, of whom space allows me to mention only ToPirit, Thomas ToBunbun, and Epineri Titimur. Finally, I wish to thank Kolias ToKonia, who served me first as language teacher and then as research assistant and general mentor.

In Rabaul I had all the co-operation I could hope for from members of the Administration. In particular I would like to thank J. R. Foldi, then District Commissioner; Harry West, then District Officer; Jack Emmanuel, then Assistant District Officer; and Col Liddle, at that time Assistant District Officer, Local Government, Vunadidir. In Port Moresby, J. K. McCarthy, Director of Native Affairs, and David Fenbury, of the Administrator's Department, spared me a good deal of their time in discussing the introduction of Local Government Councils on the Gazelle Peninsula, a development with which they were both closely associated in its early stages.

In the preparation of this manuscript I have incurred many debts. Professor Raymond Firth dealt with some questions by correspondence, and went to much trouble to send me copies of the notes he made on his visit to Rabaul in 1951. I have also been greatly helped by a number of persons who have worked through the manuscript as a whole or read various chapters in it: Professor J. A. Barnes, Dr Ann Chowning, and Professor R. S. Parker of the Australian National University; Professor Max Gluckman, University of Manchester; Professor Lucy Mair, London School of Economics; and Professor Charles Rowley, University of Papua

² A little later I moved into a house which I was able to rent from its owner.

and New Guinea. If, finding that I have not been able to meet all their comments and criticisms, they cannot approve my obduracy, I hope they can still accept this expression of my appreciation for the pains they have taken.

My thanks are also due to Mrs Marlous Ploeg, and to Mr J. Heyward, Department of Geography, A.N.U., for assistance with the maps and diagrams, and to Miss G. Mathias and Miss H. Gough who so patiently typed various drafts of the manuscript.

In the preparations for fieldwork, particularly in working through the extensive German literature on the Gazelle Peninsula, in the conduct of fieldwork itself, and throughout the lengthy and seemingly endless period of writing-up, I have had the continuing assistance and encouragement of my wife Scarlett. The words of thanks I offer here can express only very inadequately the debt of gratitude I owe her.

A.L.E.

Canberra

October 1968

The Gazelle Peninsula in its Historical Setting

WE are concerned in this book with a people known nowadays as the Tolai who live in a small area within about twenty miles radius of the modern town of Rabaul on the Gazelle Peninsula of New Britain. Topographically, the area is made up of hilly country with a narrow coastal fringe of lower land, and flanked to the south and west by a broad valley which separates it from the high, rugged Baining mountains which form the bulk of the Peninsula. These mountains constitute a natural barrier which in the past effectively sealed off the north-eastern corner of the island from the rest of New Britain. Contact between indigenous groups was limited in other directions too. Currents in the area are notoriously capricious, one early visitor describing the surrounding sea as one of the most dangerous to small sailing craft he had encountered anywhere (Romilly, 1887: 2). Permanent links in pre-European contact times appear therefore to have been maintained only with the adjacent Duke of York Islands and the southern parts of New Ireland. A limited number of coastal communities also undertook the hazardous trading expeditions to Nakanai, on the north coast of New Britain, to acquire the *Nassa* shells which, when properly treated, provided the local form of currency known as *tambu*.

Land and People

The visitor to this part of the Gazelle Peninsula is at once impressed by a number of striking physical features. The scenery around Rabaul is dominated by three peaks, known

respectively as the Mother, the North Daughter, and the South Daughter. The Mother is the highest and attains an altitude of 2,200 feet. These are all ancient volcanic cones. For this has been an area of intense and continuing tectonic activity. Blanche Bay itself, within whose inner harbour the town of Rabaul now stands, is said to have been formed by some violent explosive outburst in pre-historic times, while today around Rabaul, within a zone a couple of miles wide and extending across the centre of the harbour, there are four active or dormant volcanoes and several other points which show evidence of fairly recent activity (Fisher, 1939).

George Brown, the first missionary to enter the area, and a very distinguished naturalist, has provided in his autobiography a graphic eye-witness account of an eruption in 1878, one effect of which was the sudden emergence of a small island in the middle of Blanche Bay (1908: 240-5). The most recent major eruption was in 1937: it wrought havoc in Rabaul, destroyed a coastal Tolai settlement with heavy loss of life, and once again considerably transformed the landscape around Blanche Bay. Questions were immediately raised about the future status of Rabaul and the possible re-location of what was then the capital of the Mandated Territory of New Guinea, while the people of Matupit, whose homes lie in the very shadow of Matupi crater, were compelled at the time to evacuate the island, though they later insisted on returning to it. In addition to these more violent and dramatic outbursts, earth tremors and tidal waves of varying magnitude are also experienced from time to time. At Matupit, for example, submarine movements have resulted in subsidence, and loss of residential and garden land, while there have also been abnormal alterations of sea-level and recurrent oscillations between the island and the mainland (Stehn and Woolnough, 1937).

But if the environment is at times harsh and uncertain, it also has its more benevolent aspects. Over much of the Gazelle the soils are extremely fertile, being formed of decomposed volcanic and vegetable matter, and capable of supporting a wide variety of crops. The explorer Powell, who spent some three years in New Britain between 1877 and 1880, reported of a trip from Nodup to Blanche Bay that the land they

MAP I The north-eastern Gazelle Peninsula, 1960

passed through was nearly all cultivated, with large crops of bananas, yams, and taro all around (1883: 31). These were, and remain, among the chief items of indigenous subsistence. But the Tolai area is pre-eminently a land of the coconut. In pre-contact times, as today, the coconut contributed substantially to the daily diet in the form of food and drink. Coconut oil, moreover, was used in the preparation of a number of dishes, giving local cooking a distinctive and, to the European palate, even pleasing flavour, while no ceremonial meal was complete without *ku*, a coconut relish which Tolai nowadays liken to butter. Its varied nutritional merits apart, however, the coconut palm also provided for a whole range of other indigenous requirements both mundane and ritual. Its fronds were used in the building of houses, as well as for the weaving of mats and various kinds of basket for carrying produce to and from the gardens or the market place; the dried husks provided fuel for cooking; and the nut itself in that early phase of growth when it is referred to in the vernacular as *a tirip* was regarded as having important magical properties and, like certain other parts of the palm, was essential in a number of different ritual contexts. As we shall see shortly, the palm, as a source of copra, was also the chief means by which the Tolai became so rapidly involved in a much wider system of economic and political relations.

The Gazelle Peninsula was not rich in fauna. Wallaby and cassowary birds were known in the past, but now appear to be extinct. Nor does the pig loom large as in so many other parts of New Guinea. Herds of swine there were, and the wild pig was hunted in the more remote and denser parts of the bush, but there are no references in the literature to the large-scale pig-exchanges or 'pig-complex' so central a feature of the culture elsewhere in Melanesia. Apart therefore from the eating of human flesh, which was widely practised in the area, the main regular source of animal protein was fish. Fishing indeed was the major economic activity of men in the coastal settlements, and fish and other marine products such as slaked lime, manufactured from coral deposits, to be taken together with the areca-nut and pepper-plant as a stimulant, were systematically traded with people further inland even in pre-contact times.

The distinction between coastal and inland areas expresses the major ecological cleavage within the region, but the situation is also a good deal more complicated. Perhaps for reasons associated with its volcanic history the Blanche Bay area, despite its small size, is marked by a considerable degree of ecological diversity. This is revealed at times in highly localised forms of production. Thus a particular variety of pandanus, valued because its leaves may be woven into fine-quality mats, may flourish in some localities but not in others, or a highly prized item of food such as the egg of the bush turkey or megapode may be found in only a limited number of places. Again, a variety of crop which is out of season at one place may be in plentiful supply at another only a matter of a few miles away. For the seasonal factor itself is not uniform. Although there are certain activities which can properly be described as seasonal, for example the setting of fish-traps, when these activities will actually be carried out will be determined more by local conditions, so that at one place men may be preparing to launch their fish-traps when only a little further round the coast the season is already at an end. In these ways the ecological situation on the Gazelle provided a particularly favourable set of conditions for the development of a complex system of indigenous trade. Extensive trading between different districts was being carried on long before Europeans first arrived there. A network of markets ran right through the area, goods passing through a series of intermediaries from the coast to the more remote inland settlements and vice versa, each locality, as Salisbury notes (1962: 332), trading both on its own account and as middlemen in long-distance trade.

The people who inhabited the area at this time were mainly Austronesian-speaking,¹ and much in their culture and modes of social organisation immediately recalls patterns and themes that are widespread throughout island Melanesia as well as the New Guinea mainland. Social life on the Gazelle Peninsula, as elsewhere in Melanesia, was characteristically

¹ In addition to the Tolai, there were also a number of other very small groups in the area such as the Sulka, the Taulil, and the Bainings. These spoke Papuan or non-Melanesian languages and may have been autochthones. Some account of these groups is to be found in Parkinson's classic monograph *Dreissig Jahre in der Südsee* (1907).

minute in scale (Hogbin, 1958: 152-3). The Tolai themselves shared a common language, though dialectal variations were, and still are, sometimes considerable, and a relatively homogeneous culture. But they lacked most of the usual indices of political or cultural unity. They possessed no single common name for themselves as a group and designations of the land, the people, and the language as *Gunantuna* or *Kuanua*² were merely usages adopted by the incoming Roman Catholic and Methodist missions respectively. Today, the expression 'Tolai', which in the vernacular is used as a term of greeting or address, rather like 'mate' or 'comrade' in other cultures, has won complete acceptance as a group designation, but this is of very recent origin. The earliest reference to it in this form that I have been able to discover in the literature occurs in an item contributed to the *Rabaul Times* by a correspondent in Wau in the mid-1930s. The usage may by this time have become well-established, but the context suggests clearly that it was a product of the commingling of indigenous peoples from different parts of the country brought about by the demand for labour in the New Guinea goldfields. I shall employ the term Tolai throughout this study, noting, however, that its use retrospectively can only be justified on grounds of convenience.

Lacking a common identity, there was also a lack of any substantial body of historical lore accepted by all Tolai. There are 'legends of origin', but these tend to vest in particular matrilineage groups: they tell of more or less recent migration into the area from New Ireland or of movements within the Gazelle Peninsula itself. But at this stage it is impossible to date these events with any degree of accuracy. All of this may be taken as pointing to, or a reflection of, the fragmented and highly local character of the Tolai polity. The political units were territorial groupings of the kind now commonly referred to in the literature as parishes³ with an average population of some 200-300 persons. In some cases neighbouring parishes combined as 'districts' for defence, and

² *Gunantuna* means literally in the vernacular the 'true' or 'proper' land. *Kuanua* is a vernacular term from the Duke of York Islands and simply means 'over there'.

³ A parish is defined (Hogbin and Wedgwood, 1953) as the largest local group forming a political unit.

were referred to by outsiders using group names. But as Salisbury observes (1962: 331), the occasions for co-operation were rare and the district groups displayed little evidence of strong solidarity. Settlements moreover were often physically isolated from one another, to such an extent indeed that there was not even a footpath along the coastline around Blanche Bay (Schnee, 1904: 18). Travel then was not only physically difficult, it was also extremely hazardous since relations between parishes were marked by suspicion and hostility, often culminating in raiding and warfare. Internally, the parish was made up of a number of named localities or hamlets, each associated with a small matrilineage, whose affairs were under the direction of a senior elder (*lualua*), usually the senior male member of the matrilineage. The local matrilineage enjoyed considerable autonomy in day-to-day affairs. In particular, its members exercised joint rights over land and certain other forms of property, and participated as a group in bridewealth transactions involving its members.

Yet if Tolai social life was marked by an intense parochialism, there were also at work other countervailing tendencies equally deep-rooted in the culture. A dual organisation in the form of two exogamous units or moieties for the purpose of regulating marriage was recognised throughout the area and also extended to the neighbouring Duke of York Islands and the nearest part of New Ireland. Marriage links might therefore be fairly widespread, creating bonds between otherwise hostile communities. The interest in trading, to which brief reference has already been made, was another important aspect of the traditional exchange system. Trade was carried on in order to gain access to valued commodities not otherwise available, but in this society success in trade also opened up the major path to riches and influence. Commerce indeed was a major preoccupation of the Tolai, and it was intimately bound up with their passionate concern to accumulate wealth in the form of shell-money or *tambu*. Danks, who settled as a missionary at Kabakada in 1878, has described how this absorbing interest in *tambu* encouraged frugality and industriousness. No man was held in greater contempt than the spendthrift, and he notes how children, almost as soon as they could understand anything, were taught that the acquisition

and retention of *tambu* was an important, if not the most important, duty in life (Danks, 1887: 308). *Tambu* served as a 'national' currency, 'as much a standard coin of the realm as the sovereign was of the British Empire' (Pitcairn, 1891: 179).

But an account of *tambu* purely as a commercial institution would give a very inadequate understanding of its significance for the Tolai, and of its function in their society. *Tambu* in fact permeated the entire culture and, as Danks observed, there was not a custom connected with life or death in which this money did not play a great and leading part (1887: 316). For present purposes, however, it was the importance of *tambu* as a source of influence and power which needs to be noted. Within the parish there were usually one or two persons marked out by their possession of large stocks of shell-money who were known as 'big men' (*ngala*). Such men served as bankers to the group, and were able to bind their supporters to them by maintaining an elaborate series of debt-relationships. Through their command of wealth, which also gave them control of the male cult of *tubuan* and *dukduk*, the 'big men' also had an important role in the maintenance of law and order. In the same way, the 'big men' also mediated relationships between different parishes. Having access to large resources of *tambu* they alone were in a position to initiate large-scale mortuary rites and ceremonial dances or to sponsor the activities associated with the cult of the *tubuan* and *dukduk*, all of which involved the participation of, and competition between, individuals and groups from a number of different parishes, and so served to extend the effective range of social relationships.

This then, in brief compass, was the social world of the Tolai as it emerges from the writings of a number of persons who were among the first outsiders to have more than fleeting contact with the area. And even today the broad outline of the picture retains a certain validity, for the Tolai have shown a quite remarkable tenacity in clinging to many of their customs and institutions despite the many fluctuations in their fortunes which have marked their more recent history. Since the early 1870s the people of the north-eastern Gazelle have been in continuous contact with the outside world, and

throughout this period Tolai relations with alien and technologically more sophisticated peoples have probably been closer, more intense, and at the same time more unstable, than those of any other group throughout the entire region of Melanesia. We now have to examine the process by which the Tolai became involved in this wider network of relationships, and to note some of the effects this had upon their own social organisation and culture.

The Period of Transition: 1870-1914

From the time of Carteret's call at Port Praslin in New Ireland and his discovery of the Duke of York Islands in 1767, a number of vessels sailed near the coast of the Gazelle Peninsula, but more than a century elapsed before more systematic relations were established with its inhabitants. By the middle of the nineteenth century, however, various strands of influence were already at work in other parts of the Pacific and were shortly to converge on the Gazelle Peninsula and eventually to embrace the whole of New Guinea. Perhaps the factor of most immediate relevance was the growth of German commercial enterprise throughout the Pacific. The outstanding firm was Godeffroys of Hamburg, whose activities at this time extended from Cochin to Valparaiso. Samoa was its principal base in mid-Pacific, and a network of trading stations was being rapidly created throughout the islands. By 1871 vessels of the company were regularly visiting the Bismarck Archipelago in search of trochus, tortoise-shell, and copra which were purchased from the natives in return for iron tools and trinkets. In 1873 two of Godeffroys' agents established the first trading stations on the Gazelle Peninsula, one at Nonga, the other on the island of Matupit. Other trading firms followed. In 1876 Hershheim created an important trading establishment on Matupit too.

But gradually a more pressing need had emerged than for the simple extension of trade. There was an increasing demand for native labour for the plantations of Samoa and Fiji, as well as the cane-fields of Queensland. Fierce competition among the large number of vessels now employed in recruiting forced ship-masters to extend their operations

beyond the areas of the Solomons and New Hebrides groups (Wawn, 1893: 280). Trading in copra was now combined with the traffic in men and, although Tolai experience of the 'blackbirders' was brief by comparison with some other parts of Melanesia, the episode was marked by a number of scandals which played a great part in the arguments leading to the halt in recruiting in 1890 (Corris, 1968).

Coinciding with these developments, there had also been a general expansion of missionary activity in the Pacific. The Wesleyan Methodists, based on Australia, were already well established in Samoa and Fiji. In 1875 George Brown, having served for many years in Samoa, left there in the company of a small but dedicated band of Samoan and Fijian evangelists. Making his headquarters at Port Hunter in the Duke of Yorks, he quickly directed his attention to the Gazelle Peninsula, and at a number of the coastal settlements he was successful in persuading the people to accept a resident teacher. In 1881 a number of Roman Catholic priests were sent out from Europe to minister to the needs of the recently founded colony, sponsored by the notorious Marquis de Rays, at Port Praslin, but when on their way they learnt of the disastrous fate of the colonists,⁴ they were re-directed to New Britain. They arrived at Nodup in 1882, but after a short stay decided to move across the bay to Kininigunan, now Kokopo.

A third development, to become of profound importance in shaping the modern history of the Gazelle, also dates from about this period. In 1882 Richard Parkinson, a German national of British extraction, arrived on New Britain to establish the first plantation at Ralum on behalf of Emma Forsayth, whose sister he had married.⁵ By 1885 the coconut plantations extended for miles around Ralum, some 30,000

⁴ A contemporary account of the Marquis de Rays's expedition is given in Rev. G. Brown, *An Autobiography* (1908) pp. 354-70. For a more recent summary see S. W. Reed, *The Making of Modern New Guinea* (1943) pp. 292-8.

⁵ Emma Forsayth (née Coe) was a woman of remarkable character and business acumen. Of mixed American-Samoan parentage, she was to become one of the wealthiest and most celebrated personalities throughout the Pacific. For some account of her life see R. W. Robson, *Queen Emma* (1965). Cf. the biographical portrait of her sister, Phoebe Parkinson, by Margaret Mead, 'Weaver of the Border' in J. B. Casagrande (ed.), *In the Company of Man* (1960).

palms being planted every year (Robson, 1965: 165). An extremely gifted man, Parkinson's ethnographic and zoological interests were combined with a zest for experiment and innovation: he introduced coffee, cocoa, and spice-trees; he grew cotton, and brought in to the area an endless variety of root crops and trees. Within a short time, there were over 150 labourers employed on the plantation, most of them from the Solomon Islands and New Ireland. However, not a single one from New Britain was among this number; it was claimed that the Tolai would not work except when far away from their own country (Pitcairn, 1891: 163). On the other hand, the presence of the plantation represented an expansion of the local market of which the Tolai took increasing advantage. By 1894 the labour force had risen to over 1,000, and large numbers of Tolai would descend on Ralum every third day to hold market there and dispose of their taro, yams, bread-fruit, bananas, and megapode eggs in return for *tambu* or tobacco (Cayley-Webster, 1898: 87).

Initial Tolai experience of contact with Europeans thus involved relations with a number of very different groups. The nature of this involvement, as well as its timing, differed in some degree in the various parts of the area, but structurally the effect of the arrival of these groups, with their very different and in some cases markedly opposed interests, was to bring into being a complex pattern of social relations which had at once important consequences for the organisation of Tolai society. Salisbury, a social anthropologist who has worked on the historical material on the area in Germany and later carried out fieldwork in the neighbourhood of Kokopo, has analysed the first phase in this development in terms of a greater concentration of power in the hands of the 'big men'. Certainly Tolai leaders in the coastal settlements were quick to appreciate the advantages that firearms gave them over their enemies from further inland, and the demand for muskets increased rapidly. Traders and recruiters accused each other of pandering to these demands, but there seems little doubt that in fact both served as a source of supply (Wawn, 1893: 9-10, 289). Salisbury (1962) reports that by 1883 the *nga'a* of Nodup settlements had obtained enough rifles to equip every man of their groups: similarly I believe that

at Matupit the striking change in the position of the 'big men' recorded by Wawn in the interval of a decade between his first and second visit in 1883 was almost certainly due to their monopoly of fire-power.

The 'big men' in these parts were dependent for their new sources of power and wealth on the traders, but they also found it convenient to be on good terms with the missionaries. At Matupit, for example, the people handed over a large tract of land to the Methodist Mission rather than have it taken over by Hershheim. Between missionaries and traders there was a good deal of mutual antipathy. To a missionary like Danks most of the traders and recruiters were 'rough and uncouth men who had gravitated there because the place allowed a licence they could not find anywhere else' (Deane, 1933: 54). Revolted by their methods, Danks lost no opportunity of remonstrating with them over their participation in the labour traffic, and when two traders were murdered at Kabaira he spoke out in defence of the natives.

Yet if relations between the Europeans were marked by antagonism and division, there were other contexts in which their common interests emerged paramount. The increasing strength of the coastal Tolai to the north of Blanche Bay, bound up with their alliance with the whites, was giving rise to tension throughout the area. When therefore the Methodist Mission sought to move inland it immediately met with opposition from local leaders who discerned a threat to the monopoly of the trade they enjoyed in their localities. One of these, Talili, was responsible for the killing of four Fijian teachers, and he combined with a number of other 'big men' in an effort to drive the Europeans out of the area. News of the murders spread rapidly and was followed by 'acts of insolence' towards Europeans in the Duke of Yorks and New Ireland. George Brown was absent in Sydney at this time, but immediately on his return decided that 'if they wished to save their lives they must either fight or withdraw altogether from the islands' (Powell, 1883: 124-5). A punitive expedition, under the leadership of Brown, and made up of all the local Europeans together with their Tolai allies from Matupit and Nodup, set out against Talili, and finally defeated him. Sporadic killings and eruptions of violence continued for some

time in various parts of the Gazelle, even after the German annexation in 1884, and it was not until just after the turn of the century that complete pacification of the area was finally achieved.⁶

The presence of the whites affected not only the structure of political relations in the area, it also opened up a range of new economic opportunities of which, as raiding and warfare were eliminated and the new régime consolidated itself, the Tolai took ready and increasing advantage. One aspect of the initial contact situation in many former colonial territories is the way in which pacification opened up the way to large-scale movements of men away from their tribal homes to distant labour centres. For the Tolai the blandishments of the recruiters had little attraction, and when a little later they began to seek local employment they would often run away after only a few weeks or months in service (Schnee, 1904: 14). But in one respect the response of the Tolai to the new situation differed markedly from that of other groups in New Guinea. Thus Baessler (1895: 104) records the unwillingness of natives, both on New Britain and the mainland, to work on plantations, so that foreign labour had to be imported, but he also notes the greater keenness of the former to trade their produce. Blum (1900: 139) contrasts even more sharply the behaviour of the people around Madang who planted hardly enough fruits, vegetables, and bananas to meet their own household needs with that of 'the enterprising trading people of the Gazelle Peninsula' who took advantage of the European demand for yam, taro, and bananas and planted these vegetables and fruits 'in abundance'. The granting of an Imperial Charter to the Neu Guinea Kompagnie in 1886, with power to acquire large tracts of land for the laying out of plantations, brought in increasing numbers of colonists and native labourers from other parts to work their estates. The

⁶ There was evidence of much unrest around Herbertshöhe (Kokopo) when in 1893 a man who claimed to have magic against bullets sought to organise a movement to drive the Europeans out. Shelling of a number of settlements and action by the police restored the situation (Schnee, 1904: 18). The final episode was the murder by a group of Tolai of Frau Wolff, the wife of a plantation-owner in the Toma area. The Germans quickly organised a punitive expedition in which, according to Mackellar (1912: 149-50), more than two hundred people were killed.

new market in foodstuffs, already created by the establishment of the plantation at Ralum, was now rapidly expanded. The Tolai, for whom marketing was an indigenous economic activity, reacted to the new conditions by increasing their production. Noting the increasing importance of and growing numbers participating in these markets since European settlement, Blum records that a market was held almost daily in some different place within the area.

While the marketing of produce provided a substantial new source of revenue for the Tolai, this was probably always secondary to the income derived from the sale of copra, estimated for 1884 at around 1,000 tons (£4,000) and for 1896 about 2,000 tons (£6,500) (Epstein, T. S., 1968: 38). Discussing the early stages of economic development on the Gazelle Peninsula, Salisbury comments that the Tolai grew rich with little effort. The source of this new wealth lay initially, in Salisbury's terms, in an existing but incompletely utilised abundance of coconuts. However, within a relatively short period of time the Tolai also went in for extensive new plantings (Salisbury, 1962: 336). It is clear that all the conditions were present for a rise of indigenous productivity and an increase in wealth, but the fact that the Tolai quickly took advantage of the new opportunities whereas other groups, apparently similarly placed, did not suggests that indigenous Tolai pre-dispositions have also to be brought into the equation.

Such an impetus was provided by the enormous importance the Tolai attached to the possession of *tambu*, and to the trading and other activities which were a source of that wealth. It is true that on first contact the Tolai were more interested in exchanging their coconuts for guns, cartridges, steel axes, and knives, but as these wants came to be satisfied, they began to insist on payment in their own shell-currency. European traders were thus compelled to acquire stocks of *tambu* themselves, even to make the trip to Nakanai, in order to pay for the copra and vegetables they wanted from the Tolai.⁷ The

⁷ Pfeil (1899: 119) records that the value which the Tolai attached to *tambu* and the common use which it had achieved even amongst Europeans meant that the amount of *tambu* in current circulation was insufficient to meet the demand for it. Apparently certain Europeans then conceived the idea of having *tambu* manufactured in Europe. The venture proved unsuccessful. The Tolai immediately recognised the introduced shells as counterfeit, and refused to accept them.

aim of the Tolai in acquiring *tambu* is to hoard, not to spend it: as it is accumulated the shell that is not required for immediately foreseeable transactions is stored in special coils of 60 or 190 fathoms and upwards and these are rarely touched again until the occasion arises for the ceremonial cutting up of the coils and the public distribution of quantities of shell-money. The effect of this custom is to withdraw large resources of currency from circulation at any given time. Although therefore Tolai revenue was increasing through their sale of copra and other produce, there was not the corresponding increase in consumption that traders expected and hoped for. *Tambu*, while an incentive to increased productivity, was also a dampener on trade, and Tolai participation in the new cash economy and labour market remained so marginal that the German Administration was compelled in 1901 to introduce a decree that money and not shell should be the only medium of exchange between Europeans and natives. In the end the measure achieved its desired effect, but attempts to eliminate the use of *tambu* altogether were a failure, and *tambu* has retained its vitality as a currency, acceptable in all transactions between Tolai, right down to the present day.

For the Germans, the value of the Gazelle Peninsula lay chiefly in the opportunities it offered for establishing a flourishing plantation economy centred on the production of copra. At first the Neu Guinea Kompagnie was to serve as the instrument of this policy, but it shortly ran into difficulties. In 1899 the company was divested of its Imperial Charter: it was relieved of its administrative functions and was able to continue only upon purely commercial ventures. Aided by ample capital support, and the right to acquire extensive holdings of land in the coastal areas, the company began to see a change in its fortunes. The other main firms operating in the area were HERNSHEIM and FORSAYTHS. The success of the companies stimulated individuals to become planters, and many of their employees took up land. They would apply to their employers for financial assistance, and this offered advantages to the company. Hence under the wing of the larger companies there grew up many smaller concerns, all tied into the larger through marketing and other financial arrangements (Mackenzie, 1933: 112-14).

By the early years of the century the Gazelle Peninsula was developing many of the marks of an established and prosperous colony. In 1899 the seat of government was transferred from Friedrich-Wilhelmshafen (Madang) to Herbertshöhe (Kokopo) on the shores of Blanche Bay, which had become the most important commercial centre in the Protectorate. However, Kokopo's roadstead did not offer the shipping facilities possessed by the deep and sheltered Simpson Harbour, the inner basin of the bay, and it was here that the Germans set about building the town of Rabaul, the site of the new capital, which was established there in 1910. An early task, and major achievement, of the Administration was the building of a network of roads to link the plantations and settlements to the port of Rabaul. The road system is even today unique in New Guinea, and it did much to prepare the way for the later highly concentrated developments in the area (Williams, 1964: 181).

The alien population, meanwhile, had not only grown, it had become more diversified both as to its origins and in its activities. In addition to the increasing number of whites as traders, planters, administrators, and missionaries, there were now small settlements of Chinese and Japanese. Local labour had been found unsatisfactory for work at the wharves, and Chinese coolies were introduced, though this system too was found to have its drawbacks since as soon as they had amassed a little capital the Chinese promptly opened small stores for trading with the natives. The Japanese numbered about a hundred, and were mainly engaged in boat-building. The Tolai participated in the growing prosperity of the area, and by now were establishing closer links with the wider society. The range of consumer wants had expanded greatly. One observer commented that the younger Tolai had acquired a taste for luxury: 'he likes his tobacco, he enjoys tin-meat, he glories in European clothes, puts a keen value on umbrellas, mouth-organs, lanterns and the hundred and one knick-knacks he sees a white man has' (Lyng, 1914). A number of Tolai had served on German vessels, and some of my elderly informants at Matupit used to enjoy recalling voyages made around the turn of the century to Australia, India, the Philippines, and even as far afield as America. Some of the sailors,

on their return, had taken to wearing European-style suits and clothing. The establishment of a government school at Namanula, open to native children from all the neighbouring islands, offered the promise of new avenues of advancement outside the customary economic and social framework, but it had only begun to produce its first graduates when World War I broke out.

The social and cultural world of the Tolai was thus now vastly different from that which they inhabited when the Europeans first intruded on it some forty years before. Their involvement with a wider society was an important change; more important still was the nature of that involvement. At this stage Tolai participation in the labour market remained essentially marginal. Their chief point of contact with the developing cash economy of the area was through the land. The land was at once their major source of the new forms of wealth, as well as an important link with their past and traditional way of life. But by now the land was no longer wholly theirs to control and dispose of. The success of the colony was also dependent on land being made available for European settlement, and by 1914 the Germans had alienated from native control about 700,000 acres of the best land in the Protectorate. This represented only a little over 1 per cent of the total land area, but not all parts suffered equally. Perhaps the area most sharply affected was the Gazelle Peninsula, where the Tolai had lost by this time about 39 per cent of their arable lands (Rowley, 1965: 118). Such a situation provides an obvious source of friction, and in the years to come the land question was to emerge as a dominant theme in the political life of the Gazelle.

Rabaul 1914-1944

The choice of Rabaul as the site for the capital of German New Guinea had many things in its favour. The impressive natural beauty of the spot offered the ideal setting for the Germans to establish a centre which would be a worthy expression of their colonial achievements and aspirations in the western Pacific. Rabaul, it used to be said, was not so much a town as a tropical garden, dotted about with government

offices, business premises, and bungalows. The avenues were carefully laid out and planted with poinciana and casuarina trees, the latter creating the feeling, as one visitor many years later was to describe it, of looking down the nave of a cathedral half a mile long (Bertie, 1937: 46).

But aesthetic considerations, while undoubtedly important, were not the only factors to be taken into account. The prosperity of New Guinea was founded on the coconut. The plantation economy established by the Germans was given over almost entirely to the production and export of copra. Over 70 per cent of the area under plantation cultivation was in the islands of the Bismarck Archipelago, and four-fifths of the plantations were on the Gazelle Peninsula and New Ireland. Simpson Harbour, a magnificent natural haven, was the best in the Protectorate, and since its position was relatively central to the Territory as well as to the great commercial routes of the Pacific, most of the trade of the region came to pass through Rabaul. By 1914 therefore Rabaul was already a thriving port and an important commercial and administrative centre. More than this, by virtue of Germany's position in the Pacific, it had also been designed as one of a series of strategic bases. It became a coaling station for the German Fleet in the Pacific as well as a link in a chain of wireless stations which brought Rabaul and Apia into direct contact with Berlin. It was these latter circumstances which underlay the despatch of an Australian Expeditionary Force to Rabaul almost immediately after the outbreak of World War I.

The Australian military occupation, which lasted until 1921, brought few changes to the area in the way of administrative policy or economic organisation. The administration was, from its very nature, a caretaker administration, whose main concern became to maintain and increase the value of already existing European economic enterprises in the hope that victory would place them under Australian control (Rowley, 1958: 47). Under the Terms of Capitulation German nationals were encouraged to remain on their plantations and devote themselves to expanding their business, and in fact the area of coconuts planted under European management almost doubled in the war years, while the export of copra

continued to rise steadily after a brief period of dislocation following the occupation (pp. 59, 69). The growth of European investment was also accompanied by a significant increase in the number of natives entering wage employment. However, with the creation of the Mandate and the establishment of an Australian civil administration, these general developments were temporarily curtailed. Lack of resources for investment to further economic development, the expropriation of the German-owned estates which came under the management and control of an Expropriations Board, and the restrictions imposed by the operation of the Australian Navigation Act, the general effect of which was to reduce Rabaul to a terminal port with an inter-island connection, all combined to introduce a period of economic stagnation. The Ainsworth Report on problems of administration in the Territory, prepared at the request of the Australian Government, conveys well the general atmosphere of regression at this time. The main pier at Rabaul, Ainsworth reported, was in partial ruin; government-owned steamers were lying in the harbour in a derelict condition, while numerous government buildings required attention and roads generally, where they existed, needed substantial repair (Ainsworth, 1924: 13).

During the mid-twenties world prices for copra were extremely favourable and by 1926, with the sales of the expropriated German properties in the offing,⁸ there were again signs of a quickening tempo in and around Rabaul. In that year the Bank of New South Wales opened its first branch in the Territory in Rabaul. In August the *Rabaul Times*, which had itself begun publication little more than a year earlier, reported the opening of the new Carpenter store, the first European store to be opened since German times. Growth was also reflected in the increasing number of firms and individuals now advertising in the paper as new enterprises were

⁸ The first series of estates had been offered for sale in June 1922, but owing to the heavy fall in copra prices no satisfactory offers were received. Advertisements were renewed but only one tender was received. In 1926 the estates were advertised again, but now, following the repeated representations of the Returned Servicemen's League (R.S.L.), on terms better suited to the pockets of Australian ex-servicemen.

initiated, and lawyers, accountants and others began to open offices in the town.

Despite the many signs of neglect,⁹ Rabaul remained physically very much as the Germans had left it. The major changes were in the character of its population. The Germans had departed. The white population now numbered about 300, from the Administrator down nearly all Australian, and most of these returned soldiers. The proportion of women was small. The native population of the town had increased considerably. In 1915 there were approximately 200 police boys and 300 contract labourers, mostly living under barrack conditions. Ten years later there were some 2,500 indentured labourers there gathered in from different parts of the Territory. No provision existed at the time for municipal housing, and most appear to have lived in premises provided by their employers or in shanty settlements on the beach or scattered around the areas of the township. But the liveliest part was undoubtedly Chinatown, a small area tucked away behind the main streets, and amongst Europeans reputedly a hotbed of gambling and other vices. It was in fact mainly a trading area. The shops were mostly restaurants, laundries, curio stores, and tailor shops, and although the Chinese catered for all sections of the community alike, it was their monopoly of trade with the indigenes that really aroused the ire and envy of many Europeans.

It was, however, the 'native question', or the 'Black Peril' as it was sometimes called locally, which appears to have pre-occupied many of the white residents of Rabaul at this time. Frequent complaints were made about official laxity in administering the laws that purported to control native movements and behaviour, and a contrast was drawn between the contemporary 'disregard of all control and authority, the laziness and insolence, and even open scorn displayed' by natives towards their white masters and the 'ingrained respect and obedience shown to their previous controllers' under the German régime (*Rabaul Times*, 3.7.1925). Through the

⁹ One of the best-known features of Rabaul before the war had been its Botanic Gardens. A local resident raised the question in a letter to the *Rabaul Times* (26.10.1928): 'Why has the Botanic Gardens been neglected? . . . It is to be hoped that some effort will be made at least to restore them to what they were when Germany lost Rabaul'.

columns of the local press and in the activities of various local organisations of non-official opinion there was indeed recurring agitation for a return to the German system of granting flogging permits, without which, it was contended, there could be no proper control of the natives, particularly indentured labourers. These demands were invariably accompanied by references to the necessity of maintaining 'white prestige' and the dangers of assaults on white women and children by 'sexually degenerate' natives (cf. Reed, 1943: 250-3).

White attitudes and susceptibilities were displayed in their full intensity and crudity in the events surrounding the famous 'Rabaul Strike' of 1929. What happened on that occasion may be stated briefly.¹⁰ One morning early in January the European and Chinese citizens awakened to discover that their 'boys' were not on duty. As the morning wore on it soon emerged that the entire native working force, including the police, save for nineteen constables who had provided the night's guard, had decamped. Overnight, swiftly and secretly, they had evacuated the town and made their way to the Methodist and Roman Catholic Missions at Malaguna, a short distance out of Rabaul. They intimated to the missionaries that they had stopped work as a means of asserting their claims to higher wages. The Methodist missionary, Mr Margetts, explained the legal position of persons who did not abide by their contracts, and was able to persuade those who had gathered at his station to return to Rabaul. The attitude of the strikers at the Catholic Mission was slightly different, but eventually they too began to drift back to their masters' quarters.

The 'strike' had lasted less than twenty-four hours. There had been no show of violence by the strikers, who were well controlled throughout by their leaders. Yet the whites found little in these facts to mollify their anger. At a series of public meetings the Administration was bitterly attacked, and demands made for the suspension of various officials. Privately and in the bars comment was even more scathing, and the missionaries also came in for a good deal of abuse. What enraged the Europeans was not merely that the natives had

¹⁰ The 'strike' has been discussed by Reed (1943), Mead (1956), and Worsley (1957). A lively account of it has been given by McCarthy (1959).

gone on strike, but that the operation had been mounted without the authorities having any glimmering of what was in the wind. Their sense of outrage was fanned by the undermining of old certainties. The conduct of the strike had displayed a capacity for planning and organisation of which they believed the indigenes incapable; the entire episode indeed must have been highly disconcerting to those who, like the Administrator himself, 'knowing anything of the native mentality' found it 'quite inconceivable that the natives who belong to different tribes, and who nurse hereditary enmities against each other should sink their differences and combine in a general demonstration' (*Rabaul Times*, 11.1.1929).

A detailed analysis of the strike would undoubtedly shed a good deal of light on the nature of Rabaul society at this time, but here I wish to dwell briefly on only one aspect of it that bears most immediately on the main theme of the present study. This is the part played in the affair by the Tolai. The two major figures involved were Sumasuma, a ship's master from New Ireland, and Rami, a Sergeant-Major of Police from Manus in the Admiralties. The evidence presented before the subsequent Commission of Inquiry into the affair refers to their discussions with other natives, but none of these appears to have been a Tolai. Again, in addressing the strikers at Malaguna Mr Margetts used pidgin, though at some points he also appears to have used the Tolai vernacular. Yet if large numbers of Tolai had gathered at the two mission stations together with the other labourers, it would seem strange if some of them at least had not been recognised by the two missionaries, both of whom had spent many years in Rabaul, and been sought out by them to give an explanation of what was going on. Finally I may mention that when many years later I inquired about the matter among the Matupi my informants could offer only the haziest recollections of the episode. The evidence of course is far from conclusive, but it does at least suggest that Tolai participation in the strike, if it occurred at all, was quite negligible.

Such a conclusion would be consistent with the view I have been advancing of the pattern of relations which the Tolai had been developing with the wider society since early contact.

I have stressed how, through their sales of copra and other produce, the Tolai had shown a readiness to participate in the new cash economy, but they were far from being absorbed into the structure of the labour market. The main demands for labour around this time were for the plantations and the gold-mines. There is evidence that numbers of Tolai were at work on the New Guinea mainland in the early thirties, but there is no breakdown of figures available to show exactly how many served as indentured labourers on the plantations nearer home; all that can be said with certainty is that already for a number of years the vast majority of this labour force was drawn from areas outside the Gazelle Peninsula (Eggleston, 1928: 108). Within the town of Rabaul itself, contemporary reports (e.g. Cilento, 1932) and the later accounts I received from individual Matupi show a clear preference for 'free' casual employment as domestic servants, boat-boys and laundrymen. Such an arrangement suited the Tolai admirably, but it was less attractive to European employers, whose complaints about native unreliability re-echoed the kind of comment that had already become familiar some thirty years earlier (see p. 20). The fact was, as the *Rabaul Times* once (25.8.1936) somewhat ruefully acknowledged, that loss of or dismissal from employment held no terrors for the Tolai because every one was a landed proprietor. It was, in a sense, the Tolai who were exploiting Rabaul: they used it as a source of employment for augmenting their cash income from time to time, and for the other advantages and diversions the township offered, but they were not integrated into an urban system. Continuing to live in their own hamlets and settlements, and growing increasingly prosperous from the produce of the soil, they were able to retain a considerable measure of their economic and social independence.

Urbanisation of course is not the only source of social and cultural change, and to argue that the Tolai had not been incorporated into a structure of urban social relations is not to deny the many changes they had accepted in their way of life over the years since their first contact with the outside world. Participation in the cash economy aside, Tolai who were in closest touch with Europeans, as on the island of Matupit, had early shown a readiness to accept many cultural

innovations (e.g. Bürger, 1923: 154) and this process of westernisation continued. Thus when Groves, in a study of native education in New Guinea in the early thirties, classified the indigenous peoples into four categories on the basis of culture-contact, he found it appropriate to refer to his first category as 'the semi-Europeanized, like those of Matupi island and other villages adjacent to Rabaul' (Groves, 1936: 59-60). Among these people, he claimed, the former primitive culture had nearly disappeared. Other observers at the time offered similar comments. Cilento, the Chief Medical Officer of Health in the Territory, described the Matupi as having lost all semblance of their traditional institutions, while Father Madigan reported that on Matupit, as in other places, the real native marriage customs had long since disappeared (Cilento, 1932; *Rabaul Times*, 13.3.1936). In the later analysis of contemporary life on Matupit I shall attempt to show that such views inadequately represent the complexity of the situation there. Nonetheless, they do make clear to what extent overt cultural changes had occurred. Following the Depression, which had hit the local economy hard, continued favourable copra prices brought a new wave of prosperity to the area. Some Tolai now began to invest in the erection of their own copra-driers and in cars and trucks, and a few even to experiment with other crops such as cocoa. At the same time, the pattern of wants also appears to have become more sophisticated. In the settlements around Rabaul many Tolai were beginning to build permanent European-type houses and to furnish them in the modern style. There were new patterns in the field of recreation too, and a fashion appears to have started of chartering cars and organising joy-riding parties of both sexes. Communication between Tolai settlements had become both easy and frequent, and their former isolation was now a thing of the past.

This phase of development was suddenly brought to an abrupt halt, when at the end of 1941 Japan entered World War II. Only two days after the attack on Pearl Harbour Japanese reconnaissance planes were seen over Blanche Bay, and shortly afterwards bombing raids began. Towards the end of January 1942 the Japanese landed at Rabaul, which was hastily evacuated by the Australians, and thereafter much of

the Gazelle simply became a vast Japanese military garrison. Initially, the Japanese sought to establish friendly relations with the local people, but as the war wore on their régime bore increasingly harshly on the Tolai, and they suffered many privations. Cut off from their own lines of supply the Japanese were compelled to rely on local resources. Tolai were set to work to grow food for the Japanese troops, and in some areas their garden lands were confiscated and access to them prohibited on pain of death. Many died from malnutrition and a lack of adequate medical supplies. Yet others were killed in Allied bombing attacks. In some parts too the coconut plantations were spoliated and many years would have to elapse before they could be replenished. In addition, at places like Matupit, the people suffered serious depletion of their accumulated stocks of shell-money. Much of the *tambu* was actually destroyed by the Japanese, but great quantities were also used up on clandestine trips to purchase food from more fortunately-situated Tolai communities. In these circumstances the restoration of the Australian administration at the end of the war was generally welcomed, but it needs to be stressed that it was a welcome tempered by considerable scepticism and reserve. There were many aspects of pre-war policy and practice on the Gazelle which had aroused and nurtured the resentment of the Tolai, and there can be little doubt that there, as elsewhere in Melanesia (e.g. Mead, 1956), indigenous aspirations were given new force and direction by their wartime experiences. Such aspirations may often have been vague and difficult of precise formulation, but what is at least clear is that the Tolai were not in a mood to accept meekly a return to the *status quo* of the pre-war period.

Developments in the Post-war Period

Our survey has been designed to document the highly disturbed character of Tolai relations with the wider society since first contact. The physical instability of the Gazelle Peninsula has been matched by instability in its social setting. Over the period as a whole the economic development of the area has been quite outstanding by contrast with most other parts of New Guinea. But the pattern of that development

has been neither regular nor uninterrupted. Periods of rising prosperity have alternated with slump, reflecting unstable conditions in the world markets. However, this is only part of the story, for the fluctuating fortunes of the Gazelle also reflect the succession of imposed régimes, civil and military, each with its different policies, programs, and personnel. In the German period considerable sums were made available for investment, and striking economic advances were made, in which the indigenous peoples were able to participate. The Germans had also made provision for the development of native education which would have opened up employment opportunities outside the indigenous social framework, and presumably paved the way towards the much earlier emergence of an indigenous élite. In the period of the Mandate many of the trends set in motion by earlier German policies were halted, if not actually reversed. Much of Australian policy came to rest on the principle that schemes for the advancement of the native peoples should be limited to what the Territory itself could finance. The result was that health measures, agricultural development, education and communications etc. all fell far short of what was required to satisfy the positive obligation imposed by the Mandate to 'promote to the utmost the material and moral well-being and the social progress of the inhabitants of the Territory' (Bailey, 1928: 14). In the field of education, for example, the Administration's direct share was very slight. Some attempt had been made to secure the co-operation of the missions through a scheme of inspection and subsidy, but this fell through because the missions preferred their independence to financial assistance (Mair, 1948: 167). In the event, primary education, where it existed at all, was provided almost entirely through the medium of mission-sponsored village schools. The standards achieved in these schools were often minimal (Spate, 1966: 118), and indeed this followed from the limited aims of mission educational policy itself, which for the most part was directed at little more than securing literacy in the vernacular and teaching the principles of Christian morality (Groves, 1936: 67). A number of missions did provide vocational training, while a technical school had been opened at Malaguna, near Rabaul, in 1922, but no provisions existed for secondary

education of any kind. Again, in the field of native administration, while the Australians continued the policy introduced by the Germans of recognising and working through *luluais* or 'village headmen', there was no attempt to develop more representative political institutions.

Thus the overall impression that emerges of Australian policy throughout the period of the Mandate is of one characterised by inaction and negative in approach, certainly by contrast to the developments achieved under the German régime, though admittedly these were mainly confined to the more readily accessible parts of the Territory.¹¹ However, in the changed climate of opinion after the war, a more positive attitude began to prevail, based on the Australian Government's recognition of its obligation to provide facilities for the greater participation by the indigenous people in the wealth and government of their country. Emphasis on economic development and diversification has been central in this new approach to New Guinea and its problems, and on the Gazelle Peninsula one of the first fruits of the new policy was to be seen in the encouragement now given to the Tolai to grow cocoa on a commercial basis. The outcome of this was the establishment of the Tolai Cocoa Project in the early fifties.¹² These developments in the economic field went hand in hand with the first experiments, also being made on the Gazelle Peninsula, to introduce a system of native local government councils. In these and other ways new opportunities were again opening up to the Tolai of which, as in the past, they have shown themselves ready to take full advantage. However, as I hope to show at a later stage of the analysis, this situation has also bred its own problems and the Tolai, poised on the threshold of a new era of change, find themselves confronted with a number of increasingly difficult choices of a kind and degree they had not to face in the past.

¹¹ Cf. Stanner's comment (1953: 1) that the prevailing Australian attitude towards New Guinea was not so much indifference as more a mixture of innocence and inattention. 'No one treated New Guinea with a shrug; it simply lay a little to one side of the habitual field of vision.'

¹² For a detailed account see Epstein, T. S. (1968) chap. 6.

The Island of Matupit and the Town of Rabaul

Just a few miles out of Rabaul and linked to the town by road and a narrow causeway is the island of Matupit. It is really no more than a tiny islet, covering an area of less than half a square mile, yet it is the home of one of the largest single groups of Tolai. Situated at the base of Kabiw (Mt Mother) and Matupi crater, whence the sulphur fumes are borne across the island by the wind, Matupit has been virtually free from malaria, and the earliest European visitors invariably commented on how healthy and well-populated a place it was. Around the turn of the century the island counted about 800 inhabitants. Today, despite the heavy loss of life suffered during the Japanese occupation, that figure has risen to 1,400 (Epstein, A. L. and T. S., 1962).

Matupit almost certainly originated in the same manner as Vulcan, the small island heaved up in Blanche Bay by the eruption witnessed by George Brown, but its emergence has not yet been dated satisfactorily. Brown himself reported (1908: 93) that at the time of his first visit to the island in 1875 Matupit appeared to have been of quite recent origin. Brown, Powell, and Father Bögershausen have all referred to another eruption which, according to their informants, had occurred some thirty or forty years earlier, and these accounts may have helped to give support to a view that appears to have gained some currency that Matupit originated in 1840 (*Rabaul Times*, 31.8.1960). This appears to be most unlikely. The earlier eruption was described as a small one, and took place from the small craters at the head of Sulphur Creek. An elderly Matupi, ToLivai, was able to describe these events,

based on the tradition of his boyhood, to Sir Raphael Cilento in the thirties (Cilento, 1937). If Matupit had emerged at the time suggested, it is inconceivable that the traditional account which had survived of the Sulphur Creek eruption should not have been directly linked with Matupi traditions of the origin of the island itself. In point of fact Matupi oral history, which in these matters is quite realistic and not inconsistent with the vulcanological evidence, points to a somewhat earlier emergence, and although genealogical evidence is frequently an unreliable guide to 'objective' history in pre-literate societies, it may not be without interest to note in this instance that the starting point of Matupi pedigrees, if accepted at face value, would roughly coincide with a huge volcanic outbreak in Blanche Bay which was witnessed by Captain Hunter from the Duke of Yorks in 1790 (Parkinson, 1907: 845).

Europeans on Matupit

Blanche Bay offers at first sight an ideal landlocked harbour, but for ships of an earlier day its waters were too deep, and anchorage could only be found close into the shore at Matupit (Wawn, 1893: 283). It was thus almost inevitable that the Matupi should be among the first of the peoples of the Gazelle Peninsula to be brought into close and immediate relationship with the Europeans. George Brown was anxious to place a teacher there because he felt that it must become the headquarters of the mission in those parts (1908: 122). This did not in fact occur, but in 1876 the German trader HERNSHEIM established a permanent station on the island from which German vessels were soon carrying cargoes of copra direct to European ports. Within a short space of time Matupit had a small but thriving European population. Moreover, there were hot springs close by, and many visitors would come to the island from other parts of New Guinea to convalesce after illness and to enjoy its open hospitality and recreational facilities (e.g. Krämer, 1939).

Matupi experience of European contact was not only earlier and more regular than that of most other Tolai groups, it was also in certain important respects qualitatively different.

The Germans at Matupit evidently sought to introduce into their life on the island an element of 'style' and refinement. In front of the houses and sheds belonging to the 'Station' there was a square 'neatly planted with most beautiful variegated croton plants of brilliant aspect', with a tennis court in the centre (Mackellar, 1912: 115-16), while the Hernsheim house itself, with its music room, garden pavilion, and billiard room, was described as having all the amenities that made life in the tropics a pleasure¹ (Baessler, 1895: 101). The Matupi were in a position to observe this way of life at close quarters, so it is not surprising to learn that, having quickly adopted certain patterns of behaviour from the Europeans, they 'made a better impression' on foreign observers than many of their fellow Tolai (Baessler, 1895; Bürger, 1923: 154-5). In purely indigenous terms the Matupi as 'a people of the sea' (*a te na ta*) already looked down with contempt on the inland Tolai whom they spoke of as *koloata*, literally those unaccustomed to the sea, that is 'barbarous' or 'unclean', and presumably the taking over of new ways strengthened in their own eyes the status differential. Certainly I was frequently reminded by my own Matupi informants that they had always been in the van of those who were ready to accept the new ways and standards of the Europeans.

This early exposure to Western influence was a source of prestige to the Matupi, and it also gave them an initial advantage over most other Tolai groups in winning a place in the new society emerging in New Guinea. Subsequent developments towards the end of the German régime and throughout the period of the Mandate enabled them to maintain and exploit it even further. With the rise of Rabaul, the Europeans departed from Matupit, but even so the islanders remained well placed to take full advantage of the new opportunities and services offered by the presence close by of a commercial and administrative centre of growing importance. This is seen plainly, for example, in the sphere of education.

¹ Mackellar (1912: 131) also describes a visit to the house of Max Thiele, Hernsheim's manager. Of the billiard room he noted that, with its white walls decorated artistically with native weapons and ornaments, it would have excited admiration anywhere. Unfortunately I am not certain whether he is referring to the same house as that mentioned by Baessler.

We have noted earlier how the Germans had opened a school at Namanula, and although no information is now available about the place of origin of the scholars, it seems not unlikely that a high proportion would have come from villages in the vicinity of Rabaul. Certainly amongst the present inhabitants of Matupit there were a number who had attended the school. According to their own accounts, they had just completed the training which would have enabled them to take posts in the bank, to serve as surveyors' and medical assistants, etc., when the war broke out, and they were compelled to retire to the village. During the period of the Mandate, education was almost entirely in the hands of the missions, and even though the aims set were limited, the systems still operated to give the Tolai—and particularly the coastal Tolai—a headstart over other groups. Proselytisation had been intense throughout the Gazelle for many years, and both the Roman Catholics (Sacred Heart) and the Methodists established their mission headquarters and central educational institutions for these parts on Blanche Bay. Both missions had early decided on a policy of working through trained indigenous teachers and catechists, and as they extended their work beyond the Gazelle many Tolai themselves came to fill the role of 'missionary'. The Seventh Day Adventists, who established themselves in the area very much later, followed the same policy. The result was that at Matupit there were a number of men who had served in many parts of the Territory, and in a few cases had brought wives back with them.

The provision of education in government schools worked in the same general direction, for the few government schools that existed were mostly in the urban areas. Reference has already been made to the Technical School at Malaguna where students were taught carpentry, boat-building, engineering, plumbing, and printing etc. (Mair, 1948: 172). Many of the older carpenters and independent contractors I knew on Matupit had received their training at Malaguna before World War II. In the early thirties, largely in response to demands from local Rabaul Tolai, another government school was opened at Nodup. The Nodup school, now known as the Waterhouse Memorial School, was the most notably successful of all schools in the Territory at that time (Groves,

1936: 156); it trained a number of wireless operators who gave invaluable service during the war, and turned out highly efficient clerks speaking excellent English (Mair, 1948: 171). These various developments paved the way for a much more active participation of Tolai in the wider society of Papua-New Guinea in the post-war period. In the case of the Matupi, they gave a new impetus to the processes of social differentiation already mildly at work in the social system of the island, as well as reinforcing, as we shall examine in detail in a later chapter, the strong economic nexus that had come to develop between Matupit and Rabaul.

The Matupi, the Land, and the Administration

The briefest of visits to Matupit suffices to show the dominant influence of Rabaul on the life of the islanders. In its mere physical appearance Matupit today has many of the features of a peri-urban settlement. Space is restricted, and houses are built close together in an apparently haphazard fashion. Moreover many of these are of modern design, constructed of fibro-cement with corrugated-iron roofing and frequently louver-glass windows. Matupit has its own churches and cemeteries, schools and village stores, and a large playing field where baseball and cricket are played in season. The impression of urbanism is heightened further by the picture of men and women leaving the island each morning by foot, bicycle or bus, and returning in the evening. They are going to Rabaul to work, to sell their produce at the market there, or to shop. It is true of course that the influence of Rabaul is now strongly diffused throughout the entire Tolai area, but the fact remains that both in work and play the Matupi participate more actively in the life of the town than do most other Tolai.² Indeed, it would be tempting to describe Matupit today simply as a satellite of Rabaul were it not for the fact that the islanders display such a lively sense of their identity as a distinctive Tolai community. The Matupi remain deeply committed to their village and this, as I shall show later, is

² It is worth noting for example that at the time of this study Matupit was still the only Tolai group to enter teams in the town's cricket and baseball leagues.

not simply out of sentimental attachment, but also because access to their ancestral lands still provides them with a major source of livelihood. It is this factor which enables them to continue to assert their independence and resist complete absorption into an urban system. In a word, Matupi attitudes towards Rabaul disclose a deep-rooted ambivalence, and the relationship between the island and the town is marked by a constant tension. For while the Matupi recognise the benefits that have accrued to them from their proximity to a flourishing and expanding town, they also fear it as a kind of monster whose insatiable appetite for land menaces their very existence as a group. For the Matupi the threat of encroachment by the town touches an area of extreme sensitivity, and nothing has so coloured their relations with the Administration as the bitter struggles that have gone on through the years over the question of land acquisition. These matters occupy a prominent place in the minds of the Matupi, amounting at times almost to a total pre-occupation, and since they bear directly on the external as well as the internal relations of the village, some account of them is necessary here. The following episode, which occurred a short while after I had begun my fieldwork, may serve as a convenient means of introducing the discussion.

One day word came to the village that the Administration was interested in acquiring stones in the area known as Rabuana. A few days later I accompanied a small party of men to the spot in order to meet the District Officer. The meeting itself was quite brief. The District Officer began by explaining that the Administration wished to put up some houses on the site of the present quarry in Rabaul, and was anxious to acquire land for a new quarry at Rabuana. If the proposal were acceptable to the Matupi, he said, the Administration would take a lease of the site for fifteen years, and the owners of the land would receive an annual rent in the same way as those who had leased ground to the Administration for the airfield. He then asked the Matupi for their views. After some initial hesitation, one member of the party, the eldest present, spoke briefly. 'You three', he said, pointing to some men who were recognised as having an interest in the lands under discussion, 'don't just sit in silence'. Then, before the others had a chance to intervene, the elder continued: 'We

don't want this. A quarry here would deprive us of the use of the path to our gardens'. The officer immediately countered this by asking whether it was not possible to make another path, but the Matupi replied that it was a path that had been established by their ancestors, and it was in fact the only means of access they had to their gardens sited far up and over the mountainside. Seeing that he was not making much progress, the officer pointed suddenly to the various gun mountings that lay around and asked what path they had used when the Japanese had occupied the island. The implication of the question was not lost upon the Matupi, but they did not waver and replied simply that the whole area was forbidden to them, and they had not been allowed to gather food there. Shortly afterwards the officer turned to his A.D.O. remarking it was clear that there was 'no buy'. He commented to me that he was in a difficult position to open full negotiations because they did not know yet what they could offer the Matupi as the matter was still under consideration at Port Moresby. Finally, after some further desultory questioning, he asked the Matupi to think the matter over, and the meeting broke up.

After the departure of the administrative officers, the Matupi discussed the matter amongst themselves as they returned to the island. One elder remarked: 'It would be all right for you, Semi, to agree to it; but there is one snag. The *kia*³ has said that the land would be leased for fifteen years, but in that time they would be looking for and collecting stones all over our land. However, there would only be one name on the lease—Semi's, and the rest would get nothing out of it'. Semi, a younger man in his early thirties, admitted the point and agreed that they should not accept the proposal. Another elder pointed out that there was a spot near the police-station in Rabaul where there were plenty of stones. One of the younger men intervened to observe that although it was the Administration which had approached them, it was only doing so on behalf of a Chinaman who worked on the quarry the whole time. The implication, left unstated by the speaker but clear to his audience, was that the Administra-

³ The pidgin term commonly used throughout New Guinea for an administrative officer.

tion would get a substantial sum from the Chinaman, but would pass on only a small amount to the native owners of the land. Another man commented that once a lease was entered into, even though it was only for fifteen years, it stood for ever. Such leases were all right when they were made between Europeans, but they did not work where they were concerned. Fifteen years after the lease was signed, the Government would say that the land had been bought.

The matter did not rest there. By making discreet approaches to a number of individuals it appears that the Administration was finally able to persuade a few of the elders to agree to a lease. Word of this soon leaked out and a couple of months after the initial parley at Rabuana a meeting was called within the village to discuss the case further. While waiting for the proceedings to begin, a sergeant of police from Raluana, on the other side of Blanche Bay, who had come down to Matupit from Rabaul specially for the occasion, had made himself the centre of attention. He was denouncing furiously one man for having sold land he, the sergeant, owned at Matupit, and he launched into a violent diatribe against the District Officer. He had been to see the *kiap*, he stormed. He wasn't afraid of them. He would write a letter to Moresby and have the *kiap* sent to prison. This kind of thing had happened before, and he had gone to see the Chief Inspector of Police at Rabaul. For did they think a '*kiap na counsel*' would help them?⁴ No, they wanted to see the lands removed from the people of Matupit. They wanted them to go to places like Vudal⁵ so that they could take over the land at Matupit.

⁴ The expression '*kiap na counsel*' was a derogatory reference to administrative officers in the Department of Native Affairs, much of whose work was now conducted through the Native Local Government Councils. Raluana was a 'dissident' group which at this time still remained outside the council system. For further discussion see below, pp. 256-8.

⁵ Vudal was the name given to an experimental project for resettling Tolai from the Rabaul area on lands near Keravat acquired by the Administration from the Bainings. The scheme, introduced in 1952 to meet the problems posed by mounting land pressure, now further exacerbated by the demands for larger holdings for cash crops, soon ran into difficulties, and by the beginning of 1960 it was generally conceded by the Administration to have been a failure. At this point, of the large numbers of Matupi who had originally been granted blocks, only a few had persisted and were successfully working the land. Later in the year, however, some effort was made to re-awaken interest in the scheme, but at the time I left the field it was still too early to gauge with what success. See also below, pp. 267-8.

They wanted the quarry for cement so that they could build up Rabaul. Already, he exclaimed, the town was growing and they wanted to take up all the land.

At length the meeting opened formally when Councillor Penias called on those who had agreed to the lease of land at Rabuana to speak and explain their position. Two elders spoke first. Both denied any agreement. The one claimed that when he had protested to the *kiap*, he had been waved aside; the other said that although they had marked out the ground he had told the *kiap* that he could not agree to anything without discussing the matter with the junior members of his matrilineal group. A third man, ToPidik, was then called. He admitted that he had agreed to the lease: there were stones on his land, and what good were they? He considered that he might as well see a little money from it to comfort himself in his old age. At this one of the younger men got up and began to castigate him. They should all take care about such agreements, he warned. ToPidik was thinking of the £250 he would receive, but he should have thought more about what was going to happen as the result of his consent. Soon the meeting was embarked upon a lengthy inquiry as to who had brought the matter before the *kiap* and given him the names of the various parties in the first place. But eventually the search for a scapegoat petered out and gave way to a discussion about whose land it was anyway. ToPidik asserted his claims through an eminent ancestor of his matriline. He was supported by a matrilineal kinsman, Turpui, but the latter was immediately advised to keep out of the argument since on previous occasions he had been pushed aside by ToPidik, and now was simply being used to give weight to the assent. Turpui then announced that he had no claims in that block, and he was quickly followed by his own senior maternal nephew. As those on whom ToPidik could most hope to count began to withdraw their support, others joined the debate, proffering evidence and argument that on the lands of the 'big man' on whom ToPidik relied there had been no stones.

The feeling of the meeting was now clear, and at last one of the elders and then a younger spokesman rose to lecture ToPidik severely. Leaving him in no doubt about the

enormity of his offence, they indicated that he had now no alternative but to go before the *kiap* again and withdraw his consent, for the land he had agreed to lease lay astride the path that led to the gardens of the people of Kikila. Having made their point, they then sought to mollify the old man, whose home for many years had been in Kurapun,⁶ by suggesting that he could be excused for not knowing about the path, since the people of Kurapun did not work gardens in that area themselves. Yet the decision still placed ToPidik in an awkward predicament, for what explanation could he offer the District Officer for wanting to withdraw the consent he had already voluntarily given? Some suggested that ToPidik should say that the stones were not his after all, but belonged to the people as a whole. One influential elder felt that this was a weak approach, and said they should simply state that the stones belonged to two other individuals. The meeting finally ended when it was agreed that all should go out again to meet the *kiap* on the quarry site the next morning.

I was unable to be present at this meeting, but I gathered later that there had been a heated discussion. The District Officer was alleged to have charged the Matupi with ingratitude, saying that during the Japanese occupation there had been no question of leases. The Matupi replied that that was in time of war; in any case they too had fought and helped to drive the Japanese away. The meeting broke up when a cement peg was removed, and the officer announced that he would have to report the matter to the District Commissioner.

The following evening yet another village meeting was called at Kikila. John ToVuia, one of the leading men on the island, and at that time a nominated member of the Legislative Council in Port Moresby, was present on this occasion. Addressing the villagers angrily, he said he had heard that they had attended a meeting with the *kiap* at Rabuana armed with axes and knives. He had heard too that they had spoken fiercely to the *kiap* and charged that the Administration did not help the people. Who amongst them, he demanded, had carried an axe? One young man, employed as a clerk in one

⁶ Kikila and Kurapun are major local groupings on the island. These are discussed below, p. 89ff.

of the European stores in Rabaul, replied that he had carried an axe so that when the meeting finished he could go on to work in his garden, and then demanded in his turn who had told ToVuia that they wished to attack the *kiap*. ToVuia ignored the question, and continued to upbraid them for their unseemly behaviour. Why should this difficulty have arisen when the man who owned the land had agreed to lease it? But ToVuia's view was not allowed to pass unchallenged. One elder, whose opinions also usually carried considerable weight in these assemblies, immediately pointed out that if a quarry were started there, many people who had rights in the adjoining lands would be affected. In any case, when they had last discussed the matter together it had been established that there were no stones on ToPidik's land, and that was the verdict that ToPidik was to pass on to the *kiap*. A younger man, a senior clerk in one of the government departments in Rabaul, and now a recognised spokesman at village gatherings, also opposed ToVuia, observing that the younger people had never been consulted about the arrangements. It was ToPidik alone who would use the money, and he gave warning that those who owned the land would take him to court for disposing of property that did not belong to him. When the people finally dispersed there were murmurings that ToVuia was himself behaving just like a *kiap*.

After a while the Administration appears to have acknowledged defeat, at least for the time being, for the matter was not broached again to my knowledge during the rest of my stay on the island. Nevertheless the whole episode is very revealing of the Matupi mood and temper where matters of land are concerned. It also raises interesting questions about internal political relations on the island, but consideration of these must be deferred for fuller discussion in later chapters. Our present concern is with the light shed on one of the most important aspects of the islanders' relations with the town and the Administration.

At the meeting I attended at Rabuana, when the District Officer first broached the question of the quarry, the Matupi responded to the Administration's proposal in terms at once blunt and unequivocal. The proposition was quite unacceptable and, so far as the Matupi were concerned, there was no

point in further discussion of the matter. It was not of course a position that was likely to endear them to the District Officer, though on his part their reaction was probably not unexpected. From his point of view, indeed, the attitude adopted by the Matupi merely served to confirm the reputation they had acquired amongst many officials as a recalcitrant, intractable and generally difficult lot. Yet the Matupi did give reasons for their reluctance to co-operate. There was nothing spurious in their insistence that the establishment of the quarry would deprive them of the use of the path that led to their gardens. The people of Kikila had their main food gardens high up on the slopes; denial of access to the path, itself extremely precipitous, would have entailed for most people lengthy and circuitous detours. Nevertheless, it seemed to me that given an initial willingness to negotiate some of the Matupi objections could have been met. Indeed, at one of the later village assemblies, John ToVuia, who quite clearly had been approached by the Administration to intervene in the matter, sought to win the people round by making it known that the Administration had already agreed to improve the existing road to Rabuana from the town, and would later make a road for them to their gardens at Ralokor. But the Matupi now were not to be persuaded. The highly charged atmosphere and the show of aggression that marked a number of the gatherings pointed to more deep-seated reasons for their opposition. In their discussions amongst themselves, their profound distrust and suspicion of the Administration were unmistakable, and it was clear to me that the remarks of the police sergeant from Raluana did little more than give vivid expression to the feelings of many in his audience.

In point of fact, however, a number of distinct elements contributed to the Matupi attitude. To begin with, in the present instance, had the Matupi had a closer experience of business practice, they might well have taken advantage of the Administration's interest in starting a quarry by offering to participate in the running of the enterprise themselves. Lacking this experience, the possibility never occurred to them, and the quarry was seen simply as providing yet another avenue by which the Europeans and the Chinese would enrich

themselves at their expense. Lack of acquaintance with the ways of the wider society moulded their response in other respects too. Compelled to accept a legal system with whose inner workings they were unfamiliar, and which they had not yet learned to master and manipulate wholly to their own satisfaction, they felt themselves exposed and defenceless in the face of the more guileful Europeans. Between Europeans a lease was all right, but in any transaction over land between a Tolai and a European, be sure 'a lie lay at the core of it' (*a vaongo i tur tana*), and in the end the former always lost out. Behind all their other doubts, however, lay an overriding distrust of the Administration which marks all their dealings with it where land is concerned. As the Matupi see it, this is the lesson experience has taught them in a series of bitter wrangles they have waged with the Administration over many years. As we shall see, the circumstances surrounding many of these earlier disputes provide good grounds for much Matupi suspicion. At the same time, to the outsider, the Matupi attitude must appear as the more simple expression and almost inevitable outcome of the irreconcilable clash between the islanders' attachment to their land and the immediate presence of a modern town with its ever growing needs and demands for space.

From the first arrival of the Europeans in the area, the Matupi had to face the surrender of portions of their land, and to this day there are considerable tracts on the island itself which the Matupi are unable to use because of arrangements which date from this early period. With the establishment of Rabaul a new situation developed. The growth of the town, with its immigrant population of Europeans and indigenes from different parts of New Guinea, posed at once for the Administration the problem of finding sites for a whole range of purposes: for a compound for native labourers, for a native hospital, or for a cemetery for migrant workers who died away from home. Some time during the Australian Military Administration the need appears to have been felt to establish a race-course, and at a later date some of the adjoining land was taken over for use by the Golf Club. Since the very situation of Rabaul sets obvious limits to its physical growth, much of the expansion that occurred was almost

necessarily in the direction of Matupit, and in all the instances cited it was Matupi land that was involved. But perhaps the most serious development came when, with the introduction of air transport to the Territory, the need became apparent for an airfield for Rabaul. A block of land at Lakunai seemed to provide the most convenient site. The matter appears to have been first mooted in 1935, and in varying ways has remained a major source of contention between the Matupi and the Administration down to the present day.

Lakunai: the Airfield Dispute

The existence of a dispute over the airfield first came to public notice when in September 1935 the *Melbourne Herald* carried a report from Rabaul that government officials had made a 'sudden and violent seizure' of lands belonging to the Matupi. Shortly afterwards this report became the basis of a petition to the Permanent Mandates Commission of the League of Nations (Minutes of the 29th Session, 1936). There can be little doubt that the Administration's handling of the situation was singularly clumsy and inept. The site in question was an area planted by the Matupi with coconuts and bananas, and it adjoined the recreation reserve. Only a short time before the Administration had approached the Matupi with a request that they cede another small strip of land in order to complete the reserve. When they showed reluctance to part with any more land, the Administration admitted, after inquiry, that the people had no more land than was necessary to provide for their reasonable requirements, but agreed that if the Matupi were prepared to cede this last strip of land no further demands would be made upon them. These views were communicated to the Matupi through their resident Catholic missionary, Father J. G. Madigan. What appears to have happened now was that, without any intimation to the people of what was afoot, surveyors and native labourers suddenly appeared on the scene and began marking and pegging the land owned by the Matupi, but leaving the government reserve completely untouched. According to a report in the *Pacific Islands Monthly* (24.9.1935), some 64 coconut and 24 banana trees were cut down in the process. An account of

the subsequent events is set out briefly in the evidence of the Mandatory Power presented to the Permanent Mandates Commission. This stated that the Administration desired land for an aerodrome near Rabaul and had directed a preliminary survey. When the Matupi protested that they required the land for their food crops the Administrator had instructed Mr Ball, Assistant District Inspector, to make a full inquiry. In spite of the discourtesy and suspicion with which he was treated by the natives, the statement continued, Mr Ball's report frankly supported their contention that the land was essential for their subsistence and could not be spared for an aerodrome, and it concluded by noting that the Administration had accepted this view and withdrawn the survey.

But the need for an aerodrome remained and, despite the assurances that had been given to the Matupi and the explicit recognition of their need for land, it was decided in 1938 to proceed with the construction of Rabaul airport. There appears to be no extant documentary record of the arrangements by which the land was acquired by the Administration, and many years later at a hearing before the Commissioner of Land Titles, the Matupi were still stubbornly maintaining that they had been compelled to yield to *force majeure*, and that no agreement had been made for the purchase of the land or compensation paid.⁷ They claimed indeed that their protests at the time had been met by the Administrator himself with a threat to remove all of them to the Baining, a claim which the Commissioner found impossible to accept, dismissing the allegation as 'a fair guide to the veracity of all their statements regarding the alleged illegal actions of the pre-war Administration'. However, in a succeeding paragraph

⁷ The hearing, conducted at Rabaul and Port Moresby at various times during 1955-6, was an attempt to sort out the whole tangled question of Administration claims to the various blocks of land, most of them referred to in the text above, over which there was dispute with the Matupi and, from a legal point of view, to give the matter some degree of finality. I am uncertain what circumstances prompted the setting up of the hearing at this particular time, though it is clear that, purely administrative considerations apart, some settlement was necessary if further negotiations with the Matupi over land were to be contemplated. The need for such negotiations was always a possibility and, indeed, only a little later, in November 1956, the Rabaul Town Advisory Council made formal representations that the aerodrome should be extended in order to handle the much larger modern craft.

of his finding, the Commissioner was led to observe that unfortunately the Administration itself could offer very little evidence in support of its claims. The simple fact was that the evidence available to the Commissioner was totally inadequate to achieve the degree of legal certainty he felt obliged to seek. The mere identification of certain of the blocks in dispute posed a major difficulty since many of the relevant documents and papers had been lost or destroyed in the war.⁸ Some few years before the hearing, an attempt had been made by administrative officers at Rabaul to settle the boundaries between Administration land and that owned by the Matupi, resulting in what is known locally as the McCarthy-Murphy Agreement. At the hearing itself many of the Matupi appear to have been content to abide by its terms, but the Commissioner took the view that the agreement had never been ratified by any legislation and therefore was without legal effect, arguing that in the absence of complete unanimity amongst the natives he was bound to maintain what he considered 'the true pre-war position'. Given the scantiness of reliable evidence, and all the circumstances surrounding the case, this approach can only suggest the pursuit of a mirage, and it is not surprising to find that in the end, despite the most careful weighing of the evidence, the Commissioner himself was forced to recognise, at a number of points, that all he could do was make a purely arbitrary decision. From one point of view, the effect of the search for legal certitude was to perpetuate the confusion that already existed; such an approach could do little to solve the administrative problem, and even less to still the resentment of the Matupi. As against this, once the question of title was settled, however inadequately, the way was opened up to the negotiation of proper leases.

The next major development in the sequence occurred in

⁸ For example, in regard to one transaction where land had been acquired by the Administration pre-war, the draft certificate of title referred to an area of 101.12 hectares, but what was not clear was the location of the various parcels that made up this area. In another instance, plans that had been re-constructed in the post-war period showed various local features, but these in fact had never been fixed at one point. Further inquiry showed, for example, that there had been several Rapindik Roads, each one located slightly to the west of its predecessors.

1960 when the Department of Civil Aviation initiated a move to re-position the runway to give planes a longer and clearer approach for landing and take-off. If the measure turned out to be practicable, it would mean that certain lands now being worked by the Matupi would have to be acquired by the Administration, while others at present held under lease would be returned to the owners. The initial Matupi response was the by now familiar refusal to consider the matter. However, the Administration pursued their inquiries discreetly, and about a year later word reached the village that Dr Gunther, the Assistant Administrator, was to be present at a meeting in Rabaul when the negotiations for the transfer of the land were to be completed. The news obviously took a number of the people by surprise.

I began to pick up some of the details from my cook who, in unwonted fashion, stayed on at the house one evening after my meal in order to talk. He was somewhat agitated and began at once to tell me of a meeting that had just been held in the village at which a number of the prominent 'land authorities' appeared to have agreed to accept the Administration's request. The whole village was now talking about it, he said, and everybody was very upset. There was a strong suspicion, he added, that the one really behind the decision was a man called ToRokota. My cook was deeply concerned because the area in question was one where he, together with many others, enjoyed cultivation rights and privileges and had planted food and cocoa gardens. He told me finally that there was to be a big meeting at Kurapun at which they proposed to question ToRokota and the others about their intentions.

The following night the horn blew at Kurapun to summon the villagers. Soon a large crowd had assembled, but there was no sign of ToRokota. ToRokota actually lived at Malaguna, another Tolai settlement on the other side of Rabaul, but he was known to have arrived earlier in the day. After a long wait, when he did not answer the call for him to appear, a group of young men went to the house where he was staying. According to the report I received later, he at first refused to come out, thinking that a party had arrived to assault him. At length he emerged from the house and soon, as other

people began to arrive, a fierce argument was being waged on the spot.

A man called Peter, a schoolteacher in his mid-thirties, was the first to speak. We are very angry, he declared. The other day when they had gone out to see the land they had waited for the *kiap*, and when he finally turned up he had addressed no word to them. The *kiap* had simply gone off with the others who were examining the area, and when he returned offered no explanation to them. ToRokota replied, equally aggressively, 'Well, here's something for you to ponder on. On Saturday a message from Dr Gunther was sent out to all of us who have leases on the land there. And when we arrived before the *kiap* he called out each of our names, so let no-one who claims land there say he didn't know about it'. A sharp exchange followed between Peter and ToRokota:

'Who told ToGorogoro [the Councillor for Kurapun] that the people should go out to see the area so that they could see what had to be cut down?'

'I told ToGorogoro', ToRokota replied.

'Are you a *kiap*?'

'How many times do I have to tell you? Turbarat's here too. You can talk too. But listen now. I have not agreed yet that the D.C.A. should acquire this land. The position is that the *kiap* asked me if we were agreeable to their carrying out a preliminary survey to see if the area was suitable for their requirements. If it is, they will "buy" it, if I agree. And if I don't agree, then they won't get it. All I agreed to was the preliminary survey. I never agreed to anything over which I had no claim.'

Turbarat, another elder, usually of fierce disposition and quick to anger, then agreed that when a number of them went to meet the *kiap* they had accepted the survey just as ToRokota had explained. Peter observed wryly that whereas the day before when they had gone out to inspect the land he, Turbarat, had spoken against ToRokota and called him a madman, now he was helping him with his words. ToRokota rounded on him angrily. 'You, Peter, don't talk to me like that. I am a "land authority" (*a bit na pia*, see p. 126) here at Matupit. If you wish to strike me, don't think I am afraid. The Government is my father.' Peter was compelled to change

his tack. 'Don't you realise', he asked, 'that by selling away the lands you are destroying the people. You are taking away their means of existence. If you wish to sell land to the Administration, you should have first informed the people. For theirs is the real authority.'

At this point one man broke out sobbing. The peg he had seen them place, he cried, would mean the destruction of all his cocoa trees which were just about to come into bearing, and would have been the source of his future income. Eight years he had worked there, investing his labour and energy in it—now it was to be taken away from him. If they agreed to the sale of that land, it was tantamount to killing him. Others spoke in similar vein, one young man declaring that the descent group of ToRokota had never planted a single thing, save for one man who had coconuts there. Why? It was because of their laziness. All they wanted was easy money, he declared. They had lots of land, but they just let it lie idle.

Another of the younger men, who worked in Rabaul as a labour contractor, joined the argument. 'ToRokota, you don't live here at Matupit. Do you think you can just come down here from Malaguna to settle our affairs? What of all these visits of yours to the *kiap*, and yet our Councillor here does not know what is going on? If something is going on here it is proper that the Councillor should know first. I have seen you, and know how you have become friends with the Government. Very well. But take care for the future that someone doesn't approach the Government and expose your lies.'

ToRokota was not intimidated. 'See here', he replied, 'I am not a Baining. I am ToKaut [i.e. naming his forbear, and a former 'big man' of his lineage], a native of Matupit. This is my house, my land to which you have come to attack me. This is no new matter I have approached the Government about. You accuse me of selling off the land. But the map is there, and you all know about it. The whole of Matupit agreed that the land occupied by the Education Department belonged to ToKaut. And the same is true of the Golf Course. I know what I am doing.'

Some began to urge that the matter be taken before the *kiap* again, a suggestion that ToRokota welcomed, knowing full well that his opponents had not a leg to stand on.

Another elder, Brudel, who had been Kurapun's previous councillor for many years, apparently did not like this turn in the argument and intervened. He said he had raised the matter many years ago with the United Nations, and had spoken out then against the Administration taking their land without any proper purchase or agreement. 'Many swore at me then. But never mind. My land and country is Kabair. But I forbid you to take this matter before the *kiap* again. We have already made our agreement with the Government. All you are saying now is a lot of nonsense.' This brought an angry retort from another young man, a stores clerk in the Department of Public Works. 'See, you came here in anger against ToRokota, and spoke fiercely against him. Now we see that they all stood together, so leave ToRokota alone. Just ignore what Brudel has said. ToPulpulung, Komita, tomorrow you go and see the *kiap*, and tell him you did not agree to what ToRokota said. As for these old men, these elders, let us no longer accept what they say about the land.'

The argument went on into the early hours of the morning, going over the same ground again and again. I was at this time preparing for my final departure from Matupit, and I have no knowledge of subsequent events. Nevertheless, it is apparent that the whole course of the dispute reveals many of the same features noted already in the episode of the quarry site. In both cases there was an approach to the Matupi by the Administration with an offer to acquire certain tracts of land. In each case the initial Matupi response was a flat rejection. Then, following further discreet approaches by the Administration, a number of elders were finally prevailed upon to accede to the request. This produced a good deal of agitation within the village, and led to various stormy meetings at which those who had agreed to cede the land were denounced in violent terms, and means were sought to have the agreement retracted.

But there are also interesting points of difference between the two incidents. In the first place, there was an important difference in the positions of the two men most centrally involved in the disputes. ToPidik, who had agreed to cede land for the quarry, was a feeble old man, only saved from total blindness by a recent operation on his eyes. He had

no sisters' children, and lacking other close matrilineal kinsmen, had no strong core of support. Moreover, as a Catholic and a resident of Kurapun, he filled in this situation the position of an 'outsider'.⁹ Ignoring the fact that two of their own elders were initially involved in the deal, the people of Kikila were able to reaffirm their own solidarity and opposition to the quarry scheme by concentrating all their venom on the hapless ToPidik. ToRokota, though an 'outsider' too in the sense that he normally lived at Malaguna, was in a much more powerful position. He was recognised as an important land-owner in Kurapun, and a number of members of his descent group lived there. However, there was a more important point of difference. The lands at Rabuana had never been surveyed, so that questions of land-ownership there could still be settled as matters internal to the village. In the case of the lands at the airfield, these had now been surveyed, the titles recorded, and leases granted. From the point of view of the Matupi, there might be dispute over the question whether those who were in receipt of rent were properly entitled to it; from the point of view of the Administration the matter was settled, and unlikely to be re-opened. Hence ToRokota was not in the least perturbed by threats to take the case before the *kiaŋ* again; his name was on the lease, and he knew that there was nothing the Matupi could do to manoeuvre him out of his entitlements.

Incidents of the kind I have been describing bring out the great intensity of emotion that surrounds the question of land at Matupit. The Matupi are not in principle opposed to developments that favour the economic advancement of the area as a whole. Peter, the schoolmaster, stated this quite clearly when, at one point in the course of the argument with ToRokota, he remarked that they too recognised the need for extending the airfield. But he added at once, 'One thing that is important is that we also think of our homeland (*gunan*)'. And addressing ToRokota he demanded, 'Is there no woman who will bear children for you afterwards?' We have in these remarks a simple re-iteration of the dilemma that confronts the Matupi: that while the expansion of the town is necessary

⁹ For discussion of this concept see Frankenberg (1957).

and desirable, it must not be at the sacrifice of their own community.

In expressing himself as he did, the schoolteacher was undoubtedly giving voice to an anxiety shared by nearly everyone on the island. Yet, in point of fact, it is possible to speak of unanimity of purpose and feeling among the Matupi only in a general way, for, as we have seen, in any specific situation, there have always been some whose private interests have outweighed the public concern. In short, while disputes with the Administration over questions of land illuminate Matupi relations with the town, these external relations also bear directly on the internal relations of the island, at times activating traditional lines of cleavage within it, at times exposing or encouraging new sources of division and alignment. These tendencies are exacerbated when, as happens now when the Administration seeks to acquire a lease, substantial sums of money may be involved. Towards the end of the discussions over the land at the airfield, the view widely heard throughout the village was that the people had been betrayed by the greed of their elders. The major cleavage here was between those who exercised rights of control over the land, and those who were in various ways dependent upon these 'land authorities' for the means of cultivation; but what is striking is that the most prominent spokesmen in the debates were frequently younger and more educated people who were in employment in Rabaul. These debates reveal the profound emotional attachment of the Matupi to their land. However, such situations allow us to grasp the attitude of the Matupi mainly in its negative aspects. For an appreciation of its positive aspects we need to examine the significance of land in the economic life of the islanders and the role it plays in their internal political system. These topics provide the themes of succeeding chapters.

The Economy of Modern Matupit

WE have seen in the previous chapter how Rabaul's growing need for land has introduced a constant strain into Matupi relations with the town. Yet it is also plain that competition over land is not the only component in that relationship, for the preceding account also supplies evidence of a wide variety of other links between the islanders and the town. The 'suburban' appearance of the village has already been noted, and reference has also been made to the numbers of Matupi who go into Rabaul daily for work and other reasons. It is, however, the economic nexus which provides the clearest expression of Matupi participation in the life of the town, and an examination of the way in which they nowadays earn their livelihood will, therefore, enable us to pinpoint the nature of that involvement more precisely.

Work for Wages

The extent of contemporary Matupi involvement in the labour market is shown in Table 1. This shows that just under 40 per cent of the entire adult male population of the island is in regular wage employment. As one might expect the greatest numbers are in the age range 20-40, but what is quite striking is the decline in the proportion of those in jobs in the 30-39 age cohort. It will be noted too that the majority of these are employed within rather than outside the Gazelle Peninsula. This suggests that as yet relatively few see themselves as committed to wage employment for the entire period of their working lives; the inference is that after marriage and the birth of children Matupi look increasingly to follow-

ing an occupation which will enable them to remain close to the village.

Table 1

Matupi males in regular wage employment, 1960

Age	Employment within the Gazelle	Employment outside the Gazelle	Total	Total population	% employed
15-19	4	—	4	35	11.4
20-29	42	39	81	132	61.3
30-39	36	10	46	107	42.9
40-49	9	1	10	42	23.8
50+	2	—	2	53	3.7
Total	93	50	143	369	38.7

The table also brings out a point which serves to distinguish the Matupi—and to some extent perhaps the whole Tolai—situation from that which typically prevails in other parts of New Guinea and, indeed, in many of the other under-developed countries of the world. The proportion of Matupi who are absent from home at any given time is only 13.6 per cent of all adult males, though if scholars and others in training institutions are included the figure would rise to about 20 per cent. Reliable data on migrant labour rates for other parts of New Guinea are hard to come by, but the Matupi figure would seem to be low in comparison with parts of the Sepik and some Highlands areas (see Brookfield, 1960); certainly it is low when compared with labour migration rates in many African countries. A further point worth noting in this context is that the period of absence is also usually quite short, and few are away for more than a couple of years at a time.

No figures are available to indicate how far this pattern differs from that of the pre-war period. But a sharp difference in the kind of involvement may be inferred from Table 2, which sets out the jobs in which Matupi are now employed.

Two points emerge strikingly from these figures. First is the fact that few Matupi nowadays offer for regular unskilled employment at home, still less abroad, whereas in the inter-war years quite a number had worked as labourers on the

Table 2
Occupations of employed Matupi males, 1960

Occupation level	Within the Gazelle Peninsula					Outside the Gazelle Peninsula				
	15-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50+	Total	15-19	20-29	30-39	Total
Teachers	—	4	4	—	—	8	—	7	6	13
Clerks	—	15	7	—	—	22	—	3	2	5
Artisans	2	17	10	2	1	32	—	6	1	7
Drivers	—	1	11	2	—	14	—	1	—	1
Police, military	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	18	1	20
Misc.	1	5	4	5	1	16	—	4	—	5
Total	3	42	36	9	2	92	1	39	10	51

goldfields at Edie Creek and Bulolo. The obverse of this situation is reflected in the high proportion of teachers and clerks, just 33 per cent of the total, pointing to the rapid emergence since the war of a 'white-collar class' among the Tolai (though the use of this expression here is hardly the most appropriate since even the most sophisticated Tolai nowadays prefers open-neck shirt and tailored *lavalava* or Samoan loincloth).

Of those who are working outside the Gazelle Peninsula, a number are based in Port Moresby, while the remainder are scattered around the various parts of the New Guinea mainland. The teachers, working in mission and government primary schools, were frequently sent to serve a period in New Guinea before returning to a post nearer home. Their comings and goings provided the occasion for numerous parties and social 'get-togethers' among the Matupi younger set. Of the artisans these were often carpenters who had been employed to construct a council chamber for a newly instituted Native Local Government Council in some area of the Highlands where men of the required degree of skill were not yet available. However, the largest category of Matupi abroad was made up of those serving with the Pacific Islands Regiment and the Constabulary. Yet even here it is interesting to note the atypical status of the Tolai. In the case of the Constabulary at least, all the Matupi of whom I have record were employed as police-clerks and drivers or belonged to the police band. In a word, the Tolai who are abroad today would appear to stand out as an occupational élite, keenly aware that they are working in areas and amongst peoples often much less advanced than their own.

Tables 1 and 2, it should be recalled, refer only to men in regular wage employment. Presenting the data in this form might appear to suggest that there is a sharp dichotomy between those in jobs and those whose livelihood is gained by working at home in the village. This is not the case. In the first place, those who are employed in Rabaul continue to live at Matupit: their wives work in the gardens and they themselves do so on their free days or in their spare time. And even those who are absent in Papua and the New Guinea mainland will continue to exercise their rights in land at home. Secondly, and more important in the present context,

the fact that a man is not listed as being in wage employment does not mean that he will not work for money from time to time as the opportunity arises. From this point of view Matupi involvement in the labour market is not adequately represented in the tables. This distortion must now be corrected.

Casual Labour

It has been noted how in the pre-war period Matupi preferred to offer for 'free' or 'casual' as against contract or indentured labour. A busy port offers a number of opportunities of this kind. Many Matupi used to serve as ships' laundrymen, while others worked at the docks. However, at the time of my study this work had been unpopular with the Matupi for some years, and was mainly undertaken by other groups. Early in the 1950s the question of assuring a regular supply of labour at the docks had been giving concern to one of the main stevedoring firms, and the matter was discussed with the Rabaul Native Local Government Council, a Tolai body. It was agreed that a system of zoning should be introduced for the Rabaul Council area, each village to have its own representative or boss-boy. The task of the boss-boy was to arrange for a lorry to turn up at the village at the right time to collect the workers, to ensure that sufficient labourers would be available when it arrived, and to supervise and maintain discipline among the men working ship. But the system was not very successful. There appears to have been a great deal of pilfering, particularly of liquor and spirits, and this led to much altercation and friction between the employers and the Tolai labourers. The Matupi with whom I discussed the question usually said they had given up stevedoring because there was too much trouble for which they were unjustly regarded as being responsible. An alternative explanation, offered by a compound manager who knew the Matupi well, was that stricter controls introduced at the docks made it no longer worth their while to seek this kind of work.

To a considerable extent Matupi participation in casual labour depends upon the demand for ready cash and on the presence of a man with the right connections who can also organise a supply of labour. Thus on one occasion a lorry

appeared at Matupit on a number of consecutive days and took away about thirty men to work at the docks. John ToVuia, whom we have already noted as one of the leading men on the island, had secured a contract to turn a ship around, the idea being to raise funds for the completion of the new Methodist church on the island. In another instance a young man who had been working for Burns Philp in Fiji had just returned to Rabaul. Anxious to establish himself in business, he began to cultivate a number of Europeans who would be able to put contracts in his way. Within a short time he too was organising parties of Matupi to work at the docks, but the arrangement quickly fell through. For in the main, the Matupi attitude towards casual unskilled work is one of aggressive independence, well illustrated in the following incident. The main street of Rabaul was being relaid, and the young man just mentioned had secured a sub-contract to provide labour to cut down and remove the roots of the mango trees that lined the avenue. The Matupi understood they were to receive £1 apiece per day for the work. On the first day, a Sunday, about thirty men turned up for work and at the end each received £1. They worked for a further two days, but when they received their money on Tuesday evening, they discovered that it amounted to only £1 apiece for the two days. It is likely that the Matupi had not appreciated that they were being paid for their work on Sunday at double rates. But whatever the source of the misunderstanding, they made it plain that they regarded 10s. a day as inadequate payment for the work, and they promptly told the European contractor not to send his lorry down to the village again.

Entrepreneurial Activities: Contractors and Businessmen

In bringing out the lack of enthusiasm for casual unskilled labour, save when it is convenient, the discussion also draws attention to the importance of contracting and entrepreneurial activity for the Matupi. It is apparent from Table 2 that artisans form the largest single category of Matupi in regular wage employment. This category includes trained mechanics, some of whom were earning relatively high wages, painters and plumbers, but the majority were carpenters and joiners.

Even so the latter represented only a small proportion of the total number of Matupi who laid claim to a knowledge of carpentry and put it to use from time to time both within and outside the village. Some of these had received training at the Malaguna Technical School, some at mission schools, but there were many others who stated simply that they had learned by watching and helping their fellows on the job. The presence of these men on the island points to a degree of under-employment in the Rabaul area, a situation of which the Matupi were aware and which in their eyes was exacerbated by the presence of Kerema from Papua who had been settling in Rabaul in increasing numbers since the war, and were now competing for work with the Matupi. At all events there were usually plenty of hands available when a Matupi decided the time was ripe to put up his own modern-style house in the village, or if someone succeeded in landing a contract to build a house, a school, or a church.

Contract work of this kind tends to be irregular, but since many of the clerks in Works and Housing and other departments of the Administration were from the island, the Matupi were in fact extremely well placed to obtain contracts. Partly because of this irregularity I did not succeed in getting systematic information on those who engaged in this work, but some impression of the scope of contracting may be gained from the following cases which came to my knowledge in the course of a month on my second visit to the field. Two men, having completed a painting job for the New Britain Club, were now engaged on similar work for the P.W.D. At Talwat, a Tolai community a little further round the bay, Matupi had secured contracts for a house for a medical assistant, and another for the Education Department. One man had a contract for a house for the Education Department elsewhere, and was being assisted by seven men, all of them Seventh Day Adventists. The contract was worth £A90, part of which would go towards the building fund for their new church. Another had a contract from the Rabaul Council for a septic tank at the market place, and was then to build a house at Reimber for £A300. Two men had recently left for Talasea, on the north coast of New Britain, to complete a building contract worth £A300, while on Matupit itself two were

engaged in putting up a school house. This contract was worth £A100, and the task was expected to take a month to complete. Finally, there were three men who had won contracts from the P.W.D. for the laying of drains.

The value of contracts is clearly variable, and the profitability of the enterprise depends on the number of workers engaged and how quickly the task can be completed. Each contractor was usually assisted by a number of men who were not otherwise in regular paid employment. The contractor himself took the lion's share of the amount received for the job, and I had the impression that for the members of the work-party itself the work was not always particularly rewarding. In a few of the cases I was able to examine, by the time the task had been completed the sums to be received were probably little more than the minimum wage of £A3 a week which had recently been introduced for urban workers. Nevertheless, this kind of work was congenial to the Matupi. The work-party was usually made up of close friends who worked together as a team. The jobs provided a welcome source of cash in periods of slack and since in any case, as we shall see, productive activities in the village do not demand a rigid time-table, work away from the village for short stretches could usually be fitted in very easily. Work on contracts also had the warm approval of the elders, who saw it as a solution to the problem of working for money without absorbing the younger men completely into the wage-earning economy of the town, with its threat to the traditional ways and crafts of the village. Finally, from the point of view of the contractors, the work tended to extend the range of social contacts, so that the more successful one was the greater were the chances of achieving prominence in an arena extending far beyond the confines of the village.

Apart from the contractors just considered, some reference also needs to be made to those who normally lived and worked in the village and were engaged in small-scale business enterprises and running village stores. All told there were eight village stores open on Matupit in 1960, though only one appeared to be really successful. It was owned and run by an energetic man in his early forties called Alfred. His house lay just behind the store, so that he or his wife could always keep

an eye on it. Immediately adjoining was a copra drier, a makeshift affair which he had recently constructed, but Tolai from quite remote parts were already bringing their coconuts to him for sale. Alfred's formula for success was hard work and personal initiative and independence, and he frequently pointed out to me how many businesses established on the basis of the custom of *turguvai* or 'partnership' had quickly foundered. Most of the other stores were indeed based on the *turguvai*, an arrangement whereby a number of persons belonging to the same or allied matrilineal kin groups would combine to raise capital to open a store. But the stores also faced a number of handicaps. Because of the small amounts involved they were often unable to buy in bulk from wholesalers, and as their stocks ran low they had to purchase from Chinese shopkeepers at retail prices. Thus their prices were often higher than in town. Again, since the business was a joint concern, someone had to be appointed to manage the store, and the man chosen was not always the most suitable. As the enterprise ran into difficulties plenty of scope was provided for wrangling among the contributors. The frequency with which these businesses failed, the fact indeed that some of them opened at all when all the odds were so obviously against success, would seem to reflect the lack of familiarity with modern business principles which we have had occasion to note in other contexts. At the same time, the close association of stores with particular descent groups suggests that the opening of a new village store was often undertaken less as a commercial venture than as a novel expression of relations between traditionally competing groups. Thus at Matupit most of those who were engaged in running stores were not entrepreneurs in the modern sense: in their orientation they were village- rather than town-directed.

Village Productive Activities: Cash Cropping

Were the Matupi entirely, or even mainly, dependent for their livelihood on regular wage or casual employment, it is likely that the island would very rapidly develop into little more than a dormitory suburb for urban workers. Such a development would be anathema to the islanders, and they have been

able to resist it mainly because nearly every Matupi, including the wage-earner, is also heavily engaged in productive activities based on the village, all of which involve some reference to indigenous principles of social organisation. These activities are of two kinds: (a) cash cropping and (b) those which I shall describe as traditional in the sense that they are in line with activities that were being carried on by the Tolai before the coming of the whites.

For the Matupi—and indeed for the Tolai as a whole—the most important cash cropping activity has been for many years the production of copra. The Matupit of pre-war days, invariably referred to by the people as ‘the good times’ (*ta ra boina bung*), is recalled as a land of coconuts so thick in parts that at night the stars were hidden from view. Even allowing for the promptings of nostalgia, this may not have been too gross an exaggeration, since already, some fifty years earlier, Powell had described the island as covered with coconut palms. The wealth of the Matupi, which already before the outbreak of war had enabled many of them to put up permanent modern-style houses and to run lorries and taxis, was based on copra production, and there were at that time at least four copra driers on the island. During the war, as we have seen, the groves had been devastated, and since it takes about ten years for the palm to come into economic bearing, the contribution made by copra to Matupi revenue at the time of my fieldwork was still small.

No reliable figures are available on plantings of coconut palms at Matupit. At one point the Agricultural Department had sought to carry out a census of palms, but the Matupi were obstructive and the attempt had to be abandoned. In a budget survey of sample households which I conducted (see p. 82), only one man claimed that he had no trees and the average number of plantings worked out at around 200. On this basis I calculate that total plantings at Matupit would amount to at least 30,000, and could considerably exceed that figure.

Monetary considerations apart, the value that the Matupi attach to producing copra also has important implications for continuity in their social structure. The palm is long-lived and may continue to yield nuts for sixty years and more.

Consequently, it should be planted only on land to which one has full legal entitlement as an acknowledged member of the matrilineal descent group which 'owns' the land. We shall also see later that the effect of the rules of residence and descent, as these operate nowadays, is to preclude a number of people at Matupit from planting coconuts on any large scale.

One of the major economic developments on the Gazelle Peninsula in the post-war period has been the encouragement given to the Tolai by the Administration to grow cocoa. The Tolai Cocoa Project came into being in the early fifties and, under its aegis, a number of fermentaries were rapidly established throughout the Tolai area. The Project also provided supervisory and marketing facilities and services. The Tolai responded to the new opportunity with enthusiasm, though the success with which different communities were able to exploit it has varied with such factors as the availability of land and local ecological conditions. At Matupit, for example, there were many who took eagerly to the new crop, and in the area of Rabuana, around the base of Mt Mother, there had been extensive planting. But the Matupi had not reckoned on unfavourable conditions of soil and shade. Moreover, the area had suffered an infestation of snails, introduced as food by the Japanese during the military occupation. Time and time again, therefore, the islanders had watched the plants perish. But they persevered, and in 1961, some seven years after the original plantings had been begun, some of the gardens were just beginning to show their first fruit. In the area of Ranu, however, conditions appear to have been more favourable, and here a number of gardens had reached the stage where it had become worth while for growers to register with a fermentary. The first sales were recorded in 1959, but the total sales of the ten registered growers to March 1960 amounted to only 2,279 lbs. for which they received £A57.10s., an average of a little more than £A5 per grower.

Cocoa's contribution to Matupi cash income at this time was thus slight. But the figures do not provide an adequate picture of the Matupi investment in cocoa. All told there were thirty-two cocoa gardens at Matupit, with total plantings somewhere in the neighbourhood of 20,000 trees. In addition, a number of Matupi had been able to take advantage of kinship

and other ties in order to acquire land for cocoa in other parts of the Gazelle Peninsula. Moreover, the growing of cocoa at Matupit involved a closer degree of co-operation and organisation than the production of copra. In many parts of the Gazelle cocoa gardens are often small, discontinuous blocks, each containing about 200-300 trees. At Matupit, where the lands of the various matrilineal groups are also often small and interdigitated, it appeared to many of the elders that it would be more economical to combine contiguous blocks into single plantations. Some of these had about 2,000 trees. But this raises at once a serious problem of labour. The shade trees seed quickly, and sprout like weeds, so that the garden is likely to be overrun if it is not cleared regularly. The Matupi handled the problem in two ways. Firstly, the village assembly set aside one day a week for work in the cocoa gardens, and those who did not turn out for work without a valid excuse would be fined. The second was through the institution known as the '*kapti*' ('cup of tea'). Each week a '*kapti*' would be sponsored by a different owner or owners of a cocoa garden. The sponsors would purchase or provide food for the occasion. On the appointed evening, individuals would gather at a meeting place where a stall had been improvised. Each would offer his or her contribution, which was entered in the sponsor's notebook under the name of the cocoa garden with which the contributor was associated, and would then indicate what items of food he wished to purchase. The '*kapti*' was not really a 'social' occasion: people drifted in and out at different times, and most departed shortly after they had made their purchase. Contributions were usually of the order of a few shillings, and a sponsor might expect to make about £A5 on the evening's work. The money would then be used to purchase tools, for example large hack-saws, or to pay a working party for clearing the garden. Such assistance was of course particularly valuable to those who were in wage employment and were not always able to tend their gardens themselves.

Traditional Activities

The production of copra and cocoa fitted in with a variety of other activities that belonged to the more traditional aspects

of Matupi economic life. The annual cycle of these activities is indicated in fig. 1.

The Tolai distinguish two main seasons, the *taubar* or south-east monsoon, which prevails in the period May to

FIG. 1 Annual cycle of productive activities on Matupit

October, and the *labur* or season of the north-west winds, extending roughly from November to March. The latter change tends to be sudden and more clearly defined, but the onset of the *taubar* is fairly gradual. Altogether the fall and rhythm of the seasons is much less clearly marked than might otherwise be expected in these tropical parts. The neighbourhood of Rabaul is protected from the south-east monsoon so that the annual rainfall is normally less than 100 inches. The heaviest falls occur in December, but some rain may usually be expected in every month. Again, there is no great variation in temperature or humidity, which remain fairly constant throughout the year (Lanyon-Orgill, 1960: 640-3).

Partly because of these climatic factors, partly because there is no dependence on seasonal crops, the Tolai have considerable room for manoeuvre in arranging their productive activities. Few tasks in the annual cycle demand the organisation and conformity to a time-schedule that goes, for example, with the planting of yams in the Trobriands (Malinowski, 1935: 63, 67), and in fact few productive activities are undertaken in concert. At Matupit, for example, no new food gardens are made in the *labur*, but individuals may be found planting food crops at any time from April to October. Moreover, few activities require steady application to the task over any length of time. The Tolai system thus not only allows freedom of choice as to when a particular job will be undertaken, but it also enables the enterprising individual to allocate his time between a number of activities which he can carry out more or less simultaneously.¹

The main staple at Matupit has been the banana. Altogether some seventy named varieties are known to the Tolai, but since many of these require conditions that cannot be satisfied at Matupit, only a relatively small number are grown

¹ The lack of a developed lunar or seasonal calendar would seem to relate to this flexibility in the cycle of production. The term nowadays commonly used to translate the English word year is *kilala*, but this refers more properly to a period or season, as in the expression *a kilala na ngio*, the egg-season or season of the megapode. The indigenous equivalent for year appears to have been *a kilala na pit*, or more simply *a pit*, this being the term for the wild sugar-cane which flowers annually. I have found no reference to the names of the months in the very extensive literature which exists on the ethnography of the Gazelle Peninsula, nor was I able to record any myself in the course of fieldwork.

by the islanders. Each variety is distinguished by appearance and taste, and many are prized for their suitability for some particular purpose, for example, as a 'breakfast' food or for feeding to young babies or old people. Some varieties again will continue to yield fruit for a couple of generations, others need to be replanted at more regular intervals. Taro, that other major item of Tolai subsistence, was not grown at Matupit, where conditions are unsuitable, and was purchased from other groups at the market-place, usually in exchange for *tambu*. Not to be confused with true taro (*Colocasia* sp.) is the introduced aroid known locally as *taro kongkong* or *tingapua* (Singapore) (*Xanthosoma* sp.). This is a much tougher and more prolific plant and, though regarded as much inferior to true taro as a foodstuff, is now grown by the Matupi on quite a considerable scale. In addition, the Matupi also grow sweet potatoes, cassava (*tapiok*) and a wide variety of native vegetables frequently likened to spinach. Gardens of groundnuts are often planted around September, and the crop usually sold for shell-money. Frequently this is done as a means of opening a new *tambu* 'account' in the name of a child, the proceeds being set aside in a separate bag to which the child will be expected to add as he grows up. Finally, the Matupi also grow a number of introduced fruits and vegetables such as tomatoes and pineapples, which are mainly for sale at the market-place or around the town.

Matupit today is entirely residential, and only house-crops of beans and small numbers of coconut palms to supply domestic wants are grown on the island itself. The main gardens and plantations lie on the mainland, reaching in to Rabaul itself, past Rapindik, and stretching almost as far as Praed Point. Parts of this area are shared with the people of Nodup and Talwat. Those with gardens on the Rabuana side usually travel there by canoe.

Much of the routine work in the gardens is done by individual men and women, though husband and wife may frequently be seen working together as a team. Very often these days, however, a man who decides to prepare a new food garden will engage a small work-party of friends and neighbours to carry out the initial clearing of the bush. The heavier work is performed by the men; the women follow behind

'scratching' the land and gathering up the weeds. These are left to dry in the sun for some time, depending on the weather, and are then burnt. After a further couple of weeks, the garden will be ready for planting with a variety of crops—perhaps a variety of banana, the *tukuru* or the *vurvudu*, the spinach-like vegetable known as a *igir*, Singapore taro, corn, and sugar-cane etc. In this task the man will often be assisted by his wife or mother.

But if the preparation of a garden can usually be completed nowadays quite quickly, gardening itself is a more or less continuous process. A new food garden needs to be tended from time to time to keep it tidy and clear of the *kunai* grass which springs up very quickly. Then, as the crops come into bearing, shoots are taken and transplanted nearby. This gradual process of extension indeed goes on throughout the life of the garden, ensuring a continuous supply of food, the more recent plantings beginning to yield their crops as the older ones are dying off. Moreover, where possible, most Matupi seek to maintain a number of gardens at the same time but in widely separated places. There are a number of reasons why this is desirable. In the first place, on grounds of convenience, Matupi like to have a *limlibur*, what we might call a 'cabbage patch', a small plot situated near the beach or by the roadside where a supply of food for immediate purposes can be picked up on the way home from work, or gathered quickly without the laborious trek to the main gardens. More important, however, are the different requirements of the crops themselves. The commonest variety of banana grown at Matupit is the *kalapua*. It is an extremely hardy plant which continues to yield a crop for many years. But it is also rather dry and tasteless and does not compare with the more delicate and sweeter *vurvudu* and *tukuru* already mentioned. The *vurvudu* gives food for about a year, the *tukuru* for perhaps two or three. But both take a good deal out of the soil, which ought to be allowed to rest thereafter for about five years. If a continuous supply of these varieties is to be ensured, one needs a number of different garden sites. A further important point in this connection is that while the Matupi typically go in for interplanting, there are some crops which cannot long survive in the company of others. This is particularly, though not

exclusively, true of the coconut palm. The tendency, increasingly common nowadays, is to plant up with coconuts after a food garden has been producing for a number of years. Within a short time the palm will have eliminated its competitors, with the result that the land has been effectively removed from further use for growing food. In these circumstances we find that persons more fortunately placed are able to maintain a number of widely separated holdings—a cocoa garden perhaps at Ranu, coconut plantations at Rabuana, and food gardens at Ralokor and other points. But not all Matupi are in this happy position. Because of the operation of the rules of residence and descent there were indeed many who had no entitlement to share in matrilineage land as of right, and were compelled to 'purchase' or 'lease' tracts of land from their more favourably situated fellows for small-scale cash cropping and even for their subsistence requirements (see p. 196). It is this situation which largely underlies the sense of betrayal discussed earlier when lineage elders appear willing to negotiate leases of land with the Administration.

Once the initial clearing and planting of the garden is completed, responsibility for looking after the garden and gathering the crop passes more directly to the women, and the men are freer to devote themselves to other activities, though even so many of them still visit the gardens regularly. During the dry season, among the men who are not in regular wage employment, attention is about evenly divided between collecting the eggs of the megapode and seine-fishing.

Around the base of Matupi crater and at other points in the vicinity the earth is very warm, and here the megapode deposits its eggs. Gathering the eggs is an arduous and hazardous business, but from May to October it is one of the most popular activities of Matupi males. The soil at the egg-sites is very light and sandy. In former times the implement chiefly employed for removing the soil to get at the eggs was the husk of a coconut. This, in a sense, merely scraped the surface. Nowadays the men use shovels, so that more and more ground is turned over, and the soil has little to bind it. The birds burrow deeper in search of firmer earth in which to lay their eggs. As the digging proceeds the men gradually disappear from view since many of the holes are more than six feet

deep. When a level has been reached, the fine soil is removed with a dish or basin until a hole is uncovered where eggs are thought likely to be buried. This is the most dangerous as well as the most frustrating part of the task because the 'warren' may proceed some distance inwards from the uncovered spot. The digger now has to move head and shoulders first, and because of the light texture of the soil, there is always the possibility of a fall-in. In this event, the work of clearing may have to begin all over again. One might thus dig and scrape away for a solid hour without uncovering a single egg. More seriously, there is always the distinct danger, in the case of fall-in, of the digger being smothered alive before others nearby become aware of his predicament.

Some time before my arrival at Matupit a young lad had died in this way, and the elders at Kikila—the largest of the three villages (see p. 89) on the island—made the possibility of fatal accidents a pretext for tightening control over the collection of eggs, which they sought to restrict to one day a week. However, this was only part of the story, and there were two other matters that were really at stake. In the first place, ownership of the egg-sites vested in a small number of matrilineages, whose elders were entitled to claim a levy on all eggs gathered on their grounds. When egg-collecting was confined to a certain day each week, the elders could arrange to be present and check what persons had gathered eggs on their land, and thus enforce their levy. When the younger men demanded the freedom to dig for eggs whenever they wanted, no such check existed. But there was also a real concern among the elders that planting coconuts and cocoa, which was more rewarding in the long term, should not be neglected through undue concentration on eggs, which gave an immediate cash return.

Gathering eggs was indeed quite a lucrative enterprise, and for those not at work for wages a major source of income at this time. Matupit, it used sometimes to be said, lived on the eggs of the megapode: at a time when income from cash crops was negligible it was the source of money which had enabled many to put up their new houses. On days when I visited the egg-grounds there were usually about fifty men present. The younger, stronger, and more skilled diggers might expect to

gather about eighty eggs in the course of the day, which would be sold at 6d. each. The older men would consider they had had a good day if they managed to collect forty. A number of women usually accompanied the diggers, taking with them supplies of tea, biscuits, tinned meat, and rice which they would prepare on the spot and sell to the men in return for eggs or money. These eggs they would then sell at the market on their own account. Finally, as already noted, the matri-lineage leaders, who were themselves no longer able to gather many eggs, also profited from the levy they exacted from each digger.

From May onwards large numbers of men would gather regularly in the afternoon to engage in seine-fishing. During the period 1960-1 there were about a dozen nets owned by the Matupi, though not all of them were being put to use at the time. The manufacture of the net or *umbene* was a traditional craft which has now almost completely disappeared. It is simpler nowadays to purchase a net from a European store. The nets may cost up to £A60 and more, so that the Matupi tend to buy them on a group basis. These groups are formed in different ways. Sometimes the members of a local matri-lineage combine to buy and operate a net; sometimes two or more men belonging to the same moiety, who recognise close links with one another and tend to co-operate over a wide range of activities, enhance those links through their joint ownership of a net. In other cases seine-fishing is the joint enterprise of an *urur*, a kind of local co-operative group usually composed of contiguous hamlets within a village section (see p. 93). At the time of my stay on Matupit three *urur* had purchased nets, which they operated exclusively to raise funds for completing their new Methodist church.

Preparing and operating the *umbene* demands a certain measure of team-work. Before the net is ready for use, the rope has to be prepared and threaded, special wooden floats called *kutang* have to be made and then, together with the pumice weights, affixed to the net. When these preparations are complete a launching ceremony, the *popoai*, is held. The elaborate form of fishing magic, formerly an integral part of the *popoai*, is now only rarely carried out, but a feast is still given by the owners of the net, at which those who assisted in its prepara-

tion receive their fees in shell-money. Baskets of food and sums of *tambu* are also distributed amongst all the others present. By this means the assistance is secured of a fairly large number of people whose help will be needed when the net is actually in use. When fishing is in progress, the net is carefully folded and placed in a canoe which lies at the ready on the edge of the beach. Look-outs on the beach or perched in the trees call out as soon as they detect the movement of a school of fish on the surface of the sea. Immediately the canoe moves away from the shore in a wide arc, and two of the crew start to pay out the net. The men assembled on the beach dive into the water and begin hauling the net into the shore until the catch is disburdened on the beach, and then sorted and counted. The net is gathered up again and the canoe returns to its station in readiness to repeat the operation.

Seine-fishing of this kind is bound up with the known movements of particular species of fish. These pass close inshore at a limited number of points, so that the *umbene* can be operated only from a few parts of the island. Indeed, during the 1961 season, all the fishing was concentrated on a single spot. This meant that the activities had to be organised so that each group had the opportunity to launch its net. Quarrels sometimes broke out and one serious dispute arose involving the question of ownership and user of this stretch of the beach. But mostly there was lively interest and participation in the work of the *umbene*, whoever it belonged to; and indeed these operations provided one of the few situations in which Matupi from all parts of the island came together and interacted on a completely informal basis.

It is extremely difficult to assess with accuracy what contribution seine-fishing made to Matupi income. The nets were in use regularly throughout the season, but I was not able to keep any systematic check on catches. These varied considerably from day to day. Sometimes the reward for a full day's wait was a mere handful of fish, which might simply be taken and eaten by the owners of the net; on other occasions there was a bumper catch, leading to a wild scramble as people sought to take fish indiscriminately from the pile. One Saturday, for example, two catches were landed. The first contained about 400 fish and yielded £A2 and 13½ fathoms of *tambu*.

The second was an unusually heavy catch and about 1,200 fish were landed, yielding £A21 for the owners. This sum was much less than might have been expected at current prices, but it appears that the fish were so plentiful that they were being handed round as gifts to those who had assisted in landing the catch, and it was likely too that in the confusion many who had purchased fish on the spot had not handed their money over. In a few cases I was given figures for the earnings of the nets. One man admitted to £A70 plus *tambu* for the 1960 season, while another who had launched his *umbene* in 1958 claimed that he had banked £A108 by the middle of the following year. One *urur* claimed a sum of about £A500 in the bank, accumulated over a period of about three years. These funds accrue of course to the purchaser of the net, but many others too profit from the activity. Whenever a sizeable catch is landed a certain number of fish are always distributed among the helpers. Moreover, when fishing is in progress numbers of women are also present, gathered together a little further back along the beach. As soon as the catch is landed, they come forward to purchase fish, which they then cook and prepare for sale at the market or at various settlements around Rabaul.

By about September the gathering of eggs has passed its peak, and the *umbene* season too is drawing to a close. Much more time is now devoted to working in the gardens and planting food crops which will be harvested in the coming year. This is also one of the driest periods of the year, and a good time for gathering the coconuts and setting them out to dry in the sun, after which they can be prepared for sale as copra. Some of the men will already be looking towards the coming of the *labur*, and will be thinking of beginning the preparation of their *babau*, a term that refers to the buoy or piece of floating wood to which a fish-basket is attached, but is also applied to the whole apparatus of trap-fishing. The traps themselves (*a wup*) are large basket-like structures made of cane and bamboo strips. Were a man to work steadily and consistently at the job, he might complete his trap in a month, and be ready to set it at sea in November. In fact, most men work only intermittently, fitting it in with a variety of other

tasks, so that many traps are not placed at their anchorage until well into January.

In trap-fishing, as in the gathering of eggs, a man is primarily dependent for success on his own efforts. Collecting the material for the *babau* and the actual construction of the apparatus is the responsibility of the individual himself, but there are a number of stages in the process where he requires the co-operation of others. This is particularly, though not exclusively, noticeable around the time of launching. At this point, a number of different activities have to be co-ordinated. The wicker basket (*a peo*), which serves as anchor, has to be filled with heavy stones; then the long cable of bamboo by which buoy and trap are affixed to the anchor and held in position is prepared for loading on to a canoe; finally, the trap itself, perhaps as much as eight feet in length, has to be brought down to the beach from its cradle in the 'workshop'. Three canoes and a working party of at least ten men are usually required to place the *babau* in its proper position at sea.

The need for co-operation in trap-fishing is given structural expression in the groups known as *motonoi*, to one of which each person engaged in fishing attaches himself. The *motonoi* itself, upon which the group is based, is a small area of the beach specially set aside for activities connected with fishing. Each *motonoi* has its own 'workshop' of cradles and benches, and a house where members of the group may foregather, where fishing gear may be stored when not in use, or fishing magic performed. The *motonoi* is taboo to women, and to all males who have not been initiated into the cult of the *tubuan* and *dukduk*. There are no fixed rules for membership in a *motonoi*: a man may attach himself to whichever is more convenient or congenial to him. In practice, there is a high degree of consistency between *motonoi* membership and membership of a local group or *gunan* (see p. 88ff). However, once associated with a *motonoi*, a man is expected to co-operate with other members, and to contribute towards the maintenance of the 'house'. In particular, members should assist each other by taking turns to carry out a regular inspection of the traps and to bring the catch to shore. At the same time a certain amount of rivalry and competition enters into trap-

fishing, both within and between *motonoi*. On an appointed day after the close of the season, all the men of the *motonoi* come together for the *vevedek*. On this occasion each member's total takings for the season, which he should hitherto have kept stored and untouched, is brought to the *motonoi* house and publicly counted, after which all partake of a communal meal.

During the 1960 season I was able to list about eighty *babau* launched at Matupit. This meant that just under 50 per cent of the available adult males who were not in regular wage employment had set traps. However, I was also told that the numbers who participated varied considerably from year to year. Not all groups conducted a *vevedek* in that year, but I attended three and the totals recorded give some indication of the contribution made by trap-fishing to Matupi revenue. These are set out in Table 3.

Table 3

Income from fish-traps recorded at three *vevedek*, 1960 season

Group	Number of traps	Cash		<i>Tambu</i> fathoms
		£A	s.	
Reinatun	16	142	2	230
Kikila	18	236	18	575
Ranguna	12	187	12	306
Total	46	566	12	1,111

These figures work out at an average of about £A12 and 25 fathoms of *tambu* per trap for the 3-4 months' season, though there were a few individuals who recorded totals of £25 and close on 100 fathoms. Since prices vary according to the type of fish, and since in any case there is no conversion rate between cash and *tambu* which is valid for all transactions, it is impossible to say precisely what proportion of the total sales was contributed by each currency. However, on the basis of a calculation made elsewhere (Epstein, A. L., 1963: 192) it appears that about a quarter of all fish caught in the traps was sold for shell-money. Nor of course do figures recorded at a *vevedek* disclose the total yield from the traps to the Matupi. As in the case of the *umbene*, all those who assist, either by

going out to inspect the traps and bringing in the catch or by hawking the fish around the streets of Rabaul, are rewarded with a number of fish for themselves. The hawking is frequently done by young lads who may also sell their own share and pocket the proceeds. As in the case of the *umbene* too, as soon as a catch is landed the women gather quickly in order to *pipiai*, that is to purchase fish with their own money or *tambu* to cook and resell at the market. The *pipiai* thus provides the women with an important source of independent income; analytically, it also draws attention to another aspect of continuity in the pattern of contemporary Tolai economic activities—the role of women as traders.

The Market

Reference has been made earlier to trading as an important feature of traditional Tolai culture. Exchange was conducted between different local groups at markets or *bung* which were held regularly throughout the area. The transactions were conducted by the women, and men attended, fully armed, merely to provide protection for their womenfolk.

The institution of the *bung* has persisted down to the present day, though in an adapted form and on a more extended basis. For many years now the Rabaul *bung* has served as a central market for the entire area, catering not only for Tolai, but for all the different racial and ethnic groups represented in the Gazelle population. The range of foodstuffs available is also more extensive, since Tolai growers now produce a wide variety of fruits and vegetables, mainly for a European and Chinese clientele. Again, while shell-money remains legal tender amongst all Tolai, most purchases at the market-place are now made in Australian currency. Nevertheless, the *bung* remains essentially a Tolai institution. The market-place is maintained and looked after by the Rabaul Native Local Government Council—a Tolai body. But above all, the vendors, almost without exception women, are Tolai drawn from every parish and settlement of the Gazelle Peninsula.

For the women of Matupit selling at the market is one of their most important and regular activities, and much of their

time in the village is taken up in preparing items for sale at the *bung*. Eggs and fish are sold on behalf of their husbands and brothers, but we have also noted how they *pipiai* on their own account. In addition, they prepare a variety of cooked dishes which find a ready sale amongst the other vendors, and those who throng the market-place throughout the day. Tolai are inveterate chewers of areca-nut and the pepper-plant. The latter is invariably taken with slaked lime powder (*kabang*), manufactured from coral deposits. The women of Matupit help to produce *kabang*, and they also prepare the tiny packets (*vaum*) in which it is sold. Like certain varieties of fish, lime is sold mainly for *tambu*, and it was at this time one of the main sources of Matupi *tambu* income.

Observation at the market-place showed that normally between 25-40 Matupi women were present as vendors at the *bung* each Saturday, though the personnel varied from week to week. In one check I made covering two Saturdays in June 1961, 86 women (32 per cent of adult females) were recorded as having sold there. Gross takings amounted to £A77.7s.6d. and just over 100 fathoms of shell-money, an average of a little under £A1 and a little more than a fathom of *tambu* per vendor per day. These figures may be compared with those obtained by my wife in a more detailed study of the market carried out about the same time.² The mean value of sales by Matupi women was slightly higher than that of the average vendor; Matupi takings were also a little less in cash, but rather more in *tambu*, than those of the average seller. In addition to selling at the market itself, other women sold in the neighbourhood of Chinatown, or hawked their fruits and vegetables around the streets of the town, serving those working in shops and offices who could not get to the market themselves. Indeed, a number of Matupi women would buy at the market in order to resell in this way. The market-place was also open on certain weekdays. The Matupi, because of

² This study was concerned with exploring the nature of the price-mechanism in the market, as well as assessing the place of the market in the overall Tolai economy. Average takings came to £1.5s.10d., but this figure also included *tambu* which, for the purpose of the calculation, was converted into Australian currency at the exchange rate of 10s. per fathom. The proportion of *tambu* to cash sales worked out at about one to ten (Epstein, T. S., 1961: 11-12).

their proximity to the town, were usually the largest group present on these occasions. In these ways the market probably played an even more important role in the economy of Matupit than was the case in most other Tolai communities.

Patterns of Income and Expenditure

What emerges most clearly perhaps from this survey of the contemporary Matupi economy is the wide range of productive activities in which the islanders engage, providing them with a multiple source of revenue. Some of these are primarily urban-based, some are based on the village, while some allow for simultaneous or alternate participation in both sectors. However, for a fuller understanding of the bearing of these facts on the social and political system, a purely descriptive account of productive activities is not adequate. Some attempt also needs to be made to attach weight to the various activities, to assess for example the relative contribution that each makes to Matupi income. Further questions arise in this context such as how far those not in regular wage employment are able to meet their own subsistence requirements and, conversely, how important village activities are for those who are regularly employed. Again, as between these two categories are there significant differences in levels of consumption and standard of living? If such differences exist, what implications do they have for social and political behaviour both within the village and in wider contexts?

Unfortunately, the kind of material required to answer such questions was not readily available. From the point of view of the solitary fieldworker, Matupit was a relatively large community, and the fact that its people were engaged in so many diverse activities at the same time often made it difficult to keep track of what was going on, and the kind of information I wanted could not be collected systematically. I tried to overcome some of these difficulties by conducting a 15 per cent sample study of family budgets. Since I was principally interested in the contrasts between those in paid employment and those who earned their livelihood primarily within Matupit, the census having already been completed, the population was first stratified by occupation, age, and place of

residence within the village. Eighteen households were then selected at random from which I collected budgets of income and expenditure, covering the period of one month (April), together with property inventories. In order to contrast the relative financial rewards of regular wage employment in town and work in the village, the data in Table 4 is drawn from only twelve households, where the male household heads concerned were aged between 20 and 40, and, with one exception, were married men with families.

Table 4

Average income in twelve Matupi households, April 1960

Source of income	Wage-earners		Villagers	
	Cash £A s. d.	Shell fathoms	Cash £A s. d.	Shell fathoms
Wages	91 4 5	—	3 10 0	—
Sales:				
Fish	1 4 0	8	15 2 6	8
Eggs	3 2 6	—	20 11 0	—
Garden produce	2 16 6	4	15 8 0	2
Other	6 12 0	4	15 10 0	8
Gifts	17 3	—	2 17 0	—
Subsistence	5 7 0	—	13 14 9	—
Miscellaneous	—	—	—	69
Total	111 3 8	16	86 13 3	87

A first glance at this table might suggest that urban work is financially more rewarding than earning one's livelihood in the village. The average income for the month for those in the first category amounted to £A18.10s.7d. per household (or 19s. when expressed in terms of consumption units) as against £A13.12s.2d. (11s. per consumption unit) for 'villagers'. However, when the figures are examined more closely it will be seen that if urban workers were wholly dependent on their cash wage, their position would in fact differ little from that of the 'villagers'. One point that needs to be stressed in this context is that there is a considerable range in the wages of 'urbanites', which relates to the degree of skill and responsibility deemed necessary for the job. A small number of Matupi are in fact able to earn sums considerably higher than the

average figure. The effect of this is to emphasise even more strongly that for most of the urban workers of Matupi such financial advantages as they do enjoy over their village confrères rest on their ability to participate simultaneously in activities based on the village. Conversely, it also follows that the Matupi 'villager' is much better off at home than he would be as a manual or unskilled worker in the town. Here too there is a range in income levels, but it relates more directly to individual initiative. One of the 'villagers' in the sample, widely regarded as a somewhat idle fellow, earned just a little over £5 for the month; another, a young man with a reputation for industry, had a cash income of close on £25.

As one would expect, the contribution of village activities to the income of wage-earners is much smaller than for 'villagers', but it is nevertheless, as I have just suggested, of key significance. Among the urban workers in the sample, one had set his *babau* during the fish-trap season which had just come to a close, while a number of the others regularly fished at night with line and bait or gathered eggs at the weekend. But if urban workers attach importance to these activities, their participation in the village economy is principally achieved through their womenfolk. As we have seen, once the main food gardens have been prepared—and if a man is not able to help in the work of clearing, he can usually arrange for this to be done by a work-party—the men are left relatively free for other activities. The women go out regularly to weed the gardens; they collect food and bring it back to the village; and of course it is they who sell the produce at the market. The full importance of the role of wives does not emerge clearly perhaps from the table because one of the wage-earners in the sample was still unmarried, while in another case the wife had been in hospital throughout the period of the survey.

Table 5 examines more closely the allocation of income to different kinds of foodstuff. These are divided into three categories: subsistence is home-produced food evaluated at the then current market price; indigenous types of food are those bought at the market or from Tolai lorries which visited Matupit from time to time; and European foodstuffs, traditionally unknown, which have to be purchased in shops and stores.

Table 5

Proportion of income allocated to different categories of foodstuff
in twelve Matupi households, April 1960

Category of foodstuff	'Urbanites'			'Villagers'			Proportion of total income	
	£A s. d.	£A s. d.	£A s. d.	£A s. d.	£A s. d.	£A s. d.	Urban %	Village %
Subsistence	5 7 0	[* 5 5]	13 14 9	[11 2]			4.8	15.3
Indigenous	8 17 6	[9 0]	5 10 0	[4 5]			7.9	6.3
European	30 9 3	[1 10 9]	16 18 0	[15 4]			27.4	19.4
	44 13 9	[2 5 2]	36 12 9	[1 10 11]			40.1	41.0

* Figures in brackets relate to consumption units.

Changes in food habits and patterns of expenditure throw light not only on the standard of living of the Matupi but also on their changing wants and aspirations. For reasons considered earlier, the Matupi at the time of my study no longer rated as amongst the wealthiest of the Tolai groups, a situation of which they were fully aware and bitterly resented as out of keeping with their more 'advanced' status. And, indeed, their holdings of non-productive property (Table 6) attest to the relative sophistication of their way of life. There was a very considerable investment in housing. The cost of putting up a modern-style house at Matupit at the time ranged between £A100 and £A400. Labour costs were low because a man could generally count a skilled carpenter amongst his kin and friends, and services were given on a reciprocal basis. The heaviest expense, therefore, was the material—fibro-cement, timber, corrugated iron for the roof, and fittings and louver-glass for the windows. On one occasion word was received that a large quantity of salvaged corrugated iron was for sale in Rabaul. All day the lorries plied back and forth, taking the many purchasers to town and bringing them back again with the iron they would store until ready to begin the building of their new homes.

'Urbanites' and 'villagers' were equally desirous of putting up good houses, but few 'villagers' had been able to build houses of the same quality as those of the younger men now

Table 6
Average holdings of non-productive property in eighteen Matupi households

Age	Number		House		Household		Clothes		Miscellaneous	
	U	V	U	V	U	V	U	V	U	V
			£A s. d.	£A s. d.	£A s. d.	£A s. d.	£A s. d.	£A s. d.	£A s. d.	£A s. d.
20-29	2	2	281 0 0	—	83 7 6	37 16 0	40 16 0	14 19 0	80 6 0	18 0
30-39	4	5	164 14 10	41 14 9	74 10 1	37 12 7	31 19 10	21 2 0	27 19 10	8 2 5
40-49	2	1	112 10 0	14 0 0	49 6 3	46 15 0	27 7 6	17 1 0	7 4 6	16 0
50+	—	2	—	41 4 0	—	49 5 9	—	32 5 0	—	12 0 0

in regular wage employment, nor did they furnish and equip them to the same extent. Houses belonging to the latter contained European-style furniture and crockery, a wireless set and, in a few cases, a kerosene refrigerator. By contrast, houses belonging to the elders, and to many of the 'villagers' in the sample, were more frequently built with local materials; kitchen utensils were numerous, but furnishing was poor. Among many of the younger people there was a growing approximation to European standards in the home, but this probably correlated with education rather than job.

The data point therefore to a degree of social differentiation within the community at Matupit. A new social category has indeed begun to emerge on the island. To some extent, its appearance is an expression of the cleavage between the generations, but this is only partly so. Those who belong to the new category are all young, but they are above all marked out by their education, and the kind of opportunities this opens up to them outside village society. Such wealth as they possess is in cash rather than *tambu*: it is put to use for personal and private ends, and not to sponsoring large feasts and ceremonies, which opened up the institutionalised paths to prestige and power in the indigenous system. In many important respects these younger men are more consciously orientated towards the wider society of New Guinea and beyond. Nevertheless, they remain deeply committed to the village. And this is not a matter of mere sentiment, although this is important. The fact of the matter is that in present conditions it is only through their continued participation in village economic activities that they can take full advantage of the opportunities for employment in the urban world of Rabaul and Port Moresby. But for this very reason, they remain at the same time involved in the structure of social relations through which these activities are controlled and organised. It is this continued attachment to the land, and the cycle of productive activities associated with it, that goes furthest to account for the strong element of continuity in Matupi social structure, and the way of life that it embodies, where on other grounds a high degree of cultural erosion might have been anticipated. It is to the examination of that structure that we must now turn.

Local Grouping and Organisation

IN their perception of the habitat, the Tolai distinguish between thick forest or jungle, *a lokor*, which is the home of the wild pig and the abode of various fearsome malevolent spirits; the area of cultivation, with its natural tendency to revert to bush, *a pui*, unless continuously curbed by human effort; and areas of human habitation, *a gunan*. The term *gunan* refers essentially to the home of men, a place of settlement. It ranges in meaning from one end of the scale, where it can appropriately be translated as land or country, as in speaking for example of modern New Guinea, right through to the hamlet, the smallest recognised territorial grouping. Unless the unit in question is specifically mentioned, the meaning of the term can only be gauged contextually.

From this point of view the island of Matupit constitutes *a gunan*. Looked at in the context of relations with other Tolai groups, Matupit appears as a single homogeneous community. When persons from the island participate in joint activities with other Tolai, as at a dance or mortuary rite, they identify themselves and are identified by others as Matupi, irrespective of the part of the island from which they come or the particular descent group to which they belong. In this context, too, they are seen as speaking the vernacular with a distinctive accent, and to differ from other Tolai in details of custom as well as in temperament. Viewed, however, in its internal relations Matupit is divided and subdivided into a number of distinct named local units, also known as *gunan*, each of which claims the right to assert its independence within certain acknowledged limits.

There are four major local divisions on the island:

Kurapun, at the northern end, nearest Rabaul, Rarup and Raulaveo in the centre, and Kikila, the largest, occupying the southern part. Each of these is a discrete physical and residential unit, the name and site of which, according to the Matupi, were already established before the coming of the Europeans. There seems little reason to doubt this for the *gunan* names today are the same as those recorded by Krämer in a sketch map of the island drawn about 1906 (Krämer, 1939). For administrative purposes, however, Matupit had recently been divided into three villages, Rarup and Raulaveo being taken to constitute a single village. The Matupi apparently accepted this arrangement quite readily. Indeed, its effect appears to have been merely to give recognition to a threefold division that was already well established in German times, when Matupit had three Government appointed *luluai* or headmen. The current usage is convenient, and I shall refer therefore to these major local divisions as villages.

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN GEOGRAPHY, A.N.U.

MAP II The district and parish of Matupit

The importance of the village as a distinctive unit in opposition to and in competition with other similar groups is expressed in many informal contexts. On one occasion, for example, a young man was sent to my house to summon me to the beach in order to record some *tapialai* songs associated with the cult of the *tubuan*. Down at the beach I found a large number of men from Kikila and Rarup already assembled and rehearsing. Some time earlier I had attended *tubuan* ceremonies in another parish across Blanche Bay, and had played some of the recordings made there on my return to Matupit. These recordings were listened to with great interest, but also with some trace of embarrassment, for they reminded the Matupi that a number of years had passed since they themselves had last been able to 'raise the *tubuan*', and the present session was clearly designed to show that they were not to be out-shone by the Raluana. One man remarked quite witheringly that the Raluana had made a mess of the songs, and he was immediately supported by another who commented that if the Raluana were to hear these now being recorded they would be moved indeed. The singing that night could be heard over much of the island. The following morning my cook, who was from Kurapun, told me it was arranged that that evening I would record in Kurapun. Their melodies and style were entirely different from those of Kikila!

As my cook phrased it, the opposition here was between Kurapun and Kikila, ignoring the fact that the singing on this occasion had also included the men of Rarup. Indeed, in informal situations of this kind the lines of cleavage are frequently blurred, and it is really only in the field of administration, and particularly in the context of the Local Government Council system, that the village emerges as an unambiguous and clearly defined entity. Since the introduction of councils to the Gazelle Peninsula in 1951, each of the three Matupit villages (known officially as Matupit nos. 1, 2, and 3) has had its own elected representative on the Rabaul Native Local Government Council, a Tolai body serving the Rabaul Sub-district. The task of the councillor is to represent the views of his people to the council and to the Administration, and to report back to the villages the decisions of council or

statements of administrative policy, and to implement these where necessary. Apart from these official duties, the councillor also has responsibilities touching the internal affairs of the village. At Matupit each councillor would normally summon a village meeting every week. The councillor acted as chairman on these occasions, but although he usually introduced the topics for discussion he did not necessarily lead it, but was guided by the views of the meeting. Matters of business concluded, the remainder of the meeting was usually taken up in the hearing of disputes between fellow-villagers in which the councillor was assisted by a 'committee of elders'.

All of this points to a tighter, more formal mode of organisation than presumably operated in pre-contact times. Yet present practice is not wholly inconsistent with the earlier and much more fluid and flexible concept of the village as an area of influence whose solidarity was bound up with the wealth and forcefulness of character of the local 'big man'. The differences in the degree of internal cohesion which the three villages had achieved were quite striking. At Kikila (Matupit no. 1) and Kurapun (Matupit no. 3), for example, there was usually a large turn-out for village meetings: these began reasonably promptly and were conducted in a fairly businesslike manner. At Rarup (Matupit no. 2), on the other hand, the sound of the councillor's horn summoning the people was frequently ignored, and on a number of occasions it was around midnight before sufficient numbers had assembled and the meeting could begin. At Kikila and Kurapun, too, councillor and 'committee' were able to maintain a fairly close grip on the management of village affairs, although they were not always as successful as they would have liked. For example, at Kikila, as noted in an earlier context, the weekly program of activities was set at the village meeting, and those who failed to turn up for work without a valid excuse could be fined, the money going into a *gunan* fund. At Rarup no such degree of control existed. Part of the explanation for this state of affairs lies in the character of leadership in the three villages. Consensus on who the leading men in Kikila and Kurapun were is reflected in their low turnover rate of councillors. By contrast, at Rarup, in the five elections that had taken place since the

council system was introduced, a different candidate was elected on each occasion. However, the character of leadership constitutes only one link in the chain of cause and effect; as we shall see presently, the lack of outstanding leaders in Rarup is also directly related to its descent group structure and social composition.

The villages on Matupit are made up of a number of smaller units which I shall refer to as village sections. Thus Kurapun is made up of two discrete sections or *gunan* in the traditional sense, Kurapun and Reinatun. Similarly, Raulaveo, again a *gunan* in the traditional sense, may be regarded as a village section within Rarup. At Kikila, the largest of the villages, four divisions are recognised, but their relationship to the traditional pattern of local grouping is obscured by the fact that in most contexts they tend nowadays to be referred to as *urur* more often than *gunan*.

I found some disagreement amongst my informants about the concept of *urur*. Some claimed that the term was unknown to the traditional social system. Others denied this, pointing out that the expression used in former times was a *hi ur na gunan*, a continuous stretch of inhabited country, the term *ur* in this context meaning straight. Yet another informant explained that the *urur* of the past was the same as today: it was a *gunan*, but it differed from the contemporary *urur* in that it did not possess collective funds or an acknowledged leader, for these were the attributes only of the matrilineal descent groups. The conclusion I am inclined to draw therefore is that while in the past, in the case of some of the larger territorial units, there may have been recognised sub-divisions, with limited functions, intermediate between village and hamlet, the formal organisation characteristic of the *urur* today is a recent development.

Like the village, the *urur* today has its elected leader and committee, and meets formally from time to time to hear internal disputes and to discuss its affairs. As just indicated, the *urur* has its own funds, built up by contributions from the members and by various collective activities such as planting groundnuts and selling the crop. The members also co-operate in various domestic and horticultural tasks. Thus the *urur* turns out as a group to work in the cocoa gardens

or to clear the coconut plantation of anyone who calls upon its service in return for a sum of money paid into the common fund. But perhaps the most important work of the *urur* lies in the field of church activities. Matupit has three Christian congregations, whose boundaries to some extent coincide with local lines of cleavage. Thus Kurapun may be counted as a Catholic village, whereas Rarup and most of Kikila are Methodist. The Seventh Day Adventists, who established themselves in the area in the late twenties, are mainly concentrated in one of the village sections of Kikila. As mentioned in the previous chapter, a number of *urur* in Kikila and Rarup had purchased fishing nets which they worked as groups in order to raise money for the building of their new church. The *urur* of the Seventh Day Adventists was particularly active, and organised regular '*kapti*' for a similar purpose.

I once heard the term *urur* translated into pidgin for the benefit of an administrative officer as 'camp', and this serves adequately to express its essentially local and perhaps impermanent character. The *urur* tends to be made up of a number of contiguous hamlets, so that most members are also close neighbours. But this is not an invariable rule: one Seventh Day Adventist who lived in Raulaveo belonged to the *urur* associated with his congregation which was based on Kikila. More important, membership does not follow automatically upon residence within a particular locality. The obligations of *urur* membership are voluntarily assumed: if dissatisfied with the management of the *urur*'s affairs one may opt out, or one may be called upon to resign without the question of residence being affected. It appears then that in a number of cases the names and location of the *urur* coincide with those of traditional *gunan*, and in others, especially at Kikila, the emergence of the *urur* has given definition to local divisions which were not so clear-cut in the past, or has led in at least one case to the recognition of a new local group. Thus the hamlets which make up the *urur* known as Kilinalgingen are marked on Krämer's map, though the name Kilinalgingen itself does not appear. Informants indeed confirmed that it was a name of fairly recent origin. In general, therefore, while there is a high degree of congruence today between *urur* and traditional local units, it should also be

clear that the terms *urur* and *gunan* are conceptually quite distinct: the *gunan* is always a territorial group, the *urur* bears more the character of a local co-operative which has been developed to handle the more numerous tasks that confront the people in their contemporary situation.

The smallest local unit, to which the term *gunan* is applied, is the hamlet, within which the constituent households carry out most of the tasks that make up the daily routine. The considerable autonomy of the hamlet was perhaps more clearly marked in the past when each hamlet was physically discrete, surrounded by a fence of bamboo and separated from others by patches of uncleared bush. Under the German régime the people were required to pull the fences down, presumably because the bamboo gathered water and provided breeding grounds for mosquitoes. Yet even though the visible evidence of physical separation and distinctiveness no longer exists, the hamlets continue to retain the names traditionally attached to their sites, and their boundaries are jealously guarded, and frequently argued over.

Each hamlet is associated with a matrilineal descent group or *vunatarai*, in which ownership of the hamlet site is said to vest in perpetuity. In the past the notion of the hamlet as having an identity which persisted through time was emphasised in the practice of burying the dead of the *vunatarai* in their own homesteads. Today all corpses are buried in the village cemeteries. Nevertheless the assertion may still be heard on occasion that an ancestor lies buried within a particular hamlet: such a claim is taken to establish unequivocal proprietary rights in the site; it can be refuted only by showing that the deceased was in fact buried elsewhere.

The association of hamlet with *vunatarai* is of course a statement of a jural rule. It carries no implication that all, or even a majority, of the descent group members live within the hamlet. Females living with their husbands in virilocal residence are of course dispersed, but male members too may be living in other hamlets nearby, or even in other Tolai communities elsewhere where the descent group has another recognised local centre. Conversely, the residents of a hamlet may include adult male householders who do not belong to the *vunatarai* which 'owns' the hamlet. However, these are

precluded, at least in theory, from acquiring permanent rights of settlement there. This means that today, when many Matupi are anxious to build permanent European-style houses, they will normally only be permitted to do so on a site which is acknowledged to vest in the *vunatarai* to which they belong.

Patterns of Residence: Kikila

The description of the modes of residence in different societies might appear at first glance as a task presenting few difficulties. In point of fact, there has sometimes been a good deal of confusion over the terminology used by anthropologists to classify types of residence. Such confusion arises for example because the same terms are used for different social arrangements or the same procedures applied to what are separate problems (cf. Barnes, 1960). As Goodenough (1956: 27) has made clear, there are at least two issues which need to be kept analytically distinct: one is the concern with establishing the general pattern of residence in a society; the other relates to classifying the residence of individual couples. In either case, for purposes of tabulating the data, we have to proceed in the same general way: the individuals in the sample are classified and placed in the appropriate pigeon-hole. But it is precisely at this point that the difficulties arise. For what mode of classification is to be adopted, and how is it to be applied so as not to confuse the two sets of issues? There are societies where no great difficulties are presented. For example, over large areas of Central Africa the residents of a village usually claim to be kin of the headman: its social composition can therefore usually be defined quite simply by classifying each resident by reference to his relationship to the headman (see e.g. Turner, 1957; cf. Colson, 1962). What is tabulated here is a personal link, the headman providing a point of reference or focus for the whole group: this mode of classification effectively separates the question of village structure from that of the individual's choice of residence. Unfortunately, this procedure cannot readily be applied in the Matupi context. Amongst the Tolai, as in other Melanesian societies, there is no comparable institution of village or hamlet headmanship. Although each local descent group has its own acknowledged

leader or elder, its members may be dispersed amongst a number of hamlets. For any particular hamlet therefore there may be no single individual with reference to whom residence may be fixed. An alternative procedure would be to classify on the basis of links with father, mother, or other category of kin, but where the concern is to establish the structure of the group, this method also has its shortcomings, and can be misleading. An example may help to clarify the point. On Matupit I sometimes found a married man and his widowed mother occupying separate households within the hamlet of the deceased husband's matrilineage. On the death of a husband, the widow may elect to return to the hamlet of her own matrilineal group, and she will then be escorted there with all due ceremony by her affines; but in many cases, particularly where it was a long-established marriage and she has many close kinsmen and friends in the vicinity, she may prefer to remain in the house of her late husband. In the latter case, a son who decided to stay with her in order to look after his mother instead of going off to establish his household elsewhere with his mother's brother or other matrilineal kin, would be regarded as acting in accordance with Tolai precepts in these matters. Now if the residence of the son were to be classified on the basis of personal links he would have to be described as residing matrilocally, in the only etymologically meaningful sense of the word (cf. Barnes, 1960: 850). However, it is also possible to regard him as continuing to reside with his patrilateral kinsmen. Goodenough (1956) has given a very similar example from Nakanai, close neighbours of the Tolai, but he does not go on to make what seems to me the important distinction between residence defined in terms of the individual's link with another person, and that which is based upon a link with a group. Accordingly, in the following discussion, I shall restrict the use of such terms as patrilocal/matrilocal to situations involving co-residence with an individual's father or mother, or where there has been a sequence of such co-residence persisting over a number of generations. Where I wish to place the emphasis on the bond with the hamlet group I shall speak of patri/matri-links. It is of course clear, as in the example cited, that both kinds of link can

exist simultaneously, a point that assumes importance in the later analysis.

Following this line of argument, an attempt to delineate hamlet composition in Kikila has been made in Table 7. For the purpose of the tabulation only householders have been included—usually these are adult males, but widows and spinsters may also maintain an independent ménage. Where the householder claimed membership of the descent group which 'owned' the hamlet site by virtue of direct genealogical links, I have classified residence as matrilineal (demonstrated). Where such a link was asserted, but could not be traced, or where the relationship arose out of the custom of the *turguvai*, whereby two or more independent groups within a moiety stand together so that they are regarded for certain purposes as constituting a single *vunatarai*, residence has been classified as matrilineal (stipulated). Where the link with the hamlet group was through the father I speak of residence being patri-linked, and an affinal category has been used where the household head had settled uxorilocally.

Table 7
Hamlet composition in Kikila, 1959-60

Type of link	Number	%
Matrilineal (d)	51	51.5
Matrilineal (s)	7	7.0
Patri-linked	25	25.2
Affinal	12	12.1
Not ascertained	4	4.1
Total	99	99.9

Table 7 brings out the dominantly matrilineal cast of Kikila hamlets. Yet it is also apparent that there is a considerable range of variation as between one hamlet and another. This may be illustrated by reference to a few hamlet genealogies (see fig. 2). The first, ToMogoro, is of particular interest because it was still in the course of being established towards the end of my stay on Matupit. It provides an example of a hamlet with a simple and clear-cut matrilineal structure. The founder, Turpui, was a man in his early sixties. Formerly he had his house in the hamlet of Vuna Talia, also in Kikila,

and no more than five minutes' walking distance away. Turpui had been involved in a series of clashes with the 'owner' of Vuna Talia, and since he was unable to sustain any claim to a proprietary interest in that hamlet, he had decided to leave and establish ToMogoro as the locus of his own *vunatarai* on Matupit. At the time of my departure he had been joined by two of his maternal nephews, one of whom was also engaged in building a house for his widowed mother. The mother of the other resided with her husband elsewhere in Kikila. A third sister, long widowed, continued to stay with her son at Vuna Talia. Turpui had also recently been joined by a young divorcée, a classificatory maternal niece who belonged to the matrilineal group which 'owned' Vuna Talia. In the second case, the matrilineal character of the hamlet is again clear, but the householders are probably best described as constituting a matrilineage fragment rather than a local lineage or even lineage segment because they did not operate as an autonomous unit in the domain of descent group activities. The leader of the group of which Rariana is a fragment resides in an adjoining hamlet, while a number of his younger brothers are dispersed amongst other nearby hamlets. The third example illustrates the case of a hamlet built up around patrilocal and patri-linked residence. Nevertheless the jural primacy of the matrilineal principle is still acknowledged: in this instance the residents explained that they were living in the hamlet in the care and by the grace of their patrilateral kinsmen whose land it was.

At a number of points throughout this discussion passing reference has been made to the dispersal of male siblings amongst different hamlets. This raises important questions about the relationship of hamlet to local descent group. It has sometimes been noted how the bonds of mother and son constitute a nuclear relationship of particular importance in matrilineal systems (e.g. Richards, 1950). Thus in certain societies, where the local group is built up around a core of matrilineal kinsmen and residence after marriage is viri-local, there appears to be a tendency towards the emergence of the matricentric family as a distinct unit within the village. Where this occurs, as amongst the Ndembu of Zambia, the effect is likely to be the development of interests and loyalties

d

b

c

FIG. 2 Genealogy: a ToMogoro hamlet; b Rariana hamlet;
c Rauradi hamlet

which may conflict with the allegiance owed to the village as a whole. On the death of the mother the matricentric family matures into a uterine sibling group, which is the most frequent unit of secession in the move to form new villages (Turner, 1957: 84 *et passim*). Amongst the Tolai too the bond between mother and son is regarded as particularly strong, and a heavy injunction is laid upon a son to care for his mother on the death of her husband. That this obligation is almost invariably fulfilled is seen in the fact that at Kikila of the fifteen cases recorded in which the householder was a widow, a son resided in the same hamlet in ten, and within the same village section in fourteen. On the other hand, uterine brothers rarely formed a co-residential hamlet group: while one son lived near his mother, the others were generally

distributed amongst other hamlets. These features of the residential system are related to the functions of the hamlet and the character of the local descent group as a landholding unit.

One facet of the relationship between hamlet and descent group is illustrated in the case of ToMogoro. The hamlet comprises a core of close matrilineal kinsmen, including their acknowledged leader or *lualua*, and constitutes a locus for the *vunatarai*. In this context the hamlet provides a focal point in the organisation of descent group activities. At the same time, since not all of those who count themselves or are counted as members of the *vunatarai* reside within the hamlet, the hamlet cannot function as an autonomous political, jural, or ritual unit. This is seen even more clearly in the case of a longer established and more important descent group. Thus the members of the group to which the householders of Rariana hamlet belonged were distributed amongst five hamlets within Kikila. Save for one man who was living uxorilocally in a neighbouring village section, they all occupied hamlet sites vested in the *vunatarai* by virtue of the fact that these were said to have been the rightful homes of various matrilineal ancestors. These hamlets were interdigitated with the hamlets of other *vunatarai*, but they all lay within a single village section, and none was more than a few minutes' walk from the others. It is clear that the longer established the group and the larger it is, the more extensive its claims to land will be. But since these holdings are dispersed, the members of the *vunatarai* are themselves scattered in order to maintain their claims to the hamlet sites. The Tolai speak of this arrangement as to *vabat ra pia*, literally to sleep guarding the soil, and explain that if a *vunatarai* claimed a particular parcel of land, but there was nobody present to assert and protect the claim, it would soon be swallowed up by others.

The expression *vunatarai* is a term difficult to render accurately in English, and a major task of succeeding chapters will be to elucidate its various meanings. As we shall see, it refers in different contexts to matrilineal units and categories at quite different levels of social organisation, and its use is rarely wholly free of ambiguity. In the contexts in which I have at present been using the term it refers to a corporate

group with joint estates in land, both residential and horticultural, and other forms of personal property; its members act corporately for the purpose of arranging marriages, contributing the bridewealth in *tambu* for its male members and in the case of females holding it as an undivided fund. In all of these activities it is led by its acknowledged leader, usually the genealogically senior member of the group, who is accorded the right to *kure*, a term which can variously and somewhat roughly be translated as to administer, rule, control, manage, or judge. Although, as we have just seen, the adult male members may be dispersed amongst a number of hamlets, they are usually sufficiently close physically to one another that it seems to me justifiable to speak of the *vunatarai* in these contexts as a local descent group or local matrilineage (cf. Leach, 1951: 21). The hamlet group and the local lineage do not and, indeed, since it contains 'strangers', cannot coincide in their social composition. However, in jural terms there is an intimate relationship between them since each hamlet is held to be the property in perpetuity of a particular *vunatarai*, and it is through the hamlet that the local lineage achieves its social identity as well as a focus of unity.

Patterns of Residence: Kurapun and Rarup

Local organisation on Matupit then is built up around small hamlets each associated with and, in many cases, serving as a centre for a local matrilineal descent group. On the evidence from Kikila, most adult males tend to reside in a hamlet belonging to their own local lineage or at least to one with which they have some established matrilineal connection. At the same time the number who reside patrilocally is also considerable. How far is this pattern reproduced in other parts of the island? No detailed census was conducted in the village section of Kurapun, so that the data presented in Table 8 relate only to the two village sections which make up Rarup, and to the village section of Reinatun within Kurapun village.¹ The material has been classified in the same way as for Kikila.

¹ To avoid confusion it should be noted that in Matupit no. 3 the village section of Kurapun gives its name to the whole village. The same is true of Rarup in Matupit no. 2 and Kikila in Matupit no. 1.

Table 8

Hamlet composition in Rarup and Reinatun, 1959-60

Type of link	Rarup		Reinatun		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Matrilineal (d)	15	18.3	1	3.7	16	14.7
Matrilineal (s)	2	2.4	2	7.4	4	3.7
Patri-linked	44	53.6	15	55.5	59	54.1
Affinal	6	7.3	1	3.7	7	6.4
Miscellaneous	2	2.4	4	14.8	6	5.5
Strangers	4	4.8	—	—	4	3.7
Not ascertained	9	10.9	4	14.8	13	11.9
Total	82	99.7	27	99.9	109	100.0

The pattern here differs quite strikingly from that presented for Kikila in Table 7. Whereas in Kikila some 50 per cent were living with matrilineal kin and 25 per cent were in patri-linked residence, the data on Rarup and Reinatun present almost the reverse situation. Here in the two groups less than 15 per cent were living on matrilineally-owned land, whereas more than 50 per cent were resident in hamlets belonging to the father's matrilineage.

Such is the divergence indeed that one might be prompted to ask whether the same structural principles underlying residence and the social composition of local groups are operative over the whole of Matupit. The answer may be stated quite baldly. There is in point of fact only one social system: it embodies a set of rules which is uniform over the entire island, the principal structural feature of which is, for present purposes, the existence of local matrilineal descent groups in combination with patrilocal residence. Variation in the pattern of residence as between different parts of the island arises from the fact that the various descent groups are at different phases in their development. For reasons which will be considered in a later context, the genealogical depth of local lineages in Kikila is typically shallow; at Rarup and Reinatun, by contrast, the genealogies recorded are much deeper, and it is in these areas that the patrilocal and/or patri-linked nature of hamlet composition emerges most clearly. Thus a detailed examination of hamlet genealogies at Rarup would reveal the tendency for at least one son to settle patrilocally on the land

of his father's matrilineage (see Epstein, A. L., 1964). In a number of cases indeed the practice of patrilocal residence has persisted through two, three or even more generations, so that at first glance the hamlet genealogy might equally well be conceived as that of an agnatic group. However, the cast of a genealogy can be deceptive, and on Matupit the dominant jural principle that ownership of a hamlet site always vests in a matrilineage is never allowed to be lost sight of. Whenever I inquired the reasons for someone's residence in a particular hamlet in Rarup, the answer usually given was that the informant himself or his father (and in a few cases even father's father) had been 'begotten' by the *vunatarai* of which ToLopa, who lived in Reinatun, was the senior surviving representative and custodian of the estate. Moreover, the tendency for the matrilineal principle to reassert itself is also to be seen in the clustering together of small matrilineage segments belonging to different *vunatarai* within the same hamlet. In these circumstances the composition of the hamlet is likely to be very heterogeneous. More important, few of these constituent groups can lay any claim to land as of matrilineal right, and indeed a high proportion of the residents of Rarup hamlets are in a sense 'landless'. These facts help to explain the lack of leadership and cohesion within Rarup referred to earlier.

A further interesting feature of many of the Rarup hamlets is their dual and to some extent, perhaps, ambiguous character. The point is implicit in much of the discussion above, but it

FIG. 3 Genealogy: Talilikun hamlet

may be seen more clearly in a hamlet like Talilikun. Talilikun is vested in the *vunatarai* of Tumba (3C3),² who is represented today by his maternal nephew Turbarat (3D6). One section of the hamlet consists of Turbarat himself, the two children of a deceased sister and a classificatory uterine nephew, together with his four sons by different wives all deceased. The other consists of three aged sisters whose mother had been married to Tumba, together with a number of their adult sons and daughters. Considered as a group, the latter are living on the land of their 'fathers', since they were 'begotten' by Tumba's matrilineage. However, as we shall see later, there are circumstances in which the Tolai rules of land tenure allow for the purchase of land. The rights thus acquired pass in the usual way, but they do not constitute what the Tolai call a *kakalei*. This is a claim as of matrilineal right which remains vested in the vendor lineage, whose senior member alone is entitled to be known as 'owner of the soil', *a bit na pia* or *pai na pia* (see p. 126). In the present instance, the three sisters had purchased from Tumba's lineage a parcel of land within the hamlet, and together with their children they clearly constitute a local descent group; but they are not regarded as 'owners of the soil'. In this case, residence is both matrilineal and patri-linked.

This example also serves to bring out the difference between what I have termed patrilocal and patri-linked residence. A man residing patrilocally is normally linked to the owners of the hamlet by patrilateral ties, unless his father happened to be living uxorilocally. The reverse, however, does not hold. A man who is living on the land of a lineage which is said to have 'begotten' his own group is in patri-linked, but not necessarily patrilocal, residence. Such patri-links, however, usually imply the patrilocal residence of some member of his descent group in the preceding generation. In the following section I want to show how the present arrangement of local groups on Matupit has been built up largely around this combination of matrilineal descent and patrilocality.

² I have identified persons in the genealogies by reference to the number of the figure, generation level, and position on that level.

The Growth of Matupit

The emergence of Matupit as a physical entity is a relatively recent event although, as we saw earlier, it has not yet been possible to date it accurately. The Matupi themselves have no elaborate myths of origin of the kind familiar in the anthropological literature, and their accounts of the first settlement of the island are quite pragmatic and, I believe, consistent with the vulcanological evidence. They state that before the island arose there were people settled in the area now known as Rabuana. On the present site of Matupit there was a crater (*a mata*) which teemed with turtle and many kinds of fish so that those setting out by canoe to cross the bay would be stopped short (*pit*) by the presence of these creatures. Hence the name Matapit, of which the modern form is a corruption.

The first settler on the island is said to have been a man called Diararat. Having seized a woman from the north coast he fled and sought refuge with her on Matupit. The area available for settlement was still tiny, but employing rudimentary techniques of land reclamation which are still in use today, they set about building up the island. Gradually people arrived from other established Tolai communities around Blanche Bay. They took their share in the task of extending the area of habitation, until the island approximated to its present size and shape.

Apart from the story of Diararat's arrival, which appeared to be accepted by most Matupi, there was no consecutive or systematic account of the peopling of the island as a whole. Rather each *vunatarai* has an account of the circumstances of its own arrival. These stories are kept very much within the group; they are regarded somewhat as aces to be held up the sleeve and produced only in certain circumstances, as at a crucial point in a land dispute, where it is hoped that public narration of details of the story will serve to expose the spurious claims of one's rivals. For present purposes the most important of these accounts is contained in the genealogy of ToLopa whose apical ancestress was IaKadera IaVivivik, the wife of Diararat. IaKadera IaVivivik had two daughters, IaOkole and IaKadera, and a number of sons. IaOkole settled at Reinatun and IaKadera at Rarup, and the account reflects

the present disposition of the two segments of the lineage. But when the genealogy is examined in detail in relation to the distribution and composition of local groups, what it also reveals is the way in which, over a considerable area of the island, the social structure has been built up around localised matrilineages patrilocally attached or seminally linked to a dominant matrilineage. This arrangement has its basis in the practice of virilocal marriage and patrilocal residence: males of the 'founder' lineage brought in wives from other communities who, instead of returning with their children to their lineage homes on the death of their husbands, remained at Matupit and provided the point of reference for new local lineages. How this process operated may be illustrated from the following example.

We have seen how 'ownership' of Reinatun became vested in the *vunatarai* of ToLopa. One of his matrilineal ancestors, ToKaprabolo (12C4), settled in an adjoining area in what is now part of Raulaveo and acquired a wife from Nodup on the other side of Mt Mother. Instead of going to Nodup to live on lineage lands there, the son Taragau (12D7) remained at Matupit, residing if not in the hamlet of his father, then close by. Taragau's sister, born at Matupit, married a man from Nodup and went to live there. Her daughter, IaPukut (12E6), eventually married at Matupit a man called Simeon who was settled in the area immediately adjoining the land that had come to be associated with the descendants of ToKaprabolo's wife. The sons of Simeon and IaPukut now live in part of Raulaveo, while members of Simeon's matrilineage occupy the adjoining hamlet there. In this way we find three small matrilineal groups occupying a continuous stretch of territory, the one in the middle being linked patrilocally to each of its neighbours (fig. 4).

The conjunction of matrilineages and patrilocally-linked groups in providing the framework of local organisation is unusual, though not wholly unfamiliar in the anthropological literature. Such a system has been reported in detail, for example, for the Yao of Malawi (Mitchell, 1956). Mitchell describes how children who have grown up in their father's village sometimes refuse to move back to their matrilineal village, preferring to stay where they know people more

FIG. 4 Patrilineal links between adjoining groups

intimately. In time, as they grow older, the women have daughters who marry uxorilocally and thus a section of a foreign matrilineage begins to develop in the village (p. 187). But Mitchell also shows that it is an arrangement ridden with tension and difficult to perpetuate, and he observes that few villages have contained patrilocally-linked groups through the lives of two village headmen, unless these groups were descended from slaves. More usually what happened was that shortly after the headman and father died, the seminally-linked group would take exception to some act of the new headman and would then move off to found its own village. Amongst the Yao marriage is normally assumed to be uxori-local, and it is typically only the headman's wife who lives virilocally. In short, it is only in the case of important headmen in charge of long-established villages that patrilocally-linked groups develop to any marked extent. Similarly in Melanesia, where avunculo-virilocal residence is the usual concomitant of matrilineal descent, it has been suggested that instances of patrilocality in a matrilineal context reflect the ability of important personages to set themselves above the law and make special arrangements for their children (Hogbin and Wedgwood, 1953: 250).

It is clear that on Matupit, as amongst the Yao, the presence of patrilocally-linked groups is the mark of a dominant and long-established lineage, or at least one that is growing in strength. On the other hand, residence on Matupit is only rarely uxorilocal, and Hogbin and Wedgwood's generalisation does not readily square with the Matupit data. If my analysis

of the development of local groups on the island is valid, then the regular emergence of patrilocally-attached local matrilineages implies the practice of patrilocal residence in previous generations, and suggests that the settlement of sons with their fathers is not a wholly contemporary phenomenon. Turner (1957: 84-5) has indicated how amongst the Ndembu the stress on the matricentric family is accompanied by a weakening of the ties between father and son. Amongst the Tolai where, as has been seen, there is no tendency towards the emergence of a matricentric family, the bonds of father and son are extremely strong, and the close residential and co-operative links forged in early childhood often persist until the father's death in old age. Nor is this merely a matter of sentiment, though this should not be discounted. The significance that the Matupi attach to the patrilocal link emerges in certain contexts where it becomes relevant in establishing a man's local, as distinct from his lineage, identity. As we shall see later, this frequently assumes importance in land disputes when the view will be expressed that a person born outside Matupit, and whose father was not a local resident, cannot count himself a 'true' Matupi. Older men recalling their childhood invariably speak of accompanying their father wherever he went and learning for example what persons in the past cultivated what areas and the boundaries and histories of the various parcels of land. It was indeed largely through his father that a man acquired much of the knowledge through which he was later able to assert his claims to administer the estate of his own matrilineage.

It seems clear therefore that patrilocal residence on Matupit was not an aberrant form achieved only by the sons of a few important 'big men'. At the same time it will be equally apparent that this kind of arrangement can hardly work over long periods without friction, a point already noted in connection with the Yao. Amongst the Yao the difficulties in the situation are expressed when, on the death of the headman, the seminally-linked group moves off to found its own village. Amongst the Tolai, the descent groups are more clearly anchored to particular localities, and the tension posed by the combination of patrilocality and matriliney is given expression in other ways. The social structure of Matupit has indeed

a basic ambiguity built into it. As we saw in the case of Talilikun hamlet, and as I hope to demonstrate further in chapter 6, this consists in the fact that the members of a local group may frequently be regarded as residing with matrilineal or patri-linked kin at one and the same time, depending on the point of view taken. The nature of this uncertainty, and the expression of tension that accompanies it, is manifested in a number of ways. I noted earlier how each local descent group tends to preserve its own account of its establishment on Matupit. When discussed in general terms, these accounts tend to dovetail and to present a fairly consistent picture. But the system allows for the possibility of disagreement. There is in the Matupi genealogies what Peters (1960) has called an 'area of ambiguity', centering around the point at which one lineage is alleged to be patrilocally attached to another. We shall see later, for example, how there was disagreement about the wife of ToKaprablo (12C3) in the genealogies collected from informants of the contending groups. In such discrepancies we observe the attempts of one group to assert its dominance over another by claiming to have 'fathered' it, and of the rival party to declare its independence and full rights to ownership of its hamlet sites by denying the claim. Behind these efforts to secure the hamlet base lies the further struggle to establish rights to the allocation, control, and disposal of gardening and other lands. In these circumstances conflict smoulders not very far beneath the surface, and frequently erupts in bitter quarrels and disputes over land. These disputes are usually ventilated at hearings before the assembled village, the proceedings being conducted by the councillor and his 'committee'. The hearings are in effect law-suits, and they commonly revolve around disputed points of the customary law of land tenure. Sociologically such disputes are viewed more fruitfully in the context of lineage formation, growth and decline, and the political struggles which accompany these processes. I shall seek to develop this line of argument, and to carry forward the analysis of a number of issues raised in the present discussion. Before we turn to this task it is necessary to examine the rules of tenure in terms of which the struggle for land is conducted as well as to distinguish the various social contexts in which land disputes occur.

The System of Land Tenure

AT an early point in his detailed analysis of the land law of the Yoruba of Western Nigeria, Lloyd (1962: 13) raises and quickly disposes of the question 'what is land?' He points out that the distinctions we draw between real and personal property or between movables and immovables are not made by the Yoruba, and accordingly they do not have different rules of inheritance for different classes of property. Hence, ignoring in this context the various uses to which land may be put, or the historical or even religious significance that it may bear, land is simply 'the solid part of the earth's surface, the ground'. Such observations, made with reference to a particular group, are probably applicable to a wide range of tribal or pre-industrial societies. Certainly any statement of traditional Tolai ideas of property would have to be couched in very similar terms. In the Tolai vernacular there is indeed no term which corresponds to or otherwise adequately translates our own concepts of property or ownership. This does not imply that the Tolai lack these notions; it simply means that they perceive and formulate them in somewhat different ways. Thus whereas we speak of property in the abstract, to the Tolai property always appears as a concrete and particular relationship which is expressed through the use of possessive pronouns, suffixes denoting possession,¹ or by a number of morphemes which correspond

¹ This device occurs with a relatively small but important class of nouns in which the noun is compounded with the possessive ending taken by pronouns. Nouns in this class are those expressing personal relationship, parts of the body, essential parts of certain objects. Hence, for example, *a mata*, a face or eye; *matagu*, my face; *matam*, your face; *matana*, his face etc. (Waterhouse, 1939: 11-14).

to our own use of the preposition 'of' to indicate belonging. Similarly, the lack of explicit terminological distinctions does not imply that all 'objects of ownership' are conceived of as being 'owned' in the same way. The expressions *kaugu banam go*, this is my knife, and *kaugu pia go*, this is my land, while syntactically identical, have quite different connotations, for while the former is unambiguous, the latter may refer to a range of different interests in the land, and how it should be interpreted may depend not only on the context but also on a personal knowledge of the speaker and his circumstances. The Tolai, like the Yoruba, are thus aware that 'the physical nature of objects will always affect the manner in which they are shared in inheritance', and indeed on Matupit today there is a clear trend towards the formulation of different rules for the inheritance of land, cash, and personal property.

Lloyd's observations on the Yoruba emphasise how important it is to avoid importing the technical concepts of an alien jurisprudence into the analysis of indigenous notions of property, and other anthropologists have issued similar warnings. Many of the terms that come most readily to one writing in English have their roots in the kind of feudalism that developed in medieval England or, like the expression real property itself, have to be understood in the context of the forms of action of the Common Law. Such terms, as Gluckman (1965a: 88) rightly insists, are likely to be inappropriate to describe systems of landholding in tribal societies. But if there is agreement amongst anthropologists on the need to eschew terms which distort or obscure indigenous conceptions of rights over land, there is as yet little consensus about possible alternative terminologies.

An important contribution has been made here by Goodenough in his study *Property, Kin and Community on Truk* (1961), all the more valuable to my own analysis because of the many notional and structural affinities in the Tolai and Truk systems. Goodenough distinguishes two basic forms of ownership. The first he calls *full ownership*, be the owner a person or a corporation. It confers on an owner what he describes as a *full title*. The second divides a *full title* asymmetrically between two parties, either or both of whom may be individuals or corporations, and is referred to as *divided*

ownership. This confers on the two owners two distinct titles respectively, one called a *provisional*, the other a *residual*, title (pp. 33-4). An analysis of Tolai landholding could be presented in these terms, but the result, I feel, would be a loss of clarity. Goodenough's distinctions and terminology in fact display a number of disadvantages. On Truk, as elsewhere, a house or a tree may be owned separately from the land on which they stand. Hence we may find, in Goodenough's terms, that the maker of a garden has full title in it, though he may not have title to the territory or the soil on which it stands (p. 35). In other words, there may be a series of full title holders (of different kinds) in the same parcel of land. This would seem to be merely a tortuous and confusing way of expressing the simple idea that different interests may vest simultaneously in different persons in respect of the same plot of land. And here we touch on a more serious criticism of Goodenough's scheme. This rests, as we have seen, on the distinction between full and divided ownership. However, the point that seems to have escaped Goodenough's attention is that, where land is concerned, ownership is almost universally conceived to be divided, and this for the very good reason that, of all forms of property, land alone has permanence. As Cheshire puts it (1954: 6), 'land and goods are and must ever be on a different plane. Land is fixed, permanent and vital to the needs of society, and a thing which must inevitably be the subject of derivative rights vested in persons other than the ostensible owner'. Truk provides no exception to the general rule, since Goodenough mentions inheritance and membership in a corporation as the two considerations which restrict a full title holder in the exercise of his privileges. These alone might appear as a substantial limitation of full ownership, but one suspects that other rights of encumbrance may also be involved.

A second major attempt at terminological clarification is that of Gluckman, especially in his more recent work on *The Ideas in Barotse Jurisprudence* (1965a). Borrowing from jurisprudential analysis the notion that what is owned is not an object, but rather a right (or rights) over or in regard to the object, Gluckman takes as his starting-point the assumption, commonly accepted by jurists and implicit in the quotation

from Cheshire cited above, that several groups or persons may hold different kinds of interest in the same piece of land while it is devoted to a particular use. Equally fundamental in his approach is the view that in most tribal societies rights to land are an incident of political and social status. By virtue of membership in the nation or tribe, he writes, every citizen is entitled to claim some land, whether it be from the king or chief, or from such political units as exist in the absence of chiefly authority. Particular constellations of rights cluster to constitute what Gluckman calls 'estates', a term which brings out not only the close connection of landholding with status, but also that rights of administration are organised within a hierarchy of statuses (p. 90). Thus

in practice, among long-settled tribes the tribal land is already allocated to and divided among first-level subordinate political units who, either by joint decision or through their leaders, administer what I shall call a 'primary estate of administration'—administration here covering powers to allocate the land further within the group, to dispose of it, to control and regulate its use, and to defend it against trespassers. Within such a primary estate of administration there may be allocation of secondary and tertiary estates of administration to the series of vesting subordinate groups of decreasing size. . . . Rights to land within a particular group are determined by status inside it and by meeting obligations inherent in that status, as well as by the terms of its allocation.

The rights referred to in this passage are 'political'. Essentially they concern the rights to administer and exercise control over the land. There is, however, a further set of rights to use various parcels of land: the right to cultivate, to pasture stock, to fish, or to collect wild products. Gluckman covers these varied uses of land by the term 'rights of production', and speaks of the actual cultivator of land as having 'an estate of production'.

Gluckman has used this framework to provide an excellent account of the landholding system of the Barotse and illuminating analyses of other African groups. The great advantage of his approach is that it is explicitly designed to handle the problem of simultaneity of interests: it enables us to speak of layers of rights co-existing within the same parcel of land.

Fundamental to this scheme is the concept of the estate, land-holding being formulated in a straightforward series of allocations, each conferring a particular estate upon the grantee. Thus amongst the Lozi the allocation of land is seen as in a chain of distribution from the king to the village headman, to household head, to subordinates in the household. Stated thus, the model appears as closely akin to that of a feudal system of property in land, the basic premises of which are that all land held by a subject is said to derive originally by grant from the crown, and that land may not be held by a subject in absolute independent ownership but only as a tenant of a political superior (Randall, 1909: 11; Cheshire, 1954: 12). Gluckman himself has drawn attention to the parallels, but he is also careful to insist that there are substantial differences between feudal tenures and those of tribal Africa. But granted these differences, the question still arises how far the mode of analysis is applicable to societies in which the hierarchical principle of organisation is less marked than is the case amongst the Bemba or the Barotse.

This is a question that Gluckman has himself considered. He notes (p. 96) that the series of estates of administration is seen most clearly in those tribes that have a more or less fixed system of cultivation, and an elaborate hierarchical social organisation. Nevertheless he considers that this mode of formulating land rights is likely to cover most systems of African land tenure and those of other tribal peoples. There is one important point in his analysis which needs to be noted here. Replying to a criticism by Biebuyck (1963: 15-16), Gluckman observes that he does not consider that the phrase 'hierarchy of estates' necessarily implies the existence of an organised system of authorities, holding estates and continuously dealing with land distribution; it merely states, he says, that the holding of estates of administration retreats or advances in a graded arrangement. He then adds, 'I therefore consider it applicable to situations where groups, without authoritative leaders, devolve estates on their component segments, down to the individual cultivator' (p. 111). Earlier (p. 91) he makes a similar point when he observes that the number of estates in the series merely indicates the degree of complexity in the tribal social organisation.

However, even if this interpretation of the expression hierarchy is accepted, or the term series substituted for it as Gluckman later proposes in order to avoid misunderstanding, the point remains that complexity in social arrangements may take a variety of forms. It will readily be accepted, I think, that morphologically the social system of the Barotse represents a more complex type of social organisation than, say, that of Truk or the Tolai, but I would suggest that the pattern of land rights on Truk and, as I hope to show, among the Tolai, is much more varied and complex than in Barotseland. It is immediately striking, for example, that whereas Gluckman treats land rights as an incident of political and social status which are embedded in a series of estates, Goodenough presents his account of rights in land as expressing differences in title which result from different property transactions (1961: 34). It seems to me that this contrast expresses not merely a difference of conceptual approach, but also reflects important differences in the ordering of social arrangements in the two societies. The conclusion would seem to be that in egalitarian societies such as Truk or Tolai, where local communities are composed of autonomous and co-ordinate descent groups, an account of the landholding system in terms of 'rights which reside in obligations between persons in permanent status relationships' simply does not exhaust the topic, and certainly does not adequately express the variety of interests that may exist in respect of land. For example, Gluckman stresses as a basic feature of African land tenure the right of every subject to a minimal use of tribal land. Amongst the Tolai no such 'communal' right of cultivation exists: claims to cultivation rights arise not through membership of the community, but through ties with particular descent groups. And if it is objected that this is a mere quibble since every Tolai is in fact entitled to land to meet his subsistence requirements, then it must be noted at once that this interest covers a number of quite different kinds of rights which are acquired in different ways.

We touch here on what seems to me the one major weakness of Gluckman's scheme. In any system of land tenure we have to deal essentially with four sets of variables. These are (1) interests and claims over land which (2) vest in

persons and groups, whom we may speak of as the subjects of land rights, and (3) are exercised in relation to other persons and groups, whom we may refer to as the objects of land rights. Each of these may also vary (4) in relation to the different uses to which the land is put or according to the categories of property culturally recognised. Gluckman's framework stresses the importance of the land use factor, and the second and third variables are covered in his treatment of status. What is missing from his scheme is an adequate and systematic typology of interests; for while a statement of one's rights will provide a clear indication of status, a reference to one's status may provide in itself no clear guide to the kind of rights held. The point can be illustrated in a number of ways in Gluckman's discussion of what he calls rights of production. These found an estate of production, which lies at the base of the series. It is clear, however, that the rights to cultivate, to pasture stock, to hunt or collect wild products, which Gluckman terms collectively rights of production, may refer to what are analytically very different kinds of interest in land. Secondly, we have noted how in an African tribe every subject, by virtue of his membership in the community, has a claim to the minimal use of tribal land. This is presumably the right to cultivate for subsistence purposes, and founds an estate of production. However, if this terminology were to be applied in the Tolai context, we would immediately see that the estate of production may be founded in a number of very different ways, each of which confers a different type of legal interest in the land: there is the right to cultivate by virtue of membership in a matrilineal descent group; the claim to land for subsistence that lies against one's father's matrilineage; the right to make a garden on land acquired by gift, purchase, or the custom of *totokom* described below; or finally, the claim that a man enjoys to work a garden that belongs to his wife and her matrilineage.

We have then, as Lloyd (1962: 62) observes, to attempt to classify rights not by their grouping into estates, but by their type. Lloyd himself distinguishes between two classes of rights—those of sovereignty and what he calls 'usufructuary rights which, in a certain quantum, amount to ownership'. Some authorities object to the term usufructuary when employed

with reference to customary systems of African land law (see, e.g. Gluckman, 1965a: 86), but this point aside, it seems to me that we can push the analysis a good deal further if we begin by asking what kinds of interest in land can vest in individuals or groups. Posing the question in this way, we find that underlying the diversity of particular legal systems with their own distinctive folk categories, four structural principles or possibilities can be recognised. These are (1) the rights that vest in the political unit as a whole or its representative(s), usually referred to as rights of sovereignty or dominion; (2) the ultimate interest in land which a given society recognises as capable of vesting in an individual or group, the land that one 'owns' or, in Lloyd's terms, the quantum of rights amounting to ownership; (3) the rights enjoyed over another's land which vest in an individual or group, which I shall term rights of encumbrance; and (4) those rights which vest not in a particular individual or group, but which all members of the political unit are entitled to claim, what I shall speak of as rights of commonalty. Before seeking to define these kinds of interests further, and examining them in the Tolai context, it will be useful to discuss briefly the categories of property in land recognised at Matupit.

We have noted in another context how the Tolai distinguish between forest, the bush, and areas of human settlement. Until forest land is brought under cultivation it counts in a sense as *res nullius*, and access to it is free to all, though in some instances the area may be associated with a particular district or parish. The main distinction for present purposes therefore is between hamlet or housing sites, residential land in a *gunan*, and the areas of cultivation, a *uma*. The distinction is similar to that made by the Yoruba between 'town' and 'farm' land. But, like the Yoruba, the Tolai do not suggest that these types of land ought to be held under different tenures, nor that the rules which apply to one should not equally apply to the other. The distinction arises from the contrasting uses to which the two types of land are normally put (Lloyd 1962: 71). The same point holds in the case of *motonoi* land described earlier (see p. 78) and also to the sacred groves (*taraiu*) of the *tubuan*, and in the past the

enclosures of the *iniet* cult (*maravot*), from which the women and uninitiated were rigorously excluded.

Goodenough (1961: 31) has noted how on Truk land is separable as territory and soil so that a house or a tree may be owned separately from the land on which they stand. A similar distinction is recognised by the Tolai, but one also has to take account of other refinements. For example, Goodenough's point holds for houses of the indigenous type, but permanent, modern-style dwellings constructed of fibro-cement or other durable materials should only be put up on the land of one's own matrilineage. Again, a word needs to be said about the position of trees, of which many varieties abound in this environment, and nearly all of which are put to some use. Smith and Salisbury (1961) state the rule that trees are part and parcel of the land on which they are planted. This is seen most clearly in the prohibition, noted in an earlier context, on the planting of coconut palms on land to which one has no claim as of matrilineal right.² However, it should be remarked that at least on Matupit a distinction is drawn between 'wild' and 'cultivated' trees. In conformity with the general principle that rights of property in land are brought into being by an original human act of creation, 'wild' trees which have taken root from seeds swept ashore by the sea, or carried inland by the wind or by birds, are subject to no exclusive rights of ownership, and access to them is available to all. In the case of 'cultivated' trees, often of considerable economic utility like the variety of pandanus known as a *voivoi*, whose leaves are used in the weaving of mats and baskets, or another pandanus known as a *vaum*, prized for making the small packets in which slaked lime is sold, the seeds are collected and replanted on one's own land. It appears

² We should also note, however, the observation of Dr Hahl (1897), in an early account of Tolai legal concepts, that coconut palms are considered to be personal property. They belong, he writes, to the one who planted them, even on alien property, if the proprietor permitted them to be planted. It may be that the rule I have cited is a more recent development. On the other hand, the two statements are not necessarily inconsistent for, as we shall see later, there are in fact a number of different rules governing rights in palms. Taken together, these do introduce an element of ambiguity, which is reflected in the arguments and claims produced in the context of many land disputes, some of which will be considered in the next chapter.

moreover that in some instances rights in a tree once planted may be transferred to another.

Having discussed categories of property in land, we may now return to consider the categories of interests which may be held over or in regard to land.

Rights of Sovereignty and of Commonalty

Rights of sovereignty are those which vest in the political unit or community as a whole. In centralised polities such rights may be numerous, but in societies such as that of the Tolai, where the political unit is composed of relatively autonomous descent groups, rights of sovereignty are of less significance. Nevertheless, Tolai parishes did have their traditional boundaries, and the duty of protecting them against attack by enemies presumably provided the main component in their concept of dominion. All residents within the territory did have rights of enjoyment of the natural environment: these rights did not vest exclusively in any individual person, corporate group or other similar segment of the society, but neither did they vest in the community as a whole. They are therefore to be distinguished from rights of sovereignty, and I refer to them as rights of commonalty. Amongst the Tolai these include hunting rights or rights to collect wild fruits or plants for medicinal or other purposes. Again, access to the open sea is available to all, and no individual or group claims are recognised for example in anchorages for fish baskets. Similarly, there are rights of commonalty in the egg-lands, even though proprietary rights are also recognised here. This was stated quite clearly in one dispute over the egg-lands which, incidentally, also explains the underlying principle in all these cases. For some time there had been grumbling among many of the proprietors that people were going to the egg-lands, gathering eggs there, and then making off without having paid their levy to the owner of the soil. Finally, one proprietor, a man from Kikila, went to Kurapun and informed the people there that henceforth his ground was forbidden to them. This aroused resentment in Kurapun, but it also evoked an immediate response in Kikila itself. At a village meeting there the proprietor was sternly rebuked for

his action. One elder made a powerful speech affirming the unity of all Matupi. 'It is true', he said, 'that we are known as Kikila, Rarup and Kurapun. But we call ourselves the people of Matupit. We are one island, we are Matupi. And what you have said, ToAn,³ is no good, for you are dividing us, cutting us off from our brothers, our sisters and our matrikin in Kurapun'. The general view of the meeting was finally put by John Vuia, who pointed out that from way back no individual had claimed exclusive rights in the egg-lands, which were for the people as a whole. 'Nowadays there is nothing but trouble because of people claiming individual rights. It is different in a case where a man plants crops; they are his. But eggs are a part of creation (*a vavaki*), and a gift of God.' Confronted with this unanimity of feeling, the proprietor agreed that he would apologise to the people of Kurapun and invite them to return. It is worth noting here that in a similar kind of situation, the Matupi were not so punctilious in acknowledging the claims of the Nodup to collect eggs from Matupi sites. Between Kikila and Kurapun there were strong ties of kinship, but even more to the point was the mutual interdependence in economic matters of daily concern. In this context, to paraphrase a similar point made by Hogbin and Lawrence (1967: xii), rights of commonalty express the solidarity or identity of the widest political units of the society, here the district or parish.

Proprietary rights

Lloyd (1962: 66) observes that ownership in every day usage implies absolute rights in respect of an object. But he notes that while it is not difficult to conceive how ownership of a car gives exclusive rights in its use to the individual, it is rare if not impossible for an individual to hold land by such a tenure that he can aver that no other person has any rights in it. Other parties do have rights in the land, and he concludes that every legal system must therefore define what rights shall amount to ownership. While I agree with this formulation, partly to avoid the use of a term that has been a source of misunderstanding in the past, partly because it is convenient

³ I use here the term which simply means So-and-so.

to have the use of an adjective, I prefer to speak here of proprietary rights. Such rights depend upon no prior or antecedent estate, and therefore allow of no superior claims. Thus amongst the Tolai proprietary rights are brought into being by an act of human will, either by way of first occupancy and the marking out of an area, or by its first cultivation. Thereafter the interest so established in the land passes by right of inheritance to all those who are the direct matrilineal descendants of the original settler. As employed here the expression proprietary rights covers a number of specific interests in the estate: rights of administration and control, the right to beneficial occupancy and enjoyment (and therefore the immunity from trespass) and the power of disposal. These various interests are discussed in detail below.

Rights of encumbrance

A point that has been repeatedly stressed throughout this discussion is that what distinguishes land from other forms of property is that it rarely vests exclusive rights of ownership. Others may also have an interest in it. Curiously, although Lloyd specifically mentions these interests, he does not give a name to them. I shall speak of them as rights of encumbrance. These are essentially derivative rights, that is they depend upon or are carved out of a prior or antecedent estate. These too will be considered in detail later.

Sufficient has already been said of rights of commonalty, and we can therefore turn directly to a more detailed analysis of proprietary rights.

Proprietary Rights and the Concept of the Vunatarai

The basic rule of Tolai land tenure can be stated very simply. '*A pia kai ra vunatarai*', it is said, 'land belongs to the *vunatarai*'. Unfortunately, to the outsider at least, this is not a very illuminating statement because, as noted in the previous chapter, the term may refer to units and categories at different levels of social organisation, and its use frequently involves a degree of ambiguity. At this point therefore some attempt at clarification becomes necessary.

The term *vunatarai* itself is a compound of *vuna* = source, root, cause, or origin, and *tarai* = people, and means literally people of common origin. I have heard the word used on occasion with reference to the Japanese, but this was clearly an extension of the meaning it bears in indigenous contexts where it always carries the connotation of sharing a common ancestry. Tolai society is divided into two exogamous moieties, and every Tolai is believed to be descended from the first ancestress of one or the other moiety. It is in this sense that the moieties, sometimes spoken of as the two parts (*papar* = part, side, half) or as the 'we-folk' and the 'they-folk', are also referred to as *vunatarai*, the widest indigenous denotation of the term. Although different sets of names are used in different parts, the moiety system is uniform throughout the Tolai area⁴ as well as the Duke of York Islands and much of southern New Ireland (Trevitt, 1940: 355), and there is a recognised correspondence between them. Members of the two moieties live together in the same settlements, but the moiety itself is widely dispersed and wholly lacking in any internal organisation. It is strictly speaking a descent category whose main function is the regulation of marriage, breach of the rule of moiety exogamy constituting one of the most heinous offences known to the Tolai. The use of the term *vunatarai* in these contexts has no bearing on the question of property in land whatsoever.

At a second level the Tolai recognise matrilineal descent groups, to which the term *vunatarai* also applies. The members of such a unit are usually distributed amongst a large number of autonomous local communities, but they regard themselves as kinsmen, even though the genealogical links cannot be demonstrated. The term *vunatarai* in this context has been translated as clan (Trevitt, 1940: 352; Smith and Salisbury, 1961: 2). In current English (as distinct from

⁴ The inland district of Tabak seems to provide the only exception. Meier (1929: 3-5) observes that when the moiety system was introduced into the area by the culture-hero ToKabinana, the chief of the Tabak district did not follow the example of the other headmen and refused to divide his district in accordance with that innovation, but kept to the old system that had previously prevailed. Unfortunately, no full anthropological investigations appear to have been undertaken there, and few details of the system are available.

American) anthropological usage, clan is usually defined simply as a group having unilineal descent in which all the members regard one another as in some specific sense kinsfolk (see Radcliffe-Brown, 1950: 40; cf. *Notes and Queries* 6th ed. 1951: 89). It is clear of course that such a definition may cover a number of highly variant forms, and if I make use of the term here it is all the more important that the particular characteristics of Tolai clanship should be specified clearly. The Tolai clan, as we have just seen, is not a local unit as Fortes (1945: 62) employs the word with reference to the Tallensi; nor does it constitute a political unit as amongst the Gusii (Iona Mayer, 1965) or many of the Highland societies of New Guinea (e.g. Reay, 1959). Again, it lacks the highly segmented genealogical structure described, for example, in Evans-Pritchard's (1940) account of Nuer clans. On the other hand, it is not simply an undifferentiated group of people akin to the named but otherwise somewhat amorphous matrilineal clans found over wide areas of Central Africa (see e.g. Colson and Gluckman, 1951). Tolai clans do not carry specific names, but they are identified with reference to particular leaders and sometimes ancestors, depending on the social context, and ultimately with reference to a particular parcel of land associated with the founding ancestor. Such an ancestor, conceived of as an historical rather than a mythical figure, is spoken of as a *vunapaina*, a source or fount from which the group takes its rise. Over time, as descendants of the *vunapaina* spread out and scatter across the land, some to settle with matrikin already established elsewhere, some to establish new local settlements, knowledge of precise genealogical links within the group as a whole is lost. What remains is the tradition of common origin, and this is buttressed by continuing social interaction and participation in a variety of organised activities. Structurally therefore the Tolai clan is perhaps best perceived as akin to a network, the nodes of which are small localities each associated with a particular descent group within the wider village, district, or parish. Functionally, this network provides the basis for what Adrian Mayer (1966) calls action-sets, which are mobilised from time to time for the performance of large-scale mortuary rites and other ceremonies and nowadays also economic activities.

It is unfortunate that the expression corporate group has sometimes been used to cover a number of situations that ought analytically to be distinguished. The Tolai clan is a corporate group in the sense employed by Radcliffe-Brown (1950: 40-1) in that members of the *vunatarai* share a common sense of identity and take part from time to time in certain collective activities. But what should now also be evident is that the clan as a whole is not a property-owning group, certainly not where land is concerned.⁵ As we shall discuss presently, proprietary rights to property in land vest primarily in a local descent group. Nevertheless, this does not mean that the wider group is wholly without interests in the land of one of its segments. In certain cases, for example where a local lineage is threatened with extinction, a person from within the wider group may be summoned to inherit and administer the estate so that it does not pass into the hands of another group. Again, as we saw in the heated dispute involving ToRokota (see pp. 52-3), a part of the *vunatarai* may be strongly entrenched in a number of localities so that it may appear at times as though rights of control within a given community are being exercised by an outsider. It will be recalled that on that occasion ToRokota was careful to stress his identity as a native of Matupit. This is a point we shall examine further at a later stage of the analysis, but it may be mentioned here that in both of the instances just cited there is likely to be a tension between the principle of locality on the one hand and the principle of descent on the other.

When Tolai speak of the *vunatarai* and the divisions within it they generally employ the metaphor of the banana tree, and use the term *a apik*, a hand of bananas, to express the idea of segments sharing a common stem. Thus Smith and Salisbury (1961: 2) speak of the *vunatarai* being further subdivided into *apiktarai*, and from this point of view they refer correctly to a section of the clan which 'acknowledges the authority of one leader and lives in one locality' as an *apiktarai*. At the same time it needs to be noted that the term does not refer to a specific type of group or to one at a par-

⁵ The question of clan symbols, particularly those associated with the *tubuan* and *dukduk*, is discussed below, p. 241.

ticular level of segmentation. On Matupit at least the term was used only in contexts where one wanted to express the contrast or opposition between homologous or collateral descent units of whatever kind or order. For most everyday purposes, and especially in matters of land, when the Matupi spoke of the *vunatarai* they had in mind the local matrilineal descent group whose acknowledged leader could usually trace genealogical links with the local founding ancestor or *patuana*. This unit is a corporate descent group or corporation in the sense defined by Goodenough (1961: 32), that is the 'group preserves its organization as a corporation only so long as it holds property in relation to which it must function'. It is the *vunatarai* in this sense which exercises what I call proprietary rights in land, these being held jointly by the members of the group in a theoretically undivided estate. Such groups may vary in genealogical depth, and in some cases cleavages within them may be detected developing along the lines of genealogical segmentation. But, as Lloyd observes (1962: 36), just as genealogical descent of itself does not produce a corporate group, so genealogical segmentation does not necessarily produce recognised sub-groups within the lineage. Among the Tolai, as among the Yoruba, land is not a criterion for the segmentation of descent groups; rights in land are not divided in each generation but pass corporately to all heirs.

If the use of the term *vunatarai* were confined to the three sets of meanings I have just outlined, the Tolai system of descent might simply be represented by a three-tier model of categories, dispersed groups, and local corporations. Unfortunately, the matter is a little more complicated than this. Such a model takes too little account of the flexibility of the system, and in particular the scope it provides for the voluntary contracting of new relationships or the transformation of remote ties into close ones, what one might term the 'element of optation' in the system.⁶ What is involved here is not simply

⁶ The expression is adapted from van Velsen (1967: 142) who speaks of a process of optation to refer to the selection by the individual in any one situation from a variety of possible relationships. However, in speaking of an element of optation I should immediately hasten to add that I am not ascribing to the Tolai a system of optative descent. That term was used by Firth (1957: 4) to describe descent systems which allowed choice in affiliation as regards membership through male or female. No such choice is available to the Tolai.

the question of accretion whereby a remote kinsman or stranger is initially admitted to residence and gradually assimilated until he or his heirs are accepted as full members of the group. Amongst the Tolai there is the custom, referred to earlier in a different context, known as a *turguvai*, literally a standing together or alliance. What this means is that certain individuals or groups may decide to attach themselves (*dia ruk pirana*, they enter into or join) to an established 'big man'. The link is forged initially by contributing shell-money and other aid to some enterprise, perhaps a mortuary rite or dance festival, that the 'big man' is organising. Gradually, a relationship of mutual assistance is built up until, having achieved a degree of permanence, the parties to it come to be regarded as belonging to one *vunatarai*. It is in this area perhaps that there is the greatest scope for ambiguity in the use of the term, producing the apparently odd result, as we shall see, that persons who in one context are recognised as belonging to a single *vunatarai* may not be so regarded in others. We touch here on questions which fall more properly within the realm of politics than that of law, and since it is the latter which for the moment is my major concern, their discussion must await a more appropriate context. In the remainder of this section I concentrate therefore on the rights of property that vest in the *vunatarai* in its minimal sense of local descent group or local lineage.

I have stated that property in land is created when for the first time an area is occupied and marked out for settlement or cultivation. The rights so created, provided they are not disposed of by their originator in his lifetime, vest in his matrilineal heirs a joint estate and confer upon them what the Matupi call a *kakalei*, a claim as of right, the ultimate interest in land known to them. But while all members of the *vunatarai* have joint proprietary rights of beneficial occupancy and enjoyment, the administration of the estate vests in the leader of the group or *lualua*. However, on contemporary Matupit, where all the available land has now been taken up, not all *vunatarai* have *kakalei* or claims in the land as of right, and it is only those groups that do that can refer to their leaders as a *bit na pia* or *pai na pia*. The words *bit* and *pai* mean base, root, or foundation, and the expression *bit na*

pia is most aptly translated perhaps as the aboriginal and therefore only true owner of the soil; it applies to the present leader as the direct descendant and contemporary representative of the local founding ancestor. Such a *bit na pia* alone has the power to *kure*, a verb which may be variously translated as rule, manage, decide, or arbitrate. I have mentioned that the members of the *vunatarai* hold joint rights in a theoretically undivided estate. However, this estate rarely consists of a single block of land, and the holdings of the group may be widely scattered throughout the area of the parish. Moreover, as we have seen, land is usually worked by individuals or by a husband and wife team; they may be assisted on occasion by a working-bee, but work in the gardens is rarely, if ever, undertaken by the *vunatarai* collectively. In practice therefore particular portions of the estate vest in different individuals. The head of the local matrilineage should always be consulted about such arrangements, and even though a person proceeds to make a garden or to plant an area in what is his *vunatarai* land without first consulting the *lualua*, there is always an assumption that he is working the land with the latter's tacit consent. But no permanent and exclusive rights are established in this way. Once the garden has served its purpose or the one who made it dies the land reverts to the joint pool. In case of dispute amongst members of the *vunatarai*, it is again the responsibility of the *lualua* to arbitrate.

The task of the head of a local descent group, however, is not simply to supervise the internal affairs of his group; equally if not more important is his responsibility to protect the estate against the claims of others. His success in this respect depends upon the extent of his genealogical expertise as well as his knowledge of the boundaries of each parcel of land, how each came to be acquired and marked out, and the various transactions to which it has been subject. Knowledge of this kind is acquired through long experience, but much of it is directly transmitted through what is called the *var-vateten*, an instruction or communication. When the term is used in the context of a land dispute it usually refers to the occasion when an important elder or *patuana* calls one of his maternal nephews privately to him to instruct him in the

pedigree, lore, and tradition of his lineage. The *lualua* is in a sense the official 'remembrancer' of his group, and this knowledge is a powerful weapon in conducting relations with other groups. When, for example, I was recording the pedigree of ToLopa (12F2), I was somewhat puzzled and beginning to grow a little impatient when after a few hours I had listed only extinct lines and deceased cognates and had not yet recorded the name of a single living person apart from his own. Only later, when I had come to learn that the admired technique in debate was to allow one's opponent to make all the running and then expose the shallowness of his claims by producing an item of information to which he had no reply, did I appreciate that what at first sight seemed to me redundant knowledge, irrelevant to the understanding of contemporary relationships, might well include the aces he held up his sleeve. Such knowledge, produced at the right moment, has the power to crush the opposition, and ToLopa probably possessed the most extensive genealogical knowledge of all on the island. He was a *bit na pia* par excellence, and at Kurapun his sway was undisputed; he was *the* elder of the village (*tikana lualua na gunan*), it was said, and when he elected to speak all others remained silent. Kurapun would be contrasted with Kikila in this respect. Of the latter my informants would say *dia vorogoroi*, meaning that there were a large number of *bit na pia* there, all thinking of themselves as leaders, and entitled to speak with authority in land matters.

Amongst the rights of control that vest in the *lualua* is the power to impose a 'taboo' on any of the lands of the *vunatarai*. The prohibition may take the form of a magical device designed to protect a food garden against trespass,⁷ or it may simply be a general ban imposed for a limited period or

⁷ As a rule, no objection is made to a person who takes foodstuffs from another's garden to assuage his immediate hunger or thirst, provided the owner of the garden is informed later. However, where someone takes food regularly from another's garden without permission, this is regarded as theft. In one case I heard three women were accused before the village assembly of taking *tapiok* from a man's garden on a number of occasions without his consent. One, a close kinswoman of the complainant, said that she had been offered some by the others but refused it, and was acquitted. The other two admitted the offence, and were ordered to pay the owner £1 apiece. They offered instead one fathom of *tambu* each, which the complainant said he would be happy to accept.

particular purpose, for example on the gathering of coconuts so that an adequate supply is assured for some large-scale festival or ceremony that is being contemplated.⁸ As we have seen already, the attempt is sometimes made to claim similar powers in respect of the egg-lands, but such attempts tend to be strongly resisted, the egg-lands being regarded as subject to rights of commonalty. The rights to control access to the egg-lands thus rest with the councillor, his 'committee', and the village assembly. Hence when one *bit na pia* at Kikila called on a number of young men to gather eggs from his ground on the day set aside for work in the cocoa gardens, he was summoned before the assembly to answer for his behaviour in breaking the rule that collecting eggs was permitted only on Fridays. The implications of his offence were stated clearly by the councillor.

The people are the power: the people are the land, the government and the church. Without them all the different tasks that have to be performed would not be carried out. So if the people introduce a rule that something should be forbidden, we respect that rule because the power of the people lies behind it. And when you, one of those who made the rule, break it you have destroyed the whole basis of the rule. I think it would perhaps be better if we forgot all about the rule so that you, ToAn, see for yourself the disobedience of the people...

It should also be noted here that the egg-lands are exceptional in another respect. With regard to other forms of productive property, the right to enjoy the profits vests exclusively in the individual cultivator or manufacturer of the product. However, in the case of the egg-lands the *bit na pia* is entitled to impose a personal levy on all eggs gathered on the land of his *vunatarai*. In the remarks of the councillor just quoted there was the clear threat that if the rule about working the egg-lands only on the stipulated day was ignored by a *bit na pia*

⁸ Such a taboo is generally known at Matupit as an *ilikut*. Smith and Salisbury (1961: 5) also record that the representatives of certain *vunatarai*, members of which were original settlers in a district, have the ceremonial privilege of placing a taboo on certain garden activities throughout the district by means of a *bagil*. I recorded no instances of this kind at Matupit, possibly because there are a number of groups on the island all claiming to be original settlers. But the principle serves to explain why a purchase of land does not give rise to a *kakalei* (p. 104).

himself, other offenders would not be brought before the village forum, and he would not be able to enforce the payment of his levy.

The final set of proprietary rights to be considered are those of disposition. The *lualua* has the power to transfer rights in the land to persons who are not members of the *vunatarai*. Since certain of these transfers are made in fulfilment of customary obligations they are more conveniently treated under rights of encumbrance. For the present I confine myself to a discussion of the transfer of rights in land by gift or purchase.

A gift of land is spoken of as a *tinabar*,⁹ and may be made to a *vunatarai* or an individual. While such a gift confers full rights of enjoyment over the land, it should be stressed that the estate so conferred does not amount to a *kakalei*. Since the superior claims of the transferring *vunatarai* are still acknowledged, if the *bit na pia* who made the original gift acted without the full knowledge or approval of his group, or if knowledge of the *varvateten* is disclaimed the grant may turn out in later years to have founded a very uncertain tenure. An interesting case of this kind arose at Matupit, involving claims to the land on which the Methodists were anxious to build a new church. The old church had been destroyed during the war, and recently the Methodists decided to erect an imposing new structure on the old site. This was on land that had been acquired from ToBoka (long since deceased), who was a maternal uncle of ToLopa. ToLopa, the present leader of the *vunatarai*, was a Catholic, and it was widely believed by many on the island that he had been persuaded by certain of his co-religionists to claim that the land had never been properly acquired, so that the Methodists would not be able to proceed with the building of the new church. The Methodists at first asserted that they had purchased the land, but ToLopa denied this, and the claim was later dropped. One very old man then gave evidence that the land had been granted to them as a gift. ToBoka, he said, was the first man to welcome the Methodist mission to Matupit. He became an elder of the church, and had then presented the

⁹ From the verb *tabar*, to give or present. The noun in Tolai is frequently formed from the verb by the use of the infix *ni* or *in*.

land to the mission 'as a mark of his love and his faith'. To this ToLopa and his younger brother (who lived at Malaguna) replied that their *vunatarai* had grown in numbers, that there was no land for them to live on, and they wanted the portion to return to them. The two parties to the dispute could come to no agreement, and as fighting threatened to break out on a number of occasions, the matter was finally referred to the Native Lands Commissioner in Rabaul. A map, held by the Methodist mission, was produced in evidence; it showed the sites of the school and residence of the teacher and the catechist, but not of the land on which they wished to build the church, and the Commissioner therefore found in favour of ToLopa. However, ToLopa now relented and declared that he wished to see the matter settled properly so that work on the building of the church could proceed. The Methodists accepted this offer, and quickly contributed £A5 and 50 fathoms of *tambu* to purchase the land. At the formal presentation of the payment, to show that goodwill had been restored and that the transaction had now been finally settled, ToLopa returned 10 fathoms.

We shall see in other instances too that a gift of land confers an insecure tenure unless the transfer is ratified by later purchase. The expression purchase here translates the Tolai verb *kul*, which is used of buying any item for cash or *tambu*. It is also used, however, to refer to the bridewealth (a *warkukul*), and it is clear therefore that one has to be cautious in treating the English and Tolai terms as precise equivalents. Two points need to be noted when *kul* is employed in regard to land. In the first place, the estate vested by a 'purchase' is always regarded as inferior to a *kakalei*, a claim by virtue of original settlement or first cultivation. As in the case of land acquired by gift, therefore, the purchase of land may sometimes confer a somewhat insecure title. In the main this arises because, while rights of control are exercised by the *lualua*, where the sale of land is concerned all members of the *vunatarai* (including females) are entitled to be consulted and have the power of veto. Hence if a vendor should have second thoughts about the sale, it is usually not very difficult for him to find a pretext for reneging on his agreement; alternatively,

some other member of the group may initiate steps to have the sale set aside.

The kind of difficulty this gives rise to in the contemporary situation is bound up with the second point to be noted when we speak of land 'purchase'. In the indigenous system land was not a commodity. Transfers of land were not conducted according to the principles of the market; rather they were effected between parties who saw themselves as already linked by social bonds, and when land was exchanged in return for *tambu* it was usually in recognition of the obligations of kinship or other customary claims. The parcels of land involved in such transfers were usually quite small, since the grants were made most frequently in order to provide for subsistence requirements. Similarly, the payment demanded in *tambu* was also small. This remains the position today in regard to 'sales' of land within the village, where the sums involved in cash and *tambu* fall very far short of the market value.

The indigenous concept of *kul* then is translated by the term purchase only at the risk of serious misrepresentation. However, two developments have begun to undermine the traditional notion. Firstly, there have been various dealings with the Administration in regard to land. The leases acquired by the Administration, for example over the land at Lakunai, involve sums running into hundreds of pounds, so that *bit na pia* are now encouraged to think of the land increasingly as a commodity. The conflict between the two concepts of property in land emerges strikingly in the dispute with ToRokota (see p. 52). The younger men who protested so vehemently against their elders' willingness to accept the Administration's terms were mostly 'sons' of the various *bit na pia*. They were arguing in effect that the 'land authorities' had no power to dispose of the land so as to remove it from the sphere of Tolai social relationships and customary obligations. 'If you wish to sell it', they demanded, 'then sell it to us'. Secondly, with the development of cash cropping, many Tolai are beginning to find it necessary to think of land as a commodity even in transactions amongst themselves. A number of Matupi, for example, who have inadequate supplies of land for growing cocoa, have purchased land for cash from other groups. One

young man I knew had purchased a block of land at Napapar for £A24. Some four years after planting his cocoa trees, and when they were about to come into bearing, the people at Napapar decided to rescind the contract. Realising that there was very little he could do about it, the Matupi was claiming the return of his money plus compensation for the time and effort he had put into establishing the plantation. For him, as for many Tolai, the traditional system of land tenure was beginning to reveal its limitations in meeting the needs of the contemporary situation.

Rights of Encumbrance

We have been discussing hitherto the interests which the members of a *vunatarai* have in their own estate—what I have called their proprietary rights. We now have to consider what the lawyers term rights *in alieno solo*, claims which lie against the land of another, which I propose to speak of as rights of encumbrance. Amongst the Tolai these take a number of forms.

One of the most important rights of encumbrance consists in the claims of seminal kin on the land of the *vunatarai* which 'fathered' them. As we have seen, a man has an automatic right to make food gardens on the land of his own *vunatarai*, but the Tolai also recognise that he is entitled to 'eat' of his father's land. Strictly speaking, this is a privilege, a matter of grace, rather than an enforceable right, and it lapses on the death of the father. Very often, however, particularly where relations between the two groups have been good, the matrilineage of the deceased father will acquiesce in his sons continuing to work the land or taking its profits. Such an interest is created by way of gift (*a tinabar*), the effect of which is to confer a life interest, an usufruct in the strict sense, upon the sons. It frequently happens too, if a *vunatarai* is rich in land, that the father's matrilineage is willing to grant a permanent interest in the land to the sons. Since rights in perpetuity cannot be conferred by gift, the practice commonly adopted is to convert the gift into a purchase through the transfer of a sum of shell-money.

In theory the arrangement for meeting the claims of

seminal kin would seem to be perfectly simple, but in practice the issue is complicated by the fact that coconuts are deemed to be part of one's entitlement to subsistence. A fairly typical example is provided by the case of my research assistant, ToKonia. His father, ToVok, had planted coconuts on *vunatarai* land. No other members of ToVok's matrilineage assisted at the time, and thereafter the continuing work in the plantation was shared by ToVok's wife and his sons. Where personal chattels are concerned it is possible for a man to make gifts to his wife and children without the matter coming to the notice of his *vunatarai*. Land is more conspicuous: ToKonia had access to the plantation while his father was alive, and thereafter his interest lapsed. In this case, however, in recognition of the work that ToVok's wife and children had put into the land, the senior surviving member of ToVok's lineage, IaMon, allowed ToKonia to retain his 'rights' in it. This gift was made to him in the presence of his patrilineal cross-cousins, Sami and ToBaiai. ToKonia now enjoys the profits of 100 coconut trees planted by his father, and he has planted a further 120, presumably with the knowledge or at least tacit acquiescence of IaMon and his cross-cousins.

Yet it is not difficult to see how in these circumstances confusion creeps in over time, and may give rise to disputes. Such a dispute did arise on one occasion over an adjoining parcel of land where coconuts had been planted by the same ToVok (see fig. 5). The matter was raised by ToBaiai, ToKonia's cross-cousin, who complained that on three occasions the sprouted nuts which he had planted on his own

FIG. 5 The rights of seminal kin as a source of contention

vunatarai land had been uprooted. As we have seen, the rule is that a man is legally entitled to plant coconuts only on land which he claims as of matrilineal right, and ToBaiai was doubtless assuming that because ToVok had planted coconuts there, the land was his and therefore he, ToBaiai, was also entitled to plant. But the matter is rarely quite so simple as this. In this case the three men he accused made no attempt to deny what they had done. They claimed instead that the land did not belong to the *vunatarai* of ToBaiai, and that ToVok had in fact planted on their *vunatarai* land. The question was then put why, if that was the case, no protest had been made at the time ToVok planted the coconuts. This brought the reply that nothing had been said then because their *vunatarai* had 'fathered' ToVok; the land on which he had planted had simply been a gift to a son during his lifetime. It is likely that similar disputes will arise in future over the land on which ToKonia has planted coconuts, unless in the meantime he takes steps to purchase it. In any event we shall see later that arguments of the kind just mentioned play a crucial part in many disputes which revolve around questions of land 'ownership' and who shall exercise rights of control (*varkurai*, *kure*) over it.

A second mode of establishing rights of encumbrance is through the custom of *kutu bat ra tambu*, cutting up shell-money on the occasion of a death. An early account of the custom on the neighbouring Duke of York Islands has been given by George Brown (1901: 311). Observing how the deceased, if a prominent man, would be placed in a sitting posture outside his house, his legs and arms all tied round with shell-money, Brown explains that a man wishing to have a piece of land for his own use takes advantage of a death like this, and brings shell-money as an offering. This is tied round the legs or arms of the deceased 'big man', and the man making the offering receives a piece of land for his own absolute use during his lifetime, but at his death the land reverts again to the relatives of the original owner. On Matupit today the custom has been modified in some of its details, but the principle survives intact, and there are many who acquired their house sites or lands for making gardens through cutting *tambu* on the death of someone rich in land.

However, it would appear that the act of 'cutting *tambu*' does not of itself automatically establish a claim to part of the deceased's land: there should first have been an arrangement with the deceased which would have to be ratified by his lineage heirs after his death. This was the point at issue in one case I recorded in Kurapun. The complaint was that the defendant had tried to burn down a mango tree on the complainant's land. The defendant argued that he was entitled to do so because he had established his claim to it by 'cutting *tambu*' when his father had died recently. At this the complainant demanded to know whether the deceased, his maternal uncle, 'ruled' the land alone. 'Why did not ToAn consult us three brothers first before giving you the land? Not one of us heard anything about this.' There were some further angry exchanges, but the main point had been settled, and the councillor was able to sum up quite quickly. 'In the future I too', he said, 'will spend *tambu* on my father's death. But I "cut *tambu*" not just to claim rights to land. The reason is because I sprang from him, he gave me my existence.' The defendant accepted the point, and the three brothers were asked to prepare a meal for their cousin to show that there was no further animosity between them.

The final mode of establishing a claim on another's land that needs to be noted is through the custom of *totokom*. The term refers to the practice whereby, in return for a small sum of shell-money, usually no more than two or three fathoms, a man gains the right to plant a crop on another's land and eventually to reap it. The rights conferred by *totokom* extend only to food crops, not to planting of coconuts, and when the crop is exhausted the land reverts to the grantor. In effect, the grant is for a single season, but in many instances a man may be permitted to cultivate or enjoy the fruits over a number of years without making further payment. In these circumstances, however, the grantor has the right to resume at any time, and if this should involve the grantee in the loss of some of his crop he has no enforceable remedy.

The claims in land established by *totokom*, by gift or the 'cutting of *tambu*' are lesser rights in land, and are essentially derivative. They are nonetheless an integral, and for those

who are without claims to *vunatarai* land, a vitally important part of the Tolai system of land tenure. Leases or purchases of land in the modern European sense strike at the very heart of this system, since the effect of disposing of any parcel of land in these ways is to place it under the control of those who do not recognise the customary obligations and traditional encumbrances, and against whom they appear to be unenforceable. It is this aspect which so arouses the anger of many of the younger and 'landless' Matupi, and leads them to charge their elders with betrayal when the latter appear ready to acquiesce in the sale of yet another piece of land to the Administration.

Land Litigation and the Political Process

WE have seen in earlier chapters the importance that land disputes play in the life of the Matupi, and the emotional intensity that frequently surrounds them. Matupi concern with land amounts at times, as I have said, almost to a total pre-occupation. This circumstance undoubtedly relates directly to the peculiar position of the island *vis-à-vis* Rabaul, and the continuing pressure of the town on the land resources of the islanders. Lacking the means to resist these demands, even if they would, every fresh approach by the Administration to the Matupi to acquire land for some new purpose has the effect of triggering off acrimonious and bitter quarrels within the village itself. However, these are not the only source of disputes over land, and the Matupi in fact devote a considerable amount of time and energy to the prosecuting and hearing of land-suits arising within a more immediately indigenous context of relationships. It is disputes of this latter kind which are our present concern.

In each of the three constituent villages of the island one night a week was set aside for the public discussion of village affairs. The first part of the meeting was usually taken up with council and other matters affecting the internal government of the village. The remainder of the business was given over to the hearing of various kinds of law-suit, of which disputes over land were by far the most frequent. Not much can be said with certainty about the settling of disputes amongst the Tolai in pre-contact times. Self-help and vengeance were clearly important in the context of relations between parishes, and Danks (1887) has given a brief account of the interesting

institution called a *kamara*,¹ but vernacular terms such as *varkurai* or *kukurei* (both derived from the verb *kure*, to judge or decide) also suggest the traditional practice of some form of adjudication. But whatever the position in the more distant past, it is clear that informal village tribunals have been operating on the Gazelle Peninsula for many years. Ainsworth (1924: 17) reports that *luluais* in the Rabaul District regularly heard complaints among their people, and imposed fines on offenders, though they had no legal power to do so.

The more recent introduction of Local Government Councils has brought few changes in this regard: councillors lack formal authority to settle disputes, though they do so in fact, the hearing of cases being regarded by the villagers as one of the councillor's main responsibilities. The councillor is assisted on these occasions by a 'committee' composed of two or three prominent and responsible villagers. The procedure is completely informal and, as we shall see, accords with the character of the hearing as a moot rather than a court of law in the strict sense. The cases I attended often went on far into the night and early hours of the morning. Sometimes it was found necessary to adjourn the hearing to allow for inspection of the lands in dispute. Where such a survey (*a niurai na pia*) was required, elders, the parties, their witnesses, and others would gather at the spot the following day, and the best part of the morning might be spent in determining boundaries and similar points. The hearing itself would then be resumed on the next convenient evening. All told, over a stay on the island of about twelve months, I recorded twenty-two formal disputes which turned on the question of land ownership. Since village meetings were often held simultaneously, it is almost certain that others occurred during this period of which I have no knowledge.² Why should

¹ *Kamara* took a number of forms, but essentially it was a device whereby a person who had suffered injury could damage or distrain the property of someone of acknowledged influence within the community. This individual was then expected to bring pressure on the offender to make restitution.

² I am unable to say how far the situation in regard to litigation that obtained on Matupit was typical of other Tolai communities. Smith and Salisbury conclude their *Notes on Tolai Land Law and Custom* by remarking that there is not a great amount of litigation regarding land amongst the Tolai themselves, and they then observe that most of the

there be so many disputes of this kind, and what meaning and significance are to be attached to them? It might seem at first sight that the incidence of land litigation is a simple reflection of the situation of land shortage that obtains there. However, the matter is a little more complex than this, and before we can get to grips with the problem we first need to know much more about the nature of the disputes themselves. This requires consideration of two preliminary questions: (1) what do litigants dispute about? and (2) between whom does litigation occur?

The Sources of Contention

In discussing land litigation it is important to distinguish between the different categories of land concerned, since the nature of the claim involved is likely to vary in each case. The disputes I recorded at Matupit are classified in this way in Table 9.

The dispute over a beach concerned the *motonoï* known as Tagitagi, within the village of Rarup. This was the main

Table 9
Categories of land subject to dispute, Matupit 1960-1

Category of land	No. of cases
Beaches (<i>a motonoï</i>)	1
Egg-lands	3
Garden-lands	5
House sites	13
Total	22

disputes occur where alienation (i.e. to non-Tolai) has created a land shortage amongst the displaced *vunatarai*. Unfortunately, neither Smith and Salisbury nor I have been able to devise (or at least present) a litigation rate, and there is therefore no very secure basis for comparison. That some land litigation does occur in the Kokopo Sub-district seems certain since Smith, the Native Land Commissioner at Kokopo, and Salisbury, a social anthropologist then doing fieldwork in the area, state in their preface that they instituted the inquiry on which their paper is based in order to provide a guide to those engaged in the investigation of land claims. In any case, as I discuss below, the question is not simply one of the incidence of land litigation as such: we also need to know what the litigation is about.

point on the island from which seine-fishing was conducted. The episode I recorded seems to have been simply one of a series in a running dispute that has gone on over many years. We have seen that proprietary rights in the *motonoi* vest in a particular *vunatarai*, but that other residents have rights of commonalty in it. The question here was which of two groups was entitled to exercise rights of control in the *motonoi*. The present dispute was triggered off by a brief visit to Matupit of Mr Lutton, the Chairman of the Methodist Overseas Mission in New Guinea, whose headquarters were in Rabaul. Immediately after his departure, a man called Taman approached the resident Tolai 'missionary' or *monomon* to discover the purpose of the visit. The *monomon* replied non-committally that Mr Lutton had just come down to inspect the mission. This aroused Taman's suspicion that the matter concerned the *motonoi*, which the Methodists claimed was part of the land originally ceded to the Mission, and he immediately reported to ToLopa, who claimed that the beach belonged to his matrilineage. The matter had not been resolved at the time I left Matupit, but the point at issue was quite clear. The Methodist case was that, since the cession of the beach to the Mission, the use of the land had been freely available to all the people of the island. If, however, the land were shown to vest in a particular *vunatarai*, the leader of that group would be able to impose a levy as in the case of the egg-lands. Since at this time Methodist *urur* were amongst the most frequent users of the site, selling their catches to build up the church fund, it might appear that the dispute was simply another expression of the cleavage between two religious factions. However, other factors were also operative. Taman, a man of about sixty, was himself a Methodist and lived at Kikila. His mother had been 'purchased' from Malaguna, which was the locus of his *vunatarai*. He and his brothers had no claim to land at Matupit, and lived on the land of their father's *vunatarai*. ToLopa's *vunatarai* was also based at Malaguna, and it was clear in a number of ways that Taman and his brothers were seeking to graft themselves on to ToLopa's lineage: they stood together in the ownership of a fishing-net and other matters, and Taman had already planted coconuts at the *motonoi* itself.

In terms of the legal points at issue, the three cases over the egg-lands were of a somewhat similar nature: they turned on the question of ownership and the rights to enjoy the profits that stemmed therefrom. Two of these cases will be discussed in a later context, but the third raises a few points of interest which are worth mentioning here. Following a number of discussions in Kikila about the egg-lands it was decided to mark out the sites again. As a result of this 'survey', a plot which had previously been claimed by TiPaul had now been declared to belong to Turpui and Tio. This decision was now being contested by IaMon and TiPaul. Turpui had been 'begotten' by the *vunatarai* of IaMon, and he said that this was the first time he had heard that the land belonged to his fathers. He claimed that he had bought it from two elders of his brother-in-law's group now deceased. IaMon resisted this, but before the point could be discussed further a man called ToGarama intervened and said that all the egg-lands which Tio, TiPaul, Turpui, and another lineage elder at Kikila, ToUrapal, were claiming really belonged to him. For all the ancestors through whom they pressed their claims had arrived later and settled under the wing of his own *patuana*. He challenged them to deny this. There was a silence which was finally broken when John ToVuia commented: 'You see, what ToGarama has said has "killed" all your talk: who will answer him?' ToGarama was known and respected for his quietness of manner, and this was in fact the first time I had known him to speak out in the course of a public debate. He was, it was said, a person of genuine humility, a *madu na tutana*, an expression frequently used in speaking of the meekness of Christ. When he spoke therefore, as now, his words carried the ring of truth which the other parties to the dispute immediately felt obliged to acknowledge. Tio remarked that he claimed his portion because his ancestor had planted coconuts there, but since ToGarama had spoken thus, he would stop. Similarly, ToUrapal said that he had never actually been informed that the land was his, he had merely assumed that it was because he had seen his *patuana* work there. He now accepted ToGarama's right of *varkurai*. ToVuia brought the discussion to a close: 'We have heard what ToGarama has said: he shall *varkurai* because it is his land'.

He appealed to ToGarama to be generous, bidding him follow the ways of their ancestors, who had been men of compassion. ToGarama then simply repeated what he had said earlier: he was not seeking to remove anyone from the egg-lands, he merely wanted to have the record put straight. All the younger people should know the position. It was perfectly all right for the present elders to 'eat the eggs', but when they were dead the land would return to him.

Of the disputes arising over garden-land, one, a complaint over the cutting down of a mango tree, has been discussed elsewhere (see p. 136). Another involved the power of a *lualua* to sell, but since the case turns on the definition of the *vunatarai*, it is best considered in a later section. Two others raised the question of inheritance: neither of these involved any change in the actual use of the land or sought to deprive the present cultivator of his enjoyment; as in the case of ToGarama they were merely attempts to set the record straight so that the rights of the *vunatarai* would be preserved after the death of the present *lualua*. The final case really consists of a number of disputes between different parties. It concerned land at Ranu which had come within the scope of a survey conducted by the Native Land Commissioner at Rabaul. The aim was to map out the boundaries of the different parcels of land, to record the various interests within them, and thus settle the question of title in them now and for the future.³ However, no account was taken of those interests which can be held in land by persons other than members of the *vunatarai*. This is to miss the complexity of a situation in which different kinds of claim are involved, as the present case illustrates.

The matter arose when ToDapal (6D4), an elderly man living in Kikila, complained before the moot at Kurapun that ToBaiai (6F3) had planted coconuts and cocoa where he himself had his coconuts. He claimed that this was part of his own land, the boundary of which had been marked by a cement peg (see fig. 7). The peg, however, was no longer there, and he

³ The survey took place a short time before I arrived on Matupit. According to my informants two Europeans were engaged on the project for about 18 months. However, it ran into many difficulties and had to be abandoned long before it was anywhere near completion.

accused ToBaiai of having removed it. A long discussion followed in which IaMon (6D2) referred to the arguments that had taken place at the time when the Native Land Commissioner's survey had resulted in a declaration that the land did not belong to ToDapal. She also claimed that those who had testified to this effect on that occasion were now seeking to change their evidence. After further altercation the hearing was adjourned so that evidence could be examined on the spot.

FIG. 6 Genealogy: ToDapal v. ToBaiai

ToDapal (6D4) began by tracing out what he claimed to be the boundaries of his land, from the parcel known as ToBabat running towards ToValigen, where his mark had been removed. Thence it ran towards Vunavaila and Vunagatigat. Turbarat, a patrilineal ortho-cousin of ToDapal, said that he had been present when ToDapal and his wife planted a pandanus near a clump of bamboo, beside which we were standing at the time. But as far as the boundary was concerned over which ToDapal had led them he did not know. It was true he had said previously that the bamboo marked the boundary of ToValigen, but he knew nothing of the cement peg. He suggested that another man, ToKalula,

FIG. 7 Land in dispute: ToDapal v. ToBaiai

might know since he had been present at the earlier *niurai*. This provoked an immediate response from IaMon. 'Ea, Turbarat', she exclaimed, 'don't think I have forgotten what you said before. When Romulus was councillor [at Rarup in the early fifties] and judged a dispute over the land you said this was ToValigen's. Are you now going to change your mind and say it is ToDapal's?' ToDapal denied this, and produced the counter-argument that the land on which he had planted his coconuts had in fact been cared for by his mother before him. Anton, the oldest man present, and the husband of IaMon, now intervened. He said that many years ago they had performed a dance for Tilik (a maternal uncle of ToLopa who died in 1916), and had used Vunavaila for their *kubak*, i.e., the place from which the men emerge to enter the dance.

But the land which they were discussing at present was that on which ToLapang (a deceased brother of IaMon) had planted a particular variety of banana tree. Anton then went on to deal with ToDapal's argument. ToDapal's mother, he explained, had looked after the coconuts here because the *vunatarai* ToValigen had 'begotten' Tamtavun (6B2), and had presented the land to him to 'eat of those coconuts'. Tamtavun's sister, real or classificatory, IaVirua (6B3), had been brought up in Valaur, on the other side of Blanche Bay, and had come to Matupit in marriage. ToDapal's mother herself was also from Valaur, and when she too later came to Matupit she was entrusted to the care of her classificatory mother's brother. It was true, Anton said, that in this way she had come to look after the coconuts in the grove, but this did not mean that ToDapal himself had any claim to the ground.

The *niurai* was led by Brudel, a leading elder at Kurapun, and he now urged the party to move on and consider the other claims which existed within ToValigen. 'Let us mark out', he said, 'what was given to IaRutula (6E2) and her children. IaRutula and ToBaiai are always squabbling about it'. The dispute here was the by now familiar one: whether the rights of cultivation enjoyed were claimed as of right or by way of gift. IaRutula was here seeking to defend the interests of her sons, who had planted food crops and cocoa trees there, but the claim that they did so as of matrilineal right appeared not to be very well grounded. Brudel, her present husband, finally lost patience and demanded angrily why she was making such claims. 'I see you all talk with different words', he said. 'But I myself, I know the boundaries in this area, and as for you and your children you are on the land of my father Tumba. . . . My word is sufficient to "kill" your knowledge of the land. I am warning you, for my father was *a bit na pia* here at Ranu. He of the *vunatarai* of Tumba has not spoken yet [a reference to his patrilineal cross-cousin Turbarat who, having been accused of changing his evidence, had slunk off] so you three had better watch out. IaMon has said that the land was a gift to you, so why are you seeking to deny it?'

All the cases thus far have concerned land as an economic or productive asset. The final and most numerous class of disputes was in respect of housing sites. The majority of

these took a similar form and were settled fairly easily and amicably. A single case will suffice to illustrate the kinds of point likely to arise in matters of this sort. ToUrapal, a man in his sixties, was the father of a large family, most of whom were living close to him in the area known as Raulai Ranguna at the southern tip of the island. At one point a number of members of his *vunatarai*, also resident in the vicinity, became angry with him because he had allowed two of his sons to put up permanent houses without consulting them. They reported the matter to other members of the clan at Raluana, two of whom came over to Matupit for the hearing. ToUrapal was asked to explain why he had not first approached the *vunatarai*. His reply was that he thought he was perfectly entitled to act as he did, since he had expended much *tambu* on the death of various *patuana* of the clan. He was claiming in effect that in this way he had acquired the right to control this particular parcel of land and to dispose of it as he wished. But his argument earned him a stern rebuke from the 'committee' hearing the case. It was perfectly plain, they told him, that the land belonged to the *vunatarai*. The two sons were asked if they wished to speak, but said they had nothing to add. The complainants were then asked what action they wished to take. One of the spokesmen from Raluana replied that many women had borne children to their *vunatarai*, and where was the land for them? It was perfectly all right, he continued, that those children they had fathered should have the land on which to sleep, but they had no proprietary rights in the land itself. ToUrapal's maternal nephews spoke similarly. It was good that they should all live together on the land, they said, but it should never be forgotten that in the end it was the *vunatarai* which exercised authority over the land. On this note the hearing closed.

From the remarks of the Raluana spokesman it would appear that one of the main reasons prompting the suit was the shortage of land within their *vunatarai*. Yet if this were indeed a compelling motive it would seem that the complainants must have had in mind a future contingency rather than an immediate difficulty, for throughout the case no question was raised of removing ToUrapal's sons from the land. On the contrary, ToUrapal's nephews stressed that it was good

that they should all live together: their objections were not to their cousins putting up houses as such; their aim in bringing the case was to have publicly reaffirmed and validated the proprietary rights of their *vunatarai* in the land. A modern-style house is a permanent structure, and were its erection on the land of another *vunatarai* to pass unchallenged, it would allow for the creation of perpetual rights in that land: in this way the identification of the *vunatarai* with its *gunan* would be obscured and lead to the utter confusion of the system.

The disputes over productive land are of a somewhat different order in that, while the ultimate vesting of proprietary rights remains the central question, the issues in dispute are really over rights of enjoyment—rights to impose levies, or to cultivate and take the profits of one's labour: in these cases we would appear to be principally concerned with competition for scarce economic resources,⁴ and we might expect therefore that such disputes would usually affect the question of actual enjoyment. For example, in the case of ToDapal, the immediate source of contention seems to have been that coconuts planted in the area many years ago were at last coming into bearing, and it was therefore important to settle the question who was entitled to the income that would result from their sale. In this kind of situation, given the rules of ownership, the answer had to be one party or the other: it could not be both. The weight of the evidence here was against ToDapal, and it was his own younger brother who urged him to recognise the situation, remove the coconuts he had recently planted, and re-establish his plantation at Raulavat, where they also had land.

What strikes me as so interesting about the disputes over productive land I recorded is that so few posed any threat of disturbance to present use or enjoyment of the land. In the case over the *motonoï*, for example, there was no suggestion that if the land had been adjudged to belong to ToLopa

⁴ But in the contemporary situation even this distinction may become blurred. Thus in one of the 'house site' cases the house in question was to be erected at the instance of the Department of Education for a European school-teacher to be resident at Matupit. What was at stake in this dispute over ownership was (a) winning the contract to build the house and (b) receiving the rent for it when it was occupied.

others would have been denied the right to use it for fishing, although of course ToLopa would have been able to assert certain rights of control. The question of 'removal' was raised initially in the dispute over the egg-grounds, but it will be recalled that when ToGarama intervened to assert his proprietary interest it was, as he said, to set the record straight and not to interfere with the present enjoyment of the land. Similarly in other cases concerning garden land: in one of these a man was charged with planting coconuts on land which he agreed did not belong to him. But the purpose in laying the complaint before the village assembly was not to remove the offender from the land; more simply it was to re-affirm publicly the complainant's rights of control over it, and so validate the claims of his maternal nephew to continue to administer the estate after the complainant's death. The matter cannot be pursued further here, but it suggests at once that an attempt to account for the nature and incidence of land disputes simply in terms of land shortage is likely to be inadequate, a point to which we will return at a later stage of the analysis.

Land Disputes and the Definition of the Vunatarai

Litigation may take a number of forms. In 'advanced' societies marked by continuing technological development and institutional change, novel situations are constantly arising where the rights and obligations of the respective parties cannot be stated with any degree of certainty. In these circumstances litigation is commonly resorted to in order to determine what rule of law should govern the situation in question. Amongst ourselves, many of the cases that are taken before courts of higher jurisdiction are essentially of this kind. Of course the problem of what Cardozo (1928: 114) has called 'gaps in the law' and the creative role of adjudication is not confined to such 'advanced' social systems, as Llewellyn and Hoebel's classic study (1941) of the law-ways of the Cheyenne makes abundantly clear. Nevertheless, it is probably a fair generalisation that in tribal communities most disputes are concerned not so much with what the rules are, which are usually known and fairly clear, but how they shall be applied to a given

dispute, a notion implicit in much of Gluckman's discussion of the judicial process among the Barotse (1955). Litigation therefore most frequently takes one of two forms. In one the dispute is over the issue of fact: the norm itself is not in question and once the facts of the matter have been established it is simply a matter of applying the relevant rule to them. In the other, there may be appeal to different norms, but again the matter can usually be settled fairly easily because there exists a common frame of values by which the society's norms are organised into a hierarchy: in a situation of conflict one rule has recognised precedence over another (see Turner, 1957: 122-8). Most of the cases we have considered so far are of one of these two kinds: the central issue they raise is whether proprietary rights vest in A or B, and the arguments revolve around such questions as whether present use of land arose by way of gift, purchase, or as of matrilineal right. The rules of law themselves, for example how the rights of *varkurai* are to be defined, are not in dispute; the issue that is really at stake is who is entitled to exercise such rights. And here we touch on an important characteristic of litigation in a society such as the Tolai, for the protagonists in a dispute rarely appear simply as individuals seeking to establish their proper legal entitlements, but more often as leaders of their respective groups or factions. Many disputes therefore have a distinct political flavour, and the hearings take on the character of an arena for trials of strength between opponents who are struggling to advance or defend their political interests. Therefore, in examining the dispute-process in a given community and attempting to assess its significance, it is important to consider not only what the litigation is about, but also who the litigants are. For present purposes, disputes over land at Matupit may be classed in two categories: those occurring within the *vunatarai* and those between *vunatarai*.

Land disputes within the *vunatarai* are relatively infrequent. The few I did record were in fact between parties who belonged to the same moiety, but disputed whether they belonged to the same corporate descent group. Two of these are worth examining in some detail because, since they involve argument about the nature of the *vunatarai*, they open up the

way to a discussion of the relationship between the descent system and the political system.

The defendant in the first suit was called Tiale. The son of a prominent Matupi 'big man' in the early days of German rule, Tiale himself served for a number of years as a *luluai* or village official. By now, however, he was a frail old man, plagued by ill-health. He had no children of his own, but he had adopted the two sons of his second wife. Tiale had no sisters nor indeed any matrilineal kin with whom a direct genealogical link could be traced. In these circumstances Tiale decided to sell some of his land to his sons, and their maternal uncles were present to witness the transfer. However, when local clansmen heard of the matter they immediately raised it before the village assembly. Tiale did not seek to deny what he had done. On the contrary, he felt that he was completely within his rights to sell the land. 'It's true that they call us a *vunatarai*', he said. 'However, I myself rule this land, for I stand alone, a separate *apiktarai*, for there is no woman to continue my line after me.' As he spoke he became increasingly angry, finally declaring that anybody who wished to buy land should approach him. The complainants remonstrated with him, arguing that he ought not to speak in that fashion because when he died it was they who would perform the mortuary rites for him. But Tiale was not to be moved by their appeal. 'I am a different *apik*, I am not one of you', he affirmed. The councillor advised Tiale that if he wanted to sell the land he should think first of his *vunatarai*, and not just follow his own thoughts. But Tiale remained firm, and in the end the hearing was adjourned on the grounds that the maternal uncles of Tiale's two sons should be asked to appear. However, the maternal uncles lived at Talwat, and on a number of subsequent occasions when the matter was set down for hearing the uncles did not put in an appearance.

It will be noted here that Tiale did not deny that the parties were all said to be of one *vunatarai*, what he denied was that they were of the same lineage. Nor did the complainants on their part seek to counter this assertion. They agreed rather that they were bound together by *tambu* so that they were known as a single *vunatarai*. They were referring here to the fact that their ancestors had come origin-

ally from the same place and had settled at Matupit at different times under the protection of a common *patuana*. It was true that no genealogical connection was known to exist between them, but over the years they had always stood together in matters such as mortuary rites which required the expenditure of *tambu*. It will be recalled that in the case of ToUrapal (see p. 147) the 'committee' had no difficulty in finding against him when he had attempted to grant land to his sons without prior consultation of his *vunatarai*. In that instance, however, the complainants were ToUrapal's own maternal nephews, and the nature of their entitlement was perfectly plain. In the present case, the complainants could establish no claim as of matrilineal right, and they could only hope to exert moral pressure on Tiale. A somewhat similar situation arose over the quarry-site which ToPidik had agreed to lease to the Administration (see p. 43). Like Tiale, ToPidik was an old man without direct matrilineal heirs, and his line would become extinct with his passing. When ToPidik asserted his right to sell the land to the Administration, some wanted to have the agreement set aside because members of the *vunatarai* had not been consulted, while others threatened to deny that he had any claim in the land whatsoever. These were resorts to subterfuge that might work with administrative officers who were unfamiliar with *vunatarai* structure and composition and lacked detailed knowledge of the land holding system; such tactics could not be deployed quite so blatantly in a purely internal dispute.

The second case to be considered was a much more complex affair. It concerned two elders of Kikila, Matinut (8E3) and TiPaul (8D1) but the hearing itself was formally initiated by two of Matinut's matrilineal ortho-cousins, Tua (8E2) and Nakuen (8E1), resident in the Raluana district.

Tua spoke first, and embarked upon a lengthy account of a dispute that had arisen many years before over the alleged taking by TiPaul of 40 fathoms of *tambu* from a coil belonging to himself. He was now asking that the *tambu* be returned. TiPaul denied all knowledge of the matter. When a member of the 'committee' asked whether the dispute had been the subject of a previous *varkurai*, Nakuen explained that the case had first been heard at Matupit before the

FIG. 8 Genealogy: Matinut v. TiPaul

introduction of councils. ToIlot (the elder brother of ToVua) had been *luluai* then, and he had been assisted in the hearing by Turpui, Kaputin, ToDapal, and Tiale. The decision on that occasion was that TiPaul was in the wrong, but that they should not be hard on him because they were of the same *vunatarai*. Afterwards they had discussed the matter privately with TiPaul at his house. TiPaul was sad, and said 'You three love me, and I will repay 20 fathoms'. They accepted the promise, but to this day no *tambu* had been delivered to Tua.

The main outline of this account was confirmed by one of the elders who had been present at the original hearing, but TiPaul remained non-committal. 'I am in the dark still', he said. 'I don't remember anything about it. Did I know that they had "judged" me on that occasion I would agree.' But TiPaul was not to be allowed to hide behind what Nakuen called 'a barrier of lies', and he was finally pressed into agreeing to repay the 40 fathoms.

'So you will return Tua's *tambu*, TiPaul? When will you do it?'

'Yes, I will return it. I will bring the *tambu* to you here if not on Saturday, then on Monday. But if I return this *tambu* to Tua then it is well that I too should bring the three of them before the moot on account of the *tambu* belonging to my ancestors.'

TiPaul was not given the opportunity to elaborate his point at this stage, but it quickly became apparent that the question of the return of the *tambu*, which was now settled, had been raised merely to introduce another complaint against him, which Nakuen now proceeded to expound. Nakuen referred to the genealogical inquiries which the Native Land Commissioner was carrying out at that time in connection with a general survey of Tolai land ownership, and alleged that TiPaul had told the *kiap* that he, TiPaul, and his sister 'ruled' at Matupit. One day, Nakuen reported, the officer arrived at Raluana and asked him about TiPaul. He replied that he did not 'know' TiPaul: TiPaul was of a different *vunatarai*. He then explained that he himself, together with Tua and Matinut, 'ruled' at Matupit, and their father at Raluana. TiPaul did not belong to Matupit. He told the officer that he should consult his sister IaKolot (8D4) at Nangananga to confirm his account. Finally, he concluded: 'I am a native of Matupit. I am *a bit na pia* at Matupit, and as for TiPaul I do not know him'.

Matinut proceeded to elaborate the case against TiPaul. 'I wish to explain about our origins', he began. 'Originally, we three here are of ToPaia (in New Ireland), Nakubur, Barowon (a locality within the Raluana district), and Nangananga. One of our ancestresses fled from ToPaia when the land was attacked. Her name was IaVirua (8B4). In time IaVirua bore

twelve daughters, and today we live scattered over the whole country. There are about 800 of us altogether in the clan. And as for the lands here at Matupit, we are "owners of the soil". We have been made angry because TiPaul has set himself up as though he held the rights of administration in the land. How can this be when we three *kure*? At present it is as though we were living as strangers at Matupit. The ancestor of TiPaul was ToPulpulung (8C2), and he came to Matupit to live under the wing of our ancestors.'

TiPaul replied angrily. 'Don't talk in that way. Oh, I know very well that you wish to cut out my forbears. I am a native of Matupit, and my ancestors too were from Matupit.'

Tua: 'When ToPulpulung died where was he buried?'

TiPaul: 'They buried him at Rulai [i.e. at Matupit], and ToVakit too.'

Tua: 'ToPulpulung and ToVakit died and they took their bodies for burial to Davaon because they were not from Matupit. What you are saying is all lies.'

Nakuen: 'TiPaul, you have no father to instruct you about the land. As for your arrival at Matupit, we have seen no father who came with you. We know that you have no claims to land here at Matupit, and that is the truth.'

Matinut: 'We do not know you, TiPaul [i.e. as a member of the *vanatarai*]. What we know is that you are from Kuna-kunai. Now you can start off and make your way back there, and live in your own place. You are not from here. I, Matinut, am a Matupi. I ask that IaKolot should explain our position.'

IaKolot: 'I have lived longer than all of you, and I have received the *varvateten* from my mother's brother and from my mother herself. I have heard the hard words that have been spoken, and I will explain according to my knowledge. Tua, Nakuen and I, your mother, we rule here at Matupit. As for TiPaul, it is proper that he "rule" at Kunakunai. And when you say that those forbears of yours whom you mentioned were buried here at Matupit, that is a lie. I deny it. When one of your ancestors died here they took him for burial to Davaon.'

TiPaul: 'I have my own knowledge too. I shall say no more. I shall stand apart, and I shall inform my sister's sons. I shall give this information to them, not to you three.'

Matinut: 'You haven't got any information to give. We know that you lived here on sufferance from our old men, and you won't explain anything because you know that what you have to say is all a pack of lies. TiPaul, where are you from?'

TiPaul remained silent in the face of this taunt, and the three men, Matinut, Tua, and Nakuen began to chant in unison: 'Where are you from, where are you from, you who are without a father, where are you from?' Finally they broke off, shouting to TiPaul that he should pack his belongings and get back to Kunakunai. TiPaul replied that there was no one who would remove him from the land on which he was living. 'You Matinut, Tua and Nakuen—they brought you up at Raluana and none of you knows the "instruction" about the lands here. I know the boundaries: you know nothing because there wasn't any old man of yours here to instruct you.'

Thus far there had been a good deal of mutual altercation and exchange of abuse, but there was still some doubt, at least to the outsider, what the dispute was really all about. Now the case took a fresh turn.

Tua: 'Yes, TiPaul, where is the *tambu* and the money for the land?'

TiPaul: 'What land?'

Tua: 'All those lands which you claim as yours . . . the land on which they gather the eggs. That land belongs to our *patuana* ToMamarum (8B2). For three years now you have looked after the egg-lands, now we wish to take them over at last.'

TiPaul: 'So that is what you want? You want to remove me from the egg-lands? All right, if you wish to claim that land you will have to cut my throat first: then you can have it.'

Committee: 'Today for the first time we learn that you are of different *vnatarai*. Previously we had always understood that you were one. I have heard what you have said that TiPaul is from Kunakunai. I want to ask again: is it true that TiPaul is from Kunakunai?'

IaKolot: 'I lived long ago and I know that TiPaul is from Kunakunai. I myself—my mother's mother's brothers were Pakupal and ToMamarum—I am from Matupit.'

Turpui: 'Long ago the old people used to put out their

fishing nets from that egg-ground you are quarrelling about, and bring the fish ashore there. And one of the old men of Matinut, Tua and Nakuen used to keep his net there.'

Committee (Kaputin): 'I lived in close proximity to the old men of Matinut. A portion of my own land lies in the middle of theirs. But now I ask you three to listen to what I say. All of us here are now satisfied that the land belongs to you three. But I beg of you to show pity on TiPaul. Let him eat a little of the eggs. For he is old, and there are not many years left to him. When he dies you will claim that land for yourselves, and not the nephews of TiPaul.'

Nakuen responded to this appeal by saying that they did not wish to be 'swallowed up' by TiPaul. TiPaul had been in charge of the egg-ground for the past three years, and now he should leave.

Committee: 'Listen, TiPaul, Matinut and his brothers wish to make a change. Do you accept what they say?'

TiPaul: 'I don't want to . . .'

Nakuen: 'The way I see it is this. If TiPaul looks after the egg-grounds, and takes the levy for the eggs collected there, then it is only right that he should think of Matinut too, for he is in the same position as TiPaul. Both of them are equally old.'

There were murmurs of assent to this throughout the gathering. One of the younger members of the 'committee', ToPirit, said: 'See, TiPaul, all those who are listening to the case want you to share with Matinut. What do you think, TiPaul? Do you agree to what they suggest?'

Nakuen: 'TiPaul, do not think you can win . . .'

TiPaul: 'And you, too . . .'

Matinut: 'From this day you will leave our lands. All should hear my words. If anyone wishes to *tokom* the land, he should approach myself or IaLaita [his maternal niece], but not TiPaul. As for that piece of land you gave to your daughter IaUlai, that will return to us.' Tua added: 'And I don't want you to instruct ToIrima [TiPaul's maternal nephew] about lands which belong to us.'

Committee (Kaputin): 'Let's not start all over again. It is time that this case finished. Let us again ask what they think, and if they are in agreement let them shake hands.'

ToPirit: 'Well, TiPaul, Tua and his brother ask, if you get eggs from the use of the land, will you think of Matinut too? Well, do you agree?'

TiPaul: 'Yes, I agree that Matinut and I should share the care of the egg-grounds.'

Councillor: 'Splendid. Amity is restored, and the case is finished.'

ToDapal: 'I think that when the *tambu* has been returned they should all shake hands.'

ToPirit: 'No, they should shake hands tonight over all the hard words that have been spoken. And when the *tambu* is finally returned they can shake hands again.'

Nakuen rose to his feet and began to make a speech saying how pleased he was at the outcome. TiPaul too said that he was glad, but went on to add that what had been said of his bastardy was not good. But he was cut off as Kaputin called them all together to shake hands. He then invited the parties to come to his place the following day, when he would prepare a little food and they would all sit down and eat together.

A number of apparently disconnected grievances, relating to different events and different periods of time, were aired in the course of the dispute, and it was only as the hearing progressed that what was really at issue between the parties began to emerge. The early part of the case related to a straightforward claim for the return of *tambu* which TiPaul was alleged to have taken wrongfully many years before. It was also claimed that the matter had been adjudicated upon some ten years earlier, but TiPaul throughout this time had ignored the decision against him. But why should the matter have been raised again at this time? In his reply to the initial charges TiPaul was singularly vague and non-committal; he was in the dark about the whole affair, and could not remember any judgment against himself. It seems clear that he was in fact biding his time, waiting to see in what direction the case was heading. As emerged presently, the question of the *tambu* was really a marginal issue which, as one of my informants later explained to me, was merely introduced as a point from which the 'case could jump'. Had Tua and Nakuen come to the main point more directly, it would have made a rather obvious display of their desire to lead the

group. However, by raising a matter in which TiPaul was clearly at fault, and to which he could make no effective reply, they put TiPaul at a serious disadvantage.

What then was the main point at issue? Apart from the complaint about the wrongful detention of Tua's *tambu*, the only other specific grievance that would be recognised by a lawyer as amounting to a statement of claim concerned the right to control and take the profits of the egg-grounds. TiPaul had been looking after these for some years past, and Matinut appeared to feel that he was now entitled to a turn. It should perhaps be stressed that at this time the older men at Matupit had few opportunities for earning cash, since they still had little copra for sale, and the cocoa trees were not yet in bearing, so that the egg-levy was a particularly valuable economic resource for them. In these circumstances it is understandable that Matinut might want to see TiPaul 'removed'. It is all the more striking therefore, despite the forthright and unequivocal way in which Matinut stated his case, how quickly he accepted the situation once TiPaul agreed to share the profits with him.

In order to prosecute a law-suit one needs to be able to point to some breach of entitlement on which issue can be joined, and for which an appropriate remedy can be sought. In many instances, however, the overt claim is merely a manoeuvre by which grievances of a more subtle or intangible nature can be publicly ventilated. The present case appears to have been an example of this kind. The point was made to me quite explicitly afterwards by ToPirit, one of the younger members of the 'committee' at Kikila, who had taken part in the hearing. In his view the dispute over the egg-grounds was no more the crucial issue than the complaint about the *tambu*. The point was, he explained, that Matinut and TiPaul had always been regarded as being of the same *vunatarai*, but TiPaul had always taken it upon himself to act as its 'big man' and treated Matinut, usually a quiet and inoffensive man, as someone of no consequence. Matinut had submitted patiently to this treatment, but the last straw was when TiPaul had sought to have his name recorded by the Native Land Commissioner as leader of the group. Had I not noticed, ToPirit asked me finally, how they demanded that on their

death the land should go not to TiPaul's maternal nephew, but to the maternal nephew of Matinut, a young man still in college?

Two main arguments were deployed in seeking to establish Matinut's right of *varkurai* at the expense of TiPaul. The deliberate taunting of TiPaul on his bastardy was undoubtedly intended to be deeply wounding. In a matrilineal system the child is affiliated to the matrilineage of the mother, whether she is properly married or not: its jural status as a member of the group is not affected. In a sense therefore it might be said of the Tolai that they have no concept of illegitimacy, but it does not follow that they fail to distinguish between being born in and out of wedlock. On the contrary, the Tolai lay great stress on the role of the *pater*, and to be a bastard (*a maup* or *a kete*) is a taint which can never be removed: it is something people prefer 'to keep quiet', though it is always likely to be exposed if tempers are aroused.⁵ However, in the present instance the reference to TiPaul's illegitimacy had implications far beyond those of a personal insult. We have seen in earlier contexts that a growing lad spends a good deal of time in the company of his father. Accompanying his father to the gardens he learns a great deal about the histories and boundaries of the various parcels of land, and other matters which he is later able to put to use in the administration of his own group's affairs. This was the point that Nakuen was making when he declared: 'TiPaul, you have no father to instruct you about the land. And as for your arrival at Matupit, we have seen no father who came with you'. TiPaul, in short, had no claim to *varkurai* since he lacked the necessary knowledge for the task. But a more fundamental point was also involved. TiPaul, it was asserted, had not sprung from Matupit. When the three men began chanting 'Where are you from, TiPaul? You who have no father, where are you from?' they were giving expression to the view that, in certain contexts, a person born outside Matupit and without a father who was himself a local resident, could not count as a true native of the place. Such a person was a 'stranger' who had no claim to *varkurai*. Matinut, on the other

⁵ For a fuller discussion see Meier (1938).

hand, did have the right because, as he proclaimed, he was a 'true' Matupi.

The principle on which Matinut relied, that control of the land always vests in 'a native of the place', presumably derives from former conditions when local groups were autonomous political units, often at war with one another. And even today it remains a powerful argument, constantly invoked in disputes as well as in informal discussions. But what is a native of the place? The argument against TiPaul, while it may have had some affective impact, was in this instance a rather feeble one, for Matinut himself had not been born at Matupit, but had been brought up by his parents at Raluana. On this score his case was no stronger than that of TiPaul. The really crucial part of the argument therefore turned on the question of *vunatarai* membership: Matinut had to show that he belonged to a *vunatarai* which had its locus on the island, whereas TiPaul did not. His case rested on the recital of his clan history, which tells of the origins of the group in New Ireland, and its gradual dispersal through the Duke of York Islands and the Gazelle Peninsula. In the course of this dispersion two members of the group, ToMamarum and Pakupal, had arrived at Matupit, and eventually achieved prominence as 'big men'. They became local founding ancestors from whom Matinut claimed direct matrilineal descent. The negative pole of the argument consisted in showing that TiPaul had no such ties. It was conceded that TiPaul's ancestors had lived 'close to' ToMamarum; what was denied was that they were matrilineal kin. If ToPulpulung had belonged to the *vunatarai*, the argument went, he would have been buried on matrilineage land at Matupit: the 'fact' that his corpse had been taken back to Davaon was the 'proof' of Matinut's contention.

In this particular instance the weight of the argument lay against TiPaul. But perhaps the most interesting feature of the case is that, despite the uncompromising character of the arguments adduced, Matinut was prepared to settle for less than the full legal entitlement for which he appeared to be struggling so strenuously throughout. The result of the hearing was a compromise which accorded fully with the Tolai notion that the purpose of a moot is to restore harmony in social

relations, particularly where kinsmen are concerned. But this also meant that one of the central issues raised by the case, whether the parties belonged to the same *vunatarai* or not, was left unresolved. And perhaps this is as it should be. For it should by now be apparent that the term *vunatarai* carries an inherent ambiguity, which leads to apparently inconsistent statements. So, in the case we have just been considering, we find in the early remarks of Nakuen an acknowledgment that he, his brothers, and TiPaul were of the same *vunatarai*, whereas the later arguments were designed to establish that no such relationship existed.

The Tolai are aware of this inconsistency, or at least are able to acknowledge it when specific anomalies are drawn to their attention. But they do not see such anomalies as being embodied in the very concept itself; rather they explain them as the product of modern conditions which have led to the breakdown of a system that worked properly in the past. For example, when I was once trying to sort out a somewhat similar set of relationships to that described in the case of Matinut and TiPaul, one of my informants tried to clarify the matter for me. 'Let me try and illustrate this with an example', he said. 'The Government is made up of a number of departments, but the Government itself rules the work of each. Now it is exactly the same with the *vunatarai*: there is one stem. But what happens is that many who are just matrilateral kin (*barniuruna*) come together as the result of a *liliman na tambu* [i.e. standing together by contributing shell-money to some major activity]. This has the effect of bringing close together those who are in fact only distant kin. In the old days the *vunatarai* was kept straight because our ancestors knew what they were doing; but what they are doing nowadays is destroying the basis of the *vunatarai*. The result is that they are just getting everything confused.'

From this point of view we might thus state the formal view of the Tolai as distinguishing between demonstrable genealogical kinship, the *apiktarai* or lineage; genealogical kinship which is asserted, but can no longer be fully demonstrated, the *vunatarai* or clan; and matrilateral ties outside the clan, but within the moiety, where there is a vague recognition of common ancestry, but genealogical links are not

specified, the *barniuruna*. This view also finds expression in the case of Tiale, who argued that he himself constituted a separate *apiktarai*, and was therefore entitled to dispose of his land without consulting the others, who merely counted as *barniuruna* or at most as clansmen. The indigenous model would indeed make good sense if unilineal descent were the only principle of organisation that needed to be considered. But this is not the case. The reality is complicated by the presence of what I may term the 'big man' principle. This can be seen in Matinut's dispute with TiPaul. We see there Matinut seeking to advance the same argument as Tiale, namely that he and TiPaul were of separate *apiktarai*. In order to establish the point Matinut sought to show that TiPaul's ancestors had merely lived under the wing, and were not 'true' descendants, of Matinut's own matrilineal ancestor ToMamarum, accepted as a 'founding father' (*a tutana na vavaki*) at Kikila. But although Matinut proffered as evidence of his claims something of the history of his *vunatarai*, in fact he traced no direct genealogical link with ToMamarum. His own genealogical knowledge was indeed extremely hazy, and the pedigrees I collected from him and IaKolot on separate occasions were shot through with internal inconsistencies and also diverged from information I had from other sources.

But the point is in a sense irrelevant. There are certain societies in which the unilineal principle is clearly dominant, and where relations between individuals and groups tend to be expressed in genealogical terms. Accordingly, changes in the size and composition of groups may lead to adjustments in their mutual relations, processes which may be accompanied by public discussion and conscious manipulation of the genealogies (see e.g. Bohannan, L., 1952). Amongst the Tolai, argument does not take quite this form, not simply because the requisite genealogical knowledge is often lacking, but because the Tolai litigant is usually less concerned with tracing precise genealogical links within a lineage than with being able to claim a particular 'big man', long since deceased, as his *patuana*. For it is such a 'big man' who provides the point of reference in asserting one's *vunatarai* identity rather than one's position within a more or less rigidly defined genealogical structure. Genealogical evidence would provide the

best 'proof' of such a link, but where this is not available other testimony has to be adduced, such as the *varvateten* which recounts the origin and dispersion of the *vunatarai*. The use of the *patuana* in this way as a point of reference has important implications for the concept of the descent group. For it was a distinguishing characteristic of the first settlers or 'big men' of old that they attracted others to come and live under their wing. In Tolai eyes, however, one does not settle haphazardly under the protection of another; one goes to join a kinsman. With the passage of time the assumption comes easier that two individuals who were known to have lived closely together in the past must have been close kin. In this way matrilineal kin are gradually transformed into matrilineal kin, and living persons are able to lay claim to a common ancestor or *patuana* without being able to specify precise genealogical links. What this means is that we have to think of the *vunatarai* as a unit capable of expanding and contracting. Under the leadership of an important 'big man' the *vunatarai* expands, drawing into it persons of different branches (*apik*) through the mechanism of the *liliman na tambu*. Where there is no influential leadership, the group contracts, and the *lualua* is likely to insist on the definition of the group in genealogical terms. The *vunatarai* exists in neither of these two senses alone, but in both. Stated briefly, the term *vunatarai* has a built-in ambiguity which, in the same way as Leach has argued for myth (1964: 85), provides the Matupi with a language of argument and social controversy.

Land, Leadership and Political Control

I referred initially to the cases considered in the previous section as instances of dispute arising within the *vunatarai*. Since the point at issue in these cases was whether the parties were members of a single *vunatarai* or not, we might now say, with more accuracy, that they were between persons belonging to the same moiety. In any event, what seems clear is that both the episodes described raised issues of a political as well as of a legal character, the one reflecting a struggle for recognition of leadership within the group, the other representing a clash over the prerogatives and responsibilities attendant upon

such leadership. This aspect of land litigation, whereby the formal hearing of a dispute provides the arena for an essentially political contest, emerges even more plainly where the *vunatarai* concerned are in opposite moieties. As I have already indicated, the majority of disputes recorded at Matupit were over residential land, and concerned the right to erect a house or other premises. These cases too would frequently lie between close matrilineal kin, as in the dispute between ToUrapal and his maternal nephews (see p. 147), but because of the marked tendency towards patrivirilocal residence, seminal kin are also likely to be involved, as were the sons of ToUrapal in that same case. Indeed, since local groups are so often composed of matrilineal groups which are linked by seminal or patrilineal ties, what may be at stake is the claim to the control of a village section or even wider area. Hitherto, in my discussion of the case-material, I have tended to treat each dispute as an isolated or independent incident. But if we are to advance the analysis of the relationship between land litigation and the political process we must also look at disputes in their interdependencies. We have, that is to say, to see them in the context of an ongoing process of interaction between individuals and groups linked in varying and flexible sets of social relationships. To this end I propose now to examine a series of cases which focus on disputes over land within the village section of Raulaveo. In this way I hope at the same time that we shall put ourselves in a better position to return to some of the issues raised in chapter 4.

There were two prominent men living in Raulaveo, Rupen and Anton. Rupen was in his sixties. A leading elder in the Methodist church, he was one of those most directly concerned in the planning and raising of funds for the new church on Matupit. But he was equally involved in secular affairs, and frequently acted as spokesman before the Administration, particularly over matters of land. He was indeed a man of volatile and vituperative disposition: an outspoken critic of the Administration, he was also recognised by many fellow Matupi as a master in the art of intrigue and one to avoid having as an enemy. Anton, by contrast, was now about eighty, and although in complete control of his faculties and still remarkably hale and vigorous—he visited the egg-grounds

regularly and would dig for brief spells—he was no longer the power in the land he once had been. As a youth Anton had spent a lot of time away from Matupit, and he used to delight in recounting to me his experiences around the turn of the century when he had served aboard German vessels and made voyages to Singapore, India, and other places. Eventually he returned to the village and married. In the course of time he was appointed a government headman or *luluai* at Matupit. Later on he became a Paramount *luluai* and served many years in this capacity, exercising jurisdiction not only over the whole of Matupit, but also over a number of the neighbouring Tolai communities. It was not difficult to detect that many of the suits brought against Anton during my stay on the island were motivated by the desire to settle old scores that harked back to those days.

The first case to be considered here was a complaint brought against Rupen (9F3) by ToKevi (9G1), a protégé of Anton (9E8), and now living as the latter's close neighbour. ToKevi introduced the matter by pointing out that this was in fact the third time the case had come up for settlement. He indicated that the dispute concerned a piece of land at Raulaveo, and then continued:

'Our quarrel begins with the three old people [Hosea (9E2), IaTulipa (9E1) and Anton] for I have simply followed what they told me. It begins when I left Vunalagir [a part of Kurapun where Kevi had lived previously] to come to Raulaveo. I received word from Talwat that I should go and stay at Raulaveo, for it was discussed many times that we should all live together. I put up a small house with an iron roof, and there I stayed with my wife and child. It is true that I did not live exactly on the spot that they told me about. I stayed near Anton. Then one day Anton told me that I should work a piece of land where I should settle properly. Well, when he told me this I thought I would ask first IaTagai (9E5) who owned that particular piece of land. IaTagai said that Tuna [a "son" of Rupen] lived there at present, but that the land was ours. Another time I asked IaRodi [Rupen's wife] saying that I wished to put up a small house near the beach which would serve as a kind of *motono*i. I wanted her to ask Rupen about it first. When after some

Fig. 9 Genealogy: Tokevi v. Rupen

time there was no reply I assumed it was all right, and set to work. The first day I cleared the land and then waited to see if there would be any reaction from Rupen. The second time I started and this time Rupen saw me and sent IaRodi to inquire what I was doing. IaRodi said that she had forgotten what I had asked her to do. I did not like this, so I went on working until Rupen himself approached. We started talking and then he began bawling at me, and we started quarrelling. "Who gave you the right to work here?" he demanded. So I told him of the three old people, IaTulipa, Hosea and Anton. I left off at this point and walked up the path, where I found Anton sitting with another man, watching our quarrel.'

Rupen was asked to explain how he knew that the land was his, but he countered by demanding to know who told Kevi that the land was his. Kevi could only repeat the names of the three persons previously mentioned, so the 'committee' called upon Anton for an explanation. 'On that piece of land over there', Anton began, 'Kevi's forbears had lived from way back: that piece of land along the beach is theirs. Some portions of the beach do not belong to us. My stretch is the bit known as ToVologe. The beach at Vologe has a large tree which I myself planted to mark the boundary. The cement pegs are also there, forming a boundary with the tree. To one side is your land, Rupen. Then the boundary runs to where ToIgal, ToBolo, ToLava and my namesake [ToUramana (9C5)] had reclaimed and built up the land. Those were my forbears. There is the stretch of land that the Europeans took. My land runs up from the beach. It is there that ToInaga (9D4) lived. That is my knowledge of the matter, and I will stop there.'

Rupen: 'Before when I was a small child the German planted mangoes at Raulai. Before that there had been no mangoes at Matupit. My father Simeon ToPanie (9E7), ToKopi (9E4) and I went and took three seeds of the mango and brought them back to Raulaveo so that we could mark out together the boundaries of the lands belonging to ToKoniam, Simeon Panie and to us three brothers. ToKopi marked out the boundaries with a mango, and no other claims in the land existed there. If it was not for the fact that we married a girl of yours [i.e. referring to Kevi's *vunatarai*]

you would never have come to Raulaveo. Part of Raulaveo was bought by ToKopi (9E4) from ToMulue [a forbear of ToLopa (12F2)], and there is a portion of it which is ours. ToInaga (9D4) was a man from Kabakada, and he came to Raulaveo because they "purchased" his mother as a wife for one of our ancestors there. Then ToInaga's kin arrived from Talwat to stay with him. This piece of land we are talking about was responsible for ToInaga administering poison to ToInga . . .'

Anton: 'Quite so, but let us talk about the land.'

Rupen: 'I'm talking about the land.'

Anton: 'Well, leave out all these stories.'

Committee (Pirit): 'How did ToInaga come to live there?'

Rupen: 'ToInaga was our child whom we brought up. ToInaga was from Kabakada; he had a namesake (9D2) who was from Talwat.'

Committee (Pirit): 'And do you know who of your group begot ToInaga?'

Rupen: 'ToInaga and his mother are of the same *vunatarai* as ToDapal [see p. 144]. They were from Kabakada, and they "purchased" her to marry one of us.'

Anton: 'I will explain about ToInaga (9D4). What you have heard Rupen say about ToInaga is true. This ToInaga—IaTete (9C1) married before over at Vunairoto (Kabakada), and after a time her husband died. She lived there for a while with her son, and then these three from Raulaveo arranged for her marriage here. Those three *patuana* of Rupen bought her for ToLiliman (9C2). She came and settled here, and word came from Vunairoto to our three *patuana* here that they should look after IaTete and her son and provide her with land etc. Our three *patuana* did just that.'

Committee (Pirit): 'Was that their land?'

Anton: 'Yes, they lived there, and they handed on that word to us. This piece of land on the beach which Kevi has worked on is the very piece of land concerned. I planted a raintree there when the Japanese were here to serve as a boundary between the lands of Rupen and our own.'

Rupen: 'The time that Tavurvur erupted and Valaur appeared and Davapia sank your namesake ToUramana (9C5) left Davapia to settle here. He came to stay first at

Rapindik, and finally came to live where ToBura (9F4) now has his house in order to be with his kin . . .'

Anton: 'That is the place of ToVakia (9B5).'

Rupen: 'My old men told me about this. IaValai (9D8) was "purchased" from Malaguna for a man at Nodup, and Anton was born over at Nodup.'

Anton: 'Just stop there. I have heard your remarks, and what you say is not right. My residence here you have flung aside as though it were rubbish. No, what you say does not suit me. Now it is my turn, and I will explain to you, and you will see that we are here from the very beginning. ToInaga (9D2) was a brother of IaGaralom and their mother was IaNguna.'

Rupen: 'And this ToInaga, how did he come to be living there?'

Anton: 'Where? He lived near ToVologe on the beach. He was a kinsman of the three brothers.'

Rupen: 'This ToVologe and ToWanaot were over at Nodup and they used to come and stay with my mother there . . .'

Anton: 'I know that ToWanaot was from Kurakao (Nodup) . . .'

Rupen: 'Together with ToVologe.'

Anton: 'ToVologe (9B3) was one of the three brothers I have mentioned—Tutubai (9B2) and ToKonom (9B1).'

Committee (Pirit): 'A small query here: these two ToInaga, one was from Talwat, and the other?'

Anton: 'From Vunairoto' [i.e. Kabakada].

Committee (Pirit): 'And when they came to Matupit they lived at Raulaveo. Now before they arrived who was the *patuana* who lived there?'

Anton: 'Those three I have mentioned.'

Committee: 'Who are they?'

Anton: 'Tutubai (9B2), ToKonom (9B1) and ToVologe (9B3).'

Committee (Pirit): 'Whose *patuana* are these? Rupen's or ours?' [Pirit was here associating himself with Anton as belonging to the same moiety.]

Anton: 'They are ours: all Pitalaba.'

Committee: 'And what was the reason they were living there?'

Anton: 'They lived there because they knew it was their place.'

Thus far the discussion had proceeded quite calmly and intelligibly, but from this point the protagonists grew more and more excited, gradually becoming involved in a lengthy wrangle which ranged over their past careers, other pieces of land, and disputes over particular trees and who had planted them. Each ancestral name produced by the one was immediately capped by the other. From time to time the councillor intervened, seeking to get them to return to what the 'committee' took to be the central point—the origins of the three ancestors mentioned by Anton, but to no effect.

Committee (Pirit): 'Those three, where were they from exactly?'

Anton: 'From Matupit, from Vunawutung. It was those three who created the seats of our *tubuans*. This grove (*taraiu*) is the seat of IaPalapa, ourselves IaRat, and IaGalom [these are the names of 3 *tubuans*. For further discussion see p. 241] . . . Those three men were brought up at Ranu, and later they moved to Raulaveo.'

Rupen: 'If Diararat had not founded Matupit, and we had not married you, you would not have arrived here.'

Anton: 'See here, Diararat created the land, and as it expanded and grew so ToRaga built up the land too, and we came to join him.'

Rupen: 'That piece of land you refer to—ToRaga—that is Diararat's.'

Anton: 'No, it belongs to ToKulap. The land of ToKulap, *tolai*.'

Rupen: 'The land of Diararat.'

Anton: 'No. Where did you learn that?'

Rupen: 'It is his just as I told you before about that block of land at Ranu. Then you went off and told ToLopa, and the two of you went off and marked it with cement as your own.'

Committee (Pirit): 'I think we should ignore all this. We want to find the origins of the three *patuana*. Let us try again.'

But the attempt was in vain. For the origins of the three

patuanas lay in the dim and distant past, and while each party could muster arguments to explain the presence of the ancestors at Raulaveo, there was no testimony that either could produce to rebut irrefutably the other's claims. At length it was ToPirit who suggested a way out of the impasse—or at least a means of bringing the hearing to a close. He suggested that it had become very difficult to follow the arguments since they no longer knew what pieces of land were being talked about. It was agreed that they should mark out the sites in question the following morning. The next day it rained, and the survey was postponed. On the next appointed day there was a death at Kurapun. And there, for the time being, the matter rested.

The dispute, it will be recalled, had been initiated by ToKevi (9G1), but the further it proceeded, the more shadowy his presence became. Indeed, once he had completed his introductory statement, it was as though he had no further part to play in the proceedings. A meek and somewhat unprepossessing man of about forty something of Kevi's temperament emerges plainly in his testimony. Early in his opening statement he admitted quite freely that he had not stayed on the spot indicated to him by his own kin at Talwat, but had put up his house near Anton. Again, it is apparent that he began to work the piece of land near the beach not on his own initiative, but at Anton's instigation. Moreover, in following Anton's bidding, he was well aware of the dubiety of the course of action on which he was embarking, for he tried to assess Rupen's reaction by first sounding out IaTagai (9E5), Rupen's classificatory mother, and then his wife, IaRodi. Recognising that Rupen would be apt to regard what he was doing as a direct challenge, the timorousness of Kevi's approach also makes it evident that he would not have acted as he did if he had not felt that he had a protector in Anton. Kevi, it is plain, was a mere pawn in a game between two aged and crafty opponents. It is the nature of this game which needs to be elucidated.

A number of important clues are provided by the case itself. In the context of the hearing, the preoccupation of the parties with particular details and the way in which the argument would sometimes veer off at a tangent, made it

difficult for an outsider, and, to judge by ToPirit's comments, even for some of the Matupi themselves, to see at once what were the basic issues at stake. When analysed in retrospect, however, and stripped of inessentials, the dispute turns out to have an extremely simple structure. I have sought to show in chapter 4 how local organisation on Matupit is built up around a combination of matrilineal descent and patrilocal residence, so that settlements or *gunan* are commonly composed of matrilineal descent groups which are linked by seminal or patrilineal ties. I also argued that this combination makes for a basic ambiguity in Matupi social structure. Over time, as the groups grow in strength, tension develops in the relationship, leading to quarrels in which each party claims to exercise its rights by virtue of its aboriginal ownership of the land. The crucial argument in this struggle to assert dominance is almost invariably the claim made by the one side to have 'fathered' the other and given it existence. This pattern of dispute is to be seen in a number of cases already cited in other contexts (see, for example, the cases of ToVok, pp. 134-5 and ToDapal, pp. 144-6). The same pattern, though in a more complex form, is also evident in the present case. Kevi's case rested essentially on his claim through ToInaga. According to Anton, ToInaga (9D4) had resided at Raulaveo as of matrilineal right because his mother, IaTete (9C1), had come there to join her matrilineal kin, ToVologe (9B3) and his brothers. Rupen's reply was that 'if we had not married one of your women all of this would not have arisen'. On this argument, ToInaga was at Raulaveo in the capacity of a 'son';

FIG. 10 Structure of a land dispute

he had there become a 'big man' and that was why the people from Talwat had come to join him. It is of course of great significance that the key figures in the dispute should be ancestors of whom very little is actually remembered. In a tight-knit community with a high degree of residential stability, knowledge of marriages is common property and is likely to persist over a number of generations. Disputes of this kind therefore tend to be thrust back into a past of which knowledge is now dim. Moreover, since we are dealing here with a moiety system, so that the opposing descent groups are also in a permanent relationship involving the exchange of women, there must always be a tendency towards genealogical escalation: the more prominent the opposing parties to the dispute are, the further back the struggle is projected in time, until the founding ancestors of the island are themselves brought into the argument. In the present instance there was only passing reference to Diararat; we shall see in a later case how he may come to have a central position in the dispute.

The presence of a moiety system comes to have significance in the context of disputes and political action in other ways too. For while the moieties function primarily to divide the whole community into marriage classes, they serve at the same time to provide it with a model in terms of which the society is perceived of as made up of two groups poised in eternal opposition. We catch glimpses of this mode of perception and categorisation at a number of points in the present dispute. Thus when ToPirit, one of the members of the 'committee', asked whether the *patuana* mentioned by Anton was 'Rupen's or ours', his question could have had meaning for the audience only in terms of the opposition of Pitalaba and Maramar. Similarly, Rupen's reference to the occasion when Anton and ToLopa had marked out a piece of land as theirs suggests that he too saw the dispute as an expression of perennial inter-moiety hostility. Yet in fact not all disputes can be reduced to a simple expression of the dualistic principle: as we have seen, disputes occur within the *vunatarai*, and these may involve alliances which cut across the dual division, as in the dispute now to be described between Anton and ToKonia.

ToKonia (11E1) was a young man approaching thirty who became my research assistant shortly after I arrived at Matupit.

FIG. 11 Genealogy: ToKonia v. Anton

His house stood only a short distance from Anton's in Raulaveo, where he claimed a portion of the area there as of matrilineal right. At first I took them to be close kinsmen and, indeed, very early on in our acquaintance Anton (11C1) had told me that he and ToKonia were *kakuna*, that is he was related to ToKonia as mother's mother's brother. At this time, and throughout my first spell of fieldwork, the two appeared to be on very friendly terms, and they frequently shared meals. However, when I returned to Matupit for my second visit I immediately discovered that the two had quarrelled and were no longer speaking to one another. It appears that two of Anton's maternal nephews, together with ToKevi (9G1) and ToBura (9F4) had agreed to put up a store, one room of which would be occupied by Anton. Rupen saw the preparations and sent ToKonia to inquire of Anton what was afoot. A quarrel developed which led to a case being brought before the councillor at Kurapun, at which many of the leading elders of Matupit were present and gave evidence. ToKonia himself did not speak at the hearing, but was represented by his eldest brother, ToKalula (11E3) who explained that their claim to the land lay through ToRunal (11B4). Anton replied that the land had belonged originally to his own ancestor ToLava (11A1) under whose wing ToRunal had later come to settle. Rupen (11D4) then intervened to describe how his father Simeon (11C5) had sponsored a great mortuary ceremony (*a balaguan*) in the name of ToRunal. On that occasion

they had performed the dance known as a *kulao*, but he had no recollection that Anton had participated in it. The whole of Simeon's *tambu* was expended on that occasion save for one coil which remained now with his 'fathers' (i.e. ToKonia and his brothers). Rupen also made the point that his father and ToMararang (of the *vunatarai* of ToLopa (12F2)) had quarrelled over an *itig* (a large tree of *Octomeles* sp.; pidgin, *erima*) which stood on the spot where ToBura now had his house. A case had followed, and it was decided that the tree belonged to Simeon. Rupen was supported on both counts by ToPidik, Turpui, and John Vuia (all Pitalaba) as well as by ToDapal and ToUrapal (Maramar). Anton thus stood alone. When he was asked what he thought he said that he wished the councillor to bring the matter to the attention of the district officer. ToGorogoro refused to do this, saying that he wanted to see the case closed. If Anton wanted to do it himself that was his affair, but he should be aware that all the elders had spoken against him with a single voice.

The main argument advanced in support of ToKonia's claim was the performance of a great mortuary rite many years ago. The point involved is closely connected with one raised in the dispute between Matinut and TiPaul (see pp. 155, 161). As indicated there, the practice in former times was to bury the dead within the hamlet-site of their own *vunatarai*. In the case of a prominent man a *balaguan* might be raised in his name some years after his death, when they would perform the rite known as the *ur na minat*, the central feature of which was a dance executed on the spot where the body of the deceased lay. According to some of my informants it was believed of old that the corpse would express its delight by shaking its head from side to side to the rhythm of the dance (*di vamalagene ra lori ToAn*), but others denied this. But whether there was such a belief or not, the significance of the *balaguan* in the present context is perfectly clear. The *ur na minat* could not be performed on land which did not belong to one's *vunatarai*; conversely, having been performed it established in perpetuity the claim to the land of the *vunatarai* which sponsored the festival. Anton sought to argue that he too had 'stood' in the *balaguan*, and he claimed that he had expended a lot of *tambu* in mounting a dance which his

vunatarai brought from Raluana. But this testimony was waved aside, for ToPidik and a number of others recalled how as young men they had participated in the dance, and they all denied that Anton had any part in it.

This was a clear-cut victory for ToKonia. More important, it counted as a victory for Rupen, who had initially engineered the dispute; it indicated his own growing prominence and Anton's decline. Looked at in the longer term, however, this was no more than a minor skirmish in a continuing struggle, marked by rapid shifts of alignment, in which men seek to advance their own changing interests and to place their rivals at a disadvantage. Within a very short time Rupen found himself having to do battle on other fronts. His reference to the case of the *itig* tree in ToKonia's dispute with Anton is of particular interest here because it became the focal point of argument in a dispute which broke out between Tio and Rupen about a month later. Around this time Rupen had invited a maternal nephew from Nodup, who worked in Rabaul and had recently married a Matupi girl, to stay at Raulaveo, and, perhaps in the flush of his recent triumph over Anton, had advised the young man that he could proceed to the building of his house. When the gravel for the foundation had been laid, Tio, a man in his fifties, whose home was in Kikila, brought the matter before the councillor at Kurapun, questioning Rupen's right to act as he did. Tio's case rested on the claim that many years before, when he was a mere youth, he had been present at the hearing of a dispute between Simeon (Rupen's father) and ToMararang (12E3) that centred on the ownership of an *itig* tree.

This was the case that Rupen referred to in the dispute between Anton and ToKonia, and it will be recalled that on that occasion Rupen was supported by John Vuia and other elders in his assertion that the judgment had gone in favour of Simeon. Tio took his stand on the ground that the tree was adjudged to belong to ToMararang, through whom he claimed. In this he was immediately supported by John Vuia who said that he too had been present on that occasion and had heard the words of ToMararang as Tio had just described them. This was a flat contradiction of what he had said in the earlier dispute between Anton and ToKonia. How-

ever, nobody pointed to this inconsistency in the testimony given in the two cases, and I doubt whether many Matupi would have considered it very relevant had I brought it to their attention. This does not mean that the Matupi are not alive to the possibility of litigants telling lies or witnesses supporting their friends with perjured evidence. On the contrary, my informants would frequently tell me that a certain case was shot through with falsehood, and they would complain that nowadays the path of judgment rarely ran straight. But my impression was that such scepticism came more easily to those who were mere bystanders to a particular dispute or who had seen the system operate to their own disadvantage. On this view, what is 'true' has to be gauged situationally and each case has to be understood within its own context. So, in the present instance, the conflict of testimony about ownership of the *itig* reflected the different alignments in the two situations. On the earlier occasion, Vuia and others had supported Rupen as a means of scoring off Anton. In the later case Anton was not directly involved, and Tio had the support of a number of his fellow elders from Kikila.

There appear to have been a number of reasons for this opposition to Rupen. Some of these had their roots in certain events which belonged to the more recent past. Some years earlier, for example, a Co-operative Society store had been established at Matupit. The new enterprise, initiated under the guidance of the Department of Co-operatives, began in a flush of enthusiasm, but within a short while it had collapsed utterly with financial loss to many of the shareholders. A number of factors were responsible for the failure of the store, but for present purposes it is sufficient to record that Rupen was widely held to have been at fault, and although some years had now elapsed the whole affair had left a considerable residue of rancour against him. However, there were other and more immediate reasons behind the present alignment of forces. According to some of my informants, the present dispute was closely connected with another to which reference has been made in an earlier context. This was the clash between ToLopa and the Methodist Church over proprietary rights in the beach at Tagitagi (see p. 141). On this issue a number of the elders at Kikila, including Tio, had associated

themselves with ToLopa, and Rupen, representing the interests of the church, had finally decided to bring the matter before the Native Land Commissioner. The alliance between the elders at Kikila and ToLopa at Kurapun is of particular interest because it cuts across one of the major cleavages within the community, that between Roman Catholics and Wesleyan Methodists. In the earlier discussion of the Tagitagi case I mentioned how Taman and his brothers appeared to be seeking to graft themselves on to the lineage of ToLopa. Behind these manoeuvres lay the fact that a serious problem had arisen in some parts of Kikila where the sea was gradually encroaching on the land. Tio, Tadap, and his brother Taman were among those most closely affected by this threat and, confronted with the possible loss of their land, were looking for another place to stay.⁶ In their difficulty they had turned to ToLopa, as the *bit na pia* who controlled the largest tracts of land on the island, to assist them.

As in the dispute between Kevi and Rupen, the present case proceeded far into the night and had to be adjourned finally without any clear decision being reached. However, amongst those who were not immediately party to the dispute, the consensus of opinion seemed to be that it was Rupen who had the better of the exchanges. It seems clear that in bringing the case before the councillor at Kurapun, instead of raising the matter at Kikila or Rarup, Tio was hoping to manoeuvre ToLopa into intervening in the dispute on his side, a tactic that was also illustrated during the hearing in Tio's reliance on the *varvateten* of ToMararang, a deceased mother's brother of ToLopa. But the councillor, ToGorogoro, who was the son of ToLopa, was anxious to keep the dispute within bounds, and he refused to allow his father to be drawn into the debate. Consequently, when, in the later stages of the hearing, Rupen invoked the name of Diararat, whom he claimed to represent, there was nobody else present to gainsay him.

⁶ It should perhaps be noted that this was no novel situation in Matupi experience. Krämer's map of the island (c. 1906) shows a few hamlets at the southern end which no longer exist. Setting out by canoe for the egg-grounds or to inspect the fish-traps, my companions would frequently point out the evidence of erosion and indicate to me the sites of former hamlets now under the waves.

FIG. 12 Genealogy: ToLopa v. Rupen

Yet Rupen's claim to be Diararat (12A2), the original founder of the island, was a challenge which ToLopa could not allow to go unopposed. As matters stood, a direct confrontation was becoming almost inevitable. The opportunity was not long in presenting itself. A man called TaUpa (12F3), of Rupen's *vunatarai*, who had been living elsewhere on the Gazelle Peninsula, had recently returned to Matupit, and proceeded to build his house at Raulaveo. Issue could now be joined, and ToLopa promptly brought the matter up before a village assembly at Kurapun.

'Today I want to learn from you', ToLopa (12F2) began, 'just whose land Raulaveo is. We are referring to that part you wish to build a house on. I want to know the name of that *patuana* of yours through whom you claim that area'.

TaUpa (12F3) said he wished to build his house on the spot near the Co-operative store since that was their land. To their knowledge it was the land of their *patuana* Taragau (12D7).

ToLopa: 'Taragau I begot. It was my own *patuana* ToKaprablo (12C4) who begot Taragau. Raulaveo is my land: it runs from ToMangula [a tract of land bearing the

name of an ancestor (12C5)] and it follows straight across from the school [at Rarup] as far as Raulaveo. ToMulue (12D4) too also lived there where a *bukubuk* tree used to stand, for the reason that it was our land. [He refers here to the site on which the house of IaTagai (9E5) now stands.] There is however a part nearer the beach which we presented to your ancestor Taragau: but the area lying nearer the road, that is mine.'

Rupen: 'You know very well that this land belongs to the three of us [i.e. Rupen and his two brothers]. What you have just said, ToLopa, we never heard from our ancestors. And what about all those coconuts which were already growing when we came into the world? Do you think they would not have told us about this if it had not been our land?'

ToLopa: 'It is true that the coconuts there are yours, but the land itself I claim. I claim it because my forbears claimed it before me. They "purchased" IaMigir (12C7) at Nodup and brought her here to Matupit. At that time my ancestors were already living in Raulaveo, and there she married Kaprablo and bore Taragau and his sisters. My lands stretch from Vunabukubuk down here to Reinatun.'

Rupen: 'It is true when you say, ToLopa, that you fathered us. However, there is no *varvateten* so far as we are concerned to the effect that the land is yours. Say, when our forbears were still alive is it not strange that no question was ever raised about their rightful claims there? Was there any case about it?'

ToLopa ignored this question, and posed one of his own. 'Take this man Taragau (12D7). When he claimed this land who was the *patuana* before him through whom he made his claim?'

TaUpa replied: 'I know about Taragau, though I do not know anything before him. But what about ToKoai? When ToKoai (9F2) stayed here why didn't you raise a case then?' And Rupen added: 'And Kopi ToKitaun (9E4). When he came back from New Ireland and made a garden there, how is it that no case was heard about it?'

ToLopa: 'The explanation is as follows. That part where ToKoai lived was acquired by Tadap. Like this: previously ToKoai gave 10 fathoms of *tambu* to buy the land. But

then the *tambu* was returned to ToKoai, and the land given instead to Tadap and his wife so that their children would have a place to stay.'

Rupen: 'I know all about the *tambu* in that case. IaRodi [his wife] is also acquainted with it. The fact is that when the *tambu* was taken to ToMararang (12E3), he himself brought it back to me, since he knew full well that the land was already ours.'

Tadap now intervened to say it was true he had been approached for 10 fathoms of *tambu* for the lands that ToKoai had lived on, and that ToMararang had received that *tambu*.

Rupen: 'That's a lie. If we had known that you had bought this piece of land there would have been something to say about it before this.'

Tadap: 'When the war finished I sent IaTagaula [his daughter] to plant coconuts there. Today, those coconuts still stand.'

Rupen: 'It was ToKoai's son, ToKeregi, who planted those coconuts. If we had any idea that you, Tadap, were planting coconuts on our land we would have pulled them out that very day.'

ToLopa: 'I am quite clear about the position. The part which they presented to Taragau was that part nearer the beach where you yourself live, Rupen. There was a portion which Taragau sold to a European, and the pegs stand there to this day. That part is the one I know was made over as a gift to Taragau. But from Vunabukubuk to Reinatun is mine: I own it.'

Rupen: 'See here, ToLopa, that part you are talking about as having been sold, I know about that. ToBarau (9C3) lived there, and it was he who sold it to a European in German days. Many years later Simeon Panie (11C5) approached the Administration to ask if that piece of land could be returned, and he was successful in his quest. And there was no question of a gift. Taragau slept there, ToKoai slept there. How is it that you never raised these matters before today so that we should know about it and be clear? Now suddenly we hear that the land was made over to us as a gift. Yet when the Germans arrived our ancestors were already living there. And what about IaMangia (12C6)? When they "purchased" her

from Raluana she came to live at Raulaveo because we were of the same *vunatarai*. ToMangula (12C5) married her and he established his home among his affines. It is our area, and what you have explained here has no relation to anything we have heard from our own *patuanas*. We three here, we arose at Raulaveo itself.'

Simeon (12F4), the elder brother of TaUpa, whose home was in Rarup, broke in angrily in support of Rupen. 'We hold fast to the land here on account of those ancestors of ours who gave us our being. That is the reason we claim it as ours. If you now wish to claim it as yours, that is your responsibility.'

ToLopa: 'Look here, Simeon, that part where you stay [in Rarup] is the land of ToMangula. It is mine, I *varkurai* there. From there where your house stands down to the beach—that is ToKarigal (12D2): me again. This is the case: Diararat (12A2) married IaKadera (12A1), and she bore two daughters—IaKadera (12B1) and IaOkole (12B3). This IaKadera bore her children at Rarup, and IaOkole here at Reinatun where she stayed with her brother ToBakukut (12B2). That part where you stay, Simeon, belonged to ToMangula (12C5). It now belongs to the Methodist mission, since they purchased it from me with a lot of *tambu*.'

TaUpa: 'That's not your land at all. It belongs to Levi Makadek [Makadek, who lived at Kikila, was of the lineage which 'begot' TaUpa and Simeon]. We won't budge from that land unless Levi tells us to. But you have nothing to do with it. Vunabalbal [the name of the tract] is Levi's.'

ToLopa: 'Look, Vunabalbal was given by my forbears as a gift to the *vunatarai* of Levi, and my words hold sway over my land. That is the land of ToMangula: it takes in the school area, past Talele as far as Raulaveo. I am there.'

Rupen: 'ToLopa, they brought us into existence on the soil of Raulaveo, because we are the *vunatarai* Diararat, the first man who established his claim here at Matupit. As I have already said, they purchased IaMangia (12C6) over at Raluana, and it was she who attracted her husband to come and stay with her on our land. We are the *vunatarai* Diararat and ToUrani, IaMangia's brother followed her to stay here on our land.'

ToLopa snorted: 'Do you think ToMangula was an idiot that he would have followed IaMangia? I know that Kapra-bolo (12C4) married IaMigir (12C7). He lived at Raulaveo. And when they purchased IaMangia my forbear who married her also lived there, since it was the land of my ancestors. IaMigir gave birth there. It is true that Rupen claims to be the *vnatarai* Diararat, and I am of the blood. However, I have the *varvateten* of ToMararang that this land is mine. I am quite clear on the "instruction" about my *vnatarai*, and about my lands.'

At this TaUpa got up angrily and said that if that was so it would be best if they all returned to Nodup. There were others too at Rarup, he said, who would also leave. He was immediately supported by Simeon, who urged that all the people of Rarup should be summoned to hear ToLopa's declaration. The best thing would be for all of them to pack up and leave Matupit. But Rupen seemed anxious on this occasion not to allow the argument to wander too far afield, and he brought the discussion back to Raulaveo.

Rupen: 'Look, ToLopa, two of your ancestors married two of our womenfolk and settled with them at Raulaveo. It is ours, not yours. I claim Raulaveo.'

ToLopa: 'Such land as you claim was a gift, and anyway it was not a very large piece. The part where you stay yourself—that was a gift—but the whole of Raulaveo is mine. And as for that part where TaUpa wants to build his house, Tadap acquired that long ago from ToMararang.'

The discussion returned briefly to the purchase of the land by Tadap, and the payment of the *tambu* to ToMararang, and other witnesses were called by ToLopa. But Rupen was not perturbed. It was he himself, he declared, who gave the *tambu* back to ToKoai on the advice of ToMararang who said that it was in fact their own land. Now to their surprise they learned that the land was a gift. Had it been a gift there would have been an 'instruction' about it. It was in fact their own because their ancestors had lived there.

By this time it was past one o'clock in the morning, and at length a member of the 'committee' intervened. The argument was going round in circles, he said, and they kept coming back to the same point. It was also late and there

were those who had to go to work the next day. Moreover, Rupen had asked that other witnesses be called to give evidence about the *tambu*. He suggested therefore that they adjourn for the present, and come together another day to try and reach a solution. On the next appointed day it rained and an assembly was not called, and I heard nothing further of the matter in the short time that remained to me on the island.

The case thus finished as inconclusively as some others we have already considered. There are a number of reasons why this should be so. In the first place, there is the nature of the mode of adjudication itself. The proceedings are conducted by the councillor, and he is usually assisted by two or three men of prominence within the village, referred to nowadays as 'a committee', who are not immediately party to the dispute. In this context, councillor and 'committee' are referred to as *tena varkurai*, an expression which can only loosely be translated as 'judges'. For it should be apparent from the case-material presented that the role of the *tena varkurai* differs in many important respects from the way in which the role of judge would be understood, for example, not only in Western societies but also in many African tribal societies (see, e.g. Gluckman, 1955). Procedure at the hearing of land disputes at Matupit is indeed more characteristic of a moot, in the sense defined by Bohannan (1957: 160-1), than of a court of law. The *varkurai* is, in Bohannan's terms, an assembly of neighbours and kin who decide disputes. The *tena varkurai* seek to maintain decorum and the conditions for orderly debate. But they do not dominate the proceedings: although they may sometimes attempt to control the discussion by putting questions to the disputants or will intervene to bring them back to the point when the argument shows signs of straying too far afield, they do not take a leading part in examining the witnesses or assessing their testimony. On the contrary, their task is more to hold the ring and allow the disputants to place their arguments before the assembly and then, by discreet intervention at appropriate moments, to try and persuade or prevail upon one or other of the parties to yield gracefully. The aim of *varkurai* is to restore harmony where social relations have become embittered; the technique

adopted to achieve this end is rather like the device called 'the sense of the meeting' which is used by certain kinds of committee in order to reach a decision by consensus (Bailey, 1965). But this aim is only likely to be attained where one party is in a very weak position, or where the disputants are linked by close bonds of matrilineal kinship and are prepared to make concessions in the interest of a rapprochement. In these circumstances a decision may be reached that is acceptable to all parties. When this occurs the hearing is likely to end in a spontaneous burst of euphoria accompanied by general handshaking and the exchanges of congratulations and other pleasantries; later the reconciliation will probably be marked by a shared meal. But when the disputants are implacable rivals there can be little scope for compromise, still less for decision by consensus; and if, in these circumstances, a finding was entered which was unacceptable to one party, there would be no means of enforcing the judgment against him.⁷

Yet the fact that many disputes over land are left unresolved is only partly a function of the procedural character of the *varkurai* and the lack of effective legal sanctions at the disposal of the councillor. A further, and perhaps more telling factor, lies in the nature of the disputes themselves. As suggested earlier, few of these can be regarded simply as cases between individual litigants seeking to establish their proper legal entitlements; they are rather trials of strength between opponents who are seeking to advance or defend their posi-

⁷ At this time, Native Local Government Councils in Papua-New Guinea were constituted under the Native Local Government Councils Ordinance 1947-1957. The council system has a good deal in common with that of Native Authorities which formerly flourished in British colonial territories in Africa, but there are also important differences. In particular in Papua-New Guinea no legal recognition was accorded to indigenous courts or tribunals. Accordingly, decisions or judgments of village moots, even when presided over by an elected councillor, are without legal force, and administrative officers are not obliged to take cognisance of them. This aspect of the work of councillors was a frequent topic of discussion at council meetings, when members would complain to the Australian officials that their inability to enforce decisions at the village level made their task of maintaining law and order increasingly difficult. The situation is all the more curious in that the Ordinance lays down specifically (S. 10(b)) that one of the functions of a council is 'to maintain peace, order and good government' among the natives resident within its area of jurisdiction. For further discussion see below, p. 262.

tions as political leaders. On Matupit, as in other Melanesian communities, the stature of the leader depends very much on personal qualities; but above all the aspiring 'big man' has to have the capacity to command support and bind followers to him. In the past, the 'big men' of Matupit were able to build up their influence through the development of their wealth in land and *tambu*. Today, for reasons already considered, the islanders are poor in *tambu*, and land has become, at least in indigenous contexts, the major means of securing a following. Since land is identified with particular matrilineages, and since the core of one's support is to be found primarily within the *vunatarai*, men are thrust into competition for land, which they are compelled to claim as their own by matrilineal and aboriginal right. This aspect of the political process may be seen more clearly if we compare the positions of Anton, ToLopa, and Rupen in terms of their relative strength.

Anton, as we have seen, had once been a powerful figure who had enjoyed the support of the Administration. According to many accounts I received, he abused his authority in various ways, not least in asserting claims to land which was not his own. Now he was old and enfeebled and his wealth had been dissipated. He had only two maternal nephews, both of whom lived at Kurapun, and helped him financially from time to time. He had also persuaded two matrilineal kinsmen, ToKevi and ToBura, to stay with him at Raulaveo, though it is worth noting that ToBura was also an affine of Rupen (see fig. 13). There were also two Papuans whom Anton had allowed to put up dwellings nearby in return for a small rent. I have cited one case in which Anton was involved, but there were a number of others which he himself clearly perceived as designed to strip him of his lands. In his present situation he was quite helpless, and had to be thankful for small mercies.

ToLopa we have noted as the *bit na pia* par excellence at Matupit, and his authority was acknowledged throughout most of Kurapun village. Formerly a large and flourishing group, which had included some of the most prominent 'big men' and warriors at Matupit in the pre-contact period, ToLopa's *vunatarai* was now sorely reduced in strength. ToLopa himself had been blind and a cripple for a number of years: when

he was required to take part in a *niurai na pia*, a 'land survey' in connection with a dispute, he had to be carried on someone's back, and he would recite the history of each parcel as the landmarks were called out to him. Apart from ToLopa himself, there was only a younger brother who lived at Malaguna, and a sister's daughter who was married to a man of Rupen's lineage. His present support derived from the large numbers of persons begotten by males of his own lineage who were dependent upon him for residential and garden land.

Rupen's position was in marked contrast to that of both Anton and ToLopa. He was still an extremely vigorous man, and spent a good deal of his time travelling around. Moreover, as the accompanying genealogy shows, he was surrounded at Raulaveo by many kin, matrilineal, patrilineal, and seminal. In addition, he was attracting others to join him, a fact which, as we have seen, precipitated his quarrels with Tio and ToLopa. In short, burgeoning in strength, Rupen was now moving in to fill the power-vacuum created by the decline of his immediate neighbours on either side.

We touch here on a crucial problem in the analysis of the political process at Matupit. In Matupi theory, the boundaries of all residential and garden land are fixed, and proprietary rights vest in perpetuity in the matrilineal descendants of the

FIG. 13 Genealogy: householders in Rupen's section at Raulaveo

man who first occupied or worked them. At the same time, the groups with which we are concerned are small in number and are therefore especially susceptible to the random workings of human fertility and other hazards. As we have just seen, some lineages dwindle in numbers and strength, while others flourish and grow strong. What means exist then for the re-adjustment of land claims to meet the demands of the changing balance of power? Even if in the past such issues could be settled by force—and this is doubtful—such a means is no longer available: the struggle therefore is waged through the medium of the *varkurai*. And since change in the balance of power is itself a gradual process, no one single confrontation of the rival parties before the village assembly is likely to be decisive. Each case rather is merely a skirmish in what may be a long-drawn-out battle, an opportunity for probing the enemy's weaknesses as well as for assessing the strength of one's own support. Yet if this is so, how is the issue ever resolved? A dispute usually takes the form of a dialogue of norm and counter-norm, and it is settled when, once the arguments have been fully set out, one norm is held to prevail against the other within the framework of an established hierarchy of norms. But what happens when the disputants are able to appeal to norms which are equally valid and fundamental to the system? The pattern of argument that recurs so frequently in Matupi land disputes is that one party claims the land because it is his by right of matrilineal descent from the aboriginal holder; the other will make a similar claim and argue that his opponent merely holds by way of gift made to him as a 'son' of the proprietary lineage. How then is the Gordian knot to be cut, so that in the end control of the land passes from the hands of one party into those of the other? Or posing the question in another way, what is the mechanism by which initially-acquired patrilineal rights are converted into matrilineal ones?

In seeking an answer to these questions, I think it is important to repeat that the disputes invariably come to centre around events in the past of which there is no permanent record, and about which there can be no reliable evidence. We have seen that a man is bound to make provision for his children's subsistence, and therefore a son is entitled to plant

coconuts in or around his father's hamlet site or to make food gardens on his father's *vunatarai*. These rights, however, are not hereditary, and on the son's death the land reverts to its proper owners. In the same way, a man is entitled to reside in his father's matrilineal hamlet during the latter's lifetime, though not thereafter. Frequently, however, the matrilineal kin of the dead man may acquiesce in the son's continued residence there, particularly if he contributed substantial sums of shell-money to his father's obsequies. In time the parties to these arrangements die, and the record is obscured. Many years later a dispute may arise when the matrilineal descendants of the son assert that full ownership of the land vests in their own lineage. If they are sufficiently powerful they will be able to muster the support of witnesses who will recall how, when they were youngsters, they saw So-and-so occupying the hamlet in question or gathering coconuts from a certain palm, and the obvious inference will be drawn that he was doing so as of matrilineal right. The point was made quite explicitly by one of the elders of the 'committee' in the dispute between Rupen and Tio when he remarked at one stage: 'Who knows how many mistakes have been made from planting a few coconuts near the house? And then later on the man whose land it actually is thinks they are his coconuts'.

This structure of debate has already been observed in a number of instances. It emerges again quite plainly in the final dispute between Rupen and ToLopa. Rupen claimed that he and his brothers 'arose' at Raulaveo and that his ancestors had always been there, and he cited Taragau (12D7). ToLopa replied that Taragau was the son of his own ancestor ToKaprabolo (12C4). Taragau had lived on his father's matrilineal land, which was then made over to him as a gift. At this point, however, the argument took a new turn. Rupen did not seek to deny the 'genealogical facts' elicited by ToLopa: he argued instead that when ToKaprabolo and ToMangula (12C5) married women of his matrilineage they had settled uxorilocally. For the present a stalemate had been reached. Yet it is not difficult, I think, to see how in the end Rupen is likely to emerge uppermost. For just as ToLopa could claim to have 'begotten' Rupen, so, given the presence of a moiety system and the forms of marriage to be described below, it

was open to Rupen, by pushing the dispute back a further couple of generations, to claim that it was he who had 'fathered' ToLopa. In the earlier dispute with Tio, Rupen was indeed at great pains to show that he was of the line of Diararat, but in the present instance he did not seek to exploit this argument. I was reluctant to question him directly about this because I was anxious to avoid possible interference in the conduct of the dispute. I suspect that part of the reason for this omission was his recognition that in genealogical expertise he was no match for ToLopa.

Nevertheless, to the outside observer at least, Rupen's claim to be Diararat highlights a curious feature of the contemporary pattern of land distribution and control at Matupit. According to Matupi ideology, land vests in the aboriginal settler of a place, and passes thereafter in perpetuity to his matrilineal descendants. According to Matupi traditions their founding ancestor was Diararat. It is all the more strange therefore that the largest tracts on the island should be said to vest not in his matrilineal descendants, but in two lineage segments whose apical ancestresses were his daughters. The inference would seem to be that at some stage his own lineage was 'displaced' by the lineage of its 'children' which developed in time into the largest and most powerful matrilineal group on the island. But now that group is in decline. With the death of ToLopa,⁸ much of his genealogical knowledge and his knowledge of the history and boundaries of particular parcels of land will disappear.⁹ In this event there will be no one sufficiently knowledgeable or powerful to refute Rupen's claims. He will be able to snap or ignore the patrilineal links through which ToLopa proclaimed his dominance over him. Indeed, the boot will now be on the other foot, for he will also be able to claim that the children of IaThelma (12G1), who is married to a man of Rupen's *vunatarai*, are living on their father's land. I suspect therefore that, unless

⁸ I received word of ToLopa's death some time after I had left the field.

⁹ A complicating factor in the present situation is that many of the genealogies have now been recorded by the Native Land Commissioner, copies of which are on file at his office. Clearly this introduces an element of rigidity which was absent in the indigenous system. Nevertheless, I doubt whether this will deter the Matupi from seeking means to manipulate the system.

other factors intrude, within a relatively short time the lands of ToLopa will have come to vest again in Diararat. The wheel will have swung full circle. It seems to me that such a development would be fully in accord with the Matupi view, rooted in the moiety system, of social process as the oscillation of power between two parties or factions in permanent relations of hostility.

Land disputes at Matupit are often complicated in their detail. Frequently, too, many issues are involved besides those set out explicitly in the claims and counter-claims of each party. Furthermore, each dispute usually has to be understood in the context of a complex and constantly shifting pattern of alignments. Viewed in itself, however, the underlying structure of any given dispute is likely to be quite simple. In the majority of cases there is a confrontation of two political opponents each of whom musters arguments of equal validity to prove his aboriginal rights in the parcel of land in dispute. This situation, I have sought to argue, is rooted in the structure of local groups on Matupit. The combination of matriliney and patrilocality is a continuing source of tension in the Matupi social system; by focusing attention on a series of disputes at Raulaveo I have tried to illustrate how this structural ambiguity contributes to the rise and fall of local lineages and their leaders. I believe, moreover, that this mode of approaching the material also helps to account for a number of other features of Matupi social organisation described in chapter 4. We saw there how hamlets at Kikila usually have a much simpler and more clear-cut matrilineal structure than in other parts of the island, and that in general genealogies are also shallower. Why should this be so? One possibility is that the composition of local groups at Kikila is related to the more recent emergence and settlement of this part of the island. Shorter genealogies and a multiplicity of independent lineages would, at first glance, appear as strong evidence in support of the tradition that Kikila was settled later by many different groups. However, there are a number of reasons why this explanation is less than convincing. It is true that, in the main, genealogical knowledge in Kikila rarely extends beyond the grandmother of the present lineage head. At the same time, not all genealogies are equally shallow,

and those of more prominent men may reach back further into the past and will detail seminal bonds with neighbouring groups. Secondly, even though precise genealogical knowledge may only go back a couple of generations, when the occasion is fitting, as in the course of a dispute, more remote ancestors can frequently be recalled as having lived there previously. Historically, it may indeed be the case that Kikila was settled more recently, but for a solution of the present problem we need to look elsewhere.

The shallowness of Kikila genealogies is doubtless due in some instances to the fact that the ancestress of the group is said to have married into Matupit only a few generations ago, and the lineage has only recently succeeded in establishing itself. In other instances, I suggest, it is due to the operation of the same processes of lineage growth and decline I have described at work elsewhere on the island, the data from Kikila representing a particular phase in the sequence of development. The greater depth of some of the genealogies at Reinatun and Raulaveo is not due to the greater powers of memory there, nor is it necessarily related to a longer period of settlement. At Matupit, as is frequently the case elsewhere, the genealogy is essentially an expression of relations of power, and genealogical knowledge may be a formidable weapon in the hands of a lineage seeking to assert its claims to dominance. Hence, in the Matupi context, the depth of the genealogy seems to be closely related to the number of patrilocally attached groups over whom the dominant lineage seeks to wield authority. Herein lies, as we have seen, the central importance of the *varvateten*, the handing over of the knowledge of lineage history to the heir. But when a lineage becomes extinct or dwindles significantly in strength there is no longer a powerful remembrancer, and the knowledge is lost or can be disregarded. Groups previously patrilocally attached are now able to assert their autonomy. At this stage in its development such a group will occupy a hamlet it can now claim as being vested in it by matrilineal right, and its genealogy will be typically shallow. In time the group matures and grows in strength; but part of that very strength consists in having its sons continue to remain nearby; gradually the basic source of conflict in the social structure reappears, and struggles of a

now familiar kind occur. There were indications at the time of my stay on Matupit that this stage was now being reached in a number of hamlets at Kikila (Epstein, A. L., 1964: 22-3).

The Relevance of Land Pressure

We are now in a position to return to the question posed at the beginning of this chapter: why do the Matupi devote so much of their time and energy to the waging of land disputes? The many cases we have considered give some indication of the intensity of the struggle for land at Matupit. Is this situation then merely a simple reflection of the commonplace that men compete for valuable resources that are in short supply?

I am acutely conscious that my discussion of this question would be more soundly based if some objective measure of land pressure at Matupit were available to me. For this a survey of land use would have been necessary, from which an assessment could be made of the carrying capacity of the land and of the relationship of land requirements to available resources. Unfortunately, no such surveys have been carried out on the Gazelle Peninsula. Aware of the sensitivity of the Matupi touching matters of land, administrative officers at Rabaul had cautioned me about mapping out gardens or similar activities. But quite apart from the need to avoid activating Matupi susceptibilities, the kind of investigation that was required lay well outside my own sphere of competence. Some of the technical difficulties which beset this kind of study are set out by Brookfield and Brown (1963). In their work among the Chimbu of the New Guinea Highlands, they followed the path so notably pioneered by Allan (1949). Allan, an agriculturalist, had been concerned in much of his earlier research in Northern Rhodesia to develop a technique for estimating critical population densities under given ecological conditions. In Northern Rhodesia he had to deal primarily with *citemene* forms of cultivation, essentially a slash-and-burn technique. Consequently, as Brookfield and Brown observe (1963: 109), he did not have to consider what happens when a man requires land of more than one type to make up a complete farm. In Chimbu, the system of land use was much more complex, and Brookfield and Brown were

compelled to seek a modification of Allan's basic method. Even so, they felt obliged to limit their task to the evaluation of the adequacy of group territories in terms of the contemporary pattern of land utilisation.

There are a number of interesting parallels in the Tolai and Chimbu situations. Chimbu and Tolai would probably count as the two areas of highest population density in the whole of New Guinea. In the middle Chimbu Valley densities range between 250 and 400 per square mile while the 55,000 people composing the main Chimbu group have an average density of 261 (Brookfield and Brown, 1963: 71). The total Tolai population in 1961 was around 40,000 and occupied an area of about 300 square miles, but the average density figure of 130 per square mile takes no account of the very considerable areas that had been alienated and were now taken up by European or Chinese-owned plantations: at Matupit itself, density would probably be nearer 350 per square mile. Again, the system of land use in the two areas appears to be broadly of the same order of complexity: in both a wide variety of crops is grown, and cultivators require access to different kinds of land. Moreover, the patterns of land utilisation in both parts have been complicated by the adoption of new crops and by an increasing absorption in cash-cropping. But whereas there now exists for Chimbu some kind of quantitative measure of land pressure, the evidence I can offer on this score at Matupit is wholly qualitative.

Land shortage has certainly been part of the Matupi vocabulary now for many years. Already in 1935, when the Administration sought to acquire land for the aerodrome at Lakunai, the Matupi protested that they required the land for their food crops, a position which was later accepted by the Mandatory Power in its evidence before the Permanent Mandates Commission of the League of Nations (see p. 49). However, the Matupi argument on this occasion tells us more about their determination to resist encroachment on their land by the Administration than about their 'objective' land needs.¹⁰ But

¹⁰ It is worth noting in this context that, according to the statement presented by the Mandatory Power to the Permanent Mandates Commission, Mr Ball, then Assistant District Inspector at Rabaul, was sent down to Matupit to make a full inquiry into Matupi claims. The statement then adds that his report frankly supported the Matupi contention

whatever the actual situation in the thirties, it will be obvious that the pressure on land has been greatly intensified by more recent developments. In the first place, there was the encouragement given the Tolai by the Administration to go in for the growing of cocoa. Secondly, the post-war years also saw a great improvement in the provision of medical and hospital services, so that population has increased rapidly (Epstein, A. L. and T. S., 1962). In these circumstances it is not surprising that the land question should have become a major pre-occupation of the Matupi. Well aware that cash-cropping eats into the amount of land available for food crops, they point to the extension of subsistence cultivation to areas that had previously been allowed to lie idle. They also note a tendency towards the shortening of the period of fallow for certain kinds of land.

Nor can the topic of land hunger be discussed without reference to sociological criteria. There is not only the question of what resources are available, there is also the question of how the available resources are allocated. This depends on the system of land tenure. Given the tendency towards patrilocal residence, the system at Matupit makes for considerable inequalities in the distribution of land. The sample survey of households I conducted on the island included questions on holdings in land and this showed that while some had far in excess of their immediate requirements, there were others whose resources were very meagre. Later on I collected the names of about a hundred men, mostly in Rarup and Kurapun, who had no claims on land as of matrilineal right. In most cases they had acquired portions of land by way of gift or *totokom* to meet their subsistence requirements, but they had few opportunities for extensive planting of cash crops.

The indications are then that land at Matupit is inadequate to meet the demand there for it, though I have no means of stating whether the situation is as critical as it appears to be in some parts of Chimbu. At all events, if there are affinities in

that the land was essential for their subsistence. However, in a personal communication (12.11.1960), Mr Ball has described to me how he was asked to undertake a survey of land holding at Matupit. He points out that once the Matupi became aware of the nature of the inquiry they refused to co-operate, with the result that 'the survey never got under way'.

the two situations, there are also some interesting differences. Brookfield and Brown (1963: 39-40) note how in Chimbu boundary marks vary with the class of land. 'High use' land is more highly valued, and the struggle for land is therefore expressed in 'the tenacity with which individual rights and group interests [in such land] are protected against encroachment'. That such distinctions do not appear to be drawn at Matupit might be taken as a further pointer to the scarcity of agricultural land there. Yet if this is so, it is all the more striking that the vast majority of disputes on the island concerned residential, not horticultural land: they turned on the right to put up a house or other building.

On an island as tiny as Matupit, with a burgeoning population, it is clear that there will be a premium on space. Yet it remains doubtful whether in itself this is adequate to account for the number and character of the disputes. In two instances there was a direct reference to land shortage as a motive for refusing permission to 'outsiders' to build on matrilineage land. For example in the dispute between ToLopa and the Methodists, ToLopa claimed in effect that even if a gift of land had been made to the church by one of his ancestors, he was now entitled to reclaim it because there was no longer sufficient land for his *vunatarai*. But it seems clear from the whole context of the case that this was not his major objection; 'land shortage' merely provided him with a convenient pretext for resisting the claims of the Methodists to build their new church. A similar point was raised in the dispute between ToUrapal and his matrilineal kin after he had given his sons permission to build on matrilineage land. It will be recalled, however, that ToUrapal's own maternal nephews pointed out that it was good for them all to live together. They were not seeking to drive their cross-cousins off the land. What they sought was a public reassurance that proprietary rights in the land remained vested in themselves, and on this basis the matter was settled quite amicably. Again, it seems pertinent to note that those who were most actively engaged in waging disputes were also usually those who were least directly affected by shortage of land. In a word, most of the disputes we have examined are evidence not of a struggle for land as such but of a struggle to assert rights of control over land.

It has already been remarked as a truism that men compete for scarce resources. But we need to be particularly careful here lest we fall into the trap of accepting an oversimple view of cause and effect. It is self-evident that scarcity of resources may breed antagonisms and precipitate quarrels; it may be less obvious, though equally true, that men also frequently seize on what is scarce as a medium through which their pre-existing rivalries can be expressed. There may be circumstances, that is to say, where it is the fact of competition, rather than the scarcity of resources as such, which is primary in the aetiology of dispute. The inference I draw from the evidence is that this is the present situation at Matupit in regard to land.

Competition is woven into the fabric of the Tolai social system in a number of ways. On an abstract plane, it is seen in the Tolai perception of their society as composed of two moieties which exist in an eternal relationship of antagonism and opposition. At a more mundane level it is to be seen in the operation of the 'big man' principle of leadership. This is a topic which will be explored further when we have had the opportunity to examine a number of other critical institutions of the social and political system. In the meantime, it is sufficient to note that the traditional means by which local leaders acquired their following and won prestige are no longer available at Matupit. Accordingly, land has become the dominant ingredient in defining the position of the leader, and the major focus of the struggle for prestige and power, at least in the context of what we may call indigenous village politics. There are compelling reasons why this should be so.

For the Tolai land is pre-eminently an index of group identity. This is clear in regard to the political units of the society, which are named local groups, but it is equally true of the descent groups. Members of the clan acknowledge their common bonds not by reference to a genealogy, but by tracing their links to a number of small localities, their places of origin (*vunapaina* or, in some parts, *madapai*). Finally, the importance of land in defining the status of a local lineage has been stressed in so many contexts that it scarcely bears reiterating here. But the concept of identity also entails some

sense of the cultural distinctiveness of the community to which one belongs and of the structuring of relationships within it. And here too land is fundamental, since so many essential features of the social system are to be found encapsulated within the system of land tenure: the allocation of resources and the organisation of economic activities; the attribution of political authority and the relationships between groups. Above all, it is upon the land that the continuity of the social system rests: those who at present control it received it as a trust from their ancestors and hold it in keeping for the unborn generations. For the *vunatarai*, the land is not only its history recorded in the names of the ancestors who lived on it or worked it, it is also its guarantee of the future.

These considerations have particular relevance to Matupit. Of all Tolai communities, Matupit comes closest to resembling a true village in the sense of a discrete physical and residential group. However, given the limitations of space, the dense population, and the large number of its people who work in Rabaul, the island has taken on increasingly the appearance of a peri-urban settlement or suburban dormitory. That the transformation has not been more radical is due to the continuing relationship of the Matupi to their land. It is against this background that I think one has to assess the incidence of disputes over residential land. I surmise that in the past the tendency for men to settle on the land of their father's matrilineage must have given rise to difficulties. Today the problem is greatly exacerbated by the practice of putting up permanent, modern-style houses. If this process were allowed to go on unchecked, the result before long would be utter confusion. For once the relationship between the *vunatarai* and its hamlet land becomes obscured, the basic underpinning of the system is removed, and the entire structure of social relationships erected upon it collapses. Among the younger people of Matupit there were some who saw the waging of land disputes as a futile game played by useless old men. For the elders themselves, and for the many who sat patiently through the hearings, there can be little doubt that the proceedings had all the interest of a well-performed drama. But more serious issues were also at stake, for although it may be doubted whether the Matupi saw the matter in quite these terms,

litigation over land was now one of the few means available to them of perpetuating the traditional social and political system. Should the waging of land disputes cease to be a matter of public concern to the islanders, then Matupit could be well on the way to losing its identity as a distinctive Tolai community and to becoming indeed a suburban dormitory.

Exchange, *Tambu*, and Leadership

WE have seen in previous chapters the important part that land plays in promoting stability in Matupi social structure and culture despite the many pressures and influences that are also at work stimulating change. For in so far as the islanders continue to work their land under traditional rules of tenure they remain involved in an essentially indigenous structure of social relationships, and much of their behaviour is still regulated by the customs and values which define and inform those relationships. Thus where one resides, where and to what extent one can make gardens or grow cash crops, all these depend upon membership of a local descent group, the unit which exercises proprietary rights in land. Such membership is fixed by birth, but continuing claims to land also depend upon recognition of the authority of the elders of the group as well as the fulfilment of one's customary obligations. In these ways land provides an obvious cornerstone of the social system. But it is no less plain that the perpetuation of this system cannot be understood in terms of land alone. If landholding units, in the form of local descent groups, may be regarded as the basic bricks of the social structure, we also have to take account of the inter-relations between these groups, the mortar by which they are built into a social system. Stated shortly, relations between descent groups are mediated through the system of exchange, in particular through the regulation of marriage and the performance of ceremonies. It is in these contexts that the social, as distinct from the economic or commercial, significance of shell-money emerges most plainly, for no marriage can be properly contracted or ceremony staged without the exchange

and distribution of considerable sums of *tambu*. In the past, control of wealth in shell-money was the quintessential mark of the Tolai 'big man', and in his ability to control marriage and sponsor ceremonies through the manipulation of wealth lay the source of his power and influence within the community. In this chapter I shall focus on marriage and certain aspects of ceremonial, but my main concern with these institutions will be their bearing on the relationship between wealth and political leadership, and the way in which this is changing.

Structural Aspects of Marriage

In recent years an increasing number of anthropologists have come to emphasise the factor of choice in their analyses of how social systems work. While continuing to think of social structure as a configuration of role relationships, they now perceive a greater measure of elasticity in these relationships; that is to say, rules and roles are seen to possess a 'built-in' degree of leeway that provides for freedom of manoeuvre and opportunity to manipulate the rules to one's own advantage. These assumptions are readily extended to the analysis of situations where formerly isolated and technologically unsophisticated groups have been drawn into a wider network of relationship, because one of the major consequences of such a process is the extension of the area of choice. This standpoint has been explicitly adopted by Mair, who remarks (1964: 5): 'One sees people who have always had open to them a certain area of free choice, but who now find themselves in a situation where the range of choice is much wider'. Marriage is pre-eminently a field in which the effect of a widening of the range of choice is likely to make itself felt. For this reason an account of marriage rules and the contemporary pattern in choice of partners is indispensable to any analysis of continuity and change in Matupi social structure.

Traditionally among the Tolai, as in other primitive and peasant societies where so much of social life was regulated by the principles of kinship and affinity, marriage was regarded as too important to be left to the whims and fancies of young lovers. Young people were not allowed to marry without the

consent of their parents or other kin, and although some regard might be paid to their wishes, it frequently happened that they did not know—certainly they were not entitled to know—who had been selected as the marriage partner until the negotiations had been completed. Choice of a spouse in these circumstances was guided by various criteria—the demeanour and habits of the boy or girl, the character and social status of their kinsfolk, the amount of shell-money demanded as bridewealth and so on—but it was also circumscribed by two sets of prohibitions, the one expressed in the rule of moiety exogamy, the other in the ban on marriage with certain prescribed categories of kin.

We have seen earlier how the whole of Tolai society was divided into two moieties. These were essentially marriage classes and marriage within the moiety was regarded as almost unthinkable. Danks, the first missionary to settle on the Gazelle Peninsula in 1878, states that any breach of the rule against sexual relations within the moiety would have brought about the instant death of the woman at the hands of her own kin, and he thought probably of the man too. But he added that speculation on what might have happened to the man was idle because such cases never occurred in a thickly populated district (Danks, 1888: 282-3). Some years later Kleintitschen, a missionary of the Sacred Heart, described the position in similar terms but reported that a few converts had married in breach of the rule. However, he went on immediately to point out that such persons were totally unacceptable to their fellow tribesmen, and had to be transferred to other places where they were unknown. Yet even there word of their offences would soon penetrate, and he makes it clear that such couples were able to survive only under the protection of the mission (Kleintitschen, 1906: 191).

It appears indeed from Kleintitschen's account that Catholic missionaries of the day made serious efforts to persuade the Tolai to abandon the rule, presumably on the grounds that it was in conflict with the concept of Christian marriage they were seeking to propagate. They met with little success. Today, more than half a century later, with Christianity deeply embedded in their culture, the rule of moiety exogamy is still accepted as axiomatic and, even though the penalty of death

can no longer be exacted, is observed with the same stringency as in former times. At Matupit I came across only one case of an incestuous relationship in breach of the prohibition, both parties to which had died during the last war. The numerous genealogies I collected produced no instance of a marriage within the moiety.

Sexual intercourse and marriage were also prohibited in other sets of relationships, even though the persons concerned were in opposite moieties. Meier (1929: 6) specifies these as: father and daughter, paternal uncle and niece, paternal aunt and nephew, paternal grandfather and granddaughter, paternal grandmother and grandson, as well as cross-cousins. It is also plain from Meier's account that these interdictions applied to kinship categories, defined by the system of terminology, and not merely to immediate cognates. Meier speaks of these prohibitions as being secondary in the sense that their infraction did not assume the special character of detestability which attached to moiety incest. It does not follow, however, that breaches of the rule occurred frequently or were lightly regarded. My genealogical material reveals only a few cases of marriage between classificatory cross-cousins; that there is still a strong prejudice against such unions is well brought out in the following episode.

A young girl called IaDok had been betrothed to a Matupit lad, but appeared to favour another boy called ToVuvut, to whom she was related as *nauvana*.¹ Hearing reports that IaDok's kin were planning to beat ToVuvut, his father reported the matter to the councillor at Kurapun so that the couple could be summoned before the village assembly and questioned about their intentions. At the moot IaDok admitted, after a good deal of hesitation, that she had written a number of letters to ToVuvut. ToVuvut denied that he had replied to these messages but agreed that he and IaDok had met and talked one night. At length ToGorogoro, the councillor, spoke. 'We see', he said, 'that you who sit before us

¹ The Tolai system of nomenclature is of the bifurcate merging type in which no terminological distinction is made between patrilineal and matrilineal cross-cousins. Both are referred to as *nauvana*. This term is also applied to a cross-cousin's child (p. 212). The main terms are set out in Trevitt (1940).

wish to marry, and yet you are *nauvana*. According to the customs of our forefathers it is forbidden that *barnauvana* should marry'. The councillor was followed immediately by a member of the 'committee', an educated man of about thirty employed as an accounts clerk in one of the main European stores in Rabaul. 'Who is there of the *vunatarai* of the boy or the girl', he asked, 'who wishes to see this law changed?' Peter, the schoolteacher, whom we have already met in another context (p. 52), now stood up and declared that according to the policy of the Government they should follow the wishes of the young couple themselves in their choice of a marriage partner; if IaDok and ToVuvut wished to marry, no good would come of seeking to prevent the match. ToGorogoro, who was in his late thirties and had worked as a carpenter until he had been elected councillor, replied angrily: 'If we change this law of our ancestors, the next thing is that we shall be marrying our mothers and sisters, and our land will be ruined by the many new thoughts that our young people seek to introduce'.

ToLopa intervened at this point to say he had heard that ToVuvut had made love magic over the girl, but ToGorogoro refused to allow his father to pursue the matter further, saying that nobody had seen ToVuvut do that and the point should be ignored. An elder of the 'committee' then began to question IaDok closely to discover whether it was truly her wish to marry ToVuvut, and he pressed her until she agreed that she had acted thoughtlessly. This line of questioning angered Peter, who clearly felt that IaDok was being manoeuvred into accepting a position she did not really hold. How could she have acted thoughtlessly, he demanded. If a man were walking in the bush and didn't look where he was going he might fall into a hole and twist his ankle. But IaDok knew what she was doing, and what she was now saying was not true. ToGorogoro replied, but now in a more placatory tone. ToVuvut, he pointed out, had not replied to IaDok's letters. They had met one night so that IaDok could find out why he had not answered her and learn his intentions. The point ToGorogoro was trying to make was that they were not in fact committed to one another. 'It was only a try', he said. The mother of the boy to whom IaDok was betrothed now sought to have returned

the *tambu* she had already paid, but the 'committee' said they wished to deal on this occasion only with the question of IaDok and ToVuvut. Then addressing IaDok, one of the elders said: 'We want you to improve your way of life, and not to repeat the kind of thing which has brought you before us to the seat of judgment. If you do not listen to our advice, for sure you will end up badly'. Peter seemed now to have accepted the general view of the case and asked that an 'atonement fee' should be paid so that IaDok and ToVuvut should cease their relationship. However, ToGorogoro thought there was no need for this, since nothing had been established to show that they had actually done anything wrong. They should simply be warned that an eye would be kept on them, and if they were found together again they would be brought before the moot.

The episode is very revealing of contemporary attitudes towards the question of choice in regard to marriage. It is now generally accepted at Matupit that young people are entitled to wed partners of their own choosing and, even where marriages continue to be arranged, thoughtful parents will try to select a mate of whom they think their child will approve. Part of the interest of the present case lies in the fact that in this instance Peter was seeking to extend the principle of personal preference to include a union that would have violated the traditional proscription on marriage between certain categories of kin. It is clear, however, that he was able to win little support for his views. Nevertheless, his argument did place ToGorogoro in something of a dilemma. ToGorogoro was anxious to see the customary norm upheld but, not being a completely hidebound conservative, he was no less keen to avoid giving the impression that he was forcing a young couple to give up a course of action on which they had set their hearts. This emerges plainly in the placatory tone of his reply to Peter, where he was arguing in effect that since it had not been established that IaDok and ToVuvut were seriously contemplating marriage there could be no question of forcing them to break off their relationship. There was of course a very clear warning to the couple at the end of the case, but by this time Peter had come to accept the popular view of the situation.

Extension of the range of choice in the context of marriage has two aspects. The first, which we have just considered, refers to the recognition of a freedom to choose which formerly was acknowledged only to a limited extent, if at all. The second is concerned with a widening of the range of alternatives themselves; this becomes increasingly important when people are no longer physically or socially restricted to contacts within their own ethnic or linguistic group. Initially, on Matupit, it was the womenfolk who enjoyed the opportunities for liaisons outside the group, and in earlier years a small number of Matupi girls married Chinese and settled with their husbands in Rabaul. A few have also married men from other parts of New Guinea who were working in Rabaul and then settled in Tolai communities. Nowadays, with increased physical mobility throughout the Territory, Tolai males have better chances for forming attachments with women from outside the Gazelle Peninsula, and a number of Matupi men have brought such wives home with them on their return to the island. During my period of fieldwork a couple of incidents triggered off a good deal of animated discussion among the Matupi on the propriety of marriages between Tolai and Europeans, which served to focus attention on some of the contemporary sources of cleavage within the community. The first case concerned a possible marriage, which in the end did not take place, between a European living in Rabaul and a young Matupi girl; the second was the talk of a marriage, which subsequently did eventuate, between a Matupi man, recently returned from a college education in Australia, and an Australian girl working in the Territory. In both instances there was a striking difference of opinion between the more traditionally-oriented, not all of them in the older age categories, who were opposed to the unions, and the more 'progressive' element who welcomed them, seeing such marriages as a means of bringing the two racial groups closer together and thus elevating their own cultural standards. We shall have occasion to examine these cleavages more closely in a later context.

Given this widening of choice in both its aspects, with its important structural implications, it is all the more interesting to examine the pattern of choice as it is revealed in

marriages actually contracted. Data were collected on all extant marriages known to have been contracted by men and women domiciled on Matupit. Marriage on Matupit is predominantly virilocal, and the overall position is set out in Table 10 from the point of view of males.

It is apparent from Table 10 that in spite of the wider opportunities the Matupi now enjoy in regard to choice of marriage partners, they yet remain very parochial in the matter. Some 60 per cent of the men had found their wives within the island itself, while 40 per cent of all unions were between couples who had previously been living in different

Table 10

The spatial and social range of extant marriages of Matupi men,
1960-1

Provenance of spouses in marriages	Total	Sub-total	%
A Contracted within Matupit			
Within the hamlet	—		—
Within the village section	6		2.7
Between sections of a village	88		39.5
Between villages	42		18.8
		136	
B Contracted with other Tolai			
Baai	22		9.9
Nodup	11		4.9
Talwat	6		2.7
Malaguna	5		2.2
Valaur	3		1.3
Davaon	3		1.3
Raluana	8		3.6
Others	21		9.9
		79	
G Contracted with non-Tolai	8	8	2.3
Total	223		99.9

sections of the same village. The Matupi are parochial in another respect too. For while there is a considerable amount of individual mobility between Tolai communities, taken as a whole the population of the island remains firmly anchored to its locale. Close to 70 per cent of resident householders were born on Matupit, while a little more than 50 per cent were

FIG. 14 Marriage links between selected lineages at Kikila

living there in their natal villages. These factors combined inevitably produce a community that is criss-crossed and intertwined in the most intricate fashion by links of marriage. Fig. 14, which is based on the ties established over three to four generations between the *vunatarai* of a number of leading elders at Kikila, is intended to do no more than illustrate the complexity of the pattern. The links here, it should be emphasised, are between local matrilineages. Were seminal bonds, on which the Matupi also lay heavy stress, also included, a more complicated diagram would have to be presented. To give but two examples: the wife of Tio was the daughter of a man of generation A in ToDapal's group; again, a mother's brother of Tio had married a woman from Valaur. One of their sons, ToVorin, is now living at Kikila

married to a sister of Makadek, while Makadek himself is married to the sister of ToVorin.

The figure as it stands, however, does illustrate a number of important aspects of the Tolai conception of marriage, in which the flow of women is seen as a means of establishing and perpetuating links between local groups. The simplest form of marriage in a system based on exogamous moieties is the exchange of sisters between two brothers. Such an arrangement is known to the Tolai as a *ki vargil* or a *ki varbali*, expressions which, though difficult to translate precisely, do clearly imply a reciprocal exchange relationship. I am not quite clear about the meaning of the morpheme *ki* in this context,² but *vargil* is an adverb meaning from or to one another, while *varbali* derives from the verb *bali*, to answer, pay back, or reciprocate. The Tolai usage includes not only the exchange of a sister, but also a sister's daughter. Examples of such unions are to be found in the figure in the links in generation C of Pepelegi's and ToDapal's groups, as well as in the case of Makadek and ToVorin just mentioned. Pepelegi's marriage to his first wife, who died during the war, was also of this kind.

Although, as I have said, the *ki varbali* is seen as an essentially reciprocal relationship, there is no requirement that the two unions be negotiated simultaneously.³ At Matupit each marriage was treated as a separate transaction. Nor did the notion of direct reciprocity which is implicit in this form of marriage demand an exact *quid pro quo*. Both these points are illustrated in the account given to me by Kaputin of his own marriage. A younger sister had already married a man from Baai, on the other side of Mt Mother, and bridewealth

² The Kuanua dictionary produced by the Methodist Mission translates *ki varbali* as to exchange seats or dwellings. This would certainly appear to express the underlying idea, and my only doubt arises from the fact that *ki* is a verb meaning to be, exist, sit, etc., whereas the noun form is *kini*, existence, condition, etc., or *kiki*, a chair or seat. Another possibility is that *ki* is a contraction of *kia* which Lanyon-Orgill (1960) gives as to change or exchange.

³ In arranging the marriages of their children, parents may seek for a *ki varbali* from the very outset. Here a *valima*, an oath or binding promise, attaches to the arrangement to complete the exchange within the near future. Informants mentioned that in former times a man who had no sister might find considerable difficulty in getting married himself.

of 60 fathoms of *tambu* was paid for her. Later his mother was casting around for a bride for himself and decided on the sister of his brother-in-law. The bridewealth demanded on this occasion was 100 fathoms, and this was eventually paid.

A *ki varbali* cements bonds between autonomous descent groups. If, as happens in certain other social systems, 'sister exchange' is accompanied by cross-cousin marriage, the result will almost certainly be a form of 'systematic' exchange, in which the affinal links are reaffirmed in each generation, binding the groups into relatively stable sets of relationships over considerable periods of time. However, amongst the Tolai, as we have seen, cross-cousin marriage is proscribed. Nevertheless, the same broad ends may be achieved by different means, and one frequently finds on Matupit that a marriage having once been contracted between two groups, the initial bond is reaffirmed and perpetuated by further unions between them in alternate or subsequent generations. In some instances of this kind that I came across the movement of women appears to have been in one direction only, as in the marriages linking the *vunatarai* of Tio and ToGarama (fig. 14). In another case, involving the neighbouring groups of Rupen and ToKononia at Raulaveo, the unidirectional flow has gone on over a number of generations. The initial link here was the marriage of Simeon and IaPukut (see fig. 11). Then in the following generation a mother's brother of ToKononia married a classificatory sister of Rupen. Subsequently a young girl of Rupen's *vunatarai* was bespoken when still a child as the future wife of ToKononia's uterine nephew.⁴ The genealogical relationship of the couple, from the point of view of the man, was that of mother's mother's mother's brother's daughter's

⁴ The Tolai refer to the custom of bespeaking a girl as a *kakap varbat*. A small sum of *tambu* is paid over to the parents of the girl, together with gifts of food and perhaps clothes. The couple become formally betrothed only when the bridewealth passes, possibly many years later, and the girl leaves her parents' home to take up residence with her future parents-in-law. In the present instance it appeared likely that a marriage might not eventuate as the girl, in her late teens when I was at Matupit, was of an independent turn of mind and was thought to be unenthusiastic about the union. Altogether the custom of *kakap varbat* is unpopular with the younger generation, and it appears to be disappearing rapidly.

daughter's daughter, though the Tolai themselves have no term for it. As the Tolai see it, the arrangement here involves two groups, one of which is said to have 'fathered' the other. Obviously in these circumstances there can be no question of direct reciprocity. All the more interesting therefore is the comment of ToKonia who, having outlined the relations of the two groups, concluded by remarking: 'We marry them and they marry us'.

As these remarks indicate, there is no institutionalised division known to the Tolai of wife-giving and wife-receiving groups. Although, as we have just seen, there are instances where relations between *vunatarai* are marked by the movement of women in one direction, the more usual pattern is for women to move in both directions, the exchanges being continued over a number of generations. I know of no specific term in the vernacular for exchange marriages of this kind, nor did I find that the unions contracted in a subsequent generation were regarded in any way as being in fulfilment of a binding obligation incurred in an earlier one (see also below, p. 230). Nevertheless, the high incidence of such cases points to the importance of the principle of reciprocity in Tolai thought. Fig. 14 provides one example, that of Pepelegi, where the exchange took place in adjacent generations. So far as my records go, this is very rare, for as we have seen, strong objections are likely to be raised against a marriage between a couple who are cross-cousins. There was some difference of opinion amongst informants whether a man might marry his father's sister's daughter's daughter. Some said the term for cross-cousin applied to this relationship, and that such unions came within the terms of the prohibition on marriage 'within the blood'. Yet others applied the term *labang* to the relationship, and said it was permissible for *barlabang* to marry. An instance of such a marriage is provided in the case of ToGarama, though the point is obscured in fig. 14 because A in this instance includes two generations. But whether they occur over one or two generations, what such reciprocal exchanges mean in effect is that a man takes a wife from the group which 'fathered' him. Where the two matrilineages concerned are well established there may indeed be a series of such exchanges over

the generations, in which, as we have seen in the relations of the *vunatarai* of Rupen and ToLopa, it eventually becomes possible for each group to claim to have 'begotten' the other.

The discussion thus far has emphasised the importance of exchange in creating an intricate web of affinal bonds linking together the various local lineages on the island of Matupit itself. It should be stressed, however, that marriage exchanges, whether of the *ki varbali* or inter-generational type, are not restricted to unions contracted within the local community or parish. The example of Kaputin cited above is a case in point. However, most marriages occurring between parishes diverge from the patterns of exchange already described, for they are conceived as creating links between local or territorial units rather than between specific descent groups. Marriage outside the local community is rarely contracted at random; if anything, such unions reveal even more strikingly the desirability in Tolai eyes of marrying into a group with whom established relationships already exist. Since marriage is virilocal, it is the women who move: in this way they have a crucial role in the establishment and maintenance of links between opposed political units. The working of this arrangement is closely associated with the structure of the clan as a dispersed unit, the nodes or segments of which are localised at various points within different parishes. In these circumstances it becomes possible for a woman, brought up in one parish, to marry into another in the knowledge that members of her own *vunatarai* are already settled in her new home area and will be able to assist and care for her.

Consideration of some of the marriages that have occurred in the *vunatarai* of Rupen will serve to illustrate how such an arrangement builds up over time into an elaborate set of reciprocal relations between politically autonomous groups. Rupen's *vunatarai* is said to have arisen at Raluana, but important local centres were established at Matupit and Nodup, on the other side of Mt Mother. It was from a locality within the Nodup district that an ancestress, IaMigir, came to marry at Matupit (see fig. 9). IaMigir is said to have borne three daughters, IaKurai, IaRangane, and IaValar, who were brought up at Matupit. IaRangane eventually married a man at Reinatun, but both IaKurai and IaValar returned

to marry at Nodup. In the next generation, a daughter of IaKurai, IaPukut, married back into Matupit where she bore Rupen, while two of the daughters of IaValar also married men at Matupit. Rupen's own wife, and the wife of his younger classificatory brother, Butman (see fig. 13), are both Nodup women. A similar pattern is revealed in the case of TiPaul. It will be recalled that in the course of his dispute with Matinut (see p. 155), doubts were raised about TiPaul's local and *vunatarai* affiliations. According to his own account, TiPaul's maternal grandfather, ToUradaula, was a man of Davaon, a Tolai community on the other side of Blanche Bay. In the course of a fight of the kind prevalent in pre-contact times ToUradaula was taken as a prisoner to Matupit, where he grew up. (The fact that he was not slain and eaten would seem to suggest that members of his own *vunatarai* were already settled on the island.) ToUradaula married at Matupit, so that TiPaul's own mother, IaGuguna, was born at Kikila. IaGuguna married a man from Davaon and her three children were born there, but she returned to Matupit with them on the death of her husband. One of TiPaul's sisters married at Matupit, while another returned to marry at Davaon. Two of his mother's sisters were also married at Davaon, and their descendants continue to live there. Although TiPaul has spent nearly the whole of his life at Matupit and regards himself as a true native of the island, he also retains close links with Davaon, which he speaks of as a major centre of his *vunatarai*.

These examples go a long way towards countering the impression which has possibly been created of Matupit as an involuted and relatively self-sufficient community, at least where marriage is concerned. For, even when a marriage occurs between a couple who were both born on the island, the Matupi do not lose sight of the fact that the girl's mother or grandmother will possibly have come from another Tolai community; the chances are that a sister of the girl or later one of her own daughters will return in marriage to the district with which her *vunatarai* is associated. Since all descent groups represented on the island point to a place of origin (a *gunan na vaki* or *vunapaina*) outside Matupit, and in so many cases maintain such links of marriage with the

district of origin, the overall effect is that each part of the island tends to have its own distinctive set of external relations or alliances, and Matupit as a whole to have links with a wide range of other Tolai communities. Through these forms of exchange, marriage in the last analysis always leads outwards and, as we shall discuss shortly, provides a basis for other sets of activities which knit the politically autonomous Tolai communities into a single social and cultural system.

Bridewealth and Marriage Ceremonies

Earlier writers on the Tolai frequently emphasise the hostility that existed in former times between the various territorial groups, and the limits this placed on mobility between them. In consequence, it is contended, the physical range of marriage was also severely limited, and there was a marked tendency towards local endogamy. While this may be true in very general terms, the evidence from the genealogies as well as *vunatarai* and marital histories collected at Matupit makes it clear that even in pre-contact times there was a considerable amount of movement in the area and inter-marriage between groups. Indeed, so far as Matupit is concerned, leaving aside the tiny proportion of marriages with non-Tolai, there seems little reason for assuming that the contemporary distribution of marriages diverges radically from the pattern of a century ago. This of course is not to assert that marriage retains the structural significance that it had then. Apart from the rule of moiety exogamy and the prohibition on marriage between close cognates, the present distribution of marriages is not necessarily incompatible with the exercise of individual choice in the selection of marriage partners, and the fact that a continuing pattern of exchange is discernible in the data, while suggestive, is not wholly conclusive that marriage is still seen essentially as an affair of groups as much as of individuals. The group aspects of marriage are more clearly reflected in the payments, prestations, and distributions that are made on the occasion of a marriage, and the further mutual obligations to which the union gives rise, and it is these we must now turn to consider.

There appears to be considerable variation in the details

of custom surrounding the celebration of marriage in different parts of the Gazelle. In some parts, for example, the delivery of the bridewealth, the *varukukul*, is quite an elaborate and colourful affair. At Matupit, some of my informants assured me, the *varukukul* had always been performed with a minimum of ceremony, though others insisted that it was more elaborate than is the case today. Certainly, those *varukukul* which occurred during my fieldwork were effected with a minimum of fuss and were quickly concluded. Thus in one case a young woman called at my house one evening to announce a 'bride-purchase' at Kikila. By the time I arrived the whole thing was over and the groom's party had set off to return to Nodup. On another occasion, having heard beforehand that a *varukukul* was in the offing, I asked to be advised when the groom's party arrived at Matupit. But once again I was unable to make any direct observations, for this time the party arrived unexpectedly in the early hours of the morning, and my cook decided it was better to leave me undisturbed. The father of the girl, and a number of others, had to be aroused from sleep, and a frantic effort made to find a supply of areca-nuts which are distributed on these occasions, following the actual handing over of the *tambu*. The whole affair was concluded very expeditiously.

Yet it would be quite wrong to see in the speed and lack of ceremony with which the *varukukul* is now performed a weakening of the traditional notion that a proper marriage can only be contracted by the passage of shell-money. Payment of bridewealth in some form is probably universal throughout Papua-New Guinea, but it is interesting to note that in some of the areas most exposed to Western influence, cash has come to supplement, if not wholly to replace, the transfer of traditional valuables. The sums involved may be considerable, in some cases running into many hundreds of pounds. The Tolai look on such practices with contempt, and see in them the reduction of marriage to a purely commercial transaction; they are only prepared to countenance them in the rare case of a Tolai girl marrying outside the ethnic group. Thus in one case that I recorded a girl from Matupit married a Papuan employed in a government department at Rabaul. The marriage was celebrated at Matupit and

bridewealth paid of £A100.⁵ In only one instance that I know of where both parties were Tolai did I hear of the bridewealth being paid in cash. This concerned a young man who had already married and divorced three women, and had caused his mother's brothers so much trouble that they refused to help him in the 'purchase' of a fourth. The young man accordingly arranged the marriage himself, and paid over a sum of £A12 in cash, thereby confirming the popular reputation he already enjoyed as a thorough scapegrace.

Nor has there been the tendency towards inflation of the bride-price which has been remarked in some areas where cash has become more plentiful. In former times bridewealth among the Tolai appears to have been fixed by the kin of the bride, and the amount actually transferred varied considerably with the status of the parties concerned. Today such marked fluctuations no longer occur: for Methodists and Seventh Day Adventists an upper limit is fixed at 100 fathoms of *tambu*, while for Roman Catholics the figure is 50 fathoms. I was unable to discover how or when this arrangement was introduced, but there seems little doubt that the Matupi have been working with a standardised marriage payment for at least the past thirty years. These sums are contributed on behalf of the husband by his mother and mother's brother, and the father too frequently pays a share. The *tambu* thus handed over is held by the girl's mother or other close matrilineal kinsman as part of the *vunatarai* fund. However, the modern practice at Matupit is that where the first child is a daughter, or in the case of a first girl in a large family, the bridewealth goes to the father. I was told that this was a way of compensating the father for the loss of the *nidok* fees he would have received in the past when his son was initiated into the cult of the *tubuan*, but nowadays denied to him because this institution has been moribund at Matupit for a number of years.

The *varhukul* itself is a small-scale affair, attended mainly by the parties most directly concerned: members of the *vunatarai* of both sets of parents. At Matupit wider public interest and participation attaches to the ceremony known as *namata*.

⁵ In a number of other instances of New Guineans marrying Matupi girls, the husbands had been previously 'adopted' into the community, and bridewealth in *tambu* was paid for them by their benefactors.

Some time after the payment of the bridewealth, the groom is required to leave the village and go and stay in the bush, where he is accompanied and cared for by a number of his bachelor companions. In the past a young man might be compelled to spend some months living in this way, isolated from all human contacts save those of his servers, and especially from women. Nowadays many bachelors are likely to be in employment outside the village, and the period has been reduced to about a week. They are expected to leave for work before the village has awakened and only to return after nightfall. Crimped *Dracaena* leaves called a *midel*, which are important in love magic, and which are now suspended from trees along the paths of the village, announce that a youth has gone into retreat (*a paraparau*). Throughout this period he is supported by gifts of food made by a variety of individuals within the village. Meanwhile, preparations are afoot for the ceremony of emergence. The central features of the *namata* are the erection of a long pole, called a *tulu*, at the spot where the ceremony will take place, and the building of a small house, a *pal na mamarikai* or 'house of emergence'. The building of the house takes place at the *taraiu*, a kind of sacred grove situated in the bush, which is associated with the *tubuan* and other wholly male activities. A good deal of craftsmanship and artistry goes into the creation of a *pal na mamarikai*, whose completion may take a couple of weeks. The final tasks are attended to on the day of the *namata* itself, when the underpart of the structure is ritually sprayed from the mouth with the juice of various leaves. The groom and his servers now partake of a specially prepared meal which is served up with a relish euphemistically referred to as *ku*, the ordinary coconut milk sauce without which no Tolai feast is complete. The relish in this instance is said to possess magical properties, and its proper name is supposed to be known only to men; it is said that were a woman to taste it her reproductive organs would be seriously affected. The other men eat apart. The meal over, all set about adorning themselves: hair is dyed with a dark liquid substance (*a utur*) made from the cinders of burnt areca-nut leaves, coconut-oil and milk; slaked lime is rubbed on foreheads; while others put on a bundle of leaves daubed with red ochre

(a *tar*) which hangs down their backs. All of this activity goes on to the accompaniment of the persistent cries of the *konga*, an eerie sound produced by blowing into a leaf, which is supposed to represent itself to the women and uninitiated males as the voices of spirits, warning them not to approach a spot where secret rites are being performed.

When word has been received that preparations in the village are complete, the procession moves slowly out of the bush. The *pal na mamarikai* is borne aloft, while underneath walks the groom surrounded by his help-mates; others throng around. Entering the village, the cortège is greeted with triumphant shouts proclaiming the name of the *tubuan* whose particular style has been incorporated in the design of the house. Some of the women burst into copious weeping; they are said to bewail certain of their close kinsmen whose death is recalled to them by the appearance of the *tubuan* figure. Finally, the procession comes to a halt at the spot where the *tulu* has already been erected. The house is now set upon bamboo poles, and serves as a kind of canopy or tabernacle under which the groom and his party sit quietly. By this time many hundreds of people will have gathered, mostly from the various parts of Matupit itself, but some who have come in lorries from other districts where the *vunatarai* of the boy or his father are located. Now there is a general surge forward, and large numbers of individuals come forward to throw a piece of shell-money, sometimes wrapped with the leaf of a casuarina, on the mat before the 'house of emergence'. When this is completed, the groom himself is called upon to distribute *tambu* to his help-mates and all those who had assisted him with food while in the bush. Thus at the *namata* for a son of ToGarama, small pieces of *tambu* were given to more than thirty persons, amounting altogether to 70 fathoms. On that occasion the prestations were followed by a short speech by Kaputin addressed to the younger people, in which he emphasised how important it was that they should not forget these customs which had come down to them from their ancestors of old. If they did not maintain the customs relating to *tambu*, their country would fall on evil days. In other instances special dances were staged. The *namata* concludes with a general feast.

The responsibility for staging a *namata* rests with the boy's father and mother's brother, though it frequently happens that it is the father alone who carries the burden of sponsorship. Acting as sponsor calls for a certain amount of organisational skill, but even more for the expenditure of considerable sums of cash and shell-money. In the first place, as we have already noted, all those who acted as help-mates or assisted with gifts of food while the boy was in retreat have to be re-imbursed in *tambu*. Then food has to be provided for the men who helped in preparing the *tulu* and *pal na mamarikai*, and payment made to the women who collected firewood and threaded the shell-money for distribution. There may also be the cost of transport for visitors from other districts. Finally, there are the expenses incurred in providing the feast. In two *namata* which I observed personally, when I was able to get fairly detailed information, I estimate that the total expenses amounted to £A30 and 100 fathoms of shell-money in the one case, and £A15 and 75 fathoms in the other. The *tambu*, which is publicly presented to the boy, is held for him by a senior kinsman; it does not go to re-imburse the sponsor. Of course the sponsor does not carry the full burden alone; he can usually expect to receive assistance in the form of shell-money and food from various kin and affines as well as other individuals within the community. For example, the food for the feast is brought along on a kind of stretcher called a *kip na lukara*. Each *kip* will have been provided by a different group. The individual contributions to a particular *kip* are usually known and carefully recorded, for each contribution imposes on the recipient an obligation to reciprocate on some subsequent occasion. From this point of view, the *namata* provides an arena within which standing obligations are fulfilled and new debt relationships incurred. The full significance of the *namata* in its structural aspects only emerges therefore when it is set in the context of an ongoing series of exchanges and distributions of various kinds.

It follows from what has just been said that the scale of the *namata* tends to reflect closely the social and economic status of the boy's sponsor. The association between the holding of the ceremony and social status is seen in other ways

too. After his speech at the *namata* for ToGarama's son, Kaputin sat down beside me and gave me a commentary on the events we had just been observing. The *namata*, he pointed out, was not performed for every boy; it takes place only when the father or mother's brother is a man of wealth and position, and where all the steps leading up to marriage have been properly observed. The full import of Kaputin's remarks became clearer to me when a *namata* was performed at Kurapun for ToVaninar, a young man in his mid-twenties⁶ who was a teacher at the Malaguna Technical School. I was present at the *taraiu* during the final preparations for his emergence from the bush. When I arrived the house had already been completed, and everyone present was eager to impress on me the originality and imaginativeness of the design, which was conceived in the form of a *dukduk* figure. It had been executed by ToVaninar's father, Taule, a highly respected elder. One of his sons, I was now told, had married in haste and in accordance with his own desires, and no *namata* had been performed for him. Since ToVaninar was his youngest son, this would be the last house of emergence that Taule would build, and he had put into it all his skill and artistry. I should appreciate therefore that this was a great occasion. But mingled with these expressions of aesthetic pleasure there was also a strong note of the local pride and boastfulness which find direct expression in so much of Tolai ceremonial. It was known that I had participated in the *namata* for ToGarama's son at Kikila. Everyone now took great pains therefore to assure me that this house was quite different and, by implication, more finely conceived than the one designed by ToGarama. At Kurapun, they said, there were many first-rate artists, and all had lent their skill in preparing Taule's house. At Kikila, however, there were no such experts (*a melem*) save, they grudgingly acknowledged, ToGarama; but see, they concluded triumphantly, ToGarama himself had been brought up at Kurapun.

The sponsorship of marriage ceremonies is thus closely

⁶ The age at first marriage of Tolai males is often comparatively late. This appears to have been the case in the past too, for Kleintitschen reports (1906: 192) that men rarely married before the age of 20-25. For further details and discussion see Epstein, A. L. and T. S., 1962.

linked with questions of prestige and leadership within the community. This is a theme to which I shall return in a later section of this chapter. For the moment I wish to confine discussion to a more limited aspect of the problem: what is sometimes referred to as the politics of marriage. There can be little doubt that amongst the Tolai in the past, as in so many primitive societies, the power to arrange marriages, including his own, was an important attribute of the political leader or 'big man'. At Matupit today this remains true only to a limited extent. Perhaps the most obvious expression of change in the functioning of the marriage system is in regard to polygyny. According to Powell's account (1883: 57), polygyny prevailed in the area, and any man who was wealthy in shell-money could have as many wives as he felt inclined to purchase. However, it appears likely that the situation on the Gazelle Peninsula was not substantially different from what has been described for other primitive societies where this form of marriage was practised (see, e.g. Maybury-Lewis, 1967: 77), for Schnee (1904: 97) reports that only rich men could afford a number of wives and that most men were in fact monogamists. Schnee adds that the greatest number of wives possessed by any one man known to him was ten: these belonged to a well respected 'chief' at Kabair. The association of polygyny with political status is also mentioned by Kleintitschen, who observed (1906: 200) that many 'chiefs' acquired wives to care for their gardens; in these cases the numbers could be quite large, and he cites the instance of one local leader who had thirteen. Kleintitschen himself thus stresses the economic advantages of polygyny, but one suspects that 'big men' of the day also contracted such marriages as a means of establishing affinal links with other groups where these would offer a political advantage. But all of this is now a thing of the past. In the eighty years since missionaries first arrived in the area, Christianity has taken firm root amongst the Tolai and polygyny has almost totally disappeared. I know of only one man at Matupit who had a polygynous marriage; he did not count as a leading member of the community, and was not accepted as a full member of his church.

It must be assumed that standardisation of the bridewealth

has also changed the workings of the system in important respects. In former times the amounts paid in bridewealth varied considerably, creating a situation that was more amenable to manipulation. Kleintitschen, who presents the Tolai as a people possessed of few redeeming features, points out that it was the responsibility of the mother's brother to find wives for his nephews, adding that the most important consideration was to find cheap ones. On the other hand, presumably, those who had girls to bestow were anxious to make the most advantageous matches for them. This suggests that the arrangement of marriage in earlier days was a much more competitive process than it is nowadays when, more often than not, the function of the *varkukul* is merely to set the seal of approval on a union, the initial steps towards which the young couple have already accomplished for themselves.

In the past a man began to make his mark as a future leader of his descent group when through his own efforts he started to accumulate wealth and then gradually came to contribute his share to various *vunatarai* undertakings. Thereafter, as *lualua* of his group, arranging the marriages of his uterine nephews and nieces was one of his most important tasks. This was an onerous responsibility; it was at the same time one of the chief means available to him of asserting control over the younger members of the group, for a young man who showed himself indolent or in other ways earned the displeasure of his elders would find trouble in getting married. Assuming responsibility for the payment of bridewealth was thus a way of creating dependents, and the stamp of the really 'big man' was that he extended this responsibility to his sons and to his more distantly connected matrilineal kin. To what extent does this remain the position today? We have seen that it is now generally accepted, within certain limits, that young people are entitled to have their own wishes taken into account where choice of a marriage partner is concerned. This represents an important change in ideology which has far-reaching structural implications: in particular, it must entail considerable diminution in the control over the younger people on the part of parents and senior kin. However, for the present, it is still also generally accepted by the Matupi that the payment of bridewealth in the form

of *tambu* is the only way of contracting a proper marriage. Hence a young man who is anxious to marry continues to need the support of his elders, and I have known a number of cases where fathers and maternal uncles, who were dissatisfied with the behaviour of their sons and nephews, showed considerable reluctance to assist in the payment of bridewealth. Indeed, it might be argued that since the young men at Matupit today have so few opportunities for accumulating their own stocks of *tambu*, they are in this regard even more dependent upon their kin than in the past.⁷ At the same time, the situation is far from static: increasing involvement in wage employment and the social life of the towns, particularly for the more highly educated and skilled, opens up possibilities of escape from the system of a kind that would have been unknown in former times, or at least reduces considerably the efficacy of traditional sanctions. This is well illustrated in the case of one young man which has already been referred to in passing. The young man in question, who had spent a lot of time in different parts of the Gazelle Peninsula as well as on Buka, had been concerned in a series of escapades which won him the severe displeasure of his mother's brothers, and when he sought to marry a girl from Nodup, they refused to assist him in any way. Thereupon the young man proceeded to make his own arrangements, and his offer to pay the marriage payment in cash was accepted.

In a number of other instances that came to my attention men whose parents or kin had refused to pay the bridewealth for them had openly flouted convention and were simply living with their 'unpurchased' brides. One case of particular interest concerned a young man in his early twenties who held

⁷ This is not to imply that men marrying for the first time were expected to meet the bridewealth themselves. The point frequently made by my informants was that in the past only if a young man stayed close to the elders and worked hard on traditional tasks so that he accumulated a lot of *tambu* would they be eager to help him find a wife. In any case, as we have seen, the marriage payment represented only a part of the total expense that might be involved in contracting a marriage. Where a young man showed signs of becoming a little too unruly or obstreperous, he might be brought to heel by what was called a *tinata ma ra tambu* or a *tinata na gunan*, that is he would be subjected to public shaming. People would declare, 'We have "cut" *tambu* on the death of your forbears. What have you done?' Alternatively, he might be threatened with exclusion from the *tubuan* cult.

a post in a department of the Administration in Rabaul. He had seduced a girl from the same part of the island as himself. Word of the affair got abroad, and the matter was brought before the village assembly, where an attempt was made to persuade the young man's father to make arrangements for the *varkukul*. The father refused, alleging that he did not possess any *tambu*. The son then left his house in the village and soon afterwards he and the girl were living openly as husband and wife in a small settlement for Administration employees near Matupit, where they were under the wing of a Matupi schoolteacher who was widely regarded as one of the main spokesmen of the younger generation.

Such cases are still exceptional, and they arouse considerable agitation among the more conservative elements in the village, who are astute enough to perceive in this kind of behaviour not simply the isolated acts of indiscipline which can normally be expected of youths, but a distinct threat to the institution of marriage in its indigenous form, and beyond that to their whole way of life. For what is novel in the situation is only partly the open defiance of the elders' authority; more striking is the repudiation of *tambu* as the only proper medium for contracting marriage. The full implications of such behaviour can only be assessed, however, when we have examined more fully the functions of *tambu* and the value that younger Matupi continue to attach to its accumulation, as well as the opportunities they have and the efforts they are prepared to make to acquire it.

The Dissolution of Marriage

Divorce was a very simple matter in New Britain, according to Danks.

I have known a wife to leave her husband and return to her friends. She may complain of ill-usage and her friends may believe her. Her husband may attempt to get her to return to him, but her friends standing by her, he dare not attempt violence, so she remains with her friends. In the end he may demand that what he paid for her should be refunded by her friends. If they think enough of her to do that, and I have met with a few such cases, the money is repaid, and the wife is free (1888: 293-4).

In general terms the situation today remains very much as described by Danks. Tolai marriage continues to be regulated by customary law rather than by the terms of the Marriage Ordinance, and although many unions are solemnised in church they do not thereby acquire the protection of the law. Divorce is referred to as a *kini varbeai*, literally a living apart or separation; unlike the contracting of a marriage, it is accomplished with an almost complete lack of formality. If a man tires of his wife, he may simply drive her from the house (*i vue* or *i okole vue*). There need be no hearing of the case before the village assembly, for where it is the husband who dismisses his wife there can be no return of the marriage payment. However, where the marriage has been long established and there are children, the kin of the wife may bring the matter before the village forum to inquire why she had been driven away. Where it is the wife who leaves her husband there is more likely to be a 'court' hearing, for then the husband and his kin will be anxious to have the marriage payment returned, though they may be unsuccessful in sustaining their claim if it can be shown that the reason for the wife's desertion really lay in her husband's behaviour. But where it is a clear case of the alienation of a wife's affections, a *nial* or 'pulling' as the Tolai describe it, the guilty party delivers to the husband a sum equivalent to the marriage payment, and he may then take the woman as his wife.

But, as Barnes (1949: 39) has rightly cautioned, the lack of legal or other obstacles to divorce, and the relative ease with which it may be effected in a given society, do not automatically indicate its frequency. It would therefore be unwise, without further examination, to infer that because divorce is easy for the Tolai marriage is normally brittle. There is little discussion of the matter in the earlier literature on the area and, understandably, what there is is largely impressionistic. Schnee⁸ (1904: 96) remarks, for example, that marriages on

⁸ Dr Schnee was a German colonial official who was later to become Governor of German East Africa. In 1898 he was appointed Resident Magistrate and Deputy Governor in German New Guinea where he served for two years before being appointed to a similar post in Samoa (Schnee, 1926: 47). I assume therefore that his knowledge of Tolai custom and social behaviour was acquired mainly in the course of his official duties. It is not difficult to see how this might give some of his observations a certain element of bias.

the Gazelle were very often broken up: either a woman would run off with another man or the husband would send his wife back to her relatives. Kleintitschen's fuller account, all the more noteworthy in this context because there was so little in the domestic arrangements of the Tolai with which this early missionary could find favour, presents rather a different picture. Kleintitschen (1906: 198) observes that women would sometimes run away with a lover or willingly allow themselves to be seduced. Such behaviour was severely punished, and it was the husband who was entitled to carry out the punishment: he might either kill the wife or send her back to her kin with a demand for the return of the bridewealth. The latter, Kleintitschen adds, was usually preferred when a man was sick of his wife and wanted to acquire another. However, in spite of these possibilities, Kleintitschen also states that in fact marriages were mostly permanent. Thus he notes that in the case of a woman divorce was almost impossible. He attributes this state of affairs to Tolai meanness and their obsession with *tambu*. If a woman wanted to leave her husband, her own kin would declare against her, and would refuse to refund the marriage payment; and so long as they continued to retain it, so long did her spouse continue to exercise his rights as a husband over her. Kleintitschen reports that the woman's kin were quite ready to beat her until she expressed willingness to return to her husband. He reports too that, in the case of the men, most did not separate from their wives. Where a wife was guilty of misconduct the husband was likely to leave the marks of his displeasure in the form of bleeding stripes on her back, while he avenged himself for the most part on the seducer from whom he would demand large sums of shell-money by way of damages. Once this sum had been paid, the whole incident was regarded as closed.

Nowadays social anthropologists employ a number of standardised techniques for measuring divorce frequencies in pre-literate societies or where facilities for the registration of marriage and divorce are not available. In the course of my survey of marital histories at Matupit I inquired also into cases of divorce, and subsequently carried out the operations

described by Barnes (1949, 1967) for calculating various kinds of divorce ratio. These figures are set out below in Table 11.

Table 11
Divorce ratios on Matupit, 1960-1

	Ratio A	11.3
	Ratio B	44.2
	Ratio C	13.2
Ratio A	$\frac{\text{Total number of marriages dissolved by divorce}}{\text{Total number of marriages ever contracted}}$	
Ratio B	$\frac{\text{Total number of marriages dissolved by divorce}}{\text{Total number of marriages dissolved by both divorce and death}}$	
Ratio C	$\frac{\text{Total number of marriages dissolved by divorce}}{\text{Total number of marriages contracted excluding those ended by death of a spouse}}$	

These ratios are considerably lower than those that have been reported for some matrilineal societies, as well as for certain patrilineal ones (Mitchell, 1967: 23). The point is of considerable theoretical interest because of the association that has been postulated between instability of marriage and matriliney (Gluckman, 1950; cf. Schneider, 1961). To account adequately for this state of affairs would require a detailed analysis of Tolai domestic relations which lies outside the scope of the present volume. There are, however, two distinctive features of Tolai domestic arrangements which deserve brief mention here. One of these is the strong power of control over the wife, already suggested in Kleintitschen's account, which vests in a husband on marriage, amounting in the old days to the power of life and death.⁹ The converse of this situation is the lack of authority on the part of a girl's parents or kin to intervene in a marriage once it has been contracted. Amongst the matrilineal tribes of Zambia, as described in the literature and as I observed frequently enough

⁹ Thus Powell (1883: 85) states that the woman at her marriage became completely the property of the man, even to power over her life. He instances a chief on the shore of Blanche Bay who had acquired a wife. She wished to go back to her own people, and would do no work. The husband grew angry, and telling her that she was no use as a wife he would make use of her in another way, which he did by killing her and cooking her body for a feast.

in attending the sittings of tribal and urban courts, a basic principle was the power of the girl's parents or matrilineal kin to step in and break the marriage if they were dissatisfied with the conduct of their son-in-law, a power they were not hesitant to exercise (see, e.g. Epstein, A. L., 1953; cf. Richards, 1940: 101). I found no indication of this power at Matupit; certainly I recorded no instance of a marriage which was brought to an end in this way. When I once raised the question with ToKonía he was able to recall only one case—and that at Baai—where a girl's parents had intervened to break up a marriage. This was because the husband was continually beating his wife, and they began to fear for her safety. Here then the nature of the marital relationship is affected by the interests in it of the respective kin groups. Later in this chapter I will seek to argue that the relative infrequency of divorce is also partly a function of certain aspects of the indigenous political system.

In some societies the effect of a marriage is to bring into being a set of links between two social groups which survive even the death of one of the partners to it. The strength of the bonds between the groups is reflected in such customs as the levirate, sororate, and widow inheritance. None of this occurs among the Tolai. On the contrary, the death of a spouse is sometimes accompanied by the formal breaking of the bond of affinity. This is referred to as a *varvatut varpa*. Where, for example, an important man has died leaving a widow, at a certain point in the mortuary rites the female kin gather in front of the brothers of the deceased and cast a portion of shell-money at their feet. They then wail against the walls of the deceased's house until the leader of the dead man's group bids them cease. This signifies the return of the wife to the care of her own *vunatarai*. The wailing is said to be an expression of grief that they have had to sever the relationship in this way, and that now there is no man to care for their sister. This lack of perduring links of affinity between descent groups is consistent with indigenous notions of power as being essentially personal and leadership as competitive: when a 'big man' dies his successor does not inherit his widows; he has to set about building up his own affinal alliances (cf. Powell, 1960: 131, 135).

Tambu and Ceremonial

In the earlier discussion of the *namata* I noted that the full significance of this ceremony only emerged when it was set in the context of an ongoing series of exchanges and distributions of varying kinds. Traditional Tolai culture was rich in ceremonial, and at Matupit today fairly elaborate ceremonies, accompanied by prestations and gift-exchanges, are still held from time to time to celebrate a wedding (*a varbean*), the birth of a first child (*a ngomongomo*), or the completion of a new house (*a varlapang ure re kalamana pal*). Without question, however, the ceremonies to which the Tolai attach most importance are those associated with death and the cult of the *tubuan* and *dukduk*, and it is to certain aspects of these that the present discussion is confined.

All accounts of the Tolai stress the central significance of *tambu* in their culture, and the extraordinary hold it had upon their imagination. We have already noted (p. 15) Danks' observation that there was not a custom connected with life or death in which this money did not play a great and leading part, and he concluded his paper by remarking that nowhere else, so far as current information went, did it have so powerful an influence on savage life and custom. Durable, portable, and providing a common measure of value for purposes of exchange, *tambu* possesses all the attributes which usually serve to differentiate money in the technical sense from other valuables whose use as currency is largely ceremonial (Firth, 1961). *Tambu* is divisible: the standard unit is a fathom (*a pokono*), and this is divided into a whole series of named smaller units. Such a form of currency gave the traditional Tolai economy a highly monetised character: all purchases, whether of food, of goods manufactured by another such as a drum or a canoe, as well as payments for services, were made in shell-money (see, e.g. Meier, 1929: 13). In addition various enterprises might have their own 'fund'. Thus a man who purchased a canoe would hire it out to others, including his close kin, for a fee: all that he received in this way went into a separate canoe 'fund' or 'account'.

Yet despite its important economic functions, the real significance of *tambu* for the Tolai lay elsewhere. My own

informants, anxious that I should grasp its full meaning, would sometimes volunteer the remark that formerly *tambu* had been like God to them;¹⁰ it gave them life. Today, when everyone uses Australian currency too, the distinction between the secular and ritual significance of *tambu* is expressed in such phrases as *a mani ure ra nian, ma a tambu ure ra minat*, money pertains to food (i.e. to mundane things), but *tambu* pertains to death. It is in the rites and ceremonies performed for the dead that many of the values and customs associated with *tambu* are most clearly exemplified.

In the traditional form of burial, the body was wrapped in the fronds of a coconut palm, and the orifices plugged with pieces of *tambu*; *tambu* was also strewn on the grave within the deceased's house, if at the time of death he had been living in his own matrilineage hamlet. The explanation offered for this custom was that the spirit was now equipped to make the appropriate response when it finally reached the Abode of the Dead, and would gain admittance. As the Tolai express it, without the accumulation¹¹ of shell-money during one's lifetime, and its 'cutting up' and distribution on one's death or the death of near kin, there could be no entry to the Abode of the Dead, and the spirit of the deceased was condemned to an existence of everlasting wretchedness in the land of IaKupia. It is difficult to assess how far these notions are still accepted. Today the dead are buried on land set aside as village cemeteries, and the burial itself is conducted according to Christian rites. But this does not prevent the Tolai from carrying out their own traditional funerary rites and ceremonies in addition. The following account of a death

¹⁰ *A kalou kamavet*. Kalou is a Fijian word meaning God introduced by the first Fijian evangelists. European missionaries who worked in the Tolai vernacular adopted it, and it has now passed into the language.

¹¹ We have noted above (p. 22) how this propensity to accumulate shell-money rather than spend it was one of the factors which led the German Administration to seek the abolition of *tambu*. Similar action was urged by Col. Ainsworth in the report on native administration in New Guinea which he prepared at the request of the Australian Government. 'The curious and objectionable feature of *tambu*', he writes (1924: 20), 'is that, once obtained, it no longer circulates as ordinary currency. . . . People apparently desire to possess, but once obtained, do not willingly pay out *tambu*. Therefore, it has no commercial or reproductive value and, as a consequence, is harmful to the general progress of the people.'

at Matupit is designed to introduce a discussion of the contemporary significance, social and political, of these rites, and the part played in them by *tambu*.¹²

One Sunday morning, returning from a visit to Matupi crater, we heard the sound of wailing as the canoe approached the island. ToKonia at once surmised that it was to announce the death of ToIlot, the eldest brother of John Vuia, who had been a tuberculosis patient in the hospital at Bitapaka for the past two years. This was confirmed as soon as we stepped ashore. It appeared that word had come earlier in the morning that they should collect the body from the hospital for burial.

Throughout the day large numbers of persons gathered at the house of the dead man. The body itself lay open in the coffin, and individuals filed in and out to pay their last respects. Some appeared to be quite hysterical in their grief, and the cries of lamentation went on without cease. The funeral took place in the evening, the resident Methodist pastor, a Tolai, conducting the service. The mourners came from every part of Matupit and, as the grave was being filled in, they approached the grave-side and placed flowers. There was no further activity that day because it was Sunday.

The following morning the elder Turpui, whose house I occupied, came to collect me so that I should see the *leo* they had constructed. A *leo* is a form of scaffolding raised by planting bamboo poles firmly in the ground, with other poles placed horizontally. The whole of the framework is decked with coils of shell-money. This was the notification that there was to be a *palum tambu*, a distribution of *tambu* on death. Meanwhile, John Vuia himself was preparing to set off in his lorry to buy food and areca-nuts for the ceremony that would take place later in the afternoon.

This particular ceremony is known as a *minamai*, from the verb *mamai*, to chew betel. Shortly before the people began to gather, there was some slight altercation as to who should lead the distribution. Old IaMadik (15D3) was telling ToLokot (15E8) that he should lead because John was afraid to do so. However, ToLokot was also reluctant, claiming that he only knew a little about such matters, and that was what he had

¹² For fuller accounts of the traditional customs see Danks (1892) and Parkinson (1907).

picked up from ToMararang (a somewhat younger man of the *vunatarai* of Tio). ToMararang's father had been an expert, and therefore ToMararang himself should lead. The brothers' hesitation to take the leading role was said to be related to the belief that the cutting up of a coil of shell-money could be dangerous, for the likelihood was that it had been magically treated when the coil was being prepared; whoever cut it therefore needed to possess strong protective magic (*a babat*).

Meanwhile the people were assembling slowly. A lorry had arrived with mourners from Talwat and Baai, and word was sent to Rarup and Kurapun to urge people there to hurry up as it was getting late. At length a large crowd had assembled and IaMadik called out that the women should all sit together, not separately by villages. The men too all sat together, separated from the women by a bamboo cordon laid on the ground, providing an avenue along which the organisers and distributors could pass to and fro. When all were properly seated Tio announced that they would begin with the distribution of betel (*a varlapang na buai*). This accomplished, Turpui came forward and announced that after all there would be no *palum tambu*, but instead two distributions

FIG. 15 Genealogy: participants in the *minamai* for ToIlot

would take place: *a launana* and *a minatina*. Two parties of men now emerged, their foreheads daubed with white lime powder, and began to move round the group casting a piece of *tambu* before each person. The first party was led by ToMararang, and he was accompanied by Burungat (15F1), ToVatura (15F3) a son of IaBungtambu by a former husband whom Tollot had brought up as his own, and by John Vuia's own son, ToVuia (15F2). The second was led by Turpui (15D2), who was accompanied by Orim (15F4), ToBual (15E7), and ToKairet (2D3), a young matrilineal kinsman. They were followed by three men from Talwat, of the clan of John Vuia, who also distributed a small quantity of shell-money. Meanwhile, large numbers of women were moving to and fro amongst themselves distributing tiny pieces of *tambu*. Some of these were prestations of a special kind, for which there were separate terms, as for example the *kulao*, a presentation made by a woman to members of her father's group.

Following the distribution, there was a meal of rice, tinned fish and meat. Then, as people began to disperse, Kaputin, to whose *vunatarai* Tollot's widow belonged, approached John Vuia about performing the *varvatut varpa*, the formal severing of the affinal bonds referred to above (p. 229). The final act was the formal display and handing over of the money and *tambu* that had been accumulated in a partnership between Tollot and a man from Kurapun. Each share was laid out on the ground, and one of these was now presented to John Vuia. This was received with general acclamation. The second phase of the funerary rites had come to an end.

About a week after these events, there was a performance of what is called a *langlagur*, led on the first night by Kaputin, and on the second by a leading elder of the Pitalaba moiety at Rarup. The main feature of the *langlagur* is a procession of women, their foreheads and faces adorned with lime powder and carrying arm-baskets of the kind normally used only by the men, from the hamlet of their male leader to the house of the dead where kinswomen of the deceased are still gathered in mourning. The procession on this occasion moved very slowly through the village; there was a pause at intervals of about ten yards, when the women broke into a special kind of song known as a *taktak* praising the

vunatarai of the dead person.¹³ As the women approached the house of the dead, they were answered by songs from the women within. The men's bags, all newly made that day, were now heaped on the ground; the contents—a tin of food, matches, soap, sugar, tobacco—would go to the women who were staying in the dead man's house. What followed was in the nature of general entertainment, designed to put everybody in good humour and put an end to grief. One of the women, dressed as a man, was conducting her choir with a calculated exaggeration of gesture, while others stepped out and performed grotesque dances. It was an occasion for clowning and buffoonery. One girl had dressed as a New Guinea labourer and was parodying the New Guinea style of dancing. A guitar provided the accompaniment for a dance which was performed with a good deal of knockabout humour. Finally, two women from Kikila, also dressed as men, showed a genuine comic talent with a series of skits on the behaviour of various Europeans which had everyone rolling with laughter.

Some three months later all the leading elders of Rarup and Kikila gathered again to perform what was called a *ngugu*. By this time I had already left Matupit, and I do not possess full details of what took place; the main feature appears to have been the singing of *taktak* to the accompaniment of the beat of a large slit-gong or *garamut*, an instrument which has particularly strong associations with death. In its timing, the *ngugu* corresponded with the performance in the past of a series of rites which now appear to have completely disappeared at Matupit, though they may still be observed in other Tolai communities. These included the destruction of the house of the dead man, and the later offering of food, placed high on a tree, to his spirit, and the final closure of the ceremonies in the raising of a particular kind of *tubuan* figure known as *kurakurandiu*.

¹³ On this occasion the *taktak* ran as follows:

ToVuia na tut papa na malagene na kutu tambu
na ubu ra matai go ra kor.

ToVuia will arise and dance, cutting *tambu*
to bedazzle the eyes of the throng.

The verse was repeated substituting on each occasion the name of a different member of the group.

The funerary rites for ToIlot were by far the most elaborate I observed at Matupit and, as far as I know, the most impressive that had been held there for some years. A number of those to whom I spoke at the initial distribution or *minamai* stressed the significance of what I had seen. Of their customs, they said, this surpassed them all in importance. At the same time, they also made it plain that the present ceremonies did not approach in scale or pageantry the mortuary rites of the past. Many commented on the present paucity of *tambu*, which affected the conduct of the rites in a number of ways. Thus some pointed out to me the small size of the *leo*, commenting that formerly it would have been twice as long. On this occasion the scaffolding was adorned with fourteen coils of shell-money, but these were mostly quite small, and none contained more than 300 fathoms. The poverty in *tambu* was reflected even more strikingly in the character of the apportionment itself. Initially I had understood that there was to be a *palum tambu*, when many people would publicly cut up their coils before distribution. Instead, two small coils were cut up privately, one from each segment (*apiktarai*) of the descent group: the *minatina* was for ToIlot who was dead (*a minat*) and the *launana* for IaMadik who was alive (*i laun*). Secondly, it was noticeable that most of the distributing was being done by the women. The explanation offered was that nowadays when *tambu* is scarce at Matupit, this task is allocated to the women because they are able to make presentations of only tiny portions of shell in a way that would be quite unbecoming amongst the men. All told I recorded the names of just over fifty women who took part in this; the vast majority of them lived in Kikila. This reflects the highly local character of the ceremony; in fact, there was only one group of mourners present at the *minamai* from outside Matupit—the party from Talwat and Baai. I shall elaborate on the significance of this point later in the discussion.

Death is a universal constant of human experience. But attitudes towards death vary considerably from one culture to another. For example, the Tolai came to learn something of the ways of the Japanese during their military occupation of the Gazelle Peninsula in World War II. One aspect of

Japanese behaviour which appears to have impressed the Tolai as truly revolting was their approach to death. I was told that men who were wounded and unfit for further work would be placed on vast funeral pyres and burnt alive together with the corpses. A Japanese, it was said, preferred death to the experience of pain. This perception of Japanese attitudes was contrasted with their own view that death was something to be dreaded. It is not simply the act of dying which prompts this fear. Even today at Matupit the idea of death from natural causes is far from having been fully assimilated; the traditional notion that most deaths are attributable to sorcery remains very strong, and even though no overt accusations may be made or there be no resort to divination, there is likely to be much muttered speculation and discussion of omens and other unmistakable pointers to the practice of anti-human magic. Death for the Tolai is also a source of deep grief, which is clearly reflected in the behaviour, partly enjoined, partly spontaneous, to be observed in the funerary rites.¹⁴ Yet fear and grief are only two components that make up the complex emotional response of the Tolai to death. For death also provides an occasion for displays of pride and boastful behaviour. This may be seen in various phases of the funerary rites. In former times, when the corpse was interred in the ground beneath his own house, two fires were lit on either side of the grave (*a madiruan*). These were said to warm the dead person (*vamadir ra minat*) as well as to destroy the foul odour that filled the hut. One of my oldest informants told me that there were 'words of boasting' (*tinata na varpin*) in regard to this custom, and were a man to die without the *madiruan* being performed over him, his kinsmen would never be able to escape the charge that they had let him die like a pauper. The element of *varpin* has also been seen already in the songs of praise which were sung on the performance of the *langlagur* for Tolot. Indeed, it is no exaggeration to state that the chief burden of the mortuary

¹⁴ On the death of a favourite child, for example, the parents sometimes go into mourning for a period that may last as long as two years. During this time they observe a number of taboos and appear dressed only in black. Their emergence from mourning is marked by a rite called *a papa-kei na korkor*, the removal of the black paint of mourning and the holding of a small feast.

rites as a whole is to proclaim the status of the deceased, and to confer prestige upon the members of his group.

In an early account of funerary customs, Danks (1892: 348) observed that the burial of the common people was a very unceremonious affair. He then explained that by the common people he meant those who did not have any very great quantity of shell-money, or whose friends had little or nothing to expend on their funerals. By contrast, the rites performed for leading 'chiefs' and 'big men' were quite elaborate. Allowing for the fact that few people at Matupit are now wealthy in shell-money, the position remains very much as Danks described it towards the end of the last century. Thus the obsequies for ToIlot took the form they did because he himself in his prime had been a prominent man, and because John Vuia, his younger brother, was one of the leading personalities in the community. In other cases of death I observed there was not even a *minamai*, merely a *kubika*, that is a small portion of *tambu* was simply sent round to a number of the leading elders on the island. Thus when one middle-aged man died at Rarup, there was no distribution following the funeral. Afterwards Turpui remarked to me how times had changed. In the past this was something that would have involved a *varpin*, but nowadays six members of the *vunatarai* could die without having a piece of *tambu* between them. Once if a man died in poverty, his kin would cut up their own coils in order to avoid the disgrace and the constant taunts of other people.

A *varpin* may take the form of a simple exclamation of triumph; more often it is merely a kind of statement which combines the denigration of others with the aggrandisement of the self or the group to which one belongs. In various contexts it expresses the element of competition which is so marked in Tolai culture; appropriately therefore it is in the context of the *balaguan* and the ceremonies of the *tubuan* that the *varpin* is most apt to find expression. The *balaguan* is a large-scale mortuary rite which usually takes place some years after the death of the 'big man' in whose honour it is staged. But while it is associated with the name of a particular 'big man', the ceremony is also said to commemorate all the dead of the *vunatarai*. For this reason my informants likened

it to ANZAC day, the annual Day of Remembrance in the Australian calendar. Many hundreds of people from Tolai communities throughout the Gazelle Peninsula will gather for a *balaguan*, many different teams of dancers will perform, and there will be elaborate exchanges of pork and other food-stuffs. To each aspect of the day's events a *varpin* attached; prestige was assessed in terms of the number of dances put on, the beauty of the decorations, the amount of *tambu* distributed etc. Staging such a *balaguan* might be conceived as a large-scale exercise in building up prestige; the effect of a successful sponsorship was to proclaim the emergence of a new 'big man' on the scene, filling the gap left by the death of an illustrious predecessor. I attended a number of *balaguan* in different places, but it scarcely needs to be added that at Matupit itself none had been celebrated for many years.

The depletion of accumulated stocks of shell-money at Matupit during the war, and the relatively small amounts of 'new' currency flowing into the community, have seriously curtailed the performance of mortuary rites and ceremonies; in the case of the *tubuan*, perhaps the most important magico-religious ceremony of the Tolai, the consequences have been even more severe, for at Matupit these ceremonies have now virtually disappeared. In this respect the situation at Matupit contrasts sharply with that obtaining in other Tolai parishes. Thus Salisbury (1966: 124) records that in four villages in the Vunamami area 26 *matamatam*, the ceremonies associated with the 'raising' of the *tubuan* spirit, were performed between 1937 and 1962. At Matupit a *balaguan* was held about 1949, when two *tubuan* figures appeared, to commemorate all those who had died during the war; since then, so far as my information goes, there has been no other major *balaguan* or *matamatam*. These facts are significant not simply because they point to a sharp decline in the ceremonial life of the community; they also have profound implications for the working of the traditional social and political system.

The situation I have been describing is one of which the Matupi are deeply conscious, and one to which different categories of the population react in different, and sometimes self-contradictory, ways. The present paucity of *tambu* is the subject of constant discussion among the more conservative

elders. We have already noted the speech delivered by Kaputin at the *namata* for ToGarama's son, when he urged the younger people not to neglect the customs associated with *tambu* which had come down to them from their ancestors of old. Similar exhortations addressed to the younger people, stressing the need to work hard at traditional productive tasks in order to accumulate *tambu*, are a common theme of speeches made at village assemblies. Once I attended a *vevedek* at Kikila, when those who had launched fish-baskets that year came together to count the season's takings and then share a small meal. Tio opened a general discussion of the question when he remarked how few young men were present. He went on to suggest that they should follow the custom of old of having a house for the storing of the *tambu* at the *motono*i itself with one man responsible for looking after it. Others immediately supported the suggestion, saying that this was the road they should follow so that the young had an example set before them to which they could hold fast. Turpui contrasted their position with that of neighbouring communities, saying that today at Matupit they held only old *tambu*, there was no 'new' money coming in. This situation would only be remedied, he concluded, if everyone were encouraged to launch a fish-basket in the coming season.

Such exhortations, however, like the proposals that were being constantly mooted for 'raising' the *tubuan* (to some extent stimulated perhaps by my presence and the nature of my inquiries), can amount to little more than pious resolutions, for they take no adequate account of the social forces working against the islanders' accumulation of large stocks of *tambu*. As we have seen, Tolai ideology stresses the importance of working hard at traditional tasks so as to gather shell-money for eventual distribution at one's own funeral or that of near kin, thus ensuring admission of the spirit to the Abode of the Dead. One of the main means of acquiring shell-money available to the Matupi today is by selling at the market. In reality, as Salisbury (1966: 117) points out, the stocks of *tambu* that could be accumulated through the sale of produce at the market-place were unlikely to be very large, certainly not large enough to allow one to emerge as the sponsor of a major ceremony. Such sponsorship rested therefore in the hands of

political entrepreneurs who amassed the necessary resources by persuading others to contribute to their enterprises. Salisbury describes various ways in which such contributions are organised. For example, associations may be formed for a specific economic purpose: since the profits from such an enterprise are not usually distributed, the associations provide 'an avenue for pyramiding accumulations' (p. 120). The seine-fishing groups which are organised by *urur* at Matupit (see p. 75) are clearly of this kind, but as I have pointed out, the efforts of these groups are devoted to raising funds for the building of new churches, and these are tasks that require cash, not shell-money.

Again, it is important to notice that of all Tolai activities it is the staging of a *balaguan* and the ceremonies of the *tubuan* that most directly involve organisation at the clan and inter-parish level. This is particularly marked in the case of the *tubuan*. Each *tubuan* has a distinctive (female) name; but very often the same name is found throughout the Tolai area. Thus the *tubuan* IaValval, claimed by a man at Matupit, was also raised at Davaon, Raluana, Nakukur, and Kunakunai. In this context the *tubuan* figure is seen as belonging to the clan as a whole, providing indeed its most significant emblem. Accordingly, were this *tubuan* to rise at Matupit, the other dispersed segments of the clan would be expected to appear and lend their support. Salisbury describes similarly how the sponsor of a *matamatom* invites 'big men' of other villages to commission dances and bring teams of performers to the ceremony, for which they gladly lay out their *tambu* in the expectation of collecting fees for the performance. Salisbury also notes how at these gatherings the important men present seize the opportunity of presenting *tambu* to all and sundry, but especially to other important men. In this kind of situation the prominent men at Matupit find themselves caught in a vicious circle. For lacking the resources to send teams of dancers or in other ways contribute to the ceremonies of other communities,¹⁵ they are in this way deprived of one

¹⁵ The only major set of *tubuan* ceremonies I was able to observe was at Raluana. Although the clan of the sponsor of the ceremonies was represented at Matupit, in fact no party from the island attended. Two elders simply accompanied me in order to act as my personal sponsors, and to introduce me to my hosts.

of the major means of raising the capital to sponsor similar activities at Matupit itself.

Salisbury mentions that at Vunamami a *matamatam* costs its sponsors 3,000 fathoms, and a *tubuan* raising between 200 and 400 fathoms. The Matupi were extremely reticent about their holdings of shell-money, no doubt because they were ashamed of their poverty, but none of the elders I knew best could lay claim to more than 200-300 fathoms. Most of this was in the form of coils held in preparation for a death, and they appeared to have little in the form of liquid capital. At the *minamai* for Tolilot, Kaputin pointed out to me one of his own coils which adorned the scaffolding. It was his preparation for his mother's death, he said. Kaputin was a consistent spokesman for the traditional values and way of life, but when a few days later his own sister died, the funeral was followed by only a small presentation (*a kubika*) of *tambu* to some of the elders. This was because, Turpui explained, Kaputin was not yet 'free' of his obligations to his mother and mother's sister. Salisbury makes the valid point that a 'big man' does not necessarily have to be a wealthy man. One need not have great riches, he says, in order to 'behave wealthy', provided one can persuade others to contribute to one's enterprise. Here I cannot but feel that Salisbury underestimates the long period of latency during which the entrepreneur builds up his credit-worthiness. There were no Henry Fords in Tolai society, Salisbury remarks, but it might equally be said that there were no Charles Clores either. But the more important question in the Matupit context is, allowing the presence of a political entrepreneur, where are his contributions to come from? One of the main ways in which a man who 'raises' the *tubuan* sees a return on his investment is through the collection of large fees from those who are initiated (*dok*) under his sponsorship. It is in this context that the behaviour and attitudes of the younger people become crucial.

The attitudes of the younger men at Matupit towards *tambu* were complex and frequently marked by ambivalence. Men in regular wage employment in Rabaul have in fact few opportunities for those activities which produce *tambu*; those who work outside the Gazelle Peninsula have none at all.

Yet it was clear that many of them still attached importance to the idea of accumulating shell-money. At the time of my study, employees in some departments of the Administration received rations in addition to the cash wage: a number of these regularly handed their rations over to their mothers or other older women to sell for them in return for *tambu*. Yet others found time in the evening or at the weekends to prepare their fish-baskets, to collect eggs or to plant gardens of groundnuts, nowadays regarded as a pure *tambu* crop. Once when ToKonía had bought a new water tank he approached a man in the village to install it for him. The price demanded was £A7, which ToKonía thought excessive, so he approached another man. This was a young unmarried man who worked as a contractor. He asked for 10 fathoms of *tambu*: ToKonía raised the amount by planting a crop of groundnuts and selling it for shell-money.

Yet even those who were favourably disposed were compelled to recognise that as far as their present needs went *tambu* could not compete with money. Some would exclaim contemptuously: 'What can you buy with *tambu*? You can't buy goods in a European store with shell-money, nor erect a modern-style house with it'. Amongst the more thoughtful of the Matupi younger set there were also differing viewpoints. 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. It is clear that in these contexts they saw *tambu* as a symbol of their way of life, and a major expression of their social identity as Tolai. Others too saw *tambu* as a symbol of their way of life, and for this reason rejected it. One young married man, who was wealthy in land and spent much of his time working in his gardens or tending his plantations, and whom I had not hitherto suspected of harbouring radical views, once remarked to me that his father-in-law was always bidding him to be 'strong' for *tambu*. On these occasions, he told me, he would simply murmur in assent, but in his heart he felt that the sooner they put an end to shell-money the better. The implications of my informant's remark, which others on occasion would formulate more explicitly, was that the pursuit of *tambu* was a

distraction. It served to perpetuate the old way of life and the system of political authority that went with it, and so acted as a brake on their entry as full citizens into the modern society emerging in New Guinea. Nevertheless, it is important to note that my informants' convictions were not always matched by their behaviour. The young man just mentioned did work for *tambu*. In the 1961 season he had accumulated 30 fathoms from his fish-basket, and he also had a small though regular income from the hiring of his canoe. Most of this was deposited with his sister. Moreover, he and his wife had planted groundnuts the proceeds from which went to open an 'account' in the name of their first-born child. The child was now two, and already possessed 40 fathoms.

But while the study of attitudes is revealing, an adequate assessment of the present position of *tambu* at Matupit requires a more quantitative approach. Unfortunately, I am unable to make any very reliable estimates of the total annual income in shell-money for Matupit as a whole. My calculation, based mainly on the figures set out in Tables 3 and 4, is that total annual income in 1960-1 was unlikely to have exceeded 2,000 fathoms or roughly 1.5 fathoms per head. Moreover, since many of the transactions would have taken place within the community, the actual inflow of currency from outside would probably have been much less. It follows that, in so far as the Matupi are working for *tambu* at all, they are, as Salisbury (1966: 119) puts it, individuals struggling to earn a few fathoms at the market-place. Today at Matupit the main emphasis, both amongst those in wage employment and those who make their living within the village, is on work for cash, which does not have to be accumulated or invested in personal relationships as in the case of shell-money, but can be spent on consumables or put to other personal and private ends. In these circumstances the balance would appear to be heavily tipped against the survival of *tambu*. Nevertheless, for so long as the Matupi remain linked by ties of interdependence with other Tolai groups who insist on the use of *tambu* in their transactions, so long will the need for shell-money persist, and the Matupi continue to skimp and save in order to raise the bridewealth, to obtain certain food-stuffs such as taro from inland communities, or to purchase

the canoes without which they cannot easily reach their gardens. But they will lack the resources to pursue the ceremonial life in any but a skeletal form. This being the case, matrilineage elders may survive, or wholly new kinds of leaders emerge, but there can be no more 'big men' cast in the traditional mould.

Traditional Politics and the Pattern of Leadership

Politics is a form of competition distinguished from others by the fact that it is concerned with the struggle for power and authority and access to participation in the making of policy decisions. What defines the nature of a political system therefore is the form that the competition takes within a given community. This form is determined by a number of factors. The first of these I would refer to as the mode of vesting of power, the means by which in a given society certain persons come to be acknowledged as having political power and authority. In many societies, perhaps the majority, this lies in succeeding to or contending for and winning office.¹⁶ However, as Mair (1964: 4) has observed, power in the sense of the ability to control the actions of others can be obtained in other ways than by holding office, and the possession of wealth can be a source of power in societies which have few or no recognised offices. The Tolai are a case in point, for amongst them 'big men' do not come to office; they do not succeed to, nor are they installed in, fixed and established positions within political groups. As in other parts of Melanesia (Sahlins, 1963: 289), little or no authority is accorded by social ascription; the material which Salisbury (1966) presents shows positively, as my own data shows negatively, that 'big man' leadership is a product of design, the fruit of entrepreneurial skill. Power therefore in this kind of system pertains to the person and is essentially transitory.

The conception of power, as reflected in its mode of vesting, is in itself an important differentiating feature of political systems. It is indeed in my view the dominant variable in the definition of a political system, since any difference in this respect will be accompanied by differences in other variables:

¹⁶ For fuller discussion of this point see Epstein, A. L. (1968).

the individuals and groups who contest for power, the goals and prerogatives to which they can aspire, and the kinds of resources, human and material, which can be mobilised or deployed to achieve them. It is the interplay of these variables which defines the character of the political process in any given society. The import of this argument may be better appreciated if we compare briefly, for example, the position of a local leader among the Tolai and that of the village headmen as reported for a number of the tribal societies of Central Africa.¹⁷

Throughout most of the Central African region the village is a discrete physical and residential group (Gluckman *et al.*, 1949). Known frequently by the name of its headman, it is the basic social and political unit within the wider grouping of the chiefdom, the tribe, or the nation. Within the chiefdom, villages compete with one another: headmen strive to build up the size and strength of their villages, and vie with one another to win the favour of the chief and the various marks of prestige acknowledged within the society, as Mitchell (1956) has described in his account of the Yao. Within the village itself, the major political activity centres around the position of the headman. This is fraught with difficulty. For the more successful he is, the greater the size of his following, the larger his village, and the greater his influence and prestige in relation to other such groups. At the same time, the more people he succeeds in attracting to his village, the greater the likelihood of the development of internal faction and fissionary tendencies. In relatively long-established villages quarrels become more acrimonious and political cleavages more pronounced. As Turner (1957) has illustrated brilliantly in his account of village life among the Ndembu, these processes go on over lengthy periods. They are marked by the crises which flare up periodically within the village, when the gradual shifts that have been taking place in the balance of power are given overt expression, and a new equilibrium is temporarily established. But in the end, because of the tension between the structural principles around which the village is built, group unity can no longer be maintained, and fission takes place, usually along the lines

¹⁷ This again is treated more fully in Epstein, A. L. (1968).

of matrilineage segmentation. The leader of the seceding group will then attempt to establish himself as an independent headman of his own village. In such systems as these headmanship clearly constitutes a political office, and the political process at the local level takes mostly the form of a struggle for succession on the death of an incumbent, or, where such a bid fails, to secure sufficient followers to enforce one's recognition as headman of a new village.

This situation contrasts sharply with that which obtains amongst the Tolai. Like the Central African headman, the Tolai 'big man' is engaged in a continuous struggle to acquire and maintain a body of followers, but he has quite different ends in mind, and he also employs different resources and modes of mustering support. For example, Tolai hamlets and Ndembu villages are built up around the same structural principles of matriliney and virilocality, but whereas the core of an Ndembu village is composed predominantly of the headman's matrilineal kinsmen, amongst the Tolai male siblings rarely live within the same hamlet, and the male members of a matrilineage are likely to be dispersed amongst a number of hamlets. Although, as we have seen, each hamlet is associated jurally with a particular *vunatarai*, there is not the same identification of the 'big man' with his hamlet as that of a headman with his village. Although the Tolai hamlet frequently resembles the Ndembu village in size and social composition, it is not a political, jural or ritual unit as the latter is. The Tolai 'big man' therefore does not aim to assemble a large body of followers in a residential group. Initially he seeks to establish himself within his own group of matrilineal kinsmen, and then, by the contracting of elaborate debt relationships, to gain recognition within the parish, a unit much wider than the Ndembu village and made up of many different local descent groups. Beyond this, through financial manipulations and the sponsorship of mortuary and *tubuan* ceremonies, he seeks to operate and gain prestige in the field of inter-parish relationships. In this highly competitive process, it is worth emphasising, his rivals are to be found mainly among other descent groups, and usually in the other moiety of the society, and not within his own.

These differences in the form that competition for power

takes in different societies may not be without relevance for the understanding of other cultural and institutional differences that appear between groups. For example, I referred earlier to the relative stability of marriage at Matupit. Gluckman's hypothesis postulating a close association between marital instability and matriliney is supported by the data from all the tribes of Central Africa for which evidence is available: the data from Matupit controvert it. The characteristic of all of these tribes, however, is that men seek to realise their political ambitions by founding large villages, the core of which is composed of their matrilineal kinsmen. But this situation gives rise to serious conflict. In the case of the Ndembu, as described by Turner, headmen and those who would aspire to the office are impelled to pursue the irreconcilable goals of maintaining control over their wives *and* sisters, the one in response to the demands of virilocality and the co-residence of male siblings, the other because they are dependent upon their sisters to maintain and perpetuate the strength of the group. In these circumstances it is not merely that marriage is brittle; as Marwick (1965: 179) observes of the Ceŵa, the looseness of the marriage tie is probably a necessary condition for the high degree of integration of the matrilineage. By contrast, amongst the Tolai, where the position of the 'big man' does not rest on the building up of a residential group composed of a core of his matrilineal kinsmen, the struggle to assert control over one's sisters and their children, and to wean them from their husbands and fathers, is less apparent than in most parts of the 'matrilineal belt' of Central Africa. In the second place, the corporate identity of Tolai descent groups is expressed chiefly through ownership and control of land. In a community such as Matupit, where a high proportion of marriages takes place within the parish, and distances between gardens are not significant, a woman may continue to work the lands that vest in her own matrilineage, and to participate fully in its affairs, and yet reside virilocally. This of course is not the whole story, but it is at least clear that what is a major source of marital instability in the matrilineal systems of Central Africa is at once removed for the Tolai. It seems likely that similar considerations apply in other parts of Melanesia too, for

Hogbin (1963: 109) has also pointed to the low incidence of divorce in the matrilineal community of Busama.

I have referred to the mode of vesting of power as the dominant variable in the political system, and I have tried to show how variation in this regard is accompanied by differences in what goes on within the political 'arena'. Both of these in turn have a profound bearing on the pattern of leadership, since differences in the modes by which power and authority are vested are likely to be accompanied by variation in leadership roles. At the same time, and in the same way, variation in the rules which govern behaviour in the 'arena' will tend to call for different kinds of social and political skills. Thus if the comparison of Central African village headman and Tolai 'big man' is pressed a little further, it will be clear that each of these roles calls for different personal qualities: each represents, that is to say, a different type of social and political personality. To become a headman amongst the Ndembu requires a measure of ambition. But given that the headman's principal concern is to maintain the strength and stability of a local community, within which the tendencies towards fission are always strong, the qualities most frequently stressed as desirable in such a leader are tact, unselfishness, and quality as a judge. Turner comments that successful headmen among the Ndembu were firm but unobtrusive personalities, unaggressive, and ready to share what wealth they might acquire with their relatives. This is a far remove from Sahlins's characterisation (1963: 289) of the Melanesian 'big man', which fits the Tolai case perfectly, as one 'who combines with an ostensible interest in the general welfare a more profound measure of self-interested cunning and economic calculation'.

Such differences in 'political types' go hand in hand with differences in leadership functions. The village headman is also a politician, but many of the tasks he is called upon to perform clearly require the exercise of administrative and judicial skills. It is my impression that on the Gazelle Peninsula, at least in the contemporary situation, this convergence of roles is less marked. The skills of the 'big man' in the past were essentially entrepreneurial. Discussing the 'raising' of the *tubuan*, my informants would frequently

proffer the comment that it was a 'business' (using the English word) from which the sponsor hoped to see a handsome return on his investment. Today, with the opening up of so many new economic opportunities, these skills can also be directed to other ends. It is certainly striking that many of the most prominent men in Tolai communities combine the running of successful business enterprises with the sponsorship of, and full participation in, ceremonies of the traditional kind (see Epstein, T. S., 1964). Such men are often required to move around a great deal in the promotion of their affairs, and may rarely be seen at home. As we shall see later, therefore, those who sit on local government councils are not always the most influential men in their own communities. Within the village, decisions on major questions of policy will be deferred until the 'big man' has been consulted, and routine administration is handled by the councillor with the aid of the matrilineage elders.

'Big man' leadership of the kind we have been considering here depends upon the presence of an institutionalised form of wealth, in this case *tambu*, which through the network of the exchange system, can be manipulated to create a following of political supporters. At Matupit, as we have seen, loss of accumulated stocks of shell-money during the war, and increasing involvement in the wage and cash economy after the war, have seriously affected the capacity and interest of the islanders to accumulate shell-money and put it to work. Consequently, there has been a decline in their ceremonial life, accompanied by the virtual disappearance of 'big men' of the traditional type. At the same time, other developments of a more specifically political kind have been taking place in the area. Early in the 1950s local government councils were introduced which, amongst other things, were designed to provide a training ground for fuller participation in the government of the country as a whole. In these ways new concepts of power, and new modes of political competition were introduced to the Tolai. In the following chapter I seek to examine the developing pattern of politics that now transcends the limits of the village, and the new forms of leadership that are beginning to emerge.

The Beginnings of Modern Politics

WE have seen in previous chapters, and in the last one in particular, how changes in the total social environment of the Tolai over the past eighty years have led to important modifications in the working of their traditional political system. Many of these may be seen as instances of non-directed change: that is to say, they are the product of events in other fields external to the political system, and operating upon it. At the same time, the nature of the political structure has also been affected more immediately by certain forms of introduced or directed change as well as by processes of adaptation. The introduction of the *luluai* system by the Germans, and its perpetuation by the Australians, is an example of the first kind, the development of the *kivung na baramana* or young men's council or assembly of the second.

The term *luluai* is a Tolai word meaning leader in war,¹ and it was adopted by the Germans for those whom they nominated as village officials. A *luluai* was appointed to each village and was the representative of the Administration there. He had certain statutory powers in relation to the maintenance of law and order, sanitation, hygiene and the maintenance of roads, etc., and he conveyed the instructions of government officers to the people. Clearly the introduction of this system of administration represented some departure from indigenous conceptions of leadership. In the first place, it introduced a new type of political office, and provided for

¹ Older informants pointed out that it had this meaning in other Tolai groups, but insisted that at Matupit it simply referred to a man of very great wealth. The term has also come to be accepted in religious contexts as meaning The Lord.

some administrative functions previously unknown. Secondly, it conferred powers on persons who drew their authority from an outside source, and were therefore less subject to the checks and balances and the sanctions of the traditional political system. It is not surprising therefore to come upon reports in the literature on New Guinea of *luluais* who were able to use their office to develop into petty tyrants (see, e.g., Hogbin, 1946, 1949). In much the same way, at Matupit, I heard many allegations of Anton's abuse of power in the days when he was a Paramount *luluai*;² as I have noted earlier, there were a number of persons who were only too ready to exploit his present age and enfeeblement and to seek to settle old scores by bringing cases against him before the village assembly.

Yet the sharpness of the break with the past represented by the new policy ought not to be exaggerated. There was also a strong element of continuity. The *luluai* system was still in its essence a form of administration based on the village or similar local unit. Again, although the *luluai* was appointed by the Administration, he was also frequently a nominee of the people with already acknowledged authority and good standing in the community. In this capacity he carried out not only his official tasks, but also fulfilled many of the functions of the traditional 'big man'. Thus Salisbury (1966: 124) records that of twenty-six *matamatam* performed in the Vunamami area in the period 1937-62, seven were sponsored by the individual who was appointed Paramount *luluai* in 1937 and who finally retired in 1952, by which time the highest political office in the area had become that of council president. In this context it is also not without relevance to note that the fairly elaborate mortuary rites (for contemporary Matupit) described in the last chapter were for the man who had been the last *luluai* at Kikila before the introduction of the council system.

The *luluai* system worked moderately well given the

² This position was introduced at a later stage by the Australian authorities. Within his own village the Paramount *luluai* wielded the powers of an ordinary *luluai*, but in addition he exercised general supervision over an area comprising a number of villages, usually embracing a 'tribal' or related group.

limited aims it was intended to serve. But with its emphasis on law-enforcement functions at village level, it was geared to little more than maintaining the *status quo*; as an administrative device it was not oriented towards development. Such a system may have been appropriate in more remote parts, where there was still little contact with the outside world and the people were still living a largely traditional way of life; it was clearly less adequate in more 'advanced' areas, such as the Gazelle Peninsula, where close links had been established with the wider society and the social life of the local people considerably affected. By the thirties, in the Tolai settlements around Rabaul, some of the younger people were showing signs of disaffection with existing social conditions, and were beginning to cast around for new institutions through which they could better their lot. It was around this time, for example, that people at Nodup began pressing the Administration for better educational facilities, in which the teaching of English was stressed, a demand that was eventually met in the founding of the Waterhouse Memorial School. It was in such circumstances too that the young men's assembly or *kivung na baramana* came into being at Matupit. One of those mainly responsible for this development was John Vuia, at that time in charge of a team of laundry-workers at the Rabaul docks. Another man then living at Matupit, ToRumet, later introduced the *kivung* to Raluana, whence the idea gradually spread to other Tolai communities. The *kivung* still operated at the village level, but it did introduce the idea of raising funds to provide various services for the community. At Matupit, for example, it was the *kivung* which put forward the idea of controlling the gathering of eggs and imposing a levy on all eggs collected as a means of building up village funds. One of the first projects to be financed in this way was a playing field for the children.

It is clear then that in the years leading up to World War II there were those amongst the Tolai who were groping towards the formulation of new aspirations for the future, and this process was further stimulated by their experiences during the war itself. With the return of the Australian administration, there was a new mood abroad amongst the Tolai, a mood compounded of many elements,

but one in which the expectation of improved living standards and status within the wider community was very evident. At the same time, the war also represented a watershed in the thinking of those concerned with New Guinea policy matters. It was now widely appreciated that there was need for an emphasis on development in all fields, and a general acceleration of the tempo in promoting change. In the political field, evidence of the new approach was seen first in 1951 in the establishment of the Legislative Council of Papua and New Guinea. This was an important landmark in the constitutional development of the Territory. The first Council to embrace the whole of Papua and New Guinea, it was also the first time that it included elected representatives among its members (Wootten, 1951). More than this, the inclusion of three indigenous nominees was an earnest of the intention of the Australian Government to promote indigenous political advancement. This aim, it was envisaged, would be gradually achieved by the development of political machinery at local and regional levels, indigenous participation in which would provide the experience and skill which would pave the way for fuller participation in government and politics at the territorial level. Native Local Government Councils were to be introduced throughout the country as the main instrument for implementing this policy.

The Introduction of the Council System

The development of the *kivung na baramana* among the Tolai indicates that they were ripe for political change. At the same time, the *kivungs* themselves provided a bridge between the earlier *luluai* system of administration, and the new system of councils. At Matupit, when administrative officers paid their first visits to discuss the introduction of councils, the elders referred the matter to the *kivung*. The younger men were won over fairly quickly, and John Vuia, as leader of the *kivung*, came to play an important part in introducing the system to the Gazelle Peninsula, accompanying field officers on their visits to other Tolai groups and explaining the aims and purposes of the new institution. Continuity was even more marked at Vunamami. One of the

first to be established, the Vunamami Council acquired its initial funds by assuming control of several unofficial village groups and the proceeds of an unofficial shilling per month fund organised by the former Vunamami *kivung*. The Council was thus able to begin its work with a £3,000 sinking fund at its disposal.

Nevertheless, after making full allowance for the bridging functions of the *kivung*, as a form of administration the council system represented a radical departure from the past in a number of important respects. In the first place, it introduced to the Tolai a new concept of power, which was now vested in a corporate body with statutory backing. Secondly, it demanded a shift from the village to the area as the local unit of administration. The basic premises here have been stated by the Senior Native Authorities Officer, D. M. Fienberg (now Fenbury), whose duties at the time were principally concerned with the introduction of the council system.

The approach being made in Papua and New Guinea is based on a hard fact—that to fulfil their purposes as self-supporting local government agencies, carrying out police, minor legislative and executive functions in their areas, and acting as junior partners to Administration Departments in the provision of social services, village councils must embrace a considerably larger population than is afforded by the average Papua/New Guinea village (Fienberg, 1951: 184).³

Thirdly, the new system provided for the exercise of a wide range of functions, some of which called for the display of novel skills on the part of council personnel. Control of finance lay at the heart of the councils' executive activities, and one of the principal difficulties confronting administrative officers has been to train councillors in the art of budgeting and preparing estimates (McAuley, 1951: 179). They also had to accustom themselves to new forms of procedure for meetings and to learn how to manipulate them. At a later

³ From this point of view, the title of the first ordinance governing the establishment, constitution and power of the councils, the *Native Village Councils Ordinance*, 1949, was quite misleading. The councils were area councils administering anything up to twenty or more villages (McAuley 1954: 881). Since 1956 the relevant legal instrument has been the *Native Local Government Councils Ordinance*.

stage of the analysis we shall have to consider how far the new mode of investiture of power in the councils has been accompanied by changes in the conception of the political arena and the character of leadership.

The Gazelle Peninsula, with its large and homogeneous native population, and with the best system of communications in the Territory, appeared to offer the most congenial setting in which to introduce the new system. By 1954 eight councils had been gazetted throughout the Territory, five of which were in the Gazelle Peninsula among the Tolai of the Rabaul, Reimber, Vunamami, Vunadidir, and Livuan areas (McAuley, 1954: 881). The establishment of these councils had been preceded by extensive touring throughout the entire area by administrative officers and their Tolai aides in which they sought to explain the aims and purposes underlying their introduction. In the main the response was enthusiastic, and by the end of 1950 the District Commissioner, Rabaul, was able to claim excellent progress; he felt that, provided proper control and authority were exercised, the success of the councils was assured. His confidence seemed to be further justified by the fact that following the launching of the first councils at Reimber and Vunamami, other major Tolai groups began to ask for the system to be extended to their areas. Events were soon to show, however, that this assessment of the situation was over-optimistic, for within a year there were signs of mounting opposition to the councils from a number of Tolai communities.

The story of the 'dissident movement' amongst the Tolai provides a fascinating chapter in the recent political history of the Gazelle Peninsula, but the full telling of it would go far beyond the scope of the present volume. I discuss here very briefly therefore only certain aspects of the matter, which illuminate a number of features of the new policy and its wider implications, and also highlight some of the sources of tension and cleavage being generated within the society of the Gazelle Peninsula, a topic which will be examined further in the later analysis of contemporary political developments.

Certain events at Raluana towards the end of 1951 were among the first intimations that implementation of the native local government policy was not going as smoothly as at first

seemed to be the case. From the outset the Raluana appeared to be opposed to entering the council system. One of the first steps to be taken in introducing a council to an area was to conduct a census in order to compile the electoral register. In October 1951 the Senior Native Authorities Officer called upon the Raluana to muster for census in the accustomed way. When they failed to obey the call, Fienberg ordered the arrest of a number of individuals. The entire body of the Raluana *kivung*, composed of some forty young men, followed the party to Rabaul and proceeded to demonstrate outside the gaol, demanding that they too should be locked up. The defendants acquired the services of a local solicitor and at the hearing before a Court of Native Affairs, the magistrate dismissed the charge on the grounds that the type of census that would have been conducted had the defendants appeared was not a census within the meaning of the Native Administration Regulations.⁴ This was a defeat for the Native Authorities Section, and the first victory for what was to become known as the anti-council or dissident movement. Resistance to the introduction of the council system gradually spread to other Tolai areas, and although the total number of people involved was not large, the movement posed a serious threat to the successful working of the system in areas where it was already established, and also considerably delayed its extension to other parts of the Territory. Officers at Rabaul made repeated representations to headquarters at Port Moresby about the gravity of the situation developing on the Gazelle Peninsula, and pointed out that clear-cut policies to meet it had become a matter of administrative urgency. But few positive steps were taken to remedy the position, which gradually worsened,⁵ culminating in 1958 in

⁴ In a Memorandum dated 13 December 1951 (presented as evidence to the *Commission of Inquiry into the Navuneram Incident*, 1959) Fienberg commented that the effect of this was to place on each officer the onus to prove that he proposed to do nothing but census work in terms of a Regulation, which did not even define the term, before he could legally instruct them to assemble. Fienberg also accused the Acting Assistant District Officer at Kokopo of advising the Raluana not to attend the census, and claimed that this officer had also personally assisted the defence lawyer during the court case.

⁵ Towards the end of 1953 the Native Authorities Officer asked to be transferred to other than local government duties because of the deteriorat-

the incidents at Navuneram when fighting broke out between villagers and an administrative patrol, in which two men were killed and another wounded.

A complex interplay of factors was responsible for the course of these events, and no attempt will be made to unravel it definitively here. In the opinion of many Tolai with whom I discussed the matter, the initial response of the Raluana to the introduction of councils was prompted by pique. The Raluana, a relatively large group of about 1,200, shared some of the characteristics of the Matupi. Possessing little land, they were not as wealthy as other Tolai groups. On the other hand, they were one of the first groups in the area to accept Christianity, and over the years they developed very strong links with the Methodist mission. Like Matupit, Raluana had a relatively high proportion of school-teachers, mission-teachers, and other trained persons in its population. Considering themselves as more 'advanced' than other Tolai, the Raluana were greatly incensed when the first council on the Gazelle was established at Reimber, which they regarded as a 'bush' area. There was also a strong element of antipathy in the relations of the Raluana with other groups who had already opted for the council system. Before the war there had been a Paramount *luluai* at Raluana, but he got into trouble and was sent to prison, and a man from Nangananga was appointed in his place. The Raluana were even more indignant when Nason ToKiala of Nangananga was appointed as this man's successor. Nason, always a staunch supporter of the Administration, later resigned his position as Paramount *luluai* to facilitate the establishment of the councils and became first President of the Vunadidir Council.⁶ In addition to these points which touched more the position of the

ing situation and what he saw as the failure of the Administration to take firm action. Earlier in the year J. K. McCarthy, District Commissioner, Rabaul, was asked by the Administrator to visit Raluana in a final effort to persuade the people there to accept the council. The Raluana remained adamant, and the meeting quickly developed into a brawl, in the course of which McCarthy was struck over the head with a crutch belonging to one of the Raluana spokesmen (McCarthy, 1963: 233-4).

⁶ At the meeting at Raluana which ended in a brawl it was Nason on whom the crowd converged, and it was in going to his defence that McCarthy was struck.

Raluana within the wider Tolai community, there was also the fact that the *kivung na baramana* had acquired considerable authority within the group, which participation in the council system threatened to diminish.

But however important the motives of the Raluana, and whatever the aspirations that fired them to opposition to the new government policy, an explanation of the movement simply in terms of intra-Tolai relations and developments would be grossly inadequate. There were in the Native Authorities Section a number of officers who were convinced of the rightness of the local government policy and were deeply committed to it. For men like Fienberg, a local government unit was not intended to become a piece of window-dressing nor to act as an inter-village debating society; it was part of the administrative machinery with a very definite job to do. In Fienberg's view the councils were designed to develop into a comprehensive system of administration, gradually becoming involved in all aspects of indigenous social life—law and order, the regulation of customary usages, the provision of social services, and the financing of schemes for the economic advancement of the area. Conceived in these terms, their establishment was bound to upset in various ways the existing structure of power within the wider community. Thus the missions, which had long enjoyed a virtual monopoly in the field of Tolai education, were plainly unhappy with the trend of development, and it is interesting to note how from the very outset councillors were led to protest at their meetings about obstructionism on the part of various missionaries and their lay catechists. The responsibilities which the councils were to enjoy in the maintenance of law and order had in the same way important implications for the role of the police, and here too there was an immediate source of tension. There was also scope for tension even within the Department of Native Affairs, for the creation of a 'specialist' Native Authorities Section to implement the new policy threatened the autonomy to which many officers had become accustomed in the days of village administration. All of these conflicts and cleavages and the personal animosities and antipathies which frequently accom-

panied or exacerbated them, are an essential part of any serious attempt to understand the anti-council movement.

The resistance to incorporation in a council system on the part of a small minority would have been of less moment had it not been for a number of anomalies in the overall policy of the Administration itself. Although the enabling legislation clearly foreshadowed a regular pattern of administration which would gradually be extended throughout the entire Territory as circumstances permitted, in implementing the policy the Administration followed the principle of voluntary participation and there was no legal requirement that once a council area had been proclaimed a particular community had to participate in it if it were disinclined. Taken in conjunction with the tax question, this gave rise to serious difficulties. The pre-war head tax had not been re-instituted, originally on the grounds that the people needed time for rehabilitation after the war, and later, apparently, because it was felt that a direct native tax could not be imposed without also imposing a direct tax on non-natives which the Government was not yet prepared to do. The result was that the people in council areas taxed themselves while those who elected to remain outside the system remained wholly untaxed: the council areas were thus providing at their own cost services that other areas got (or at least were entitled to) from the Administration (see McAuley, 1954: 881).

A particularly vexed situation was created in those areas where councils had already been established. Councillors frequently asked what was the point in having councils when they raised taxes to provide services that other groups were receiving freely from the Government, and they demanded that those in non-council areas should be excluded from Government employment and participation in other Administration or council sponsored enterprises. Vin ToBaining, the President of the Vunamami Council, expressed the mood of frustration when, at a meeting of the Combined Councils in 1956, he spoke heatedly in favour of ending the present impasse: 'Every time visiting officials and important people come amongst us, they only speak highly of the work of the Local Government Councils. Now, we are tired of this. We are tired of this trouble caused by the anti-council minorities

because Government has done nothing to remedy it. . . . We are not fools.'

These various representations by the Tolai councils brought little direct alleviation of the situation, but the situation was in fact gradually resolving itself, largely through the advance and impact of the councils themselves. Rowley (1957: 439) has described a very early meeting of the Vunamami Council he attended at the end of 1950. Almost a complete day was taken up in attempts by administrative officers to explain a simple budget; most of the councillors sitting on the floor were quite bewildered. However, the picture improved rapidly, and when he visited Reimber Council in 1957, he found the President criticising some supervisory omissions of his Executive Committee and debate was going on about working projects. Nor was progress confined to increasing mastery of the techniques of meetings and discussions; the councils' contributions to social and economic advancement were at last beginning to make their mark. Whereas a few years earlier there had been reports of individuals moving into non-council areas 'where there was no tax, no sanitation rule, and you can do as you like', there were now indications of dissatisfaction in the areas still run by the *kivung*, reflected in the movement of numbers of persons from Raluana to the neighbouring area of Nangananga. It was becoming apparent indeed that leading members of the *kivung* at Raluana, influenced perhaps by the views of their fellows working in Port Moresby,⁷ were beginning to have second thoughts about remaining outside the council system. Thus in May 1957, people at Raluana held a meeting at which they decided to petition to be allowed to join the Vunamami Council, and it is interesting to note that among the services they immediately asked for were the provision of medical aid posts, water storage and tanks, the use of the council-run central cocoa fermentary as well as the help of the council in the acquisition of additional land for cash crops, facilities which were already available in council areas.

⁷ *The Evidence presented to the Commission of Inquiry into the Navuneram Incident* includes an interesting letter from a Raluana in Port Moresby which refers to a meeting there to discuss the position. The writer indicates that he thought it was now time for them to 'go in', but noted that the general feeling was for a separate council with its own president for themselves and 'our friends who are not in yet'.

At the time I commenced my fieldwork, although Navuneram and a small number of other groups still remained intransigent, the evidence clearly suggested that the council system had taken firm root among the Tolai and was working quite effectively. This is an appropriate point therefore at which to examine the work of the councils more systematically.

Councils: Powers and Functions

Council activities can be most conveniently studied in terms of three sets of functions: law and order; the provision of public services; and the undertaking of commercial and developmental projects. We shall consider each of these in turn.

At the inception of the native local government policy it was envisaged that the establishment of councils would be accompanied by the introduction of a native courts system. A draft ordinance dealing with courts was prepared as early as 1949, but with the coming to power of the Liberal Government in Australia, there was a change of policy on this matter, and although the Tolai councils since then have repeatedly sought the setting up of these courts, the necessary enabling legislation has never been introduced. This has created an anomalous situation. We have seen earlier (p. 186) that under the terms of the Native Local Government Councils Ordinance, councils are responsible for maintaining peace, order, and good government in their areas. To this end they are empowered to appoint their own constables, but since the councils lack the means to employ more than a few constables their police functions remain minimal and the responsibility for maintaining law and order in the villages is discharged by the individual councillors.

Viewed from the village, the organising of hearings and the settlement of disputes is perhaps one of the most important of the councillor's tasks. Something of the character of these disputes, and the way in which they are handled at Matupit, has been described in earlier chapters. The curious thing is that there is no legal support for these arrangements, and the only means by which the councillor is able to assert jurisdiction is through the traditional system of sanctions

operating within the community. The fact that so many cases are still settled at village level instead of being taken before an administrative officer sitting as a Court of Native Affairs indicates how effective these sanctions remain.

Nevertheless, cases do arise from time to time where a villager will refuse to appear before the village moot, and the councillor may be powerless to do anything about it. On one occasion, for example, ToGorogoro, the Councillor at Kurapun, tried to bring a charge in the Court of Native Affairs against a young man from Matupit who had been committing adultery with a Matupi girl whose husband at the time was working in Port Moresby. The Councillor explained that he had called upon the young man to appear before the village assembly on three occasions, but without effect. The A.D.O. pointed out that under the Native Administration Regulation a charge could be brought before the court only by one of the wronged spouses or by the girl's father. At this ToGorogoro began to expostulate, but the A.D.O. cut him short, and gave him a severe dressing down for not showing proper respect to the court. However, after a few minutes he relented and said: 'I'm sorry about this. I know how you feel about it. But that is the position, and I'm trying to show you the road you must follow'. ToGorogoro was still not satisfied and raised the whole question of councillors' powers at the next council meeting. Again, the A.D.O. sought to make the legal position clear, and he was supported by the Tolai President of the Council who pointed out that although councillors had no legal authority to enforce jurisdiction, there was a way round the difficulty: there was, for example, a council rule which entitled the councillor to charge anyone who did not keep his house or latrine in order. ToGorogoro quickly pointed out that this was no remedy where the man who refused to appear kept his house and latrine in order. The A.D.O. was in a difficult position. Privately, he was in sympathy with ToGorogoro, for he recognised that if councillors were unable to settle cases informally within the village, the whole system of administration of justice would be threatened, since officers would have to spend so much time on their judicial duties that there would be little to spare for anything else. The A.D.O.'s

embarrassment was clearly reflected in a long and disingenuous attempt to justify the existing policy: he spoke at length about the two party system of government, and explained that those who did not turn up to meetings called by a councillor could be regarded as an opposition: they could not be forced to turn up. There was no further discussion.⁸

Related to its responsibilities for the maintenance of law and order and 'good government', a council has also certain legislative powers to make rules for the 'peace, order and welfare' of the people within its area. Although in theory these powers are fairly far-reaching, in practice they have become severely circumscribed by administrative policy and precepts; since 1955 all rules are submitted to the central government for approval both by the Crown Law Office and by appropriate specialist departments. An example of the way in which councillors feel themselves to be hamstrung by this procedure may be seen in their various unavailing attempts to introduce a rule regulating the sale of cocoa beans outside the fermentaries associated with the Tolai Cocoa Project. The Tolai councils had become involved in this Project largely accidentally as the only indigenous corporations to which bank loans could be made. By 1960 European officers and many Tolai councillors had become perturbed by the drift from the Project fermentaries, and the increasing sale of cocoa beans to private Chinese buyers.⁹ Tolai spokesmen saw a solution to their difficulty in the introduction of legislation making it an offence for a Tolai in a council area to sell his beans at other than a Project fermentary. But although numerous drafts were prepared by the Agricultural Department, they had always been rejected by the Crown

⁸ This was neither a novel nor an isolated complaint. Healy (1961) reports that councillors frequently complained that they had inadequate means of upholding the council's authority. At a meeting of the Combined Tolai Councils which I attended towards the end of 1959, many leading councillors contrasted their position with that of the former *luluais*, who had had considerable powers in dealing with 'bigheads', and they demanded the re-introduction of punitive sanctions. The District Officer, as Chairman, doubted if such measures would be acceptable to the Administration in Port Moresby, and simply proffered the same advice as that of the President of the Rabaul Council cited above.

⁹ The situation is examined in detail in Epstein, T. S. (1968).

Law Office as being too restrictive. A disquieting feature of this situation was that local officers remained obliged to expound and justify a policy to which, they would admit privately, they did not personally subscribe. Amongst councillors themselves there was a strong sense of disillusion about their incapacity to promulgate rules: Healy (1961) has reported that the legislative functions of local government councils in general were minimal; this was certainly true of the Rabaul Council where by 1960 rule-making had become virtually confined to making provision for the annual council tax.

A major aim of the local government policy was that through the councils the people could come to participate in the provision of public services out of their own resources. The fact that in their petition for entry to the council system the Raluana should specifically ask for certain services which were already available in other council areas indicates that the policy was achieving some measure of success in this regard. The Native Local Government Councils Ordinance confers on councils the power to raise loans and invest funds. However, at the time of my study, apart from the special case of the Tolai Cocoa Project, no money had been raised in this way, and no grants-in-aid had yet been made available to native local government. The sole significant source of revenue therefore was the annual council tax imposed on all males (save those specially exempted) over the age of seventeen, and on all females over seventeen who wished to vote. The amounts at the time were £A4 and £A1 respectively. Thus the estimate of recurrent revenue for the Rabaul Council for 1960 was £A8,149 of which £A7,300 was made up of tax. Table 12 shows how these funds were allocated.

Close on a third of estimated expenditure was devoted to council expenditure, £A1,500 of which was made up of emoluments to the council clerk, councillors, and the supervisor of works. Most of the expenditure on transport was also of a recurrent kind. Early on the Rabaul Council had purchased its own truck, on which there were fairly heavy repair and maintenance charges. When not in use on council business, the truck also provided a small source of revenue by being hired out as a form of public transport. The other major items on the budget—education, health and sanitation,

Table 12

Estimates of council expenditure, Rabaul 1960

Item	Amount £A	%
Council administration	2,339	31.3
Health and sanitation	893	11.9
Education	1,068	14.3
Agriculture and marketing	682	9.1
Roads and bridges	100	1.3
Water	850	11.4
Law and order	192	2.6
Transport	1,031	13.8
Social welfare	310	4.2
Total	7,465	99.9

and water—called rather for capital expenditure. Because of the nature of the soils, water was scarce throughout the Gazelle, and part of each council's program included the gradual installation of wells and underground tanks in all villages where these were required. Responsibility in the fields of education and health was shared with the respective government departments. Thus teachers at Council Village Higher Schools were provided and paid by the Education Department while the school buildings and houses for the teachers were put up by the council. In the case of the medical aid posts, the councils put up the buildings and paid the salaries of the medical orderlies, but the Health Department was responsible for their training and also provided free supplies of medicine and other requirements.

While these arrangements appear to have worked satisfactorily, it is in such contexts that the councils emerge most clearly as an integral part of the administrative structure and as instruments of administrative policy rather than as relatively autonomous policy-making bodies. Councillors themselves have gradually become aware of the situation, and on occasion have expressed mild dissatisfaction with it. Thus at one meeting the suggestion was put forward that the Health Department should take over the payment of salaries of medical orderlies and assistants at the aid posts on the grounds that although the council paid the orderlies, it had no say in

filling the posts, or arranging transfers. In short, the council paid the piper, but did not call the tune. An administrative officer present at the meeting told me privately that he favoured the proposal, though on somewhat different grounds. He felt that too much of councils' money went on emoluments, and savings in this direction would make funds available for other projects. But in point of fact, with very limited sources of revenue at their disposal, the question that was beginning to concern a number of those directly concerned with council administration was what the councils could do next once every village had been supplied with its school building, its aid post, and its water tank.

The question of effective control of policy, which has a direct bearing on the future allocation of funds, is also vital in the context of the councils' third set of functions as instruments of community development. The two major instances in which the Rabaul Council has been associated with the promotion of development schemes have been the Tolai Cocoa Project and the establishment of the settlement on the Vudal. A few of the Tolai councils had begun to show active interest in the cocoa industry almost from their inception. Already in 1951 the Vunamami Council had appropriated funds from its revenue for the construction of a fermentary at Ngatur, and a little later the Livuan and Reimber Councils followed suit. Soon, as the number of plantings increased, it was recognised that there was a pressing need for more fermentaries, and the Tolai Cocoa Project came into being. However, as mentioned earlier, the decision to associate the councils with the project was taken largely as a matter of administrative convenience (see Williamson, 1958); and today, although Tolai growers and councils are represented on the Management Board, in fact the Project is controlled directly by the Administration. The Vudal Settlement Scheme was initiated by the Rabaul Council in 1953 on 1,000 acres of administration land near the Vudal river beyond Keravat, which it acquired on a 99 year lease. The aim was to subdivide the land into small blocks and make these available on individual tenure to applicants within the Rabaul Council area for starting cocoa farms. Initially, the scheme was enthusiastically received, and it seemed likely to develop into

one of the most important of the council's activities (McAuley 1954: 885), but technical difficulties, errors of judgment and other factors soon brought it to a state of near-collapse. During my stay at Matupit a desperate attempt was being made to revive it, the leading role being played here by John Vuia, who had come to regard its success as a personal challenge, and was one of the few actually to build a house at the Vudal.¹⁰

Given the lack of technical and managerial skills amongst present council members, such large-scale projects clearly require supervision by, and close co-operation with, various departments of the Administration. This state of affairs considerably restricts the autonomy of the councils and severely limits their responsibility for major decision-making. This is particularly noticeable in the case of the Cocoa Project, for which the councils have a financial responsibility, but little real managerial authority. But instances of this kind apart, the councils are also confronted with an inconsistency in the policy of the Government in regard to sponsoring development. For while councils have statutory authority to engage in business and to promote development, the Administration's commitment to the ideology of private enterprise also tends to inhibit this development. The effect of such a commitment has already been seen to some extent in the reluctance of the Administration to accept legislation forbidding the sale of cocoa beans outside the Project-controlled fermentaries on the grounds that it would be in restraint of trade. It may be seen too in the response to a suggestion made at a meeting of the Combined Tolai Councils in 1960 for establishing a workshop at the Malaguna Technical School. The idea was that it would give the students some practical experience, but it was also envisaged that the workshop would be undertaken as a commercial enterprise. Speaking in favour of the proposal, Vin ToBaining, President of Vunamami Council, pointed out that in earlier years students had been able to improve their practical skills by working on the cars and lorries of the councils, oiling and greasing them

¹⁰ It should perhaps be noted that a later and somewhat similar scheme, sponsored by the Vunamami Council, on the Warongoi river appears to have been more successful.

and doing minor repair jobs. Now all of this had been stopped. Then again, he continued, they used to make desks, tables, and chairs. But that too had been stopped. All they did now was to put various things together and then take them to pieces again. A few councillors expressed doubts about the scheme. One asked who would be responsible for supplying the spare parts for the vehicles, while another inquired who would want to take his lorry to be repaired by a bunch of schoolboys just learning their trade. An administrative officer then attempted to sum up the discussion by pointing to certain practical difficulties of the scheme. He also explained that to equip such a workshop would run into thousands of pounds. His private comment to me, however, was that the proposal stood little chance of official acceptance because it ran counter to favoured notions of private enterprise. In a word, as Healy (1961) has observed, administration policy dictated that council participation in schemes for economic improvement should be indirect, unless there was no other agency available; at Rabaul of course there were a number of European-owned garages and motor repair shops.

Leadership and the Councils

It will be apparent from much of the foregoing analysis that the emphasis in council activities is on practical undertakings rather than on general policy discussions.¹¹ This was also clearly reflected in the conduct of council meetings, few of which were even accompanied by any vigorous debate amongst the members over issues of principle or policy.¹² This of course was in accord with the underlying aims of the council policy; as mentioned earlier, councils were regarded as a part of the machinery of administration, intended to do a specific

¹¹ A similar point is made by McAuley (1954: 884) who records that one result of this emphasis was that the officers concerned had a good deal of their time taken up in assisting with such practical details as the procurement of materials and the carrying out of works. McAuley cites the comment of one councillor that Native Authorities Officers could always be told from other *kiaps* because they had corns on their hands instead of elsewhere.

¹² I refer there only to meetings of local councils. The meetings of the Combined Tolai Councils, which were at this time purely consultative and advisory, frequently took quite a different form. See below, p. 288.

job of work. But however important the pragmatic functions of the councils, it also needs to be stressed that it was never envisaged that the aims of the policy could be stated exclusively in these terms. The Papua and New Guinea Act 1949, which first provided for the introduction of native local government, foreshadowed a more comprehensive framework of political institutions within which the councils would have their place, and towards the achievement of which the development of the council system represented a first step. Viewed from this perspective, a further major purpose of the councils was to serve as an instrument of political education: they were to be the training ground on which a new democratic leadership would be developed, a 'workshop' in which to acquire the skills that would in time be put to use in fuller participation in the government of the country at district and territorial levels (see Lambert, 1957: 466; Rowley, 1957: 443-4). It is clear that the council system introduced to the Tolai new concepts of power and authority as defined by their modes of vesting. The question that arises is how far this development has been accompanied by an awareness and acceptance of the councils as a legitimate and useful arena of political struggle. What is at issue here is not merely the extent to which the councils have modified the traditional character of political competition, but also the degree to which they provide an effective forum for the discussion of matters of major moment within the area. Such issues in turn raise questions about representation on the councils, and the relationship between the office of councillor and leadership in other spheres of activity. In a word, it is the role of the councils in the political life of the community that we now have to consider.

From the beginning it has been the policy that councillors should be elected rather than directly appointed by the Administration, a principle whose adoption was facilitated by the general absence in New Guinea of forms of hereditary authority. Elections on the Gazelle Peninsula are conducted biennially by 'whispering ballot'. This is combined with the Australian system of preferential voting, each voter coming up individually to the administrative officer acting as returning officer and giving his list of preferences. Healy remarks

(1961: 168) that the operation of the preferential system is certainly too complicated to be generally understood, but that it satisfies the Administration that the person most electors prefer has been elected. Yet even if this assumption is allowed, and there appears to have been general agreement upon the choice of candidates, the result still tells us little of the status of the councillor within his constituency, of the reasons for his selection, or in what ways he is regarded as a representative of his community. No council elections were held during my period in the field, so I am unable to adduce direct evidence on these points. This is unfortunate, but it is not fatal. For the crucial question here of course is the way in which the role of councillor is perceived, and while the conduct of an election might be expected to shed interesting light on it, it is not the only source of evidence available to us. An alternative approach is to examine the expectations held of a councillor by considering his work within the village. We should then be in a position to see how his role within the village reacts upon his work within the council. Since so much of the work of village government goes on publicly, some account of a typical village meeting at Matupit would seem to provide a useful lead into the discussion of these questions.

We have seen already that village meetings are a regular feature of social life at Matupit. At Kikila and Kurapun one night in the week was usually set aside for the village assembly, but the arrangement was easily varied, depending on the weather or the nature and amount of the business to be transacted. The meeting was announced by the blowing of a conch-shell, and within the hour most people who were attending had gathered near the Councillor's house. Since meetings were held at night, it was not easy to see exactly who was present,¹³ but it was my impression that they were usually well attended by both males and females; the younger people were frequently absent save when for some reason they were directly concerned in the proceedings. At Rarup,

¹³ On one occasion I volunteered to bring along my Tilley lamp, but the offer was not accepted. There was in fact no shortage of these lamps at Matupit, and it was clear that the people preferred to conduct their meetings in the dark.

meetings were more sporadic, and those that were called were often poorly attended and it was sometimes approaching midnight before a quorum was deemed to have gathered. The following account is of a meeting that was called at Kikila in March 1960, some three months after I had commenced fieldwork at Matupit.

Penias, the councillor, opened the meeting when he considered that enough people had gathered. He spoke briefly, and without interruption, simply listing a number of points.

These were as follows:

- (1) The collection of council tax was lagging behind because people were not paying quickly enough. He reminded them that they must hurry up and pay the tax.
- (2) A rumour was going around that war was once again going to break out. The councillor himself did not elaborate on the nature of the rumour, but confined himself to remarking that they had received no such word from the Government, and that it was an offence to spread such foolish talk.
- (3) There was the question of two buildings to be put up for the Women's Club and the pre-school.
- (4) A number of gardens from which the crops had been harvested were now becoming overgrown with weeds. These should be cleared so that the ground was made ready for planting again.
- (5) At Rarup and Kurapun many of the young men spent their time playing cards and gambling. He did not want this sort of thing in Kikila. It led to trouble in the house, for a man lost his money and then his wife became angry because there was nothing left with which to buy food. Such cases would be brought before the council.
- (6) The Agricultural Show was to take place at Kokopo shortly and people should begin their preparations for it. So far as I understood his remarks, he gave no indication what these preparations should be.

His list of points made, Penias asked whether there was anyone who wished to comment on what he had said. After a short pause, John Vuia spoke. He said he agreed with what Penias had said, and wished to speak on three matters only. First, the question of tax. The tax collection at Matupit was down a lot this year. On this point he wished to make a suggestion: that everyone should get a small money box and put £1 in it every three months. In this way when January came round there would be no problem of finding the money for tax. He then turned to the matter of the rumour of war. He himself had not heard the stories until one day recently at Vudal he had been approached by a man who asked what it was all about. He suspected that the rumours had their origin in an item in *Talaigu* (a periodical published by the Catholic Mission at Vunapope) towards the end of last year. He then roundly condemned the spreading of these stories, and proceeded to describe the case of a young man at Nakanai (on the north coast of New Britain) who had been defrauding the people by telling them that he was collecting money to get a ship that would take them to America for education. ToVuia stopped at this point, apparently forgetting for the moment the third matter on which he wished to comment. He was followed by a young man in his early thirties who took up the question of the two buildings. He noted that the people of Kikila had already made their preparations for putting up one of them, and that they should now arrange to meet with Rarup and Kurapun to discuss the matter further. He then switched to another topic, saying that when the Methodists got together to put up a house for their catechist, the older men had come along to work, but not the younger people. 'I saw them', he said, 'all playing cards'. Penias seized on this, repeating that he did not want this to go on in their village, and anybody found doing so would come before the court.

ToKikiala, a man in his late thirties who had been in earlier years a 'missionary' of the Seventh Day Adventists, spoke next. He had lived in Manus (in the Admiralty Islands), he said, and he had also worked in Madang, and the words he had heard in those places he had not expected to hear

here on Matupit. Yali¹⁴ had taught that the dead would travel to the land of the whites, and they would then send the cargo to the native peoples. The whites would be jealous, and would try to prevent the natives getting it, claiming it as their own. And there was Paliau¹⁵ who taught that the people should throw their money into the sea so that a ship would come. And the people obeyed. He did not think the people here would be as foolish as that. They should not listen to lies. Then he shifted to another topic, saying that there was no respect amongst them for their coconuts. 'If a man plants a coconut and it thrives and bears fruit it is as a blessing on him. We are not people living in darkness. If we steal in this fashion then we have thrown away our faith and our belief.' John Vuia took this point up saying that as from today he had imposed a taboo on his lands at Raulavat so that none should collect eggs there because so many were helping themselves to his coconuts without permission. A number of elders followed, all speaking in similar terms, and threatening to deny access to their own egg-lands too. This concluded the business of the meeting, and the councillor and his 'committee' then settled down to the hearing of the evening's cases.

Most village assemblies I attended took the same general form. As in the present instance, the councillor opened the meeting by reporting various matters decided on by the Rabaul Council or by an administrative officer. This was followed by general discussion in which all were free to participate and, if they wished, to raise other matters. The extent to which the councillor dominates the proceedings, either by initiating proposals or by his control of the discussion, will depend a great deal on his temperament and personal capabilities. At the meeting just described, it is clear that he played no dominant part; his role was rather that of a *rapporteur*. The payment of tax, for example, was not a matter which Penias brought up on his own initiative; it was a point raised at a council meeting which councillors were asked to discuss with their people back in the village.

¹⁴ Yali was a prominent leader in the Madang District where he had been closely associated with a cargo cult. For an account of his career see the excellent study by Peter Lawrence, *Road belong Cargo* (1964).

¹⁵ Another prominent cult leader. See Mead (1956), Schwartz (1962).

And it was John Vuia, rather than Penias, who took the lead in exhorting the people to pay their tax promptly, and who suggested that they would find the burden easier if they were to put away smaller sums towards the tax from time to time. In situations such as these the role of the councillor appears as akin to that of a filter, through which messages are passed, while the responsibility for raising new issues, influencing opinion, and mustering public support is assumed by other prominent persons in the community.

It would of course be absurd and blatantly false to claim that the role of councillor among the Tolai can be described universally in these terms. There are obvious examples, such as Vin ToBaining of Vunamami or Nason ToKiala of Nangananga, who are not only leading personalities in their own communities but are well-known and respected throughout most of the Tolai area. Such persons are 'big men' in the traditional sense who have also developed into modern political leaders. Nevertheless, these remain exceptional cases, and it is the fact that the system produces such representative figures as Penias that has to be explained.¹⁶ The position of the councillor as I have described it at Matupit may reflect to some extent the decline of the traditional 'big man' there, and this may well be true elsewhere, particularly in the villages of the Rabaul Council area. Yet as an explanation this is far from adequate. In the previous chapter I referred to traditional 'big men', following Salisbury, as political entrepreneurs. Many of these have been able to adapt themselves fairly easily to modern conditions, and have applied their entrepreneurial skills and interests to the promotion of modern business enterprises, as is well shown in the case of ToDungan of the inland parish of Rاپitok (Epstein, T. S., 1964). The son of a former Paramount *luluai*, and a *luluai* at Rاپitok himself before the introduction of councils, ToDungan has consistently declined to serve as councillor, although an obvious choice for the office. The fact was that

¹⁶ It was noticeable that at meetings of the Rabaul Council, and still more of the Combined Councils, the number of councillors who contributed to the discussion was usually small. A man like Nason would sometimes draw my attention to the behaviour of his fellows at a meeting, complaining that most of them came and just sat with their mouths shut, and adding that he didn't know why they were there at all.

he was too pre-occupied with his various business interests to have time for the routine affairs of village government, and indeed he was very rarely to be found at home.¹⁷ Nevertheless, he remained one of the most influential men in the parish, and few decisions of any moment were taken without his having been consulted. Similarly, at Matupit John Vuia, who had served for a time as a councillor, had now withdrawn from formal council activities to devote himself to his work at Vudal and his other interests. During my stay at Matupit he was frequently away from the village. Neither of these facts had affected his position of prominence within the community, and when a matter of importance arose during his absence a decision would be deferred until his return.

Examination of the social composition of the councils throws further light on the question. In the Rabaul Council, for example, the majority of members were in their thirties or early forties. According to Tolai ideas, therefore, they fell into a status category intermediate between 'youths' and 'elders'; they had not yet acquired the prestige and authority that attached to elderhood. Lacking the ripeness of wisdom in the traditional sense, they also lacked education in the formal Western sense. Of the eighteen councillors only one had attended the Government Secondary School at Keravat.¹⁸ This lack of formal education was also reflected in their occupational status. There was one tally-clerk, a driver, a building contractor, and a carpenter (Penias, who had been trained in carpentry at the Malaguna Technical School before

¹⁷ There is a high turn-over rate among councillors. This is because, having served one or perhaps two terms of office, many feel that they have done their stint, and are anxious to avoid re-election. At a meeting of the Combined Councils in March 1960 ToBaining made the suggestion that a councillor's tenure of office should be extended from two to four years. He argued that this would increase the efficiency of their work, and avoid some of the difficulties created by too frequent elections and switches in personnel. His proposal evoked little enthusiasm. One speaker immediately objected that he personally had his own business and a large family to look after, and two years' service was quite sufficient. The matter was finally put to the vote, and ToBaining's motion was defeated by 41 votes to 27.

¹⁸ Among the councillors of the Combined Tolai Councils there was only one who was reasonably fluent in English, and spoke this language regularly when conversing with Europeans. When administrative officers and other Europeans were present meetings were conducted in New Guinea pidgin, sometimes called neo-Melanesian.

the war, served as the Rabaul Council's Supervisor of Works), and the remainder simply described themselves as 'villagers'. In short, councillors are not necessarily the most influential men in their own communities in the traditional sense, while there is also a noticeable absence of the more educated, English-speaking Tolai who are more closely involved in the modern wage economy, and whose political interests reach beyond the confines of the village. This state of affairs, I suggest, is not accidental, and accords well with the role of the council as it is perceived from the village.

The council system brought into being among the Tolai a new type of administrative unit, requiring the co-operation of different villages. At the same time it added a new dimension to their concept of political competition; potentially the villages are now units competing with one another for a share of the council's budget, and the services which the council is able to provide. But the Tolai do not appear to see the situation in quite this way. On one occasion, for example, I had been chatting with the elder Turpui, and I happened to ask if he thought the horn would blow that evening. He replied that he did not know; perhaps if there was anything from the council in Rabaul to report Penias would call the village together. But frequently if there was nothing to report Penias did not call a meeting. 'As if the people lived by the word that came from the council! What about the matters that arise in the village—the planting of coconuts, the work on the cocoa, the growing of food, and seeing that men and women live well together in their families?' For men of a more conservative stamp like Turpui, the task of government was still primarily conceived of as village government. The council was of secondary importance: it was a creation of the Administration and served as an instrument of government policy. Such a view has a direct bearing on the selection of the councillor. His role is perceived principally as that of an intermediary and a buffer between the villagers and the Administration. What is required therefore is not a man of independent outlook who will take decisions that bind his constituents, but one of docile temperament¹⁹ who can be controlled by the village elders

¹⁹ Thus Penias was frequently referred to with approval as one who was not given to anger or harsh words (*pa i nunure ra kankan*).

and will serve simply as their mouthpiece or voice (*a nilaina*).

Two incidents may be cited briefly to illustrate this point of view. At the council elections in 1957 Epineri Titimur was elected for Kikila. Brought up at Nodup, Titimur had come to Matupit to join his mother and other members of his *vunatarai* already long settled on the island. He had earlier attended for a short time the Government Secondary School at Keravat, and when I came to meet him he was in his mid-thirties and apparently developing into a successful building contractor and entrepreneur. He was also one of the two men at Matupit who had acquired blocks of land under the Warongoi Scheme (see p. 268). Within a short time of his arrival at Matupit he began to make his mark as a man of industry and enterprise, and his contributions to discussions at the village assembly made a good impression; it was considered he would make a good councillor. Epineri also enjoyed a measure of support amongst the younger people, who found in his speeches an echo of their own sentiments and aspirations. But he turned out to have an independent turn of mind, and many of his views were less congenial to the elders of Kikila. In particular, he was strongly opposed to the people drinking liquor, which at that time was still illegal, and he lost no opportunity of denouncing the practice. Matters came to a head when on one occasion Epineri found a Matupi lorry driver with a bottle of liquor lying hidden under the driver's seat. Epineri asked him for a lift into town, and then had the man charged for drinking whilst in charge of a vehicle. The Matupi were even more enraged when a little later a party from the island had set out by boat to visit the Duke of York Islands. The boat was overcrowded, and there was a lot of drinking going on. Epineri reported the matter and went as far as to suggest, so it was alleged, that they be deprived of the use of the boat for their return. The upshot of these events was that the Matupi were soon making representations to the District Officer for the replacement of Titimur and the holding of a by-election on the grounds that his frequent absences from the village for business reasons were preventing him from carrying out properly his duties as a councillor. The Administration resisted these demands, but at the time of the next

election Epineri was absent in Talasea, and he was not nominated.

The second incident occurred when I had left the field at the end of my first trip, and I only came to hear of it from a number of different informants on my return to Matupit. In the latter half of 1960 a General Taxpayers Meeting was called at the Rabaul Council House. There had been rumours of a likely outbreak of fighting on that day between Tolai and locally employed indentured labourers from the Highlands districts, and the meeting was poorly attended, though the Matupi were well represented. The main item for discussion was a proposal for an increase in council tax. The Matupi expressed their objection to any increase. Back at Matupit a meeting was called of the whole village. John Vuia introduced the matter, and linked the proposal for a tax increase with the setting up of a new Tolai Higher Council. But the mood of the meeting was firmly opposed to any rise, and the councillors were instructed to vote against the proposal. However, when the council itself next met and discussed the matter it was agreed to proceed with the implementing of the new tax rule, and eventually tax collection began on this basis. When the tax tribunal arrived at Matupit, the people gathered and at once a fierce argument developed, a number declaring that they refused to pay at the new rate. Those who refused to pay were further incensed when a number of teachers and others in government employment came forward to pay tax. Many were preparing to leave the spot when an administrative officer arrived. Learning what was going on he explained that the matter had been agreed upon by the council and finally warned the people that if they continued in their attitude of defiance they would all have to appear before the court the following week.

Following the departure of the officer and the tax tribunal, a number of meetings were called of all sections of the island, at which it was agreed that they should all stand firm on the issue, and if necessary should go to prison together. A week later the people of Matupit were summoned to appear before the *kiap* in Rabaul. One of my informants, who held a clerical post in a government department, and had spoken at the meetings urging the people to oppose the new tax, was one of the

first to be called into court. When he learnt that refusal to pay might mean a term of seven weeks' imprisonment he wavered. What could one do? he asked. In whatever direction one turned the door was shut; one was trapped. If he went to prison who would look after his wife and children? However, others showed more resolution. One man was taken and placed in the police van. The Matupi arose. They tried to rescue the prisoner and at the same time to attack the Council President and their own Councillor, Penias. There was fierce resentment against Penias because, it was said, he had not carried out properly his duties as a spokesman (*a kapkap tinata*, literally a carrier of words), and had ignored the words of the people. Some councillors, it was alleged, had said in supporting the new tax rule: 'It is we who lead the people, not the people who lead us'. Two views of the concept of representation here stood opposed and the result was, following this incident and the arrest and imprisonment of a number of Matupi men, a disturbed atmosphere in the village which was still noticeable when I returned some time afterwards. The people of Kikila were particularly bitter, their mood being expressed in such comments as 'The council is none of our affair any more. We won't vote. When the next election comes round "they" can choose the councillor from amongst themselves'.²⁰

Beyond the Parish Pump

The incidents just described throw a good deal of light on the general conception held at Matupit of the role of the council and of councillors. On the more specific issue of the tax, they also reveal the almost complete unanimity of purpose in rejecting the proposal to raise the tax. At the various meetings held in the village to discuss the matter, so far as

²⁰ The response at Kurapun was somewhat different. It seems to be agreed that the councillor there had firmly opposed the tax instruction throughout, and it was also agreed that he had acted like a proper councillor in representing the views of his people to the council. ToGorogoro, unlike Penias, refused to pay the new tax and, so it was said, demanded that he too be sent to prison. It was the view of my informants that ToGorogoro was not sent to prison because the administrative officer dealing with the matter recognised that if this had happened the people at Kurapun would have accepted no other councillor.

my information goes, only John Vuia, whose support of the Administration has been seen in a number of contexts, spoke in favour of the proposal. All the other prominent elders who contributed to the debate were solidly opposed to it and they were then supported by a number of the younger, 'white-collar' workers employed in Rabaul. I was told later indeed that such was the general agreement that the number of those who actually spoke in the debate was quite small. It was only later, with the promulgation of the rule and the attempt by the tax tribunal to enforce it, that there was a wavering in the ranks, revealing a deep-rooted source of cleavage within the community. It is the nature of this cleavage that I now wish to examine.

I have referred in an earlier chapter to the processes of social differentiation at work on Matupit, and to the emergence there of a social category quite unknown to the traditional system. To a considerable extent this development is the expression of an inter-generational cleavage, but as I noted above (p. 87) this is not entirely so. Those who fall into the new category are mainly men under forty, but what marks them out as distinctive is that they have acquired a measure of formal schooling which has opened up a wide range of job opportunities beyond the boundaries of the village. They serve as teachers in mission and government schools inside and outside the Gazelle Peninsula, they are employed as clerks or in junior administrative grades in various government departments or work as trained mechanics and artisans for private firms. A few, like Epineri Titimur, are private contractors and entrepreneurs. Many of them are familiar with parts of the country other than the Gazelle Peninsula. As the remarks of one of my informants quoted above indicate, it was on the men in this category that the pressures to pay tax at the new rate were most acute, and most of them succumbed. For the most part employees of the Administration, they feared that non-compliance would affect their chances of future promotion, if not lead to actual dismissal. And although most of them were still involved in the economic life of the village, this was not a prospect they could contemplate lightly.

Yet the cleavage is rooted in more than a simple divergence

of economic interests. In this instance, involvement in the urban wage economy is itself an expression of the drive towards closer participation in the wider society beyond the village. There is today among many of the younger people at Matupit a heightened awareness of a world beyond the Gazelle Peninsula, and a growing curiosity about it and their own place within it. One evening I had called unexpectedly on ToPirit, one of the members of the 'committee' at Kikila, to discuss a case heard recently at the village moot. He had been listening to the news over his wireless set, and had jotted down on a piece of paper the names of various countries—Cuba, Laos, the Congo—which had featured in it. He had very indistinct ideas of what was going on in these places, but there was no mistaking his eagerness to learn about them. On other occasions too an item of news heard over the radio or read in a newspaper provided the opening gambit in a conversation with someone encountered casually as I moved about the village. Once, for example, I was stopped by a man as I was walking past his house who asked me about the European who had been in Africa and had been refused permission to visit New Guinea. He was referring to the case of Professor Max Gluckman, although he did not mention him by name. Since I did not possess a wireless set, this was my first intimation of the affair, and I expressed my surprise. My friend pondered the reasons for the exclusion and finally commented: 'Yes, before we were blind, but now we are awake. In the old days there was no proper education. The missions are to blame for that; if they had started before we would now be far ahead. Now things are moving a little, but very slowly'.

The new mood abroad finds its expression in the private exploration of novel ideas and concepts. Because they are frequently uncongenial to the more conservative element, they may lead at times to more open clashes. I have referred earlier, for example, to a sharp difference of viewpoint on the question of marriage between Europeans and Tolai, which led some of the younger spokesmen into fierce denunciation of the present village leaders. This division, however, is only the symptom of a more fundamental cleavage: the issue is not simply one of conservatism versus modernity, of

stability as against change. The Matupi, as I have shown at various points, have always been ready to accept cultural innovation, particularly when this has been to their material advantage. The source of division really lies in two opposed conceptions of the path that future development should take. The one, essentially parochial, is most forcefully expressed in the constantly reiterated exhortations of the elders at village meetings for people to work harder in their gardens and plant more coconuts and cocoa. In this way the village would prosper and living standards be raised; even more to the point, the younger people would be less attracted to work away from home and in its most fundamental aspects the distinctive way of life of the village could be maintained and its autonomy preserved. The counter-view cannot be formulated in quite such clear-cut terms. Much of the social thinking of the younger people is still groping, tentative, and uncertain; as we saw in the earlier discussion of their attitudes towards *tambu*, it is also marked by considerable ambiguity. Yet despite the obscurities and inconsistencies, a central thread does run through it. Fundamental to this position is the recognition that the village no longer controls its own destiny but is now merely a small unit of a wider society; future advancement therefore is seen to be bound up in closer integration into the wider system. Opportunities for more advanced education and technical training are crucial in this regard, and nothing more clearly reveals the different outlooks that have developed within the community than the response to educational issues, which is well illustrated in the following episode.

During the course of fieldwork, the Administration was taking steps to implement a 'crash-program' of education in New Guinea. Part of the program consisted in the posting of European teachers to village schools. A special training course had been organised at the Malaguna Technical School, and it was proposed that one of the teachers should be posted to Matupit. The Administration immediately negotiated a lease of land for the teacher's house, but subsequently a dispute broke out over the ownership of the land between the elders of two *vunatarai*, and this had not yet been settled. A meeting of the Parents Committee, a body which some of the younger

people had taken the lead in setting up, expressed concern at the delay and decided to call a meeting of the whole island.

The following night a large crowd of people gathered at the centre of Matupit to discuss the matter. One of the teachers, himself a Matupi man, was called upon to explain the background to the issue. He pointed out that he had attended recently a party for the teacher-trainees at Malaguna, and one of the Europeans with whom he was chatting had asked him if it were true that the Matupi did not want to have a European teacher amongst them. The Matupi made no reply to this, but instead asked for the source of his information. The European said that he had been told by one of his friends. A general discussion followed these remarks. It was generally agreed that this was something that affected them all, and was harmful to their reputation. What was more, it was quite untrue, for they themselves had expressed the wish that a European teacher should come and live amongst them and teach at their school. A number expressed their surprise at the story, saying it was the first they had heard of it. Many were plainly angry, and what followed was in the nature of an inquiry to try and track down the source of the rumour, for clearly it must have originated in a remark or statement made at some time by someone on Matupit itself. Anyone who knew anything about the matter was asked to speak up; nobody in the audience did so. It was then suggested that the matter related to the dispute over the ownership of the land for the teacher's house, and that they should call for the two groups party to the dispute to appear, and thrash the matter out there and then. The elders of the two *vunatarai*, if they were present, made no response. Finally, ToPirit rose to suggest that they were wasting time hunting for the source of the rumour in this way. The situation was that the story had spread widely and was obviously known all over the place: the question was what they were going to do about it. His own suggestion was that they invite the Education Officer down to Matupit, and explain their position to him.

Thomas ToBunbun, one of the senior Matupi teachers and widely acknowledged as a spokesman of the younger people, arrived at this point and immediately took the chair.

After apologising for being late—his home was at Rapindik, on Matupi land but some distance from the island itself—he began by repeating the story he himself had heard that a 'Malay' teacher was to be sent to Matupit because they did not want a European one. The discussion ranged wide again, and returned to the question of the source. At this point a man called ToKikiala who, it will be recalled (see p. 273), had been a 'missionary' of the Seventh Day Adventists, made a long speech in which he cited various parallels from the Old Testament. He reminded them that when the Israelites in the desert had taken to the worship of idols, God had not gone seeking out who had spread the word initially. He had simply smashed the idols. So it was here. Their task was to restore the good name of Matupit, and he supported the idea already suggested that a letter be written to the local press. ToPirit also thought this a good idea, though he considered that it did not go to the heart of the matter, for if the letter were published but the land dispute remained unsettled, their position would be worse than before, and they would all be branded as liars. ToBunbun, too, noted that the idea of a letter to the press had some snags: for those who had not yet heard the story would now be acquainted with it, and the word would be spread even further. The view finally accepted by the meeting was that they should arrange a meeting with the District Education Officer.

Teachers and others of the more educated element at Matupit frequently complained of the boredom of village meetings, and having to listen time and time again to lectures from the elders on the same old themes. They would attend and take part in the discussion when they felt they were directly involved, but more often they preferred to spend their evenings elsewhere. This was one of the few instances I came across when it was the younger men who took the initiative in calling a meeting of the entire village and who completely monopolised the proceedings. Because it was a dark night, I was unable to observe just who and how many were present, but it was striking that the main speakers—Thomas ToBunbun, Epineri, ToPirit and others—were leading spokesmen of the younger group, while the councillors and the prominent elders remained for the most part seated in silence. All the

speakers expressed concern for the good reputation of the island in the eyes of the Europeans, but their underlying anxiety was that they might be deprived of the services of the European teacher, and so lose the opportunity of raising the educational standards of their children, particularly in the learning of English. For the younger people the issue was thus of crucial concern; amongst the more village-oriented it aroused little enthusiasm. Various elders with whom I discussed the matter were quick to recall that there were a number of Matupi lads who had gone to the school at Namanula in German times. Then when the war broke out they had had to retire to the village, so what had their education profited them? In their view, it was in keeping the life of the village strong that in the last analysis the future and the security of the people lay.

But differing views on inter-racial marriage or the role of education are only the particular expressions of a more pervasive divergence of outlook. As I have said, what is really at issue between the protagonists is their perception of the world they inhabit, what their position within it should be, and how this might best be achieved. The cleavage has thus built into it an important political component. This is reflected not only in the adoption of profound differences of approach to a variety of issues, but also in behaviour in more specifically political contexts themselves. From this point of view, it can hardly be a matter of accident that the younger educated element is scarcely represented on the local government councils. In a few instances men in this category have been successfully nominated, but after a short period in office, as in the case of Epineri Titimur, quickly fell out of grace with the elders. In other cases they have preferred not to stand. Sometimes this reluctance to be nominated as a candidate was justified on the grounds of pressure of other commitments, sometimes it was attributed to the fear that by taking up an unpopular stand on particular issues they might prejudice their career prospects. Some of these statements conveyed a clear sense of resentment of the situation, but I believe it would be a serious mistake to attribute criticism of the council system simply to motives of pique.

The bases of the complaints made about the councils were

summed up for me once by a man I knew well with a force that was all the more convincing because ordinarily he gave the impression of being of very placid temperament with a pleasant and easy-going manner. On this occasion I had asked him to give me an account of the way council elections were conducted at Matupit. After some initial hesitation he gradually warmed to the task and then suddenly he was talking with an intensity of feeling that I had not observed in him before. The conversation was in Tolai, but his remarks were freely interlarded with English terms for which there was no precise equivalent in the vernacular. Thus he referred to present councillors as '*aumana* yes yes', and the system itself he compared to a 'lolly' that one would give to a child to make it happy. There was no power in the council, and none who was able to express a new idea, for all were afraid to voice what they really thought lest they offend the *kiap* or the elders in the village. In any case, what kind of leadership could be provided by men who were ignorant? Take the business of the allocation of land at the Vudal. The councillors wanted only five-acre plots. But they had no real grasp of these matters. For what one had to do was to try and work out just how much money an acre of cocoa would produce, calculating in terms of pounds of cocoa per tree. For a start they needed thirty acres if they were to achieve anything like a decent standard of living.

A number of distinct elements are compounded in this critique: the poor calibre of the councillors and their manifest inadequacies when confronted with modern problems; the dominant role of administrative officers in the running of council affairs, and the lack of effective powers at the council's command. The councils, on this view, remain essentially parochial and heavily tinged with the stamp of paternalism; they are thus ill-equipped to handle the wider issues of most concern to critics of the system. As the earlier discussion of their work shows, much of the business of the individual councils is taken up with technical matters and is rarely concerned with major policy decisions. It is all the more interesting to note that meetings of the Combined Tolai Councils have quite a different character. At this time the Tolai councils had not yet amalgamated into a single body,

and the combined assembly lacked any fiscal, executive, or other corporate functions. However, mainly through the efforts of a few outstanding individuals, the meetings were beginning to take on some of the trappings of a political forum. Because the issues raised, if not always vigorously debated, tended to cover a broad spectrum—economic development, land problems, race relations etc.—such meetings were followed with considerable interest by a number of the younger Matupi. But it was precisely because of their concern with these broader issues and because so many of the matters discussed had to be referred to Port Moresby for decision, that they were coming to see the need for fuller participation in a wider political arena. It was indeed at a meeting of Tolai councillors, called on the occasion of a visit by the Administrator to Rabaul, that the first public pronouncement along these lines was made. Although no longer a councillor, Epineri Titimur attended and caused quite a stir when he pointed out that the Australians had been administering the Territory for fifty years and then proceeded to ask when the people of New Guinea were to achieve self-government.

Like the question of education discussed earlier, this too was an issue that bore directly on the future position of the Tolai within the wider society, and again the response to it highlighted the cleavages that have developed within the Tolai community. At Matupit, for example, Epineri's question was followed by a number of village meetings at which he was called upon publicly to account for his behaviour. At one of these meetings at Kikila, Epineri's village, it was one of his own age-mates who raised the matter. This speaker began by referring to the fact that these days many prominent people were arriving in Rabaul to hold meetings and learn the thoughts of the people. When this happened, if someone wished to express his views, that matter should first be discussed at a village assembly so that they prepared properly what they wanted to say. Those who spoke on these occasions should remember that they spoke not just for themselves, but for others as well. The name of Matupit was involved, the speaker continued, and over the recent question about self-government he had been made the butt of jokes at the office

where he worked. He was a Matupi man, and he had been deeply shamed by the remarks being passed all over the town by Europeans, half-castes, and Chinese.

Throughout these remarks Titimur had not been mentioned by name, but the target at which they were directed was perfectly patent, and it was he who rose to reply. He first apologised that he had not called the people together before putting his question to Mr Cleland, but he explained that there simply had not been time. He had only just come out of hospital when he learnt of the Administrator's arrival. He had at once approached Councillor Penias, who had made no objection to his raising the matter. (At this point Penias leaned over in my direction and asked in a whisper what the term self-government meant: did it mean that the Australians would leave the country?) The first speaker, whom I knew from many previous conversations to share many of Epineri's ideas, now spoke again saying that he wished to make it clear that he was not attacking Epineri for raising the question of self-government, merely the circumstances in which he had done it. The idea itself was good—a *tinata na tavagun* (literally, a word of awakening) to the Australian Government. For a while the debate was carried on between the two men until at length John Vuia intervened to say that he had recently met Mr Calwell (at that time the Leader of the Australian Labour Party and of the Federal Parliamentary Opposition) who told him that if self-government were granted too rapidly New Guinea would 'fall', and that would be a matter of shame to Australia as well as to the people of New Guinea themselves. But by this time many of those present appeared to have lost interest and were beginning to move away. One of the younger men, who earned his livelihood within the village, remarked to me later that he had left before the end because it was all a lot of idle chatter.

Epineri remained unabashed by the obvious lack of support he was able to command among his fellow-villagers. He accepted that there were not many at present who thought as he did, but he did not consider himself to be completely isolated. He felt indeed that in stirring up a hornet's nest he had accomplished his present purpose. For look at what is now going on, he told me. The *kiaps* were talking, the planters

and businessmen—everyone was talking. It was a 'word of awakening' he had spoken, and opinion and support would gradually swing his way just as it had over the re-settlement schemes. He was one of those, he said, who from the beginning had pressed hard for the Vudal project, and see now this year people had started to clamour for land at the Vudal, on the Warongoi and elsewhere.

In his book *The Trumpet Shall Sound* (1957), Worsley has placed millenarism and secular forms of political organisation on a single continuum of political expression, and argues that in Melanesia apocalyptic mysticism is gradually giving ground before the development of such 'rational' institutions as the co-operative society and the political party. Cargo cult activity, he notes, has not been a phenomenon of the towns, and certainly it is striking that no full-blown cargo movement has been reported amongst the Tolai in the area around Rabaul; nor have the Tolai produced cult leaders comparable in stature to Yali, Tommy Kabu, or Paliau. But this should not be taken to imply the absence of contemporary cargo-type thinking or activity amongst the Tolai. During the latter part of my fieldwork a number of incidents occurred which displayed many of the characteristic hall-marks of a cargo-cult. At one point, for example, more than a hundred young men from different parts of the Gazelle Peninsula had abandoned their villages and established themselves at a camp where they were said to be awaiting the arrival of a submarine which would take them to America. It is of interest that nearly all who were involved were young men, some of whom had only recently left school, and that the vast majority of them also came from inland settlements. It is also of interest to note the reaction to these events at a place like Matupit. I have already indicated the note of surprise and disappointment sounded by various speakers at a village meeting that such ideas were circulating among the Tolai. On another occasion, shortly after news had reached us of the outbreak of the submarine cult, Epineri called in unexpectedly to see me at my house. He appeared rather upset and began at once to ask me about what he called the cargo culture. He referred to the large numbers who had gathered to await the submarine's arrival

as well as to rumours of a new outbreak of war. There had been many cases of cargo culture in the islands, he remarked, but this was the first time it had occurred amongst the Tolai.²¹ Perhaps finding mirrored in the behaviour of the cultists a measure of his own frustration, he attributed the outburst to the fact that the people were tired and angry. '*Vingaia avet a boina*', they keep demanding, 'when shall we see the good life?' But while he claimed to understand the popular dissatisfaction which gave rise to such movements, he deplored the form in which it was expressed, which he regarded as retrograde. Epineri and a number of his compeers at Matupit had come to appreciate that the solution to many of their most acute social problems lay in gaining access to power at the territorial level, where they could participate in and hope to influence the decision-making process. Cargo movements were condemned not simply because they offered ineffectual solutions to their problems, but because they played into the hands of those who wished to delay their assumption of fuller political responsibility.

There was among a number of the younger Matupi men a considerable interest in the Legislative Council at Port Moresby, and much discussion about the kind of representative required there. Some of the most vitriolic comments I heard at Matupit took the form of personal attacks on indigenous members who, it was said, sat complacently throughout the sessions without the least understanding of what was going on around them. Interest in these matters mounted further when early in 1961 it became known that important changes affecting the composition of the Legislative Council were to be introduced shortly.²² The number of indigenous members was to be increased, six new places being provided for indigenes elected by their own people. The method to be followed was one of indirect election, the members being chosen by an 'electoral college' composed of persons who had themselves been elected by members of a Native Local Govern-

²¹ Strictly speaking this may not have been quite correct. Worsley (1957: 48) has a reference to the Dog Movement which flourished briefly in the Kokopo area and the Duke of Yorks shortly before the arrival of the Japanese. According to Worsley, the name was said to reflect the natives' view of the way they were then treated by Europeans.

²² For a more detailed discussion see Parker (1966).

ment Council or of communal groups in areas without councils. The candidates were not required to be sitting councillors, and of the dozen candidates who stood at Rabaul, there were perhaps six, including one Papuan employed as a government clerk in Rabaul, who were not councillors. One of these was Epineri Titimur, whose candidature was endorsed, amongst others, by one of the most prominent of the elders at Kikila as well as by the Councillor, Penias. At the meeting of the 'electoral college' itself the candidates were invited to state their case. Most spoke in purely personal terms and Vin ToBaining contented himself by saying merely that everyone present knew him and what he stood for: 'elect me and I will represent you'. A few of the speakers stressed the importance of choosing an educated man who spoke English, but this did not carry weight with the majority of the delegates. When the Papuan candidate read a prepared statement in English, ToMari, a 'big man' from an inland settlement, promptly asked: 'Who is he going to represent—just those who speak English?'

The result, a victory for ToBaining, occasioned no great surprise. As the Electoral Officer commented at the time, the election was won on personality and past record rather than on anything that had been said in the conference room. Nevertheless the election did reveal one novel and, I believe, significant feature. The Papuan clerk had been nominated by and enjoyed the support of a number of Matupi. In their view, because he spoke good English, had worked for many years in the Administration, and understood its workings, he was a better qualified candidate than any other Tolai they knew. Their action clearly suggests a new conception of politics gradually taking shape among the Tolai.

Continuity in Change

IN previous chapters I have been examining various aspects of contemporary social life on Matupit. The account has been essentially synchronic, an attempt to describe at a particular moment in time the social structure of the islanders set in the context of their relationships with the wider society of the Gazelle Peninsula and beyond as well as those with other Tolai groups. Such an attempt at once comes up against a number of difficulties because for almost a century—the period for which we have some kind of written records—the Tolai have been experiencing a continuous process of change and adaptation. Already by the time of the outbreak of World War II the indigenous communities around Blanche Bay had ceased to be isolated, relatively self-contained and autonomous groups. Had Malinowski carried out his field-work on the Gazelle, instead of only a few hundred miles to the south, he would surely have found it less easy to record, as later he was to do of the Trobriands, his ability ‘with but little effort to relive and reconstruct a type of human life moulded by the implements of the stone age, pervaded with crude beliefs and surrounded by a wide, uncontaminated open stretch of nature’ (1930: 406). Tolai social behaviour had by this time to be observed within the setting of a new social environment, and there was already some evidence of a process of acculturation well under way. Since then change has proceeded, unevenly but with gathering momentum, so that, as we have seen, competent observers could describe such communities as Matupit in the thirties as having lost all semblance of their traditional institutions. The material I present offers testimony of a yet more recent

phase in the continuing movement of social transformation. It seems to me, however, that my data also suggest the inadequacies of an account of these developments couched simply in terms of change, that is of departure from some prior set of conditions and relationships. For if so much of the evidence points to change, what gives the Tolai situation so much of its complexity and, for the observer, its peculiar fascination, is the no less striking evidence of persistence and continuity. Indeed, given the intensity of the contact experience on the Gazelle, the puzzle in a sense is not so much to understand change, but to explain why change has not been more radical and far-reaching. It becomes clear that change and continuity represent two perspectives of the same reality; they are the two faces of a single coin, so that in any given context the one cannot be understood without at the same time specifying the nature of the other. How then are we to describe systematically, and, beyond that, to explain, the twin aspects of continuity and change on Matupit? In this chapter I seek to make explicit the ideas which guided the presentation and analysis of my material, and to pose certain further questions which I consider emerge from it.

The Dynamics of Social Change

In her book *New Nations*, Mair (1963) takes as her main theme the nature of the changes that have been taking place in African societies in response to Western influences. Today, she remarks, these changes would be epitomised in terms of the extension of scale of social relationships. In adopting this perspective Mair is working with a concept first developed by Godfrey and Monica Wilson (1945) in what is still one of the most ambitious attempts at systematic treatment of social change by British anthropologists (cf. Gluckman, 1965b: 286). The starting point of the Wilsons' analysis, based mainly on observations in Central Africa, was that the difference between the traditional societies of Central Africa and modern Central African society, between 'primitive' and 'civilised' society, was a difference in size. In the former, comparatively few people were in close relationship, and the characteristics of these societies were correlates of their smallness of scale. By the

scale of a society the Wilsons mean the numbers of people linked by social relationships in space and time and the intensity of those relationships. Social change accordingly is a function of an increase in scale: as scale increases, a complex and interrelated series of changes take place throughout the entire social system.

The kinds of development in Central Africa which the Wilsons analyse in terms of an increase in scale are closely paralleled on the Gazelle Peninsula. Before the arrival there of the Europeans, social life among the Tolai bore all the characteristics of a small-scale society as specified by the Wilsons. Indeed, to employ the term Tolai in this context is misleading since it suggests a symbol of common identity which the people traditionally lacked: while neighbouring communities might share a basically common culture, their relationships were usually marked by social distance and hostility, often leading to outbreaks of raiding and warfare. As with the modern use of the term Nyakyusa for the Tanzanian people the Wilsons studied (G. and M. Wilson, 1945: 28), the adoption of the name Tolai as a group designation illustrates the way in which the area of application of a common symbol increases with the development of closer bonds between groups which were formerly discrete and autonomous. The arrival of the first traders, planters, and missionaries, and the later establishment of a German hegemony in the area, had immediate as well as far-reaching consequences for the indigenous people of the area. Warfare and cannibalism were quickly stamped out, yielding to a system of law, promulgated from afar, which through its command of severe punitive sanctions soon became effective throughout the entire region. Within a short time too native products were being shipped directly to the major ports of Europe and elsewhere, while the local people became increasingly dependent upon goods and materials imported from abroad. There was also an increase in the range of mobility and communications: Tolai men who formerly had feared to venture far beyond the boundaries of their own parish were soon sailing the seven seas. They acquired an awareness of the world and its people that would have been unimaginable to their ancestors. At Matupit, for example,

I was able to date certain events by a passing reference once made by an aged informant to the Maji Maji rebellion in German East Africa in 1906. In these, and other ways, the Gazelle Peninsula had thus been brought within what the Wilsons have called the circle of universal community.

However, in applying the concept of scale to such events the Wilsons were seeking not so much to facilitate the chronicling of change, as to promote its understanding; scale was deemed to have not only descriptive, but also predictive, value in the sense that it generated hypotheses. That is to say, given the criteria of scale specified by the Wilsons, it becomes possible to infer the likelihood of a whole series of further changes in the social system, and these inferences can be tested out in different ethnographic contexts. For example, amongst the entailments of an increase in scale is, as the Wilsons put it, the combination of greater autonomy in the narrower relations with subordination in the wider. There is also the greater importance of impersonal relations and mobility, which are accompanied by the acceptance of more universalistic and less magical religions. As the Wilsons phrase it (p. 41), local patriotism declines as wider loyalties develop, and emphasis on the worship of immediate ancestors diminishes with increase in scale. On the latter score, for example, the Wilsons devote some attention to discussing the incidence of magical belief and practice, observing that the proportion of occasions on which Africans attribute misfortune to witchcraft and sorcery is diminishing and traditional magical rites are now often omitted. More recently, Marwick (1965) has adopted a similar point of view in linking the decline in beliefs in witchcraft and sorcery with the displacement of small-scale intimate communities by large, impersonal, urban complexes. Such formulations, however, point up some of the shortcomings in this kind of approach to the problems of change. For in so far as they are prognostications of the long-term direction of change, they are difficult to test; while in so far as they relate to the contemporary scene, they fail to come to grips with the fact that these beliefs not only show a stubborn persistence,¹ but, as Gluckman (1942)

¹ I am not of course trying to suggest that the Wilsons were unaware of the persistence of these beliefs. They are careful to note that the numbers

has pointed out, they also tend to proliferate into new fields of relationship: amongst employees, in sport, and even in the arena of modern politics.

Similar difficulties are encountered if we attempt to test the Wilsons' proposition that intensity in the narrower circles of relationship necessarily diminishes as intensity in the wider ones increases. Proceeding along Wilsonian lines we might note, for example, that on Matupit increasing participation in a cash and wage economy has weakened the capacity to take part in ceremonies with other Tolai communities. In political terms this means that younger men on the island, no longer able or interested to satisfy their ambitions by following the traditional paths to leadership, are now beginning to look to more direct participation in the wider political arena of New Guinea as a whole. Yet such an analysis, if valid to a point, does less than justice to the complexity of the situation that confronts the ethnographer. Despite its physical and other resemblances to the settlements that have grown up around the peripheries of so many colonial towns, Matupit is not an urban compound, still less is it a suburb of Rabaul. If there are now close bonds between the islanders and the town, a no less striking feature of the relationship

of accusations of witchcraft may actually have increased under modern conditions (p. 120, n. 1). They suggest nevertheless that the relative importance of magic is declining and that of science increasing. In their view, such persistence is an illustration of the unevenness of change, a mark of what they call radical opposition or disequilibrium in the social system. This appears to me to involve a circular argument. For the Wilsons all change is a product of an increase in scale, and since the elements of the system are seen as being in equilibrium, any increase in scale must be accompanied by changes in all the elements specified in their scheme. By definition therefore if change occurs in some elements, but not in others, there must be disequilibrium, i.e. radical opposition. It seems to me that the Wilsons are led into this tangle because, working with a particular notion of equilibrium, they are led to view the occurrence of uneven change as a departure from the logical requirements of their model, and therefore as a problem that calls for explanation. Hence the development of their notion of radical opposition. However, if the process of change is viewed as the working out of the consequences of choices made in response to new opportunities, it would appear that change must necessarily proceed unevenly, since, as we shall see, involvement varies throughout the population. Moreover, as I seek to demonstrate below, even if change is partial and uneven, an increase in scale need not of itself produce radical opposition, provided that the new alternatives pose no incompatibility of values.

is the bitter struggle waged by the Matupi against the incursions of the town, and their efforts to maintain their autonomy as a distinctive Tolai community. In this context, younger and more educated Matupi, working for wages in the town, who in other respects represent more 'progressive' opinion within the village, will sometimes emerge as spokesmen of tradition in opposition to the lineage elders whom they accuse of acting in breach of Tolai customary law. Here, as in the matter of witchcraft and sorcery, the Wilsons' analysis, with its concentration on change, neglects or at least takes insufficient account of the factors making for continuity. Stated in somewhat different terms, their analysis, like the analyses of Tönnies, Durkheim, Maine, Redfield and other students of change who have adopted the method of polar contrast, is more revealing of the direction of change, rather less so of its dynamics and tempo. While the concept of scale makes for an illuminating description of the two poles of 'primitive' and 'civilised' society, it contributes little to our understanding of such questions as how a particular society moves from one pole to the other or why different societies which have been brought within 'the universal circle of community' move at different rates. Its weaknesses emerge, that is to say, when we seek to explore the processes of social change.

The importance of studying social change as a process has gained increasing recognition amongst anthropologists since Firth's formulation (1954) of the distinction between structure and organisation. Whereas the Wilsons' approach explicitly excluded consideration of the role of the individual as beyond the scope of sociology, for Firth the essence of social process, and hence the understanding of social change, lay in the individual's exercise of choice between alternative courses of action. Firth himself employed some of these ideas in his replication study of Tikopia (1959), and since then Bailey (1960) and Mair (1963) have both sought the mainsprings of change in the readiness of men to seize new opportunities and alternatives where these appear to be to their personal advantage; a similar concern with choice and decision-making lies at the heart of Barth's attempts to develop generative models. For Barth a central problem of anthropological

analysis is institutionalisation, how a multiplicity of individual decisions made under the influence of canalising factors can have the cumulative effect of producing clear patterns and conventions (Barth, 1966: 3). In conventional 'structural' analysis, Barth notes, social relationships are usually defined in terms of sets of rights and duties; thus social structure, conceived of as an arrangement of statuses, is in the final analysis a structure of norms. Such a methodological approach must be less readily applicable to the analysis of changing situations where it is the very definition of new, and the re-definition of old, relationships which need to be worked out. Barth's procedure avoids this difficulty because social patterns are seen as being generated through processes of interaction and in their form reflect the constraints and incentives under which people act. The initial stress, in other words, is not on norms, but on behaviour viewed as a series of transactions in which the parties systematically seek to assure that the value gained for them is greater or equal to the value lost. Transactional behaviour is thus 'strategic' behaviour:² advantage is measured by reference to a set of values which serve as generalised incentives and constraints on choice as well as by reference to a pre-established matrix of statuses; such behaviour is also set within an ecological setting. But if choice is made with reference to values, this is not to imply the primacy of values over action or that the value system remains static; between the two there is a relationship of mutual interaction. As Barth observes (p. 17), changes in the opportunities for conversion of value from one form to another compel changes in the principles of evaluation, once new choices begin to be made; while changing frequencies

² Although I think the point that Barth is trying to make here is clear, it seems to me that his use of the term strategic in this context is unfortunate, suggesting that when individuals make their choices they have an overall set of aims as well as an overall view of the situation within which they act. Apart from the fact that many choices are simply made with an eye to the immediate or short-term advantage, there is also the important consideration that the actors must frequently lack the information by which to assess the wider implications of their decisions. It is precisely for this reason that, having adopted one course of action, they later find themselves confronted with problems or incompatibilities of values they had not anticipated. It is, I argue, in the need to resolve these difficulties that the roots of change lie.

of choice are accompanied by changes in the strategic situations which may accelerate (or in other cases inhibit) further change.

Although concerned on this occasion with raising more general methodological issues, Barth's approach makes some stimulating suggestions for handling problems of the kind that have been a major concern of the present study, and broadly similar assumptions have been woven into my account of social change on Matupit. With the arrival of Europeans on the Gazelle Peninsula a range of new opportunities and alternatives was opened up to the Tolai, and much of what we now perceive as change and continuity in their way of life may be regarded as the working out of their responses to a changing social environment and the incentives and constraints it offered and imposed upon them. How the new situation so created is defined in varying contexts is a function of what I propose to call a process of involvement. By involvement I simply mean the ways whereby and the extent to which a formerly autonomous group comes to participate in wider fields of social interaction than was previously possible. Involvement here implies the continuous exercise of choice from amongst an increased range of alternatives, and since each act of choice in turn is likely to set up further demands and to impose new constraints, the nature and degree of involvement may themselves be continually changing.

Taking the notion of involvement rather than increase in the scale of social relationships as the point of departure at once draws attention to the different ways in which tribal and peasant societies throughout the world have come to be drawn into wider fields of activity and interaction, and the varying consequences this process has entailed. It also suggests the possibility of ranging such societies along a continuum, varying at one extreme from minimal involvement, represented for example in the case of Tikopia, to almost complete absorption at the other, as in the case of the Makah Indians (Colson, 1953). But such an attempt would at once encounter certain difficulties, since involvement deals not with a single variable but rather embraces a complex of factors which could not easily be reduced to a single dimen-

sion of calibration (see Mitchell, 1964). My concern here is more limited; it is to consider how far such a concept may usefully be applied to ordering and interpreting the facts of social change and continuity on Matupit.

In many parts of the colonial world the process of involvement has been initiated in basically similar ways: participation in the wider society was mediated through relationships with a number of different groups—adventurers and traders, administrators and missionaries. This was as true of the Gazelle Peninsula as elsewhere, and all these have played an important part in re-defining the framework of Tolai society. But as Mair (1963: 62) has observed, whatever aspect of social structure is considered, it will be found that the most striking changes can be seen as the effects of the introduction or wider extension of a money economy and the development of large-scale industry. A major factor therefore in determining the character of involvement is the form in which new economic opportunities presented themselves. As noted at the outset, the value of the Gazelle Peninsula for the Germans lay chiefly in the opportunities it offered for establishing a flourishing plantation economy centred on the production and export of copra. Even before the German annexation, Tolai were able to take advantage of the existing surplus of nuts to sell to traders in substantial quantities: they were able to grow wealthy with little effort. Later they responded favourably to official encouragement to increase considerably their plantings of palms. In addition, the establishment of European plantations, and the introduction of indentured workers from outside the Gazelle, created an enlarged market for foodstuffs to which the Tolai response was again to increase production.

Not all Tolai groups of course were equally well placed to take advantage of the new opportunities in this way. In more isolated settlements men who sought the new wealth had little alternative but to follow the practice most common in other colonial dependencies of seeking work for wages. Of the inland parish of Rapitok, for example, it is reported that living elders had no recollection of any sales of coconuts to trading stations in German times, whereas they remembered numbers of men who had worked on European plantations

in the same period (Epstein, T. S., 1968: 58). In more fortunately placed communities there appears to have been a marked reluctance to work for the new settlers. The coconut indeed was an ideal crop for those who sought the new wealth with a minimal disruption of old routines. It made no great demands on time and labour. Amongst the Tolai the nuts are not gathered from the trees, as they are in some parts of the world, but are simply collected where they have fallen to the ground. Again, once planted the palm requires relatively little attention, thus freeing men for other activities, including casual work for wages. Finally, as noted in an earlier context, it is long-lived, yielding nuts for up to sixty years and more.

Mainly through their sales of coconuts, and later of copra, communities like Matupit had been able by the outbreak of World War II to achieve a relative degree of affluence. They were able to participate effectively in the new cash economy without being wholly absorbed into it. In these circumstances involvement for a group like the Matupi posed no great incompatibilities of choice of values. As their wealth accumulated they were able to buy various commodities formerly denied or unknown to them or to invest in new kinds of personalty or capital equipment such as houses, copra-driers, and taxis. But they continued to live on the land, and to draw their livelihood from it. In certain important respects, therefore, participation in the cash economy through the sale of copra, far from disrupting the traditional system, actually served to buttress it. For example, the palm, because of its longevity, might only be planted on lands to which one could claim entitlement as a member of the owning *vunatarai*. This in turn served to perpetuate the form of political authority based on the control and administration by lineage elders of land and other property owned by their descent groups. Despite the degree of rigidity introduced into the system through the appointment of village headmen or *luluais*, the element of continuity remained strong, for *luluais* and 'big men' continued to put their wealth and authority to the service of traditional ends, enhancing their reputation and influence by sponsoring *tubuan* and other large-scale ceremonial activities. If there was at this time in places like Matupit evidence of some degree of acculturation it is likely

that this has to be viewed in the context of relations between coastal and 'bush' people, and the efforts of the Tolai nearer Rabaul to maintain their traditional superiority of status over the inland communities.

This element of competition between Tolai communities ensured that the situation never became wholly static. Tolai entrepreneurs were constantly casting around for new sources of profit, and already in the inter-war period there were a few who had sought to experiment with cocoa. In the communities nearer Rabaul closer economic links were also being forged with the towns: some Matupi were acting as contractors for the supply of labour to the docks while others were beginning to put to use in wage employment the skills they had acquired at the Malaguna Technical School. New social contacts came to be made, sometimes with sailors from visiting vessels, occasionally with sympathetic Europeans resident in Rabaul, which resulted in the communication of ideas and the formulation of new aspirations. Increasing Tolai involvement with the wider society was thus accompanied by a growing awareness of their status within it; there was deep resentment of the restrictions, constraints, and abuse to which all natives were subject in the race-conscious climate of pre-war New Guinea society. Dissatisfaction with the *status quo* was expressed in a number of ways: in the demand for better schooling, with instruction in English, seen as a means of enabling the people to grapple more effectively with their new environment and, at the village level, in the appearance of the young men's *kivungs*. Contained in these developments were some of the seeds from which more radical changes were to spring in the post-war years. The contemporary material from Matupit enables us to observe some of the processes making for continuity and change now at work.

Various studies elsewhere have stressed the overriding importance of their ties with the land in shaping a people's response to a situation of rapid social change (see e.g. Watson, 1958; cf. Gluckman, 1965b: 292-4). Similarly here, too, I have been arguing that it has been their continuing relationship to the land which holds the key to understanding Tolai adaptation to their changed circumstances, and in the opening chapters of this book I have tried to show how, right up

to the present, land has remained crucial in defining Matupi links with the wider society. What I have called Matupi involvement has been mediated chiefly through their ties with Rabaul. The relationship between island and town, we have seen, is marked by a deep ambivalence: there is on the one hand bitter resistance to the encroachments of the town on the limited land resources of the islanders; on the other hand, as stronger bonds are constantly being forged with Rabaul, there is increasing recognition of the fact that their future livelihood is also dependent on the continuing growth and prosperity of the town. What I may term here negative involvement has a direct bearing on many facets of Matupi behaviour. Europeans who have close experience of the islanders usually speak of them as 'difficult' and unpredictable; they are indeed a proud people, sensitive to slight, and a prevailing mood of suspicion tends to colour nearly all their relationships with outsiders, governing in particular their initial response to many of the suggestions made by the Administration for their ostensible welfare.³ More specifically, it also affects directly the internal system of social relationships among the islanders themselves, continually generating tensions between individuals and groups. As soon as the Administration has expressed an interest in acquiring a block of land for some purpose, opposition is almost certain to be sparked off between those who stand to gain financially from the transaction and those who do not. Wind of such a transaction, moreover, is also likely to exacerbate the cleavage, endemic in Matupi social structure, between the land authorities, leaders of their respective matrilineages, and those who live in patrilocal residence and may be without claims to land as of matrilineal right. Since the latter include a high proportion of those working for wages, the rift also becomes to some extent the expression of another line

³ The following serves as a fairly typical example. At one point the Administration had instituted an anti-malaria campaign in the Tolai villages. As a result of the spraying, numbers of chickens and domestic animals were killed. However, some Tolai were also alleged to have died in this way—an allegation for which as far as I could discover there was no foundation—and the story spread, gaining ready acceptance amongst many Matupi, that the campaign was a device on the part of the Europeans to kill off the Tolai and acquire their lands.

of cleavage within the community, one not rooted in indigenous principles of social organisation, but a product of positive involvement: that between 'urbanite' and 'villager'.

Why should the 'urbanites' be so concerned in these disputes, often indeed taking a leading part in them? Many Matupi work for wages because they have acquired skills which give them a competitive edge over others in the labour market; yet others seek work away from the island because they lack adequate land for profitable cash cropping. But whatever the motives, almost without exception they maintain ties with the village and continue to play a part in its economic life. Their behaviour in this regard is consistent with the argument adduced in chapter 3 that it is only by simultaneous participation in the different sectors of the economy, wage, cash, and subsistence, that the Matupi can take full advantage of the opportunities for employment in the town and elsewhere. In many of the developing countries the maintenance of links by urban workers with their tribal areas of origin is bound up with the lack of long-term security offered to them in the towns; when they no longer desire to work, or have become unable to find it, there is little alternative but to return to the village. This is no less true of the situation on the Gazelle Peninsula, but in communities like Matupit continuing commitment to the village also offers immediate rewards as well as the possibility of an income from cash crops when one has retired from work for wages. Commitment in this context, however, implies more than an attitude of mind. For in so far as the 'urbanites' continue living in the village and choose to engage personally (or even indirectly through their wives and kinsfolk) in gardening, fishing, growing coconuts, cocoa and the like, they themselves contribute to the perpetuation of the indigenous forms of social organisation. Thus in chapter 4 I have been able to show how local organisation on Matupit remains basically traditional: the community is still composed of hamlet groups, each jurally associated with a local lineage under its acknowledged leader. More than this, as I have sought to illustrate in chapter 7, relations between these groups, and between the Matupi and other Tolai communities, continue in the main to be mediated through the exchange of women and valuables in

accordance with customary rules, values, and procedures. Presenting that analysis was not a task of reconstruction; it was built up and inferred not simply from the statements of informants talking about the past, but from observations of their everyday behaviour. Even today therefore it seems justifiable to speak of a high degree of continuity in Matupi social structure.

Nevertheless, the situation I have just been describing is far removed from that which seems to me to have characterised the pre-war period. The increasing stress on development that has marked Australian policy since the war has opened up further ranges of opportunity to the Tolai; in taking advantage of these they have come to be faced with increasingly difficult conflicts of choice. In short, if the attachment of the Matupi to the land remains today as strong as it was in the past, the context within which they must make their choices and take their decisions is now quite different. The question of land resources is of course crucial here, and it soon becomes abundantly clear that the kinds of adjustment that were possible only a generation ago are so no longer. With improved hospital and medical services, the very rapid rate of population growth in recent years poses the most obvious problem in this connection, and the Matupi in 1960 were not alone among the Tolai in sensing its growing magnitude. Yet at the very moment when pressure on land is being intensified by the sheer increase in numbers, there is a heightened clamour for more land sparked off by the introduction of a new cash crop in the form of cocoa. Nor is it simply that the supply of land is becoming inadequate to the demand. For it is precisely in these circumstances that the persistence of the traditional system of land tenure, which hitherto had provided the very basis of continuity and stability in Matupi social life, becomes itself a source of irritation and a target for attack.

At Matupit, as we have seen, the principle of matrilineal descent is associated with virilocal marriage and patrilocal residence of men, a combination which tends towards gross inequalities in the distribution of land holdings. With the high degree of residential continuity at Matupit over the past three or four generations, there is now a considerable number

of men resident on the island who have no proprietary claims to land there. In the past the problem was presumably not so acute since a man had claims on the land of his father's matrilineal group to meet his subsistence requirements, with a possible option to 'purchase' on his father's death. Now, with increasing pressure on land, there may be less readiness to 'sell' on the part of the father's descent group; in any case, such plots would scarcely be adequate for growing cash crops on any substantial scale. Under the circumstances, it can hardly be accidental that Rarup, where so many live in patrilocal residence and so few have claims to land as of matrilineal right, should also have the largest proportion of males in wage employment or working for contractors on a casual basis. It will also be recalled that of all village sections it is Rarup which offers the clearest testimony of lack of leadership and internal solidarity.

It is not difficult to see how under present conditions the working of the traditional land tenure system becomes a fertile source of tension between matrilineage elders, the leaders in the community, and their deprived 'sons'. The emergence of a growing category of urban workers feeds into this cleavage and further exacerbates it, at the same time introducing yet other sources of strain into the social and political system of the island. As I described in the previous chapter, a serious divergence of views and values has developed within the community, touching not only such questions as the control of land, but also education, inter-racial marriage and other areas of action in which younger Matupi now see new alternatives opening up to them. To some extent, though not entirely, these divisions of opinion follow the lines of generation cleavage, and the rift therefore might be regarded as no more novel in Matupi experience than elsewhere. After all, was it not some of the leading conservative elders who only a generation ago had taken the initiative in forming the young men's *kivung*? When some of the elders described these events to me, it was clear that they regarded their behaviour as provocative, and the birth of the *kivung* as a development which the 'big men' would inevitably view as a deliberate slight, if not a challenge, to their authority. But here too, as in the matter of land, there are important differences between the pre-war posi-

tion and the present. As noted, the post-war period saw a considerable step-up in the program of education among the Tolai: many Matupi workers are now employed in more responsible positions than in the past and some earn relatively high wages.

A number of consequences flow from this. In the first place, there has been the gradual adoption of new scales of value. Whereas the aims of the *kivung* seem to have been directed at bringing about improvements within the village, many of the younger spokesmen see the pursuance of customary goals as a hindrance to their emergence as full citizens in a modern society. These new aspirations are seen most clearly in the political sphere. In the traditional system there was a tendency towards a coincidence of command of wealth and political authority. This no longer obtains. Following the losses of the last war the older men have become poor in cash as well as shell-money, and the wealth of the community, measured in savings and personal property, is mostly in the hands of younger people who lack formal status within the village. Cash earnings are put to personal and private ends: building a permanent style house and furnishing it in the modern fashion, buying a motor-cycle or car and the like; unlike *tambu*, the new wealth is not invested in the sponsorship of ceremonies and other activities which in the past would have opened the way to prestige and influence. At Matupit therefore there has been a marked decline in ceremonial life, a tendency which the elders deplore but which they are powerless to stem, still less to reverse. The conditions for the emergence of 'big men' of the traditional type no longer exist, and in certain important respects this has weakened Matupi links with other Tolai groups. Younger Matupi with leadership aspirations have therefore to seek other outlets for their political ambitions. As involvement with the wider society has intensified, spokesmen have begun to emerge who, recognising that many of their problems can no longer be solved at the local community level, are now voicing demands for more direct participation in the territorial political arena. With further constitutional reforms in the offing, bringing changes in the forms of political representation, opportunities will arise for the performance of new leadership roles. As we saw in the previous chapter,

younger Matupi are taking an active interest in these developments. What remains to be seen is how far the new modes of competition will lead to changes in the forms of mobilisation as well as modification of the traditional conception of leadership.

Structural Change, Cultural Continuity, and the Question of Identity

In the preceding section I have been considering some of the factors making for continuity and change in the structure of social relationships on Matupit. But continuity and change are not events that can be directly observed, they are inferences drawn from other sets of observations, for example, as Barth (1968: 662) has suggested, by looking at social behaviour as an allocation of time and resources. Changes in the proportions of these allocations can be observed and measured, and new allocations therefore are observable as concrete events which may have systematic effects and thus generate important changes. The events of change can thus be described in terms of a set of frequencies of alternatives, while the process itself might be characterised, in its positive aspects, as the generation of new social forms and, negatively, as the decay of old forms, the erosion of custom.

The process of erosion, even if only temporary, is well illustrated in Firth's account of Tikopia reactions to the famine of 1952. Among its immediate consequences was the rapid denudation of ritual and ceremonial life. As the famine developed, certain types of performances were merged with others or simply omitted until at its height there were occasions on which even basic elements were abandoned. Yet Firth points out that even at this stage there was still some solemnisation of a death. There was *some* mourning, *some* preparation of food, *some* transfer of property, *some* assembly of kin along structural lines. In short, he concludes, the skeleton of the social order was preserved, however attenuated the content (Firth 1959: 84-9). Making all allowance for the differences between the two situations, Firth's commentary on events on Tikopia could well be read as an equally apt summary of the present position at Matupit. For if I have spoken

of a high degree of structural continuity there, in the sense that the basic features of economic co-operation, of moiety and descent-group organisation and political authority were still in evidence, the whole of my account also makes it clear that what I was able to 'observe' was only a skeletal structure, bare bones stripped of much of their cultural flesh. That so much of the internal political activity of the Matupi should centre round disputes over residential land is, I believe, merely the simple reflection of this state of affairs.

Cultural erosion has proceeded very far at Matupit. Casual inspection shows, for example, that there are now few houses built there to a traditional design. Further observation and inquiry soon reveal other less visible forms of decay: the decline of traditional arts and crafts or the passing of a once rich oral literature (see, e.g. Meier, 1910; Kleintitschen, 1924). But the course of erosion is seen most clearly in ceremonial life. As I have indicated, there had been at the time of my visit no appearance of the *tubuan* or *dukduk* masked dancers for many years, and many young people had not been initiated into the male cult. Funerary and mortuary rites continued to be performed but, save in the case of a once prominent man like ToIllo, only in a severely attenuated form. These rites had once been the occasion for staging dances the success of which was measured not only in the skills of the dancers and orchestra, but also in the efforts of the artists who conceived the dance, carved the masks or dancing staves, and composed the songs. As in some of the Motu villages near Port Moresby (Groves, 1954), the conditions under which the dance serves as a crucial weapon in the battle for social standing no longer exist at Matupit, and such dancing is nowadays very rarely to be seen there. Those dances which are held occasionally are of quite different character: regarded purely as a form of entertainment, they do not require the making of the customary prestations and exchanges: the movements of the dance as well as the songs that accompany them are non-traditional, and the music is provided by teams of guitarists.

The erosion of custom here is a product of structural change: as involvement intensifies the further it runs and the quicker its tempo. Some of the factors governing the process, and hastening it on, may be seen in the earlier discussion of

the place of shell-money on contemporary Matupit. Looked at in cultural perspective, *tambu* may be seen as lying at the heart of the traditional Tolai system of values, the central component in their conception of the moral order. Viewed from the standpoint of social structure, as a medium of exchange, *tambu* serves as the crucial mechanism defining and maintaining the bonds between various social groups as well as providing the nexus between the realm of the living and the realm of the dead. For the Tolai *tambu* is thus a major symbol of continuity in their way of life. Yet at Matupit its importance is clearly on the decline. As the numbers of younger people who come to work for wages within the Gazelle Peninsula or elsewhere in New Guinea increase, so do they have fewer opportunities for those activities which produce *tambu*. Furthermore, as cash earnings come to allow for the satisfaction of an increasing range of wants, so does the value of *tambu* itself become debased; its acquisition is no longer worth striving for. Nor is there a great deal the elders can do to stem the tide for, however much they deplore these developments, they are themselves trapped by the need to meet their own increasingly heavy demands for cash. As we have seen, much of the effort which they have recently been putting into seine-fishing, traditionally a highly profitable source of *tambu*, has been aimed at raising funds for the building of new churches. Yet others are caught up in the need to acquire and save money in order to purchase, or to help their sons to purchase, cars and lorries to transport their cash crops or to enable them to undertake other enterprises. In these ways, through the exercise of myriad acts of individual choice between alternative courses of action, we can observe the balance gradually swinging against *tambu*.

Culture, it has been said, has its 'hard' and 'soft' parts: some customs are abandoned quite quickly, others are clung to with great tenacity. Among the Tolai, *tambu* clearly falls into the latter category. In discussing the place of shell-money in Matupi social life, therefore, we are not concerned simply with the question of the survival or disappearance of a particular cultural form; because *tambu* represents 'hard' custom, its decline raises the more general question how far the process of erosion can go without loss of a group's cultural distinc-

tiveness and hence its sense of group identity. If, as I have suggested, a continuing process of erosion is a function of an ever increasing degree of involvement, is the end result of the kinds of change I have been describing the complete absorption of the group into a wider system of social relationships, with assimilation of the values of the wider society as the cultural expression of this development? What is at issue here is the relationship of structural change and cultural continuity.

Questions of these kinds are perceived most clearly perhaps in a context such as that of contemporary Matupit, but they arise no less sharply wherever peoples of different cultural or ethnic backgrounds are brought within the ambience of a common social framework through the processes of urbanisation or immigration. To the best of my knowledge they have received little detailed examination in the anthropological literature, but in so far as anthropologists have touched upon them there appear to be wide differences of opinion. For example, in an analysis of social change and its bearing on education in South Africa, Hoernlé and Hellmann (1952; cited in Hogbin, 1958: 244-6) speak of the logical end of the process of contact and change which has been set in motion there as the total assimilation of the knowledge, techniques, standards, and values of Western culture by the Bantu. A somewhat similar point of view informs Mair's discussion of the absorption of rural migrants into the new towns of Africa, which she compares with the processes of immigration elsewhere. 'As the immigrants find their way about, they begin to merge more and more with the population, provided that no obstacle is put in their way; in an American or western European city the next generation reveal their origin in little but their name' (Mair, 1963: 134). As against these views we may set the claim of Herskovits and Bascom (1959: 3-4) that the current African scene is marked not only by change but also by cultural continuity. 'There is no evidence', they affirm, 'which supports the assumption . . . that African culture . . . will shortly and inevitably disappear. We have little reason to believe that African culture will have any difficulty in persisting with more than re-interpreted modifications'.

There is a major difficulty which is always likely to arise when questions of stability and change are discussed.

Continuity and change unfortunately cannot be described absolutely, as if one excluded the other; they are relative terms with shifting frames of reference. Phenomena which for one purpose may be classified as events of change may for some other purpose or from a different perspective be treated with equal justification in terms of continuity. Accordingly, whether one approaches a problem with an orientation towards change or from the vantage point of stability there should be no contradiction between the two sets of conclusions, merely the reflection of a different choice of emphasis. In the present instance, however, the divergence of viewpoints expressed goes far beyond such a difference in emphasis: differences over the interpretation of the empirical data point to totally opposed views of the nature and course of change; such differences in turn, I suggest, are related to the use of different analytical frameworks. On the first point, it seems to me that the analyses of Hoernlé and Hellmann and of Mair assume that the processes of change have gone further than is in fact warranted by the evidence. I find it difficult, for example, to reconcile the view of Bantu institutions presented by Hoernlé and Hellmann as already largely moribund and unfit to survive with Mayer's analysis (1961) of East London, with its account of the persisting structural and cultural cleavage between Red and School Xhosa migrants. Similarly, it appears to me that Mair's discussion of ethnicity assumes too easily the disappearance of groups when there is abundant evidence to suggest that it is their very persistence which calls for examination. It is interesting in this context to find Mair making use in her account of the metaphor of the melting pot. But as the authors of a recent American study observe, the point about the melting pot is that it did not happen. 'The notion that the intense and unprecedented mixture of ethnic and religious groups in American life was soon to blend with a homogeneous end product has outlived its usefulness, and also its credibility. In the meanwhile the persisting facts of ethnicity demand attention, understanding and accommodation' (Glazer and Moynihan, 1963: v).

It would of course be unfair to impute to Mair the view that changes of the kind she predicates take place overnight. She herself is careful to point out that although new forms

have developed in the African urban centres that cut across ethnic divisions, these divisions are by no means obliterated. Likewise Hoernlé and Hellmann, while arguing that Bantu culture cannot survive, also offer the opinion that the Bantu will develop certain distinctive characteristics which will mark off their way of life from that of other groups. But these statements have to be read, so to speak, as parenthetical qualifications of the main thesis: they do not amount to recognition of 'the persisting fact of ethnicity' as an important problem in its own right. That this should be so is not accidental, but has its roots, I believe, in the way in which these writers employ, implicitly or explicitly, the concept of culture. This is a concept that has long been central to anthropological thinking, but it may be used in divers ways, each leading to a quite different mode of analysis and to different kinds of theoretical statement. Thus, for example, while many cultural anthropologists seek interrelations or patterns in custom, for those who adopt a structural frame of reference, custom is treated not as a thing in itself, but as it symbolises or expresses social relationships. As Fortes puts it, social structure is not an aspect of culture but the entire culture of a given people handled in a special frame of theory (Fortes, 1953: 21; cf. Gluckman, 1968: 220).

The latter is the standpoint adopted by Mair, and she specifically rejects an approach to the study of change in terms of culture. Tackling the problem of change through the study of society or social relationships, she observes (1963: 207), is neither to deny the importance of culture nor to use another term for it; it is to ask a number of highly significant questions which many students of culture do not ask. In Mair's terms, social relationships are made manifest through cultural behaviour, and this is what the inquirer sees first; it is his key to the analysis of the structure which he learns to perceive as he observes the regularities in people's behaviour and in their comments on behaviour. Society and culture are thus seen as two facets of the same reality. This is also essentially the usage of Firth (1951: 27) and other British anthropologists for whom structure is related to culture as form is to content. If this view is accepted, it would then seem to follow, as indeed the Wilsons (1945: 115) state quite explicitly, that there can

be no separation of the two: changes in the sphere of social relations must be reflected in changes in culture. But is this necessarily so? Curiously enough it is Fortes, one of the leading exponents of British structuralism, who urges caution here. Having stated his belief that social structure is the foundation of the whole social life of any continuing society, he goes on to note the evidence from emigrant groups of the retention of religious and aesthetic customs in the face of radical changes in structural arrangements. The social structure of a group, Fortes argues, does not exist without the customary norms and activities which work through it.

We might safely conclude that where structure persists there must be some persistence of corresponding custom and where custom survives there must be some structural basis for this. But . . . though the customs of any continuing and stable society tend to be consistent because they are tied to a coherent social structure, yet there are important factors of autonomy in custom (Fortes, 1953: 23).

The autonomy of custom is revealed in a number of ways. For example, the boundaries of a culture—in so far as they can be defined—may not coincide with those of a single society, and we may well find adjacent groups with different forms of social organisation sharing an otherwise common culture.⁴ But for present purposes its importance lies in its bearing on the question of continuity. In formulating the notion of the autonomy of custom, Fortes appears to have been influenced, at least in part, by the work of Herskovits on the survival of African tribal culture amongst New World Negroes, and that work has clearly stamped Herskovits' own approach to the study of change in Africa. Herskovits' emphasis on continuity is a valuable corrective to those accounts in which the stress has chiefly been on change. But it is not enough simply to assert continuity; we also need to know wherein it lies and how it is achieved. Herskovits' whole approach of course is orientated towards the concept of culture, broadly conceived

⁴ An excellent illustration of this is to be found in Lawrence's study (1964) of cargo cults in the Madang District of New Guinea. The groups within the District reveal a wide range of structural variation, but this is of less account in understanding the aetiology and form of the cargo phenomenon than the fact that they share basically similar epistemological principles.

in basically Tylorian terms. Change accordingly is seen as a process of acculturation, the taking over by a group of traits from outside which can be added to its own cultural repertoire. Selectivity is central to the process, compatibility with traditional values providing the key criterion of acceptance or rejection of the new cultural form. By way of illustrating the selective and additive character of the acculturative process, Herskovits and Bascom (1959: 6) remark for example how the Africans' eagerness for a European type of education does not mean that monogamy is also acceptable. Such a formulation amounts almost to a caricature of the way in which social transformation proceeds, missing completely the conflicts of choice which provide the major driving force in change and give the process its dynamic, and for the people concerned, frequently painful, character. As young Africans acquire literacy they become qualified to hold jobs offering higher wages which enable them to satisfy, and at the same time stimulate further, their aspirations for a higher standard of living. In these circumstances, they may well find that while the idea of polygyny remains attractive, in fact they are compelled to adopt monogamy if they are to achieve their other newly acquired goals. In much the same way, the fact that the Tolai 'accepted' Western forms of money does not mean that they had thereby rejected their own form of currency. But in seeking new opportunities for earning cash they have been led to make choices which have affected their capacity, as well as their inclination, to accumulate *tambu*. Hence its gradual decline at Matupit in recent years. Yet, as we have seen, it has not completely disappeared there and Matupi still put a lot of effort into working for it. Is its persistence due then simply to the forces of inertia? I think not. In the first place, the Matupi continue to need shell-money because other Tolai groups upon whom they rely for brides and for the satisfaction of other daily requirements still insist upon its use in their transactions. Yet, *pace* Barth, it also seems to me that the balance of choice cannot be weighed simply in terms of 'material' advantage. Within Matupit itself, the exchanges that take place on the occasion of a marriage or death are still conducted solely through the medium of *tambu*, because this is seen as the only appropriate way for Tolai to behave on these

occasions. Viewed in the context of change and of Tolai relations to other groups, *tambu* becomes a symbol of group identity, consciously perceived and articulated. As an English-speaking Tolai once expressed it to me, '*tambu* is our treasure. If we didn't have *tambu*, we would not be Tolai; we would be a different people'. If change is to be viewed as proceeding through the exercise of choice, then the final choice that confronts a people must be the choice of identity.

Discussing the expansion of civilisation and the impact this has had on primitive and tribal societies, Redfield (1953: 45) has observed how in the long run the folkways of most of these peoples are transformed into a manner of life which approximates that of the invader. If such peoples are not early destroyed by force or other means, they are assimilated. Yet he also notes how invasion and conquest stimulate a reaction in which local culture is reorganised. He refers to the American Indians, and speaks of the emergence of a sort of generalised American native folk. He also points to similar developments taking place in Africa. Thus far from the sense of group identity disappearing, it may even be reinforced by the growth of a wider sense of community which embraces the old, as on the Gazelle Peninsula where the newly acquired identity as Tolai reinforces the traditional allegiance to the parish. In the present study the readiness of the Matupi to accept innovations in their way of life has been marked throughout, but the observer cannot help also being impressed by their determination to remain Matupi, and it seems to me that many aspects of their behaviour cannot be understood unless we take account of this fact. The Matupi of course are not alone in this regard, and it may be instructive therefore to compare briefly their own position with that of the people of Hanuabada near Port Moresby. There are a number of close affinities in the situations of the two communities. Both lie on the doorsteps of a town, and their recent history reflects their close contact with and long experience of Europeans. But Hanuabada's degree of involvement in the wider society has been greater than that of Matupit. Whereas the Matupi still derive much of their subsistence and cash income from the cultivation of their own lands and other village activities, at Hanuabada the

traditional economy has disappeared.⁵ The people are wage-earners for the townsfolk, and it is around this fact that their whole life is organised (Belshaw, 1957: 1). With greater involvement, structural decay and cultural erosion have also proceeded much further than at Matupit. Hanuabada lands, for example, are divided into named areas which seem once to have been units of ownership. Today this is no longer so, and within these areas blocks of land are now claimed by persons who have little kinship connection or who are of different descent groups. Descent group organisation indeed has largely broken down, and other institutions too have been seriously affected.

But there is another side to the coin, for greater involvement is also accompanied by a higher degree of acculturation. For example, the wearing of European-style clothes, still scarcely ever seen among the Tolai in 1960, was already common at Hanuabada at the time of Belshaw's study in 1950. Similarly ballroom dancing, again unknown to the Tolai, is reported by Groves (1954) to have been gaining favour rapidly at Hanuabada. As Groves comments, it is the ritual of emancipation from tradition, of initiation into the powerful world of the West. Yet in spite of all the evidence of change, of emancipation from the past, Hanuabada has not become an amorphous and featureless peri-urban settlement. Residence and relationship patterns still mark the group as a distinctive social entity, and it is interesting to observe that although cash now forms an important part of the marriage payments, the passage of traditional valuables is still regarded as an essential element in the transaction. Nor is continuity revealed simply in the persistence of particular customs or institutions; it is seen too in the way in which principles and premises deeply embedded in the traditional culture re-assert themselves and find expression in new cultural forms, as for example where cricket becomes not so much a game but an occasion for feasting and ceremonial, or in the running of local church affairs. Similar processes are to be observed on the Gazelle Peninsula where, for example, the building of new churches

⁵ This is not to say that no food at all is produced at Hanuabada, merely that, as Belshaw observes (1957: 25) agriculture has little more significance than household gardening in a European suburb.

represents in novel guise the traditional competition for prestige amongst Tolai parishes, so that the official opening of the building takes on all the features of a traditional mortuary rite, and is in fact described as a *balaguan*.⁶

Continuity has been defined by the Wilsons (1945: 27) as both the volume of material co-operation and communication with the past, and the non-material unity that exists when people act, speak and feel as if it were a reality. This non-material continuity, they argue, is differently defined in different societies. Tribal peoples tend to define it as cultural similarity, and stress observance of the same customs as were practised by their forefathers. In modern society, the Wilsons claim, it is development which is stressed—there is held to be a certain continuity between feudalism and modern constitutional government, not because both are alike, but because one grew out of the other. Analytically, this distinction seems to me unhelpful and misleading, ignoring the common element in both situations. In the first place, it takes no account of that continuing relationship with the land which, as the whole of the present study has stressed, can play so important a part in providing the backbone of a people's perception of their history. Secondly, though history is obviously of major importance in defining and maintaining the sense of group identity, it is not simply by providing a record of change and development that it achieves this. Thus if Englishmen in the twentieth century feel some sense of unity with their Elizabethan ancestors, it is not because their form of society has grown out of feudalism, but rather because they see themselves as in some respects the same people, in spite of the great structural changes that have taken place. My point is best made perhaps by way of analogy. If photographs are taken of a man at different stages of his life, they will show marked differences in his appearance in childhood, manhood, and old age. But if there are enough photographs in the series, we should have no difficulty in discerning that they are all of the same person, not because the man has grown out of the child, but because we recognise a thread of continuity running through the

⁶ Such a *balaguan* was held to mark the opening of the Methodist church at Matupit a few years after the end of my fieldwork. The celebrations included the performance of dances by the *tubuan*.

pictures. The anthropological problem is to define the thread of continuity in the context of social change. Redfield (1953: 51) has noted some of the objections to the use of the concept of culture in this context, and has pointed to the need for a term that suggests what is most fundamental and enduring about the ways of a group persisting in history. Continuity, that is to say, has to be sought not in a catalogue of customs in which we can tick off those items that have persisted, but in the structure of signals by which people continue to recognise their common identity even though many formal aspects of their culture have disappeared. But this is only one aspect of the problem. Gluckman (1965b: 296) has remarked how, so long as there is some basis for a community life, tribal ties show tremendous tenacity. How far this is true of all groups is uncertain. But if we are to deepen our understanding of this phenomenon it seems to me that we also need to know much more about the processes of identification: the circumstances under which new social identities come to be formed and then perpetuated, and the factors which underlie the struggle waged by so many groups, units in a wider social system or polity, to continue to assert their own distinctiveness and claims to autonomy.

Glossary

<i>Apiktarai</i>	branch or segment of a descent group
<i>Babau</i>	buoy or piece of floating wood to which fish-baskets are attached; also applied to the whole apparatus
<i>Balaguan</i>	feast or ceremony, especially one associated with the dead
<i>Barniuruna</i>	matrilateral kin
<i>Bit na pia</i>	land authority or controller
<i>Bung</i>	market-place
<i>Dukduk</i>	name given to the male cult, as well as to the 'male' masked figure prominent in its activities. Cf. <i>tubuan</i>
<i>Gunan</i>	place of settlement
<i>Iniet</i>	a secret society, proscribed by the Germans
<i>Kakalei</i>	claim to land as of matrilineal right
<i>Kapti</i>	'cup of tea'; a modern variant of a traditional form of raising money
<i>Kiap</i>	pidgin term for administrative officer
<i>Kure</i>	to decide, rule, administer etc. Cf. <i>varkurai</i>
<i>Kivung</i>	meeting or assembly
<i>Labur</i>	season of the north-west wind or monsoon
<i>Langlagur</i>	a dance in honour of the dead
<i>Liliman (na tambu)</i>	alliance formed on the basis of supporting a 'big man' in his enterprises by contributing shell-money

<i>Lualua</i>	leader or elder in a group
<i>Luluai</i>	'big man', war leader; a village official
<i>Matamatam</i>	large-scale ceremony associated with the <i>dukduk</i> (qv)
<i>Minamai</i>	distribution of shell-money amongst those who have come to chew areca-nuts on the occasion of a death
<i>Monomon</i>	resident catechist in charge of a congregation
<i>Motonoi</i>	part of the beach set aside for fishing activities and taboo to women; the group based upon it
<i>Namata</i>	ceremony associated with the emergence of a young man after his seclusion in the bush as part of the preparations for marriage
<i>Ngala</i>	'big man', man of wealth, leader
<i>Niurai (na pia)</i>	marking out or survey of land
<i>Palum tambu</i>	distribution of shell-money on the occasion of a death
<i>Patuana</i>	old man; ancestor
<i>Pipiai</i>	to trade; custom whereby women purchase items for resale at the market
<i>Tambu</i>	indigenous shell-money
<i>Taraiu</i>	grove or area in the bush set aside for the activities of the male cult
<i>Taubar</i>	season of the south-east trade winds
<i>Tinabar</i>	gift or present
<i>Totokom</i>	the borrowing of a piece of land
<i>Tubuan</i>	masked dancer associated with the male cult; the <i>tubuan</i> is a 'female' figure who is also said to be the mother of the <i>dukduk</i>
<i>Turguvai</i>	alliance or partnership
<i>Umbene</i>	net used in seine-fishing

<i>Urur</i>	kind of local co-operative group or 'line'
<i>Varkukul</i>	the bridewealth; the ceremony which marks its passage
<i>Varpin</i>	pride, boasting
<i>Varvateten</i>	teaching, instruction
<i>Vevedek</i>	the custom of gathering together to count the takings after the trap-fishing season
<i>Vunapaina</i>	origin or source, especially of a group
<i>Vunatarai</i>	a group of common descent; local lineage, clan

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