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SOCIAL CONTROL

in

T A N G U

Dissertation

presented for the Degree

AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL LIBRARY UNIVERSITY

of

Doctor of Philosophy

The Australian National University

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December, 1953

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Preface

This dissertation presents part of the material collected during eleven months fieldwork in Tangu, Bogia sub-District, District of Madang, Papua-New Guinea. I had prepared myself for the study of religion, myths, mystique, and particularly for that nexus of ritual, economic, and political activities, Cargo cult. Also, since the 'island group' and 'one village' studies so characteristic of Melanesian ethnography had left open many problems regarding the relations between territorial groups it seemed worthwhile doing the investigation among a people forming a comparatively large linguistic group and distributed in several settlements.

Generally speaking, however, circumstances dictated a qualification and partial abandonment of the problems I had come to investigate. I found Tangu themselves to be irreligious, mentally disorientated, and intellectually bewildered. They were preoccupied with working the soil and hunting; they were curious about the outside world, but ignorant, muddled, and deeply suspicious of Europeans and the culture they had brought with them. It seemed to me that Tangu wanted to know, but were loth to learn; that they wanted material benefits - on the same terms as their own

observation of Europeans led them to believe was possible - without working. More importantly, Tangu wanted to know truth; they were seeking a theory or interpretation wherein experiences have an ordered and proper place - where explanations, in terms of the generalising principle, and anchored in faith, are linked to each other as particular instances justifying or illustrating the theory.

Tangu are perplexed. Contacts with many other native cultures, with missionaries and their various teachings, with administrative officers and their official and personal edicts, with traders, recruiters, and planters have provided them with a bulk of experiences, new rationales, and learning which, while defying traditional norms, offers no coherent substitute. Tangu are unable to evaluate the contradictions and variations in actual behaviour which they encounter: they neither praise nor condemn others; cultural differences are not referred to a known standard of goodness or efficiency. Tangu do not judge: they concentrate on what is necessary - gaining a living. They hunt, garden, trade, exchange, feast, and dance. They spend their leisure hours idling, smoking, gossiping, and chewing betel. Life offers very little more than producing food and consuming it within a traditional framework. Tangu no longer practise their

plastic arts, crafts, and rituals; their clubhouses, foci of these activities, have ceased to exist.

The contrast between the confusions of Tangu intellectual activities and their certainties regarding working for a living is vivid. Traditional organisational activities are dead; and buried with them are the intellectual conceptions and notions with which the activities themselves were linked. Consequently, the organisational concepts of Anthropology - given to the subject by a people themselves - have only a tenuous validity. There are no obvious descent groups in Tangu, no clubhouses, no courts, no ranking system... In themselves these absences need cause little concern; but the problem that confronts an investigator of a people as intellectually entangled as are Tangu is - How does order arise when the people themselves have no conception of order, no notion of what that order might or should be like? One is led to ask Why is there not anomy here - Why, if Cargo cults are, as they can be interpreted, attempts at self organisation, do not Tangu indulge in these activities more often?

It is my hope that the matter which follows will go some way towards answering these questions.

There are few references in this thesis to other

Melanesian peoples for as such they could only have value as comparisons or as a short cut technique of explanation. Itemised comparisons are invidious - especially when comparing first hand knowledge with second; also, Tangu society contains groups which may be severally described as matrilineal, patrilineal, and bilateral... Consequently, mentioning other peoples would tend only to confuse the issue - the presentation of Tangu as a real and logical unity despite surface differences.

I have avoided using any specialised orthography in the spelling of Tangu terms for the language has many variations of pronunciation and, consequently, no greater accuracy is gained by the use of one or other phonetic system. It is perhaps arguable whether Pidgin is a language sui generis or merely a vocabulary with varying syntactical forms; but at any rate it is not English and I have used a form of spelling conventional to it. Lettered references refer to notes at the foot of the page: numbers refer the reader to the end of the Chapter.

The Rev. Cornelius Van Baar S.V.D. had compiled an extensive vocabulary, a grammar, and notes on the Tangu language and customs, all of which, unfortunately, were lost during the Japanese invasion of New Guinea. Nevertheless, I am happy to say that Father Van Baar is recollating his

material from memory, and it is to be hoped that publication will be soon. Other writers are Rev. Georg Holtker,[a] who visited Tangu in the early thirties, and the Reader in Oceanic Languages, University of Sydney, A. Capell[b] - whom I thank for an introduction into the Tangu language.

The fieldwork was carried out under the terms of a Scholarship awarded by the Australian National University and to them I remain indebted for the opportunity. I have to thank the Administrator of Papua-New Guinea, and many other officers of the Administration whose kindly

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(a) Ein Papuanisches Zwillingspaar beim Stamm der Tanggum in Neuguinea. Anthropos vol. 45 1950 p.575. (co-author Robert Rootil).

Ethnographia aus Neuguinea. Annali Lateranensi vol.ix 1945.

Die Steinvogel in Melanesian. Sonderdruck aus Sudseestudien. Basel 1951.

(b) Languages of Bogia District, New Guinea. Oceania vol. 22, p.130 et seq.

Survey of Linguistic Research.
South Pacific Commission. Project S.6. Report No.1. vol.1, p.22 et seq.

hospitality I enjoyed - especially Mr. Arthur Ewing, A.D.O. at Bogia during my stay in Tangu. The priests and brothers of the Society of the Divine Word at Alexishafen and elsewhere were truly charitable, magnanimous, and tolerant; one cannot but admire and congratulate the Order on the work it has done. I thank my teachers - Professors E.E. Evans-Pritchard, S.F. Nadel, M. Gluckman, and M.N. Srinivas - and hope that their pains have in some parts borne fruit. To Father Van Baar of the Tangu Mission my admiration for the work he is doing, and my deepest thanks.

PROBLEM AND ABSTRACT

I

The fact that social control is as wide as the study of sociology itself implies that, in specific reference, the concept requires containment. A first approximation would be the examination of certain selected questions in reference to a political or quasi-political unit - since a political group would normally set the limits for a particular set of controls. And if opinion be divided on what goes to make a political system, a first requirement would still appear to be an analysis of the relationships between constituent groups to the end of eliciting and presenting logically the principles round which the activities of a people appear to be organised. This implies an analysis of power distribution within the group concerned and the related problems of power seeking or status advance - linking what Bateson has called "Preferred Types"[1] with what Radcliffe-Brown has called positive and negative sanctions.[2]

Thus, this dissertation is concerned first with finding the organising principles of a group - intrinsic control, control inherent in social relationships. Secondly, it is necessary to isolate and analyse those areas where the

initiative of an individual can effectively steer or guide the behaviour of others: this process of exerting effective influence on many by one or a few I call management. Third, these activities need to be related to certain notions or dominant values held by, or common to, the bulk of individuals making up the group.

I do not enter directly into the process of socialisation. Since the arrival of the Mission in Tangu, and Administrative action in abolishing native clubhouses, the overall educative process has been in a state of change and flux for some years. (a) In addition, it may be assumed for any group that the members have been, to varying extents, effectively socialised. For the crucial problem in regard to social control is not so much the educative and imitative processes - how the values of a group become known, accepted, and internalised - as the resultant in the form of a body of values held in common. And this problem - conflict in values, values only loosely held - is examined under the third head in the preceding paragraph.

Tangu have no system of chieftainship; nor is there a principle of descent valid for all Tangu capable of organising groups in relation to each other in a hierachy of balanced segments. Uniform and real equivalence between communities

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(a) The Japanese occupation made further inroads on traditional values.

is lacking, and neither Administration nor Mission control Tangu as a unit group. Tangu are few - not more than two thousand in all; yet no other area in the hills between the Ramu and Iwarum rivers presents the investigator with a larger or more dense concentration of population. And though many real cultural differences may be found within Tangu the people feel themselves one, a unity. Not an organised unity, but a particular identification not accorded to outsiders. Moreover, the main structural principles lying behind their activities are common to all Tangu in whatever part of the area they happen to live. In the past, though they fought among themselves at many and different levels of mobilisation, the four named Districts into which Tangu is divided nevertheless combined with each other in defence against outsiders; and this combination for defensive warfare seems to have been the only diacritical symbol of Tangu unity. It was not until the coming of the European that a name, Tangu, was ascribed to, and accepted by the people under survey in this thesis.

Each of the Districts groups the forty odd settlements into which Tangu are distributed in a way significantly different from the others; and each contains communities of varying sizes and degrees of solidarity. Further, some settlements in Tangu are in a closer relationship with neighbouring,

non Tangu settlements than with certain other communities within Tangu itself. Yet, in terms of interrelationships and intercommunication, inter-Tangu relations may fairly be said to be stronger and more numerous, as a whole, than relations involving Tangu with non-Tangu. The reflection of this lies in the assertion made by all Tangu that they are one. Demographic factors and the physiography of the area give Tangu real grounds for their assertion of unity even though an examination of certain features of social organisation might lead one to think otherwise.

Within the limits set out above, therefore, Tangu appear to be a suitable group for study. There is order in Tangu - though sometimes even today, and certainly in the recent past, the situation might appear to be anomic. Both aspects, order and anomy, appear to arise out of six logically separable factors which are, in fact, functions of each other, and which, interacting, produce tension - and its release - in relationships. The brother-sister relationship, normally most close and intimate, is translated on marriage into one involving explicit debt, or mutual food exchanges. This brings formality and strain into a relationship which, previous to marriage, was characterised by an absence of these factors. Further, through the custom of brother and sister exchange in marriage, not only do series of couples

form debt relationships, but groups of couples are mobilised in opposition to other groups, as groups.

These strains might be visualised as interacting within a closed group or local community - implying a division of the local community into two equivalent halves, each half related to the other through the brother-sister relationship. And indeed, this is an ideal which Tangu social structure would appear to set itself. But there is another value which counteracts the ideal of self consistency - that Tangu consider it desirable that women should marry out of the local community. Thus, sisters who emigrate to marry bring discrete communities into relationship with each other through the food exchanges carried out across the brother-sister bond. At the same time community values are strong; and there is tension in the inconsistency that demands intimacy with kin, with own community, and also demands that women should marry out into other communities. Loyalties to kin and community are split.

On the ground a compromise is reached. Communities of any size are, in fact, divided into two halves. But no community is self consistent, and all communities are in relation with other communities, in amity or otherwise, through the linkage of individuals in the brother-sister relationship. Nevertheless, the existence of the brother-

sister relationship entailing an exchange or debt relationship after marriage, the dual division of a community - a duality seen through most aspects of Tangu social organisation and making for control through mutual interaction or opposition - and the expressed maxim that women should marry outside the community are three factors making for order when in "balance", and for disorder when not.

A fourth factor making for order in some contexts and senses and for confusion in others is the European penetration and administration of Tangu. Order arises from the more obvious administrative techniques of control - appointment of village officials, surveillance by police, and patrol activity. And in addition, there is, in Tangu, a Mission station with resident European priest. But the freedom of movement arising from effective control by Europeans has also presented Tangu with a series of moral and intellectual dilemmas.(b) When Tangu reflect on affairs their minds move in a world that is wider, and in some respects less ordered and more conjectural than their own activities would seem to warrant. While Tangu have been stripped of many traditional forms, very few have been substituted. On the other hand, mental and physical contact with an enormous variety of cultures

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(b) See Appendix A concerning Cargo Cult activities.

including the European has considerably widened Tangu intellectual horizons - with the result that correspondences between bodily and mental activity are disproportionately few. On the ground, and within the present context, this dislocation between values or beliefs or imposed beliefs and activities expresses itself in confused assertions or judgments regarding particular conduct. Thus, reinforcement of norms, or the blocking of deviance by relating behaviour directly to a moral imperative tends to be weak. In action, the conflict of values, or choice or moral imperatives tends to be determined ad hoc by reference to temporary and personal advantage.

It is a commonplace that offices, or locations of authority, are not necessary to social control. But when transgressions occur and disputes arise the initiative for bringing about a settlement must be found at some point within the social structure. Such initiative, acting as authority, is only found in Tangu in the offices of Luluai, Tultul, and Doctor boy, and to a certain extent in catechists and boss boys. Native and traditional procedures of control do not admit an exercise of authority. But there is exercise of power seen as influence which is effective. From day to day this effective influencing, this management of the conduct of others is scarcely noticeable: persons and Households go their own way about managing their own business. But in crucial situations

management can be seen in operation for management not only creates but also feeds on tension in relationships. In other words the trouble or crucial situation itself triggers the managerial process: dispute situations are also situations in which managers compete.

Offices normally carry peculiar kinds of authority, and insofar as these are explicit so uncertainties, and therefore tensions, lessen. Management is essentially implicit and ad hoc; it is the control component of a mutual steering between persons in a community which is seen at its most critical focus in dispute situations. Managers do not impose their wills on others; on the contrary, the essence of management resides in accurately assessing and expressing the end result of the mutual steering. This is not the same as merely crystallising public opinion; it is this and also more than this, for good and successful managers can include their own wishes in the final resultant.

The factors which produce tension in relationships - the brother-sister relationship, the assertion that women should marry outside the community, the duality in social groupings, the European penetration into Tangu, management, and mutual steering - may be reduced to the three headings I have already mentioned: intrinsic controls - the controls inherent in social relationships, or the implications of the brother-

sister relationship; exterior controls - or the control exercised through management and the European penetration; and the values or notions held by Tangu at the present time. Thus, while attention is drawn throughout this thesis to dominant notions and values, the first three chapters have the implications of the brother-sister relationship as their main concern, and the last three attempt to analyse critical situations and the techniques of management.

II

The character of the people under survey, their diversity as between themselves, and their place in relation to neighbours and the region in general is made clear in the first chapter. Tangu settlements are described seriatim together with an introductory note on their organisation into collectivities. Demographic data is presented and a number of criteria are

adduced to show how closely Tangu settlements are related to groups outside the Tangu area. These criteria tend to show that Tangu settlements are an almost arbitrary selection from a far wider spread of local groups, culturally akin, and socially related. Yet, demographic data and historical perspective show Tangu to be a unity; and in the present day, whatever the "objective" facts may lead us to suppose, we are confronted by the further fact that Tangu "feel" themselves one. This felt unity can be broken down into many single factors each of which is inconclusive - except the warring combination. But, taken together, each of the factors enumerated appear to pull Tangu groups into a single society.

The theme of the second chapter is concerned with two main aspects of basic existence: the traditional and recently imposed. By day, Tangu settlements are deserted; the inhabitants have gone to their gardens or to hunt. Activities revolve round the gardens and the production that comes from them - subsistence, feasting, dancing, exchanges, status, and aesthetics all have gardening as their basis. Only at dusk or on feast days does a settlement show signs of being a community. Tangu also trade with one another and with outsiders, and since the coming of the European and his goods they have discovered a need for money. To get money to buy clothes, knick-knacks, and axes and knives and dogs for more efficient

gardening and hunting, Tangu migrate to work on plantations and among Europeans generally.

But gardening implies a series of interlocking activities and values; migration to work another wholly different series. To stay in Tangu means a general conformity to the first; and returning migrants are, therefore, forced to re-adapt themselves whilst those who have remained behind must needs widen their own ideas if they are to reabsorb their changed kin. The continuing process of mutual adjustment implies tension, fluidity of values, and wide limits to conformity. Total rejection of the values implied in gardening leaves one alternative: to go.

Analysis of social structure is the main concern of chapter three. Since, however, there are differences in structure as between the four Districts composing Tangu, the analysis is made in terms of those factors which are common to all Districts, noting in passing, the significant differences. Commencing, then, with a brief introduction into the relevant parts of the kinship system, the argument proceeds with the presentation of the basic social unit, the Household, in various contexts of reference - its formation, recruitment, and relation to kin-locality group and community. In order to make this relationship clear - especially as the importance of the kin-locality group has dwindled much - historical evidence as to its character is adduced together with an analysis

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of the present day relation between persons bound together by kin ties and those linked by neighbourhood.

If Tangu were an agglomeration of separate Households the analysis so far would be sufficient to demonstrate these controls which are implicit in the way of life of any group. But two features bring persons, Households, groups of Households, and local communities into significant relation with each other: the apportionment of garden produce and the brother-sister relationship - or relationships expressed in that idiom. Each of the two latter features is a function of the other, for all foodstuffs not involving the community as a unit is apportioned within these terms. Consequently, it is at this point that the general discussion shifts from an excursus on the Household into an analysis of that other basic feature of Tangu life - the brother-sister relationship.

Perhaps the most important point to be elicited from this chapter is the way in which the social structure provides at many levels for a division into two:- feasting moieties; communities split into equivalent halves, physically and socially; the sexual division of labour, - a general cultural division of any community into males and females, neither for a moment entering the province of the other; and finally, the brother-sister relationship itself demonstrates not only a fundamental dualism as between the sexes but also the fact that they are

complementary to each other. From the brother-sister relationship arise all the dual relationships in Tangu. Further, since marriage is basic to the formation of Households and the existence of the group, and it is after marriage that the tensions between brother and sister become evident and explicit, it is understandable that it is not until after marriage that individuals find themselves fully locked in food exchanges and the tensions these imply.

The dual nature of relationships at all levels in the social organisation makes for tension; at the same time one must assume that in this form aesthetic satisfaction and day to day living reach a summation. In other words, the constant juxtaposition of equivalent halves not only makes for order and restraint but also for short periods of anomy. There appear to be only two loci where mutual and dynamic opposition reach a stable balance: in marriage, within the Household; and in the idea of mngwotngwotiki - where an exchange relationship in the brother-sister idiom is deemed, for various reasons, not to exist.

III

The section of the thesis concerned with exterior forms of social control commences first with an examination of dispute situations which are not complicated by elements of sorcery; this is followed by an excursus in sorcery beliefs so far as they are relevant to the understanding of dispute situations in which sorcerers are also active. Each of these analyses is complementary to the other, and both seek to relate the situations with which they deal to the social structure in which they are found - more especially to the theme of tension in certain crucial relationships. Finally, the last chapter is concerned with analysing the interrelationships between those persons in Tangu who are in a position to exert effective influence - as it is varied and qualified by two features of European penetration: the Administration and the Mission.

Apart from those factors concerned with tension in relationships, chapter four seeks to examine three main aspects of simple disputes: their course, their content or substance as a technique for restoring a state of euphoria in the group, and finally, their function as situations dealing with competitions in managerial capacity. The course of a dispute is simple. First, there is an expression of anger which may, or may not be followed by a publication on the slitgong. Sometimes, if the dispute flares suddenly and violently,

publication on the slit-gong is superfluous and the dispute takes its course; at other times publication may be followed by immediate reconciliation, and the third event in the course of a dispute - the br'ngun'guni - foregone altogether. The br'ngun'guni is a boasting match between the disputants and carried out in terms of gardening ability - each vaunting his own prowess and decrying that of the other: it is also, from the point of view of the onlookers, a stacking of the evidence, an oratorical demonstration, a bringing forward of the right point at its most advantageous moment. Finally, when the anger has died down, the disputants part and honour is satisfied by an exchange of feasts.

When examining the substance of these disputes two factors above all must necessarily be kept in mind; first, that disputes occur as a function of tension in certain crucial relationships; second, though the dispute itself may release the tension in a particular relationship, the tension remains in the relationship and when it builds up sufficiently the dispute will recur though perhaps on another pretext. It follows, from the vary nature of disputes, therefore, that there can be no parallel conception of "right" as we know it, in Tangu. Nor, in the native context, does there exist that apparatus which is necessarily locked to any strict conception of "right" - a court, rules of evidence, judgment, and enforce-

ment. Rather than the establishment of "right" Tangu are concerned with restitution of the status quo, with abating the anger, releasing the tension, conciliation. And to this end most of what happens in a dispute appears to be directed.

Both within the dispute itself, and outside it, the disputants are kept apart lest they make matters far worse by coming to blows; the br'ngun'guni accelerates the outpourings of anger, and the physical leaping and running eventually exhausts and sobers the most furious; the comments of spectators are nearly always two sided - an appeal to reason to the one, a plea that the other should not take it so hardly. Where the dispute is protracted a process of arbitration is discernible - not through a single person but in the form of a multiplicity of three cornered conversations which gradually bring the disputing parties closer to each other and lay the basis for settlement in the prescribed way. This settlement, which may be said to restore a "balanced" tension, takes the form of a mutual exchange of equivalent feasts: feasts which are not roughly equivalent lay the basis for further disputation in the near future.

The managerial content of a dispute can be seen in the adroitness with which certain disputants make their points in the br'ngun'guni; in the way other issues are suddenly brought onto the stage and made to play as important a part as the incident which triggered the anger; in the way the disputants interact with each other and the assembled people - so that

each disputant, by a process of mutual steering vis a vis himself and the spectators, can bring himself into a position vis a vis his rival where he can feel that the honours reside with himself. In day to day activities it is to the word of this man that others pay greater attention. Finally, one may draw attention to the fact that the settlement feast not only re-enacts a prime societal value; it puts to an empirical test the comparative gardening abilities of the two disputants - a social ability without which personal qualities in management count for little.

No attempt is explicitly made in Chapter Five to compare, by a similar process of abstraction, sorcery disputes with the simple: disputes are disputes and the process of settlement in the one is similar to that in the other - rather is the accent laid on the factors being dealt with in sorcery in relation to the complex of belief in sorcerers. Thus, in the present context, what is crucial, socially important in simple disputes is the managerial situation - actual and effective control by a few upon many; and though sorcery disputes also give managers their opportunity what is important is the way control is exercised on individuals by a more or less compartmented and autonomous complex of beliefs. As in simple disputes, sorcery disputes are acted out in terms of the tension in certain crucial relationships, but where the underlying and explicit causes in simple disputes can be traced to real or

fancied slights, hurt feelings over food distributions, trespass in hunting bush, thefts and the like, sorcery disputes have to do with hidden feelings, with guilts, with scapegoats, with anxieties over suspected adulterous wives.

From the analysis it would appear that sorcery beliefs act upon and restrain the actions of individuals through feelings of guilt. Not that guilt restrains: illness forces men to search their consciences and find their guilt in order that they may atone. The force of sorcery lies in the illness or death which reminds others of the consequences of actions entailing feelings of guilt - though in fact it is the consequence itself which sets in train the finding of guilt. Sorcerers act upon individuals and no one is invulnerable, and all are equally vulnerable; hence, though in day to day relations a clever man, or a strong man may manoeuvre himself to advantage, he is always vulnerable to, and always restrained by the fear of sorcery.

Though sorcery acts in the first instance upon an individual such is the nature of the belief in relation to the local community that the act of sorcery against one is rapidly translated into an attack against the whole community. Hence one may say that sorcery keeps the community together. But not always. Being a function of the tension in relationships and these tensions not being limited to intercommunity

values only, acts of sorcery continue to be "alive" or effective only as long as the tension is in a state of "unbalance". With the return of tensions to a state of normality, active sorcery dies, guilts are expunged on a member of the community, and intercommunity relations return to normal. In addition, historical evidence is adduced to show that when tensions within a community reach a certain pitch, when illnesses reach epidemic proportions, when guilts are rife, the community may be completely disrupted. On the other hand, on the basis of the evidence provided, it would be true to say that so long as the community exists as such sorcery acts so as to channel the behaviour of individuals into community values.

Finally, management is discussed in its total context of relevance; that is to say Tangu methods of control are discussed in relation to the procedures and roles which have been imposed on them by the Administration and Mission. And since the exercise of power or influence must needs take place within a matrix of checks, the attempt is made to isolate and define the checks upon Tangu managers of all kinds from whatever source their managerial potential derives. For these checks do not act only on managers; each person in Tangu is subject to them. But managers stand nearer the footlights and checks upon them are more easy to see - and what acts upon them acts upon others also.

Notes

1. Gregory Bateson. Naven. Cambridge 1936. esp.pp.160 - 170

2. A.R. Radcliffe-Brown. Social Sanctions. Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences, 1933 vol. 8. p.531