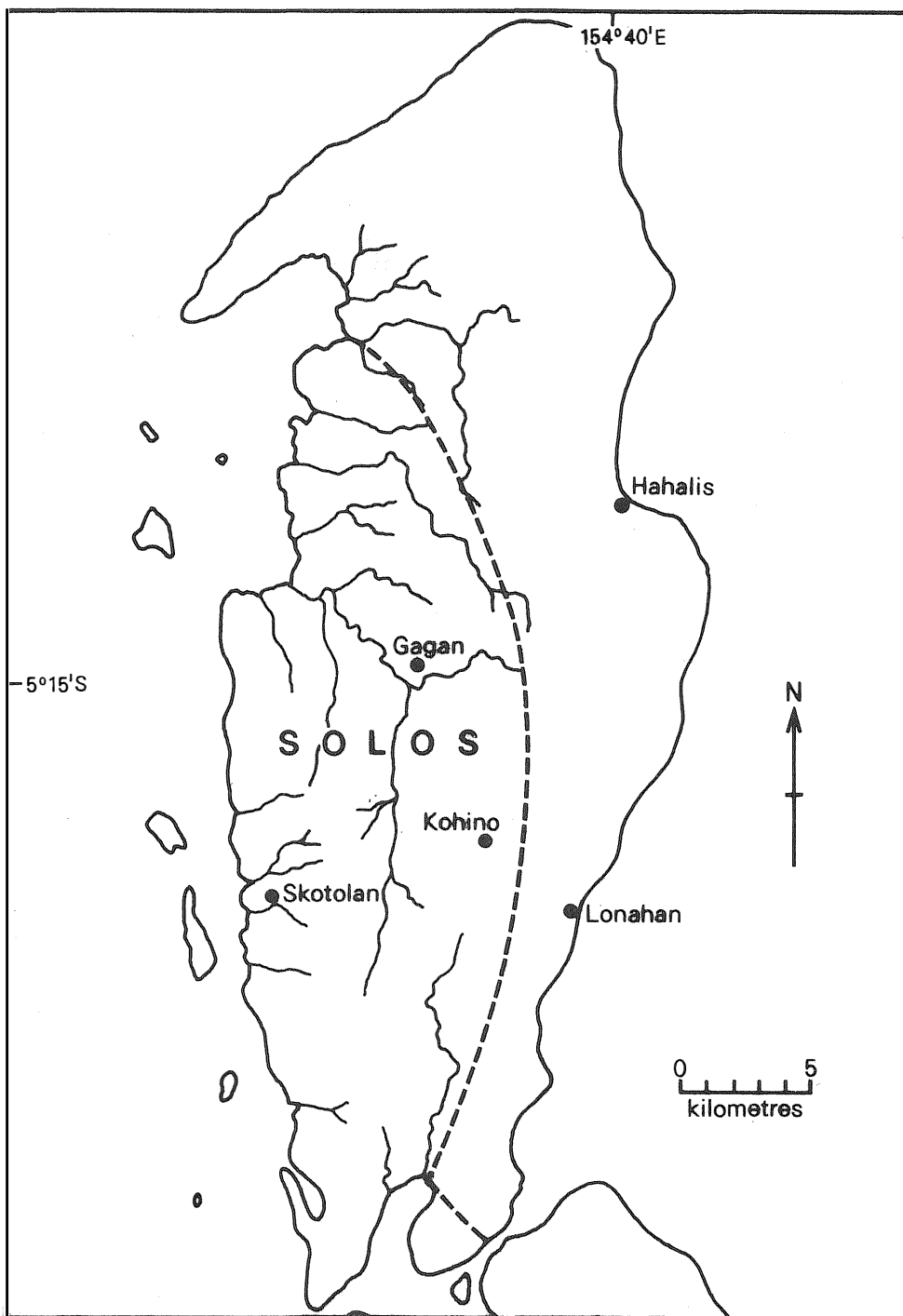


TRADITIONAL MARRIAGE AND THE
IMPACT OF CHRISTIANITY ON THE
SOLOS OF BUKA ISLAND



Buka Island

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A. H. SAREI

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Contents

	<u>Page</u>
Preface	vii
Chapter 1 Buka Island and its tribes	1
Chapter 2 Basic features of traditional marriage	17
Chapter 3 Marriage impediments	44
Chapter 4 The impact of Christian marriage	49
Appendix	58
Bibliography	60
Index	62

Figures

1	Buka Island	Frontispiece
2	Solos kinships	19
3	Possible marriage within the tribe	20

Preface

Those accustomed to reading scientific expositions of tribal marriages will find this treatise on Solos marriage a disappointment. Several handicaps were foreseen before beginning this work. First, there was the problem of the time during which the marriage practices had fallen into disuse; then the brevity of time in which the study had to be written. Another difficulty was the scarcity of pertinent source material for research.

Despite these difficulties I decided to proceed with the study of tribal marriage among my people, the Solos. My intention has been not to produce a thorough scientific treatment of marriage but to indicate some directions for those who are working among my people. Although much good has been accomplished during the last fifty years by missionaries and government personnel, many mistakes have been made which must be corrected in the future if there is to be more fruitful work among the Solos.

I have chosen marriage because in marriage and the family we have the foundation of society and the feeling of belonging to a community which leads to the action of service. Increased respect and understanding of Solos customs and attitudes can assist the church in bringing to the Solos people a greater appreciation of its teaching on the sacrament of marriage.

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Chapter 1

Buka Island and its tribes

Buka Island is one of the seven thousand inhabited islands which mushroom in the vast ocean of the Pacific. The name Buka is a misnomer of the native word boka, first recorded by Verguet in 1883 in his book Iles Solomon. Europeans first sighted it in 1767 when Carteret named it Winchelsea (Hinton 1969:259) but for some unknown reason this name did not persist. As the story goes, the people approached the explorer's vessel shouting boka, boka (Bigault 1947:12, Hinton 1969:254, 259). This word is an exclamation in the language of the Tasi tribe who live along the eastern and northeastern coasts of the island. It usually comes either at the beginning or end of a question, asked in wonderment or annoyance. Used on its own, it has no special meaning. When attached to a question it means, 'What is it?'. When the people first saw explorers and traders they asked one another in great amazement what the sailing ships were and who these white men were. The word boka came freely to their lips. Thinking that the people said buka, the explorers and traders left the island calling it Buka Island. Prior to this the island had no common name. Buka Island is in the group of islands which form part of the Solomon islands. It is approximately 800 miles due east of the Papua New Guinea mainland, separating the rest of the Solomons from Papua New Guinea and its surrounding islands. It is separated from Bougainville by a narrow channel commonly known as Buka Passage and formerly known as König Albert Strasse, the name given by Parkinson (1907:467) who claimed he was the first European to traverse the channel in 1886 (Blackwood 1935:1).

In 1768 a Frenchman by the name of Bougainville sailed the Pacific and rediscovered the Solomons or at least the northern Solomons. He went ashore on many islands, one of which bears his name today, the island of Bougainville.

Buka Island is 40 miles long and 6 to 7 miles wide, roughly 220 square miles in area. Like Bougainville, it was formed through volcanic activities which pushed the continental

rock-bed from under the sea (Robson 1932:143). Along the eastern and northern coasts of Buka, limestone cliffs rise up hundreds of feet. The west coast is fringed by almost impenetrable mangroves and a short mountain range rising a few thousand feet.

The land surface of the island has an incline toward the west. All the streams, which are frequently flooded beyond their banks by the heavy tropical downpour, empty their waters into the sea on the west coast (Montauban and O'Reilly 1958: 31). Thus the eastern side of the island is left practically dry. There is a swamp about a mile wide between the dry land and the sea where hundreds of crocodiles make their homes (Collinson 1926:24). The island is also covered in thick tropical jungle which accounts for the rich black soil that is found there. The bigger streams, especially the Gagan River, which is formed by three bigger streams which meet several miles from the sea, provide the people with an abundance of river sago to use for thatch (Blackwood 1935:2).

The tribes of Buka

From the earliest times the island of Buka has been occupied by two tribes: the Tasi tribe (beach people) and the Solos tribe (inland people).¹ The former live mainly in the areas along the eastern and northern coasts. The latter inhabit the central and hill areas along the west coast and down to its shores. How long ago these two tribes came to this island is not known as the people shunned all remembrance of their former land.

Nature was generous towards the people. She provided them with all they needed to sustain life from day to day without having to work too hard for it (Fox 1967:72-3). They made nets, spears, bows and arrows. In agriculture they used stone axes and digging sticks (Montauban and O'Reilly 1958:34). For their travels over waters they used dugout and mona canoes. The latter are constructed of thin planks without any outrigger (McHardy 1935:49). They made baskets, mats, woven walls from bamboo, pottery and carvings which were mainly representations or symbols of their ancestors and their clans (Tippett 1967: 186-9). Although life in the clan was communal, each man set his own time. Man was the master of his own destiny in everyday living (Lamarre 1950:5). The people of Buka are now being

¹ See Verguet (1883) for a description of the general characteristics of the Buka tribes.

forced out of this situation and state of mind in order to join a world confused by the mad rush of Western civilisation. Cash cropping has virtually taken over subsistence gardening.

The Solos people

As mentioned, the Solos people lived mainly in the central and hilly areas of the island. They numbered about 3,700 in 1928,¹ and spoke a common language or dialect which has its origin in the Austronesian language. The dialect is called hasolos ('of Solos') but is pronounced as sonos. How the word solos came to be used to designate this particular tribe, I do not know. The word tasi means sea, and therefore, beach people. The word solos signifies neither bush nor inland. The nearest name to it is tonos, the name of a hardwood which is common in the area. So perhaps it came originally from the idea that these bush men were as strong and as hardy as the tonos wood. Frequently one hears the following expression among the Solos people: 'Owanuk a na kesmeh, meia amagon puo tonos' ('let the storm come, the tonos tree has nothing to fear'). It is also a shout of encouragement especially when there is a dance competition between the Solos and Tasi people. In the midst of uproars and shouts, one hears, 'Hakue yan i neen tonos' ('let the branch of the tonos tree swing!'). So one could interpret it to mean hardiness. The local name of the area is Petisuun meaning downstream or west side of the island.

The Solos tribe consisted of clans which were independent of one another, the only binding factor being their common dialect. In the rich forests clans built their hamlets of fifty to one hundred huts and cleared areas for their gardens of taro and other crops. Each clan scattered throughout the area, laying down boundaries beyond which the other clans were not allowed, either for gardening, fishing, hunting or for collecting nuts and other fruits. Clan members were free to make their gardens in the area or hunt or fish in the creeks (Fox 1967:13). They chose to live at different villages at different times before the Administration laid down the policy that people must remain in their villages.

Domesticated fowls, pigs, and dogs were kept, which foraged for food around these hamlets. Wild pigs kept to the deep forests where they were hunted with dogs by men of the village.

¹ Statistics in Epistolae, 1927-28, file 5SS040, Archives of the Marist Fathers, Rome (hereafter AMF).

There were also opossums, flying-foxes, snakes and lizards. From the flying-fox the Solos people obtained teeth to make nakohu (teeth money) for bridewealth or to buy pigs and other objects from one another.¹ A whole village often took part in fishing in small lakes during the dry season. In bigger streams men either fished with torches at night, which caused the fish to leave their hiding places and be caught in nets laid across the stream some miles downstream, or with a certain plant or vine used to stun the fish. Using the plant or the vine provided a very effective way of fishing but the people risked being blinded by the juice. Women collected prawns, river shells and snails in the smaller streams. They also collected wild vegetables and mushrooms.

Once or twice a year, the entire village engaged in nut and fruit gathering (Montauban and O'Reilly 1958:34). This was an opportunity for young men to show their future wives and in-laws how well they could climb. The galip nuts could be stored after being dried in the sun. They were kept to make special puddings either for engagement ceremonies or to be eaten after important communal work (Ivens 1930:112). A family could make such a pudding for a group of people who helped them in their gardens. Each family of the village had its turn in receiving help.

The people cooked vegetables and fish in coconut oil. Those living in hamlets by the bigger streams found they could obtain salt from sea water flowing into the streams during high tide (Blackwood 1935:89). Sago was occasionally eaten, and at times became a staple food for those who had given up the usual foods after the death of their loved ones. The normal length of time for abstaining from food was three months. After this a burial feast was held in which the deceased was officially recognised and declared as dead, and gone from the clan (Montauban and O'Reilly 1958:56). His or her name could not be mentioned until a generation later, when again the same name was given to a newly born baby.² In certain cases, where the dead persons were very dear in life, the bereaved abstained from taro until they died. They resorted either to eating sago or yams or to other rare kinds of food.

Pigs were kept and raised especially for feasts and for bridewealth. Once a year the nahinous feast was staged by a

¹ Personal communication, B. Memmes, 5 June 1970.

² A. Binois, Epistolae, 3 January 1910, pp.3, 10, AMF.

different clan of the Solos tribe where each chief demonstrated his wealth and power and prestige before other chiefs and clans by trying to outdo the other. During such a gathering maternal uncles sought for prospective husbands and wives for their nieces and nephews.

Before inviting other clans or villages, the host village had a special dance every night called gae. Tunes were sung to the accompaniment of wooden slit gongs or drums made from the tonos tree. These drums were called tui, from a word meaning heart. It was said that the person who thought of making these drums got his idea from the beat of his own heart.

From hearing the beat of drums the other clans knew there was to be a feast in the area in a couple of months. They would begin preparing things for dancing. Since the nahinous feast was a very special one, the invitation was sent in the form of two coconuts decorated with the leaves of a red or purple croton plant called ring which signified nobility and sacredness. The men of the inviting clan would go to the other clan and suspend husked coconuts from the rafters of the tsiuhan (assembly house) of that clan and leave immediately. The invitation was sent first to one and then to the next clan, never to all at the one time. The two coconuts represented acceptance of the invitation and acceptance of the responsibility of staging a feast the following year. Thus if two coconuts were cracked in the first village it was a sign of accepting both. If only one was cracked in the first village, two more were sent to the next, until one of the clans broke both coconuts (Montauban and O'Reilly 1958:70). The rest then would be sent only one coconut. This would indicate that one of the clans along the way had promised to stage the feast for the following year. All the clans were expected by the inviting clan to at least accept the invitation. A refusal to accept was a sign of ill will against the other. So the feast was a means for each clan to find out how it stood in regard to the others, as well as a reunion and goodwill feast.

Generally speaking, the Solos are still less outgoing and ambitious than the Tasi people, and of firm characters (Montauban and O'Reilly 1958:31). They have always been content with what they have and have always tried to safeguard what they already possess rather than make conquests and new gains. When they engaged in battles against another tribe, it was mainly to avenge a member captured and killed by that tribe. Now and again an ambitious chief would arise among them, who would not only wage war against other tribes but would also try to subdue the other clans of the same tribe

under his rule. Such a chief would also make expeditions to capture women from the other tribes to be his extra wives.¹

Solos men and women were bound to their families and clan. They tried to make the best of their marriages and had as many children as possible.² These children gave them a very special standing with the chief and other members of the clan. They were efficient farmers and good fishermen and hunters although they lived in constant fear of other tribes and even other clans. Such distrust led to a very closed community, the clan. Since the men were preoccupied with the task of vigilance, the garden work and the transportation of food and wood fell entirely upon the shoulders of the women (Turner 1920:5). Yet the Solos had a high regard for women because their society traced its members through women alone (Bugoto 1969:551). In any family, the women were more important than the men (Codrington 1891:34).

Solos men and women belonged to a matrilineal group and could not marry relatives within the same clan (Ivens 1930:82). Inheritance passed from the maternal uncle to nephews and nieces (Blackwood 1935:44). The sister was the ruler and head of a clan, but the brother was the chief who practised and exercised power over the clan and its members (Codrington 1891:34). The children of any marriage belonged legally to the wife and to her brothers and relatives. This did not however mean that the husband and his people were strangers to the children; in fact, since a wife was frequently raised in the husband's community after marriage, children became as intimately associated with their father's relatives as with their mother's.³ Although the symbolic aspect of kinship stressed ties with the mother and her matrilineal kin, strong allegiances were often built up with the father's kin so there was little intergroup hostility (Rivers 1914:77).

Leadership was inherited, but a more capable man could take the lead when the leader showed his inability to rule (Tippett 1967:144-5). Since each clan consisted mainly of blood relations, there was not too much of a reaction when another person took over as leader. He had to exert his influence over the natohi (chief) and the rest of the clan. Normally,

¹ See p.22 ff. for a discussion of polygyny.

² J. Chevrui, Epistolae, 24 August 1923, file 5SS331, p.7, AMF.

³ See section on 'Marriage as a process' in Chapter 2.

a younger brother or cousin or close relative of the chief could replace him by building his prestige among the people through the provision of feasts and through demonstrating his abilities in clan activities. Such a person could not, however, call himself natohi if the chief was alive or if his family's firstborn daughter had a young son who was expected to assume the title of chief. If he belonged to this family he assumed the title of chief as soon as the ruling chief died.

The ideal Solos chief was of the chieftain family who had to be either elder brother or the second-born after a girl in the family. He was a man of great influence within his own clan and with the other clans also; he was brave in battle and daring in all his undertakings; he possessed wealth in the form of shell money, flying-foxes' teeth money, pigs and land.¹ All these enabled him to play host to the other clans and any strangers who happened to come into his clan. The chief possessed the biggest garden in the village. Often young unmarried men gardened for him and were given a hatuk (refreshing meal) in return. Until their marriage, such men had to do all the work which concerned the clan. It was the chief's privilege to employ them since he often supplied meals during important occasions. This is also why many chiefs had more than one wife (Guppy 1887:44).

It was not sufficient therefore for the chief to accumulate and store up wealth in order to be considered a rich man and a leader. He had to use what he had for the good of all those under him. In order to be effective and to elevate his position, he would have to stage feasts, with all that he possessed, inviting other clans to dances in his village (Tippett 1967: 145). A generous person could make people respond readily to his wishes.

The tsiuhan belonged to the chief. It often bore the emblems of the chief and the clan, indicating his power and nobility. This house formed the central point of the village. In it, important announcements were issued (Montauban and O'Reilly 1955:52). The tui were kept here to call the people to gatherings, to warn them of an enemy attack or to announce good or bad news. Each special beat of the tui had a particular message known to all. Sometimes a clan could call another clan for help when attacked by an enemy because the sound of these tui could be heard from long distances. Likewise, during a combined attack against an enemy the drums could be beaten

¹ See Epistolae, 1926-28, no.45, Versiaux Archives, Rome.

in such a way as to say that it was time to advance on the enemy. The other clan would go at once into battle (Oliver 1955:60).

The tshuhan was used exclusively by men. It was, besides being a house for issuing orders, a visiting house for the men of the village. Visiting at a person's house was very rare (Guppy 1887:38).

Only women could visit one another in their houses, the beo or back-end being assigned to them. The pore (front end) was exclusively for men (Montauban and O'Reilly 1958:37). Occasionally the man of the house sat with his friends and chewed betel nut.

Clan members freely shared all they had, especially food. They invited one another to their gardens to harvest taro if the others seemed a little short of food in their gardens. So, on the whole, the Solos men and women were generous and faithful to the laws and regulations of the clan and tribe.

The women generally were faithful to their spouses, as were the men, although the latter occasionally took part in amorous expeditions to the other clans or tribes (Montauban and O'Reilly 1958:37). This happened particularly during the period of lactation when rigorous restrictions were placed on husbands having sexual union with their wives; this was because they wanted no pregnancy while the other child was still small. The use of love charms was very common, their manufacture often being known only to one or two members of several families in the clan (Montauban and O'Reilly 1958:60). These charms were made from mixtures of certain roots and trees upon which the names of the dead ancestors were invoked for effectiveness (Tippett 1967:12).

The Solos mentality

Compared with the Tasi people, the Solos have been less receptive to new ideas. They were never exposed to outsiders as were the Tasi people and they were content with the security their way of life gave them (Fox 1967:314). To them it was a happy life because every man had a place and contributed his share to the common good of others (Bugoto 1969:551). For them their tribe and especially the area owned by the clan was the world and the bush was their schoolbook.

The Solos are generally less boisterous and talkative than the Tasi.¹ They speak all at once, in a flurry, for five or

¹ A. Binois, Epistolae, 3 January 1910, p.6, AMF.

ten minutes, followed by intervals of silence as though they have run out of conversation. It must be remembered, however, that the slowness to accept white men's ideas, or the silence within the conversation is not a sign of complete eclipse of thought. It is the moment the Solos people sum up and weigh the content of ideas and things in the conversation. They must be convinced that the advantages of a new idea outweigh those of their old convictions or practices. Today some Tasi people have cheated Solos of their money through a mixture of 'business talk' and cargo cult. The Tasi have played upon the inquisitive minds of the Solos exploiting their belief in legends which seems to be justified in modern times by all they see around them (O'Reilly 1951:1).

The Solos consider a person as either a hard or a kind one. People are then approached according to how they have been judged. A hard person is approached in awe and fear and false reverence which is quickly replaced by slyness and trickery. When a person is harsh towards the people, he rarely obtains the truth from them. On the other hand, a kind person is approached in openness.

There is nothing more hateful to the Solos than to be treated harshly. In their past society, a harsh person was eliminated either by poison or by exposure to the enemy during a battle where he was killed. Such solutions are no longer possible and so the ill feelings and resentments of the people are pent up in their hearts and minds. Occasionally individuals show this tremendous pressure by attempting to use their fists against their educators. The chiefs are said to have been strict towards their subjects, but they also possessed kind and well-disposed personalities. Their strictness came only after a subject did something that went against the clan. Thus the strictness of a person with a background of a kind and a just personality was always accepted by the people of Solos.

A Buka or Solos will never forgive a person who punishes him for deeds he has not done and for exposing him needlessly. Such a strong reaction derives from the fact that in olden days the Solos were particularly clan-conscious, each individual's actions representing either fidelity or treachery to the clan. It was therefore each person's aspiration to live his or her life in order to be well thought of by others (Wallis 1926:352). So public reprimand of a person for an evil deed unknown to others breeds ill feelings in the culprit and the lack of a sense of inner worth.

As the Solos know that many of their old practices have been eradicated by Christianity for a better life, they expect

their missionaries and leaders to manifest all these Christian considerations they preach. To them an exhortation to love your neighbour or to be just to others means nothing unless they see those who preach these things practise them. Abstract theories as far as they are concerned are mere words.

Thus the Solos people expect a fair treatment from those who lead them to something which is supposed to be better than their own way of life. Self-control, refinement of manners and courtesy are indispensable; a mild, generous, yet firm character, and a sociable, cheerful and lively temperament are the only tools for success (Charles 1938:197-200).

The Solos religion

Traditional Solos religion revolved around worship of the spirits, especially those of the deceased ancestors, superstitious practices, charms, magic and sorcery. The pure spirits were also honoured and worshipped (Montauban and O'Reilly 1958:35). Prayers were offered to these spirits for protection, for material needs and for helping the sick, and atonement for the misdeeds of the individual or the clan.

Their religion also had a tendency toward animism (Montauban 1910:44), but this was not explicitly acknowledged as in other parts of the Solomons. The tendency existed only in so far as the people sought to acquire strength by rubbing on their bodies coconut oil or juices of certain roots after they were chewed with betel nut, pepper fruit and lime. This was more medicinal than anything else.

The Solos people had sacred places where each clan or family honoured the spirits of the dead and the pure spirits (Fox 1924:112-24). The spirits of the dead, called mat, were believed to live in cemeteries where they were buried (Montauban and O'Reilly 1958:69). The pure spirits lived in sacred places, mountains, rivers or rocks called masanoh. As soon as a burial place of an ancestor became unknown his spirit was said to live now in the company of the pure spirits in the sacred places.

Since the ancestors once lived among the people and therefore knew their needs and hardships, the people prayed to them for their material needs and the successful growth of their gardens. Pure spirits were believed to control the happenings of nature. They were divided into two groups, the bad and the good. Thus an unsuccessful fishing or hunting expedition was often attributed to the latter's actions. The ancestors' spirits then were invoked to ward off the bad spirits. To them also were assigned the protection of the area owned by the clan, with its streams and fruit trees. They were invoked

to bring unsuccessful hunting and fishing on trespassing clans (Firth 1951:208). At the same time, the people lived in constant fear of these spirits (Lamarre 1950:3). The Solos people did not offer sacrifices in the strict sense but they laid offerings at the sacred places.¹ The fact though that the Solos had a term to signify burnt sacrifices (hatong) indicates that these occurred.

The Solos people also possessed legends which greatly influenced their hope for a better life in the future and in the next life. Many of those legends were similar to many of the stories in the Bible, which is one reason why the Solos readily accepted Christianity. Christianity seemed to verify many of the old beliefs. Their ancestor and founder, Gerian, was believed to have been born of a rock without the instrumentality of man and woman; the expulsion of a couple resulted in the disappearance of an ideal world of plenty because they neglected to perform a certain duty. These two legends they compared and found to be the same as the Christian Creation and Incarnation. The story of an infant lying in a manger convinced them all the more that this was the same person as in their legend. There were many such legends which one may find among the writings of O'Reilly (1951) and Montauban (1936).

To eat an enemy in order to absorb the strength of his spirit was a horrifying thought for the Solos people. They believed that the strength or spirit of an enemy was just as deadly to them as the person himself was. As mere humans, they could not fight and conquer the spirits of the enemy and so it was left to their ancestral spirits to subdue the enemy's spirits. The downfall of an enemy was an indication that his spirit and strength were conquered by the victor's spirits. Thus before eating an enemy there was a ceremony, similar to an exorcism, in which the ancestors and their spirits were invoked to cast out the spirits of the enemy lest they brought harm to those who ate his flesh (Lamarre 1950:14).

¹ The night of the same day of a person's death, the people would go to the bush to call for the soul of the dead man to come back to the house. They would prepare food and would leave it in his house. Food would be replaced every day until the last festive meal, two or three years later, and then thrown into the river, adding pieces of pork (Binois 1910:10).

Cargo cults

Cargo cult is based on the belief that material goods (which white men possess) have really been manufactured by the dead ancestors and that these goods rightly belong to their descendants. They hope to feast on the things sent by their ancestors from unknown lands. In order to obtain these goods, the dead ancestors have to be honoured with certain rituals. This is derived from the fact that each tribe possessed its own ways of worshipping its ancestors in the past.

The practice of cargo cult is ridiculed by all except those who are involved in it. Little real attempt has been made to look at it from the point of view of the people. Intervention by force only confirms the people's conviction that the government and the missions are trying to withhold the secret of obtaining cargo.

For the Solos the basis for the cargo cult did not originate by seeing manufactured goods brought by white men. This only reminded them of their longing for a better life. They savoured their many legends which reminded them of an ideal world. Among them were legends of persons who created things out of nothing. For example, there were the legends of Matumbu, Gerian and Tukee. The Matumbu legend concerned a person who made things out of nothing by a wave of his hand, or by simply wishing these things. The legend of Gerian concerned a man who was supposed to be lord over a place of delight, where man did not have to work. Everything was there for man's enjoyment. Then one day the wife of his friend refused to offer him a stick of fire. Because of this, he went away with everything leaving the people with nothing. The Tukee legend concerned a rejected orphan who invented a flying tower called Tukee (Montauban 1936:44). These legends existed before Christianity came to Bougainville and before the people heard of the white man's aeroplanes, and before they ever saw one.

The old Solos religion was materialistic in its aims. It was not a religion which sought to unite man with a supreme and good being through worship, prayers and 'moral' living. Rather it was a religion which offered them a way to appease the spirits of the ancestors who were at times angry because people violated the customs of the tribe and clan. It was principally a religion of supplication rather than of adoration. Sacrifices were offered for good health, for cures from sickness, and for protection from the violence of nature, malicious spirits, magicians, sorcerers and enemies. Physical strength rather than moral strength was sought; success in hunting and fishing, a good harvest, good weather and other

similar things were asked for. The people were closely bound to nature. There were certain phenomena of nature the causes of which they could not explain. Thus the natural solution for them was to say they were caused by the spirits (Lamarre 1950:3).

They accepted Christianity fairly quickly (Montauban 1936). This was partly due to its similarity to their own religion. When the missionaries taught them to pray in the Christian fashion, they did that very easily. They were told to pray for grasia (grace). This to them was probably an invisible matter which would someday be revealed to them (Hastings 1970:7). Furthermore, they were told to pray to God for all their needs. That was not a strange practice to them. They had prayed to their ancestors for years before Christianity came along. To those who taught them the Christian religion, the aims of prayer were faith in God, grace, moral strength and increase in virtue, and God's blessings. For these people, newly introduced as they were to Christianity, and so deeply immersed in their own social life and religion, their 'needs' were still very much a material question. When the missionaries arrived and taught them to pray, this seemed to be at last the better way of having all their needs met.

As they became accustomed to Christianity, they realised how prayerful the missionaries were, reciting the breviary or the rosary every day. They noticed that the missionaries received manufactured goods which they sometimes handed out to the chiefs so that the chiefs would let their subjects join the Christian religion (Carrier 1965:210). The logical conclusion was to think that these goods received by the missionaries came as a result of their daily prayers. The number of adherents to Christianity increased rapidly. They hoped that if they stayed in this religion and prayed long enough, they would reach the stage where their prayers would be just as effective as those of the missionaries. Thus the people were not converted Christians but trained Christians. For a people so firmly rooted in their beliefs, real conversion as such could not have taken place as quickly as it did. The fact that magic and sorcery are still practised today confirms that these Christians were 'trained' rather than 'converted'.¹ Furthermore the belief in cargo cult is active in the second and third generations (Tippett 1967:84). Many have reached the stage where even the Christian religion has

¹ P. Montauban, Epistolae, 9 December 1946, file 5SS331, p.1, AMF.

not answered their hearts' longing.¹ They have prayed long enough and no goods have come. Meanwhile, the missionaries are continuing to receive their goods. What can they understand from this? The missionaries are hiding the secret of access to cargo. Imprisonment of Solos leaders is regarded as a way of maintaining the secret.

What do the people think of the non-praying Chinese and Europeans who receive goods? They believe that these people are intercepting the goods meant for them. In desperation they resort to ancestral worship once more and go back to their old beliefs (Tippett 1967:212). They beseech the ancestors to bring them the goods directly; they must come through the cemeteries. Never before have the people gone as far as having their rituals in cemeteries.

Others have resorted to kato papan, sexual liberties with anyone except blood relations. Those who freely indulge in sex such as those at Hahalis, do so with the intention of increasing their population, in order to overthrow the white man by force and to claim what rightly belongs to them (Willey 1965:110). Others practise what is called moa, a ritual followed at Koromira. It is designed to overcome the natural urges of the flesh which they firmly believe to be the cause of the cargo's not arriving. At certain times of the day, young men and women who live together undress and pair off to perform the moa ceremony. The pairs position themselves for intercourse. When a man and a girl do this a number of times without actually having intercourse, they are promoted to a higher rank of leadership. Those who are promoted to a higher rank are said to be closer to acquiring the much-longed-for cargo.

Why the sexual abstention of one and an over-indulgence in sex of the other? The answer seems to be this: at Hahalis the over-indulgence in sex began originally as a revolt against a representative of the Catholic religion (Tippett 1967:209). Now the people intend eventually to take over white men's possessions by force. At Koromira their practice of sex abstention came about through the realisation that the clergy and the religious were celibate and in their prayers were more efficient in getting the cargo to come.

The cargo cult beliefs of the Solos have been more subtle than elsewhere. Some joined the beach peoples' open practice of cargo cult. But for most, the belief has been an underground movement. They see in the Christian religion the

¹ Ibid., p.2.

fulfilment of many of their legends, so they hope the time has come to receive the cargo. Many have become indifferent to Christianity because it did not fulfil the hopes with which they accepted it. The common exclamation one hears today is: 'Hasuut opan lotu na bai mei kessa naka buta tenu!' ('I have prayed long enough and nothing came out of it.') Christianity was only accepted for the material things it would have given them.

Ridicule or imprisonment will certainly not eradicate these ideas from people's minds. In their confusion they primarily need sympathetic understanding from those who are interested in their welfare. Too often knowledge about cargo movements has been inaccurate and second hand. Everyone hopes that with the education of the young generation this cargo belief will disappear. Thus no attempt is made to understand the older generation who are involved in the cargo movement. This is a grave mistake because they still have a great influence over the mentality of the young. The old generation in the villages have to be taken care of and made to feel part of the new developed society. As long as they feel neglected the ideas of cargo will not be eradicated. With so many boys and girls now returning to the villages after standard six,¹ the older generation will have more support and influence. It is of the utmost importance that interest be shown towards the villagers and these dropouts. It is also important that the missionaries and government officials maintain frequent contact with the people. This approach alone will shatter their illusions about cargo. To back this up, projects should be introduced into the villages rather than the stations or towns. Standard six school leavers could help the older people to organise the village projects, under the direction of missionaries or Department of Agriculture officials. The people must feel part of these projects. Their suggestions must be taken into account (Tippett 1967:86). It is only by doing this that they will feel they are achieving something.

Another factor which can assist the people to overcome their belief in cargo is to make clear to them that in their everyday lives everyone has to work their gardens and plantations in order to live. If the ancestors were the producers of the cargo, they would have passed on that way of life where everyone did nothing but feast on ready-made goods. What the

¹ Only one-third of standard six school leavers are able to find places in high school after completing their primary school education.

ancestors had, they passed on: arrows and bows, clubs and spears, songs and dances. Simple examples, such as telling people to set a table with empty plates and expect food to come on these plates without someone cooking, can help the people to see how unreal their hope for cargo is.

Chapter 2

Basic features of traditional marriage

Marriage regulations

The norm of choice. Solos society was composed of exogamous clans which regulated their marriages by kinship or genealogical relationships (Rivers 1914:82).¹ While Western culture stresses free choice of partners, the solos culture stressed the choice of a partner by kinship. Marriage, in the past, was contracted solely within the Solos tribe; tribe exogamy did not exist. The people were divided into four main totemic groups, the naboen, the nakarik, the nakas and the natasi. The nakarik's totem was a fowl, the naboen's an eagle, the naka's was a dog and the natasi's a sea hawk. Unlike other parts of Bougainville, the Solos did not have totem exogamy. Ideally the members of each totem group would marry among themselves. Marriage between these totem groups was strictly prohibited; if ever an exception was made, it was done by the chiefs in order to secure allegiances. If two groups possessed a totem bird in common, marriage within the same totem was not excluded. The particular bird was also eaten.

Clan exogamy. A totem is known as a hanuma. Pinopossa or clan refers to a group whose members are related to one another as descendants of a common ancestor. Eighty years ago such clans occupied one village. They were, strictly speaking, all blood relations. As members of a clan married into other clans and brought in their spouses, the enlarged clan was made up of a number of lineages, especially if the wife was brought into a patrilocal settlement, with matrilineal descendants (Blackwood 1935:44). A man had to look outside his group for a wife. If marriage was ever attempted within the same group, death resulted (Rivers 1914:504). Through these intermarriages local exogamy vanished.

Blood relation exogamy. The people found that the safest way to avoid brother-sister marriages was blood relation

¹ See Appendix for a listing of relationships within the Solos tribe.

exogamy. It still exists today, although the Western concept of marriages after the third degree collateral confuses them. Some marriages are beginning to follow the Christian customs. Marriages between closely bound kin are regarded as incestuous. The use of terms such as brother and sister towards a relative (even distant) automatically excluded sexual relationships with them. One factor responsible for breaking down the traditional norm of morality is the ridiculing of the kinship terms of relation.

Clan relationship (messo pinopossa) means the awareness of a smaller group of having their origin from a common ancestor. To keep their identity, these groups lived in villages independent of other groups, despite the fact of their being one people. Such groups consisted principally of blood relations. These independent groups were connected to one another by marriage, thus giving rise to relationship by affinity.

Totem relationships (hanuma) among the Solos involve having either the eagle (naboen) or fowl (nakarik) as their mythical ancestor. The two groups were scattered throughout the entire area of the tribe. Ideally naboen and nakarik married only among their own totem. The naboen were believed to be the first inhabitants of the island but the nakarik assumed the role of the nobility through exhibition of strong magical powers. Naturally there existed a strict prohibition of intermarriage between these two classes at the beginning. In time, however, intermarriage was allowed after certain dispensations were carried out. As years passed it was no longer easy to recognise who belonged to the naboen and who belonged to the nakarik. To solve this confusion they resorted to reading the marks on the palms of the hand to see to which hanuma (household) one belonged. The naboen had three lines on the palms and the nakarik had four lines. Through intermarriages, one person could have both, indicated by the bearing of three lines on one palm and four lines on the other.

Certain foods were prohibited according to totem membership. The ceremony imposing the prohibition was known as haret. A few minutes after a baby was born, the aunt, who as a rule was the leading midwife, took it by its hands and feet and swung it back and forth as she foretold what outstanding qualities would be prominent in the life of the baby. These are the words she spoke to the newly born boy: 'Kue, kue, kue! Noe nakatuun i pisiin oma. Kue, kue, kue! Noe mammaneo ma. Kue, kue, kue! Noe gukui oma.' ('Swing, swing, swing! You shall be a hero, a hunter, or a worker!') The baby girl was treated in the same way only adding those qualities required of women. After this the aunt warmed a special leaf and

pressed it against the tongue of the baby, saying, 'Hasagohani o hetun tei neen doi tomo hareto, banoe natei non natasian ai dekeako e goagon o ria tamo. Tonasah, e hen hiot mao banoe kameima o pi aio poong' ('Feel the warmth of this leaf of prohibition and know that for you, it is forbidden to eat a red fish and a type of flying fox for the rest of your life under pain of contracting sores and bone deformities') (Montauban and O'Reilly 1958:35, Wallis 1926:383-5).

Figure 1 shows the tribe forming the widest circle of relationship. Then comes the totem relationship, followed by the relationship of affinity. Marriage between family and blood relations was completely excluded. Thus they are joined and enclosed within the middle circle. They are connected to the circle of relationship by affinity to indicate certain prohibitive degrees where marriage was concerned. Marriage was permitted in the last three outer circles.

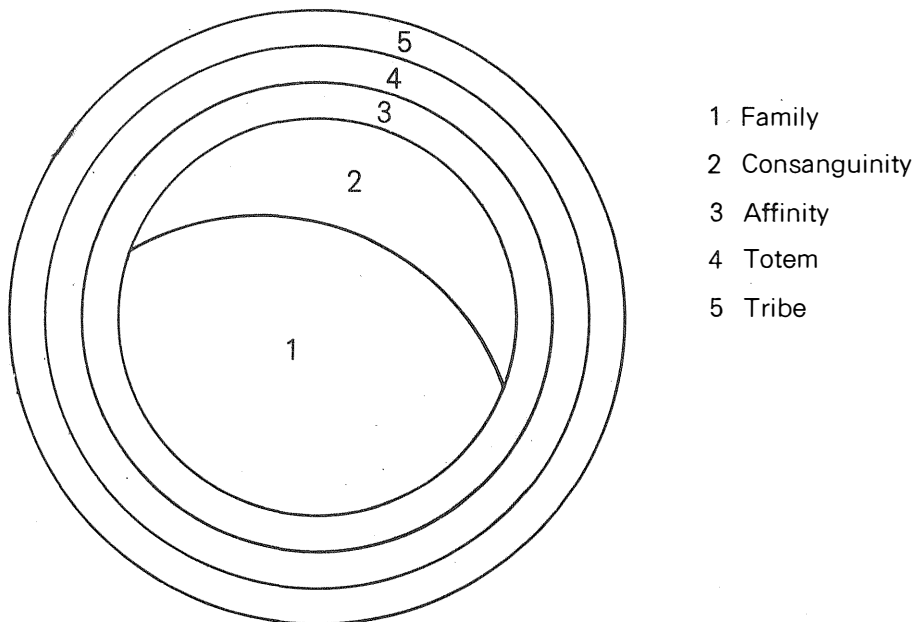


Figure 1. Solos kinship

By tribal relationship (messi putun katun) I mean the people's awareness of being one people, by their occupation of the same geographical area, their speaking of the same language or dialect and their having at times joined in battle expeditions against another tribe.

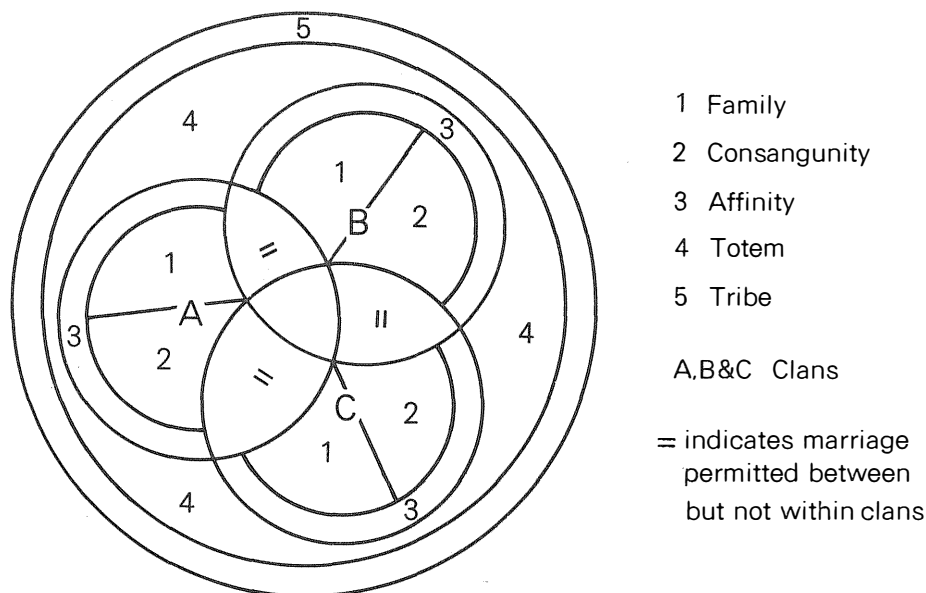


Figure 2. Possible marriages within the tribe

Marriage as a social institution

The Solos people regarded marriage as a social institution which permitted each couple a stable cohabitation: they supported each other and raised children in the short time they lived for the clan.

Solos required that young boys and girls be trained and well prepared for marriage. Married life was looked upon as the foundation of the well-being and solidarity of the tribe and clan. Through this institution the number of its members was increased for the support and strengthening of their group against other tribes. Partners were chosen by the parents and the maternal uncles. Free choice of partners would have incurred the displeasure of the clan. Marriage was too important to let young, inexperienced boys and girls choose their own partners. Furthermore, marriage was not meant as a start of an independent family, as in Western culture; rather, it was a means by which each clan expanded itself (Thiel 1970:14). This meant that the couple were, more than before, bound to the whole clan in a special way. Marriage was not simply a 'love affair' between partners but a bridge between various families and clans, and a way of reconciling caste differences (totem differences) and differences in social status. In a

certain sense it was a silent, peaceful invasion of another clan. This happened especially when a family had many daughters. When a girl married into another family or clan, she extended her clan into the one she married, because the children were hers and her people's as the Solos was a matrilineal society (Blackwood 1935:39).

As a sacred union of husband and wife, marriage was naturally surrounded by taboos and rites. Severe punishments were meted out for adultery and fornication (Montauban and O'Reilly 1958:75). Fertility rites were performed during the early stage of the first pregnancy. Taboos were imposed upon the parents of the unborn baby (Wallis 1926:360). After the birth of a child there was a cleansing rite coupled with another fertility rite to ensure other births in the future (Montauban and O'Reilly 1958:35). Everything connected with marriage, the sex organs, and sexual acts within marriage were considered sacred. The marital union was sacred as well as secret.

Uppermost within the minds of the Solos was the conviction that their first duty was to serve the clan and the tribe. The children they brought into the world, through their mutual love, were to be the future builders of the lineage. 'Marriage is seen as a means of extending the family.' (Thiel 1970:14)

Parents had the duty to instil in their children from their early years the idea of service to the clan and tribe: each individual was not an end in himself but only found a meaningful basis for his existence in his clan. The clan provided everything a normal individual needed for a happy, stable and secure existence (Firth 1951:210).

A boy was sent to live at a common house (tsiuhan) at the age of seven or eight. At about the same age a girl was brought to her future husband's parents' house to be trained by her future mother-in-law. The young bride was reminded that her future and her betrothed's future belonged to the clan. The better they became as husband and wife, and the more children they had, the higher they would be esteemed by the chief and the rest of the members of the clan. Marriage therefore was a communal institution.

Generosity was a necessary virtue among the people and parents tried to teach their children to be generous at all times. In the community members freely exchanged goods, especially food. When given something, a person, to show his thanks and appreciation, gave back an object of lesser value. If a feast involving the whole clan was staged, a return feast was expected. The chiefs competed by trying to put on a feast greater than the others'.¹

¹ Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1968, vol.15, London, p.221.

Since the Solos people possessed a matriarchal society, they traced their lineage to a common ancestress (Montauban and O'Reilly 1958:37). Therefore, every first daughter of a family had the right of succession through which the clan was extended. Around her family revolved the social and religious life of the people. It was customary to name children after the ancestors. As first born, a girl had the privilege of using the names of famous clan ancestors. Naturally, since the children belonged legally to her and her brothers and relatives, names given to the children came from her side (Blackwood 1935:78). The children were never given names from the father's side. Likewise, they did not bear his last name as is customary in Western culture (Blackwood 1935:32). This practice is presently being imposed upon the people for financial and statistical reasons, but in doing this something is being destroyed. A name meant more than just a tag of identification in the community within which they lived. It spelled out the destiny of the individual in his or her daily life for the bearer of an ancestor's name had to strive after the virtues of that particular ancestor.

Each family made sure it had enough wealth for trade which was mainly barter. Providing for bridewealth, however, was the responsibility of the maternal uncle. It was his concern to have enough teeth money to be able to hand these out for the brides of his nephews. Thus it was also his important duty to seek out the best families for prospective wives for his nephews. He knew those families into which he wished his nephews and nieces to marry. It was also his privilege to refuse offers for his nieces from other families if he thought they were of ill-repute. In the eyes of the Solos a good family was generous, laborious, kind and hospitable, with well-disciplined children, and in possession of a certain amount of wealth. Possession of these qualities by a family assured the uncle that his niece would be well taken care of by the family and relatives of the prospective husband.

Virginity. Virginity was expected of any girl before marriage to ensure that her partner had exclusive right to her fertility. The Solos were very much like the Malaita people in the South Solomons in this regard (Knibbs 1929:51). The violation of a girl's virginity could bring about death for the rapist. Even in these modern times a man will often refuse to marry a girl if he knows she has had an affair with another man.

Polygamy. Basically the Solos practised monogamy. However, as in other societies, some men exempted themselves from this law, not in defiance of the law, but because of the status

they held in their community. Thus the chiefs and warriors frequently took more than one wife. This became an accepted thing and no one questioned it as far as these two classes of people were concerned. However, difficulties would arise if an ordinary man tried to enter into polygamy.

The chiefs and warriors kept many wives as a sign of prestige among their people. As heads of the clans, the chiefs possessed more wives than the warriors. The number of wives a man could keep depended on his position in the tribe. The head chief naturally had more wives than the subordinate chief and subordinate chiefs had more wives than the warriors. Since these men frequently played host to others they needed these wives to look after their gardens and their pigs. Most women taken as wives remained mere servants of the chief; three or four at most would bear his children (Forestier 1900).

As mentioned, the chief had to use his wealth to stage feasts for his people and for other clans. He had to supply pigs, food and so on. This was only possible because he possessed many wives who did all the work. Having many wives alone was a sign of high prestige and wealth. Many more men would have had many wives except for the fact that not all could afford to support them. Some chiefs thought it was their privilege alone to have many wives. In any case, it became without refute the privilege of the chief and his warriors. A chief could hardly oppose the warriors for taking extra wives since they formed his bodyguard and were the protectors of the people. So there was no better way of keeping them in his favour than to allow them to have more than one wife.

The third category of men whose practice of polygamy was accepted was those who had no children. Solos men and women hoped to have as many children as possible. A childless couple in any marriage experienced great shame. Thus the husband in most cases resorted to taking a second wife, who was often a widow young enough to bear him children. Or else the couple might adopt an orphan from the relatives of the wife, or from the husband's side. Such a child was considered as their own (Codrington 1891:25).

There was no ceremony for these extra marriages (Ivens 1930:100). The ceremony of marriage was kept strictly for a marriage which began with the betrothal, followed by the engagement and finally the espousals. Polygamous marriages were referred to as pali, meaning the mating season for dogs, or munitou wanen, many wives for one. Normally widows rather than young unmarried girls were taken as extra wives. Sometimes they were acquired from other clans through the payment

of bridewealth or the goodwill of other chiefs. In most cases they were captives from other tribes. Taking them as wives was referred to as henukut and never as henene, the latter term being only for a proper marriage. The former term meant harlotry. In cases where widows were taken, say from the same clan (and this was possible since these women would have come from another clan), gifts were given to the women's relatives and to the deceased husbands' relatives.

One may think polygamy presented a problem regarding inheritance of property but this was not the case. Since the Solos society was matriarchal, the man, even though he might have six wives, had no problem with dividing his property among his many heirs. The children had the right of inheritance to the properties of their maternal uncles. The property of the chief belonged to his nieces and nephews (Blackwood 1935:100). In this way the property remained in the hands of the chieftain family. Even if a member of the family married outside, the property could never go out of the family.

Purpose. (i) Love. Before asserting the presence or absence of love in the Solos marriage, it is necessary to look at the meanings of the word. Bouyer (1965:219) lists the following two aspects of love as given by the philosophers of old: the love of desire, where we are drawn to an object simply out of desire for our own personal benefit, and the love of benevolence which causes us to wish for the well-being of the object of our love.

Without necessarily excluding every aspect of self-interest, love emphasises not only reciprocity, which implies that the one loving is at the same time also loved, but also a passive and an active communion, which consists in a mutual possessing and giving. Love is a strong, complex emotion causing one to appreciate, delight in, and crave the presence or possession of the other, and to please him or her and promote his or her welfare. It can mean sexual passion or the gratification of it. It is a yearning or outpouring of the soul toward something that is regarded as excellent, beautiful or desirable. Love is affection for and attraction toward a person because one sees good and excellence in that person and the achievement of that good and its possession is had within marriage. Such notions of the word mention no external signs to show love but point to the internal nature of love. External signs only come as the result of the overflow of the internal feelings.

In all external appearances the Solos marriage was devoid of love (Blackwood 1935:104). If love existed from the start between the partners, it could not be detected. The external

manifestations of love and affection were considered rude and stupid and were always associated with irrationality. But an innate sense of the above-mentioned definition of love was subconsciously held as precious and essential. Furthermore, the fact that the boys and girls were completely isolated from one another did not offer them the opportunity to treat one another with external signs of affection except perhaps when the girl faithfully cooked food for her future husband. The boy in turn showed his affection by being helpful towards his parents and supplying them with all they needed. In helping them with their work or with their needs he showed love to his future wife also.¹ Between married couples there hardly passed any signs of affection, except in silent acts of service by the woman and thoughtfulness on the part of the husband. The mothers fondled their young babies to show their affection for them. Apart from that, love between dear ones diffused in silence. The proof of the existence of love was often indicated by the length of time spent mourning when a dear one died or left on a journey.

The fact that the partners were chosen by the parents and maternal uncles naturally raises the question as to whether there ever was love in those marriages. Even if external signs of love were lacking, there was at least that simple conjugal love which developed through years of appreciating the other. Because the Solos marriage was a process, spreading over a number of years, the partners learned to appreciate and love each other. In other cultures the boy and girl fall in love before they decide to marry (Thiel 1970:16).

For the Solos people and those who had the custom of marrying partners chosen by the parents and maternal uncles, the partners were marked for each other and that was sufficient. They were then taught to appreciate and love each other in a durable way. Marriage was too great a thing to be left only to the decisions of the inexperienced young people. In their own way, the people knew that a love initiated by physical beauty and attraction was superficial. Therefore, they had a saying which went as follows: 'Do not rush to lay hands on a lovely new banana shoot lest by chance a centipede be there and you will regret being bitten by it.' Physical beauty, experience taught them, would be overshadowed by and destroyed by old age. It was natural for all to seek beautiful girls for their boys but character was more important than beauty. Thus, in training the partners, the elders tried to develop lasting qualities such as being generous, laborious, patient,

¹ See section on 'Marriage as a process' in this chapter.

kind and hospitable, and especially for the girls, being faithful to the husband and being a good mother. When the new couple embarked on their connubial life, they loved each other more easily and with love deeper than superficial love. This is how the partners were trained and prepared for love (Oliver 1955:157).

What better system could the Solos people have had to foster love between the partners than this? Although the partners were trained apart, they were nevertheless beautifully prepared to accept each other in love. Never did you find an effeminate, fearful boy who was unable to assume the role of husband, protector and father. Nor was a girl ever afraid to assume the role of wife and mother. So it can be rightly said that for these people marriage was for love - in marriage the couples learned how to love concretely. It can also be said, therefore, that in such a society, partners got married in order to experience love. Marriage was the cradle of love, and as such, true love only began from within marriage and not outside of it.

The people possessed their own kind of love. The stability of marriages indicated that there was something deeper than just the contract and promise to live together for life. Dating was not necessary because the two partners were not strangers to each other even though they never spoke nor came near each other until the day of their marriage. They saw each other in passing and heard what was said about them by others. Again it showed complete trust in the intelligence of their parents and uncles in the choice made for them.

(ii) Children. The fundamental purpose of marriage was to have children. Married couples aimed to have as many children as possible. It was a sign of failure when they did not have children. Dying without issue to keep one's presence alive in the clan was almost equivalent to annihilation from the clan. The barren wife was subject to shame continually. Seeing a woman with no baby in her arms or by her side was almost considered a crime. Barrenness likewise jeopardised the peace and trust between the husband and wife. The husband often became suspicious of his wife and she became easy prey to men. Usually the woman was blamed for barrenness. It never occurred to the Solos that the man could be at fault.

In regard to discipline within the family, the father had great authority over the children and his wife. But the future marriage of his children was in the hands of the wife and her brothers. The elder brother as a rule took the responsibility. When the choice of a future wife was made, the father could

make a suggestion, but the wife and her brother had no obligation to follow it. The maternal uncle then had authority over the marriages of the children. When a girl of the family was married and the sinnahan¹ was distributed to her relatives, the father was given a share. The maternal uncle also bore all the burden of providing enough shell or teeth monies to give for the future wives of his nephews. If a marriage turned out to be a failure, it was his concern to put it right again. When anything serious happened which involved the marriage, it was often the uncle who paid the price, even with his life. This fact made him take his work seriously and thus he was a constant adviser to his nephew or niece if their marriages did not go too well. Sometimes a husband would report his wife's misbehaviour to her uncle. The uncle then had authority over the marriage, particularly when it was new.

Unity and indissolubility. Apart from preparing the boy and girl to be a good husband and wife and thus become acceptable to each other, the ceremonies of engagement and marriage had symbols expressing unity. Parents and children ate out of one basket. Thus in the engagement and marriage ceremonies the two partners ate from one basket and from the same piece of food. The words uttered by the elder who presided over the ceremony reminded the two to stay together for life.

The indissolubility of the marriage contracted was sealed and expressed by the handing over of the sinnahan by the parents and the uncle of the boy to the parents and the uncle of the girl.² This took place before the engagement ceremony was held or later. The fact that the boy and girl were bound by shell and teeth monies during these ceremonies likewise signified unity and indissolubility (Blackwood 1935:89). However, the full force of indissolubility came when the chief carried the girl on his back to the platform for the marriage ceremony. It then rendered marriage unbreakable. The fact also that the ceremony was always a public affair held with a big celebration, made it a very special occasion. An engagement was confined to the people of the village. For the actual marriage, people from other villages were invited as well, because it was considered a day as great as the day of nahinous, a feast staged by the chief once a year.

¹ Shell and teeth monies given in marriage to the parents and relatives of the girl by the parents and relatives of the boy: brideprice.

² Personal communication, Mr B. Memmes, 5 June 1970.

Putting on a feast involved weeks of preparation before the actual day. During this time invitations were sent to other villages to come along and put on dances. The public aspect of the celebration and the expenses reminded the married couple of their obligation to make their marriage a success. The elder presiding over the wedding ceremony impressed upon the newly married the permanent nature of their marriage:

Son and daughter, your marriage today in the eyes of the people is something great and sacred. You are now to begin your life together for life helping each other. You, girl, are to care for your husband, cook his food, give him soup when he is sick and care for the children you are going to have, and in particular, never try to go after other women's husbands, lest the wrath of your husband should bring death upon you. You, man, are the protector of your wife, to defend her against any man who may try to harm her in any way, supply her with all she wants, never beat her unreasonably and let not your children lack meat, fish and all that they should receive from their father. If you two ever try to break this marriage, shame be upon you both and especially on you, girl, because of the fact that today you have been brought here on the chief's back. Who are you in comparison to him? What will the parents and relatives of you both repay him for this? You, man, what riches have you to repay all the expenses that went into today's celebration? May our ancestors give you both children who will be heroes of our tribe, fathers and mothers of our tribesmen to make our tribe live on in the face of our enemies.

Since each member contributed to the vitality and strength of the clan, any act which violated the rights of a member was equivalent to an act against the whole clan. If a member was insulted by another clan, that insult was felt by the clan as a whole and it was its duty as a group to avenge the insult. Thus the moral imputability of an act existed in so far as it was directed against the clan and one of its members. It also followed from this idea that an act was meritorious in so far as it was for the benefit of the clan and its members. In their dealings with other tribes the Solos were just as cruel and immoral as their enemies.

Divorce was contrary to the Solos idea of marriage and only in extreme cases was it reluctantly allowed. The factors which could lead to divorce were: unceasing cruelty on the part of a husband to his wife, incurable laziness especially on the part

of the wife, and repeated refusal of the wife to have conjugal relations with her husband. Later, when Christianity did away with the severe traditional punishments for adultery, adultery became one of the causes for divorce also. A divorced woman became a prey to all because no one dared marry her for fear of her previous husband. Yet divorce was rare because of the preparation of the boys and girls for marriage and the scrupulous choice of partners by the parents and maternal uncles. Free choice of marriage partners would have been hazardous because of the conditions and time in which they lived. It was a communal way of life and the good of all, even in small matters, was a concern to the tribe. To people in a communal society freedom and independence from others did not constitute happiness. To be happy was to live in harmony with parents and the tribe as a whole and to contribute his or her little share to its well-being (Mead 1950:150). For them then, free choice endangered marriage and the family, and ultimately the tribe.

In the Solos marriage, death alone was the dissolver of marriages contracted in the tribe. After the death of one party the remaining one abstained from certain kinds of foods, especially the favourite ones of the dead person. Sometimes abstinence from certain foods occasioned by the death of a partner lasted a lifetime. If a man or woman had loved his dead spouse dearly, he or she might never remarry. In normal circumstances, the abstinence from certain foods ended after a number of months, with a feast, in which the dead person was officially recognised as gone from the tribe, and his or her name could not be mentioned again.

The custom of bringing the girl early to her future husband's mother for training was one precaution against marital trouble in the future. Another was to have children. As long as the two had children there was no danger of the marriage bond being broken. Only when one spouse was barren was the danger of divorce imminent. The man was the most troubled party because every man wanted to have children and also because he became suspicious of his wife. Sometimes wives deliberately took contraceptive roots or leaves from the bush to prevent conception. This was an indication, often, that the woman was prone to having extra-marital affairs. Barren women in the village were as a rule a prey to the men for the simple reason that it was safer to have intercourse with them, without fear of their becoming pregnant and thus being caught. If the woman was not responsible for her barrenness, she and her husband tried every means to cure her barrenness by other roots or even paying big sums of money to the medicine men of the

village to cure her from sterility. Even in his desperate attempts and wishes for children the man could not put away his wife. So divorce was recognised as something dangerous to family life and therefore to the clan. Those who managed to carry out a divorce 'lost face' in the circle of their clan and were branded as bad people who had to be treated with suspicion and as outcasts.

Adultery and fornication. Since the institution of marriage formed the core of Solos society, it was especially safeguarded by strict laws. Adultery and fornication were traditionally classified as major crimes and deserved the death sentence (Knibbs 1929:51). Abduction within the same tribe, say from the next clan, sometimes took on the gravity of a crime equal to that of adultery or fornication. Unless the girl thus abducted was raped, the punishment was a heavy fine and the girl was immediately returned to her village. Now the 'sins' of adultery and fornication were not so much 'sins against moral principles' but sins of injustice and theft (Fox 1967:65). They were acts against the fiancé or spouse. The sexual elements of the acts were considered morally insignificant as Solos people did not have an abstract norm of right and wrong except what the laws of nature presented or taught them by everyday living. To the Solos, the ultimate 'right' or 'wrong', 'good' or 'bad' was the clan. To steal, rape, fornicate or commit adultery, or even kill someone from another tribe without being caught was not wrong. It was an act of bravery. The only time the 'guilty' one was punished was if he was known by the other tribe and it sought revenge.

The use of charms to attract women for free love and the practice of polygamy were considered to be signs of prestige within the tribe. With strict rules against free love within the immediate clan, men consequently sought out women from other tribes or clans. Some charms called hirako were supposed to attract the women to them even from a long distance. Thus men did not have to actually go into the village to pick women for themselves. This type of charm consisted of certain roots of trees and ginger wrapped around an heirloom of a dead ancestor and certain incantations were uttered over this. For another type of charm, consisting of certain roots of trees mixed with ginger and hiei (sulphur), to work, the man had to actually see the woman. As soon as she looked at him he closed the parcel and tied it firmly with strings as if he had captured the woman's spirit. Or else a man could scrape the woman's footprints from the ground or procure a strand of her hair and wrap that up with the original mixture. The simplest charm of all was one in which a man simply put crushed roots

into a cigarette or cigar or pipe of the desired one who would then be attracted to him. Love expeditions of one tribe to the other were often the causes of battles between the tribes.

Marriage as a process

Unlike the Western marriage it took years for a Solos marriage to be legalised. The act of legalisation began with the engagement ceremony, and was effected by the handing over of the bridewealth (sinnahan) either before or after the engagement ceremony. The engagement ceremony was held soon after the girl had her first menstrual period. She would have also undergone the tiku ceremony in which the septum of the nose of each girl and boy was pierced for the purpose of decoration and in the belief that if anyone died without having undergone this ceremony they would be bitten by a serpent while making the journey to the next world. At this stage the girl would have been twelve. Although the handing over of the bridewealth made the partners irrevocably wedded they were not allowed to live together as husband and wife until after the marriage ceremony. The reason for the delay was that they were only about twelve years of age when engaged. After the engagement ceremony they were strictly forbidden to come near each other (Blackwood 1935:102).

The next and final stage was marriage which took place eight or nine years after the engagement ceremony. The fall of the girl's breasts and her physical growth would suggest her readiness for marriage. It was also required that the boy be physically mature and strong in order to defend his wife and family against enemies and against any men who might molest his wife. The marriage ceremony added nothing new as far as the legalisation of the marriage was concerned. It simply reaffirmed before all that these two persons were husband and wife. The legalising act was performed only in the presence of the two clans involved in the marriage. The indissolubility of the marriage was again impressed upon all, and especially on the partners, by the bridegroom's chief carrying the girl on his back. Later, under Christian influence, both partners were carried on a poapoa (platform).¹

When they married, the wife was put under the protection of the husband for the first time. Up to the time of marriage she remained under the protection of the future father-in-law because she had left her own father's care at the age of seven

¹ Personal communication, Mr G. Moah, 1 November 1970.

or eight (Blackwood 1935:102). Protection of the wife was essential because the betrothal took place early in their lives. It was the practice to match a boy and girl born about the same time.

The Solos never allowed their girls to marry young. One reason was their great fear of women dying in childbirth, based on the belief that such a woman became a most dangerous spirit. Her spirit became possa keya, a name connected with the flying-fox monies.¹ It was believed that such a spirit killed men and women by hurling at them a hot stone which was supposed to be the unborn baby.

Consent. Since marriage involved the whole clan, and the individual marriages only found their worth in the clan itself, the act of consent was expressed, in the first place, by the parents and maternal uncles of both partners, who were too young to express their consent.²

The consent of the boy and girl came gradually with the preparation they were given by their respective parents and uncles. The boy consented to marry the girl chosen for him as he watched her grow into a promising future wife under the guidance of his own mother. The girl watched her future husband being trained partly by his own father and partly by the disciplinarian who looked after the boys at the tsiuhan (Hopkins 1928:85). She saw him grow into a strong man, skilled in the art of battle and the use of bows and arrows, spears and clubs. She noticed how he became an expert hunter and fisherman under his father's direction. He would climb fruit and coconut trees well and was already providing for her needs. These facilitated the acceptance and consent between the two even though they were chosen for each other by others.

Often a young man would run away from the engagement ceremony or the marriage ceremony itself and had to be brought back by force. His escape was not an indication of his unwillingness to marry or become engaged to the girl. Rather, it was due to shame of being seen together with his future wife for the first time and touching her during the ceremony. This was more common at the time of engagement. If a boy could not be caught for the engagement ceremony, his younger

¹ 'Hatout yarun possa haome puh napean, ai ga son tenuh, possa keya.' (To make sure she did not have a miscarriage, another name for it was 'possa keya'.) Personal communication, Mr G. Moah, 1 November 1970.

² Personal communication, Mr B. Memmes, 5 June 1970.

brother could represent him. The young man would receive a thrashing from his father after the ceremony.

Physical force might be used when a girl from another tribe or a widow within the village was abducted. The former often gave rise to battles between two tribes. In the event of a widow's abduction arguments between the abductor and the relatives of the woman ensued. Abduction was practised often by widowers but was redeemed by the handing over of the usual sinnahan (brideprice).

If a young man tried to marry a girl of his own choice he would be faced with many obstacles. The girl would already be betrothed to someone else, especially if he fell in love with her at the age of puberty. Then he would have to face her relatives and the parents and relatives of the boy to whom she was betrothed. Finally he would endanger the lives of his own parents and relatives if a fight arose. Thus everything was against a personal choice of marriage partner.

Solos people like their other Melanesian neighbours, were haunted by fear. They were gripped by fear of the spirits, enemies, magicians, the forces of nature such as storms, floods, lightning and thunder and earthquakes. Their whole existence was permeated by fear of those things. Nevertheless, it did not follow that the people were completely divested of the free use of their reason and the exercise of their will. These, as I have already shown, were very much exercised by the people of Solos.

Many marriages appear to us now to have been forced when we compare them with Christian marriages. Their marriages though, when understood in their time and circumstances, were contracted in a manner valid to them.

The sinnahan pledge. The word sinnahan is derived from sinah and han. Sinah is the name of a plant with broad leaves resembling banana leaves which were used to cover goods and to preserve food for a long period of time; they were also used to join the sides of the roof in a new hut. Thus we can see the idea of stability and unity, the two sides of the house being joined by these durable leaves to make an entire roof rainproof. Han means a triangular area between two keels of a big tree. This was always a safe haven in the forest whenever a person was caught in a storm while hunting. Here too, a person losing his way through the jungle would seek shelter for the night. Thus with the combination of these two words, sinnahan signified the stability of marriage. The monies and the goods given for the girl were to ensure the stability of the marriage contracted, to show the partners

they were united. Until the sinnahan was handed over the boy and girl were, as it were, one building through the betrothal sealed by the hekabu (betrothal gift) which was known as possa keya (with the roof top of the house open, the two sides of the roof not yet joined). That is why the betrothal could be rescinded through a serious quarrel between the two families. However, once the sinnahan was given to the girl's parents and relatives, not even a serious quarrel could break up the engagement. A reconciliation feast had to be made instead. The quarrel could be forgotten then and the marriage would go ahead. The sinnahan was not simply a commercial transaction.

In addition to the sinnahan, gifts of pigs, cooking pots, nets, baskets and containers for carrying food were made. The value of shell and teeth monies was calculated in lengths of one yard and two yards. A yard would be valued at \$25 and two yards at about \$50. Both types of monies were very difficult to make and they were made only by certain men in the village. The shell money, called beroan, was made from clam shells ground to the size of rosary beads and sometimes even smaller. This was done by rubbing the shell against sharp coral stones. They were then cut and holes made through each bit by drills made from flying fox bones or hard palm tree trunks, called pako. Shell money was introduced through barter with or conquest of the coastal people.

Proper to the Solos people themselves was flying fox teeth money. It was called nakohu (Montauban and O'Reilly 1958:62). Nakohu were obtained from a rare kind of flying fox known as the napunei which lived in the hollows of inaccessible trees. Because of its scarcity, money made from these teeth was even more valuable than shell money. After a large collection was made, holes again were drilled through each little tooth with a fine needle made from bones taken from the wings of the flying fox or hard palm tree trunks. These teeth were then strung on to a strong thin line made from the fibre of a vine. The next step was to put the string of teeth in between two bigger strings with the teeth facing upwards. They were locked in between these two bigger strings by means of another thin cord. Putty was then smeared over the completed string of teeth, and was immediately immersed in a container with purple paint from clay called gogoa. This was used as a preservative. As money-making was done by only a few men, the rest had to pay to have them made for them, in money or objects of value. Even if a person supplied the teeth to be made he had to pay.

As heads of the family, the uncles were responsible for providing for sinnahan. They kept a number of nahanaoh treasures buried either in the cemeteries or in sacred places.

No one would try to unearth them for fear of being killed by the spirits of the dead who were believed to occupy the sacred places. Normally two shell monies and two teeth monies, the usual sinnahan for a girl, were kept in these treasures. The number of treasures kept depended on how many nephews there were. The relatives of the boy would often help supply the amount needed. A set number of nakohu and beroan were required as a bridewealth, but this could be raised by the status of the girl (Blackwood 1935:85).

The ceremonies. A couple to be married were involved in (i) the hanoi (betrothal); (ii) the hekokot (engagement); (iii) the henene (marriage); and (iv) the hasuu (handing over of the bride to her husband).

(i) Hanoi. There were two ways in which the betrothal was effected; the normal way by hanoi (choosing of a partner through negotiating) and the extraordinary way by hakus (claiming a partner for a child by the head of the clan of the ruling family) (Montauban and O'Reilly 1938:67).

The normal procedure was for the girl's parents to propose to the boy's parents. If the girl's parents thought the boy was a promising prospective husband, the father or most frequently the maternal uncle propositioned the parents of the boy. The proposal was then considered. If accepted, the father or the uncle brought a bunch of betel nuts and a parcel of pepper fruit. By this sign the girl's parents knew the proposal was accepted and approved by the boy's family. On this visit a day was appointed for the boy's family to bring a string of possum teeth or half of the bridewealth as an instalment. By this the betrothal was irrevocably sealed.

The extraordinary way took two forms. The hakus was simply a claim by a male parent or uncle of a child for a specific partner, made by the head of the clan of the ruling family during a gathering. This did not need the normal procedure of a betrothal. Yet it was as binding and as serious a matter, if it was rejected. The noksingun consisted of inadvertently walking past the side of the house called nasingun where the dwellers had the head of their beds (Montauban and O'Reilly 1958:92). This ipso facto betrothal was most frequent where people of different totems shared a village. This special custom affected mostly girls but also occasionally boys. It derived from the reverence the people had for the head of the elders of the ruling family irrespective of their age. No further ceremonies were necessary to legalise the betrothal.

Normally, however, there were many more formalities. On the day appointed, the boy's family brought half the bridewealth

to the girl's family with food which they ate together. After this they returned home. The next day if the girl was old enough to leave her parents, the family brought her to the home of the boy's parents with a pig. The rest of the relatives returned home that same day while the father and mother remained behind for a day and night to accustom her to her new home. They left after receiving a nakohu (string of flying fox teeth money) known as the possa keya. This was a further pledge that the parents agreed to their son's marrying the girl and having children by her. Only after this string of money was given to them would they return home, assured their daughter would be safely married.¹ Thus the betrothal was legally established.

From the moment the girl was brought to her future in-laws' home, the period called hameng (probation and training) began. Her capabilities as a future housewife, her working habits, her temperament, her form and figure, were all observed, not only by her prospective in-laws but by the maternal uncles and relatives. Gradually she took over all the duties in the house. Good qualities in a girl were more important than beauty.

(ii) Hekokot. Solos considered the first menstrual flow in a girl as her first-born baby. It was usual for the women to pass word around that such a girl has had her first baby, a polite way of telling others she had her first menstrual period. When the girl noticed she had a flow of blood, she ran home to her own mother's house where she remained for several days. In the meantime preparations for the engagement ceremony would be made. She was not allowed to cook or touch food meant for other people, nor anything meant to be planted in the garden. She was regarded as unclean and liable to pass on sickness to those who might eat the food she touched. What was meant to be planted would never grow properly nor bear a full harvest if she handled it at that time.² Before the ceremony, the girl was washed and was again considered clean. The week after the girl was out of confinement, the ceremony was held. Prior to this the sinnahan was given to the parents and relatives of the girl. There was no special ceremony connected with handing over the bridewealth; the boy's uncle merely brought the bridewealth to the parents and the girl's uncle.

On the day of the ceremony old men prepared a special meal called namenak made from mashed taro cooked in coconut oil.

¹ Personal communication, Mr B. Memmes, 5 June 1970.

² Cf. Lawrence and Meggitt (1965:29).

The girl was given her purification bath and was anointed with scented coconut oil kept for very special occasions. Her hair was painted red with gogoa made from baked red clay diluted with some of the scented coconut oil. She was given a new tehu skirt, made from stalks of a ginger plant beaten and dried in the sun and strung together on a strong string to make a thick skirt. Around her waist she wore strings of flying fox teeth monies; around her neck and chest were the strings of shell monies. The boy was likewise adorned. He was given a bath with sweet-smelling leaves from the bush and particularly with crushed ginger roots and leaves. The ginger was believed to possess power and energy.

The ceremony took place in front of the tsiuhan of the village. The girl was led by the mother while the boy was escorted by four strong men in case he tried to escape. The pair sat on a platform before everyone present and the ceremony commenced. At this time food was also laid on a very high table built for the purpose (Montauban and O'Reilly 1958:86).

The elder presiding over the ceremony began by addressing the people of the village. Then he took a strong of shell money from the girl's neck and put it around both of them saying, 'The binding of you both with this precious thing, money, is to remind you both that you today are united unbreakably for your future marriage. You belong to each other now for always'. Meanwhile, the boy and girl had their hands around each other's shoulders. A bowl of food (namenak) was then placed before the two and the girl held up a piece to the boy's mouth so that he could eat. She then put the remaining bit of food back into the bowl; the boy then fed her the rest of it. While they offered each other this food, the presiding elder said to each of them, first to the girl: 'You, girl, remember that this is to be your duty as a future wife of this man, to give him his food when he is hungry.' Then to the boy: 'You, boy, remember that as a future husband to this girl, you are going to provide her with food out of your hunting and fishing and whatever she will need.' He then said to both of them, 'The fact that you both have eaten of the same bit of food truly made you for each other one day, to be one in marriage, to share one house, one bed and eat out of the same basket of food'. The ceremony was then concluded and they were given a basket of food to consume between them (Hopkins 1928:84). The people present likewise started to eat. The gathering then dispersed and the elder gave the newly engaged a strong warning that they were not to seek each other's company as husband and wife until they were really

married. They had to stay away from each other for the next seven or eight years. Only after their marriage could they live together as husband and wife.

(iii) Henene. The marriage ceremony was the biggest and most solemn occasion among the Solos people, as well as being a very special time for the couple married. Preparations took many months. The uncles, parents and other relatives of both parties bought pigs and other food needed for the feast. In the week prior to the marriage a big decorated platform twelve feet high was built in the centre of the village in front of the tsiuhan. This was to hold all the food for the day and here the couple to be married were to sit. This same day was a hectic day of preparation, cooking all the food to feed the invited guests.

Before the ceremony began the food was placed on the platform. As in the engagement ceremony the bride and groom were adorned, the former with shell monies as before (Blackwood 1935:92). The partners were then brought together and carried on a poapea (platform) while the people sang a special dirge called tagi, used for chiefs' and warriors' funerals.¹ This was to mark the importance of the celebration. The groom was led up to the platform by one of the old men while the bride was led to the front of the platform by her mother. Here the chief met both and then took the girl from her mother. He lifted her on his back and amid great shouts from the crowd he walked slowly toward the steps that led to the top of the platform. The grief of the mother and her relatives could hardly be heard because of the peoples' acclamations. On reaching the top of the platform the chief seated the girl next to the groom (Montauban and O'Reilly 1958:74). The four men and the elder who brought the groom formed a semi-circle behind the groom and the girl.

The chief welcomed the guests and gave the details about the couple and their respective relatives. Then the bride and groom were encouraged to sit together. The young man's right arm was placed over the girl's shoulder with his palm resting on her right breast. The girl's left arm encircled the man's waist resting her palm on his left thigh. The chief loosened several strings of shell monies from the girl's neck and put them around both of them, while instructing the couple and the assembly on the significance of the actions. The placement of hands on each other meant ius in corpus. The binding with the strings of shell money and nakohu again symbolised the precious union of matrimony.

¹ Personal communication, G. Moah, 1 November 1970.

A special bowl of food (namenak) which included a piece of pork was then placed before them. As in the engagement ceremony, the bride held in her hand food and meat to feed the groom. The groom then fed the bride. This exchange continued until the namenak was finished. Again this indicated the unity between the bride and groom and the obligation to care for each other (Fox 1967:15). Finally the two faced each other and embraced, while instructions were given on unity and indissolubility. Then the singing and dancing began. The bride and groom were given a share of food for the first time and then they joined in the singing and dancing. The young groom joined the men while the bride joined the women. The singing and dancing went well on into the night. It was interrupted only when all settled down to their meal. By early dawn the next day, the people were on their way home to their villages.

The Solos people had yet another ceremony before marriage was complete. The partners had to wait two or three days after their marriage before beginning to live as husband and wife. During those days the bride remained in her mother's house. The groom returned to the tsiuhan. Delaying cohabitation for a couple of days gave the partners a rest after the hectic celebration, and gave them time to realise that they were married and had to be ready to live as husband and wife.

(iv) Hasuu. Sometimes a house was erected for the new couple before their marriage but often they lived in the house of the girl's parents for a few months before their own house was ready. On the day the bride was brought to her husband's house, her mother prepared some food for her to take. When evening came the women of the village lit torches and accompanied the bride to her husband's house. The women sang and waved their flaring torches (Montauban and O'Reilly 1958:82) as they went along toward the house of the groom (Wallis 1926:39). If this was in the same village, it took a few minutes. However, if it was at another village then the women were accompanied by men. When they reached the house the mother and her daughter went in while the young men who kept the groom company, quietly walked out of the house. After a few words of advice to both, and especially to the daughter, and after seeing them eating out of the basket of food brought by the bride, the mother left. All the women shouted their good wishes to the couple and departed. Thus ended the excitement of the celebration and the two settled down to their new life.

Marriage from the point of view of the partners

From the time they could barely walk, boys and girls were betrothed to someone chosen for them (Blackwood 1935:82).

For them marriage was unavoidable. The society so fixed the institution that they were not given an opportunity to decide whether to enter it or not. During their years of preparation for marriage, they were strictly segregated from each other. The young man had nothing to say about the bridewealth. In most cases he did not know how much was given to his future in-laws and the relatives of the bride. Neither did he have any say in arranging for his future home as the father of a family. Others took care of that for him.

The initiation ceremony made the boys and girls recognised members of the tribe and clan, but until marriage, they were inhables as far as certain actions and status in the clan were concerned. As adolescents they had to keep many taboos which were abrogated only after marriage.

Marriage raised the status of men and women to the level of full active members (Hopkins 1928:108). A man could now sit among the elders of the clan to make decisions regarding community affairs. He assumed full responsibility over his wife and family: he took part in battles, owned his own house and garden. The young wife, likewise, could participate fully in matters that involved the grown women. She could act as midwife in order to learn her future role as mother. Membership was further augmented by the arrival of the first born baby. Esteem for the couple by the chief and other members grew with the birth of additional children.

The married state had many consequences for the partners. It required of them first of all fidelity, which, if disregarded, would place the partners under the sentence of death. The very fact that a person was chosen for a specific partner automatically excluded others. When partners married, they accepted from each other the exclusive right of ius in corpus. In the use of their exclusive right, they aimed at having children. Since liberty in sex was forbidden, the couples were thrown closer in their sex life. During a wife's pregnancy and lactation the husband abstained from sexual union with his wife (Ivens 1930:106). In the first instance, it was because they believed the foetus or the unborn child would be aborted (Duclot and Vernant 1946:22); in the second case because of fear that the supply of milk in the mother's breasts may be diminished and spoiled.

Although husband and wife knew the phenomenon of pregnancy was the result of their sexual union (Blackwood 1935:132), they lacked the understanding of the growth of the foetus in the mother's womb. According to their understanding of conception in relation to the sexual act, the husband and wife had to copulate many times before the wife could conceive a

child. Even today, one often hears a man when accused of being the father of an illegitimate child, say, 'I have only had intercourse with the woman once, the child cannot be mine'.

With increasing status in the clan through marriage came obligations. As soon as the wife showed signs of pregnancy, especially if this was her first, she and her husband ceased to eat certain kinds of food. This abstinence had to be kept until the purification feast, held one to three months after the first born. Abstinence was supposed to ensure the well-being of the unborn (Ivens 1930:109).

How much knowledge of the sex act a married couple had when they came together for the first time, I cannot say. However, the general information given to the boy at the tsiuhan by the disciplinarian, and to the girl by her mother-in-law during her years of preparation, helped them to know how to go about beginning their sex life, plus of course the natural instinct. Legends which dealt with intercourse also were sources of information on the matter. The partners were often strangers to the sex act when they began their connubial life. However, they soon learned to adapt themselves. Any presumption that they learned from seeing their parents performing the act of intercourse in their presence while yet young, falls short of the truth.

As mentioned, marriage did not mean separation of the partners from their respective families. Rather they formed a bridge or a bond between the two families and relatives. The grandparents had a considerable say in the raising of grandchildren, so it was difficult at times for the parents to have full control.

Marriage imposed upon the couple and their parents the taboo of not calling certain relatives by their proper names. After the parents of both parties agreed to the betrothal, they ceased to call one another by name. They addressed one another as suhan (Blackwood 1935:75).¹ After the engagement ceremony when the bridewealth was handed over, a similar taboo was imposed on other affinal relationships. The women, including the mother of the girl put on a hood called hahanis (covering the head) so that they could not be observed by the future son-in-law (Montauban and O'Reilly 1958:32), and the young man ceased to call his future in-laws and their relatives by name. He would refer to the girl's parents and

¹ For the explanation of this term and others used here see Appendix.

uncles and aunts as anis and they in turn would call him that. He would call the girl's brothers and male cousins mounat and her sisters and cousin sisters moutian. The bride-to-be, on the other hand, referred to the boy's parents and uncles and aunts as neihis and they in turn called her by that term. She would call her future husband's brothers and cousin brothers moutian and his sisters and female cousins neihen. Under no condition could the husband talk to the sisters or female cousins of his wife; the wife likewise could not talk to the brothers or male cousins of her husband. This practice came from the reverence the people had of marriage as a sacred institution. This prohibition on name-calling was kept until the end of their lives. For the first few years of marriage the wife never called her husband by name but she referred to him as eka (he). Why were these people not called by name? It was because of the intimate knowledge each now had of the other as husband or wife. It was, as it were, two families entering into a secret pact, the husband entering the bed-covers of the family of his wife: it is called sik i touh. These taboos were brought about by the sacred nature of marriage, pregnancy and childbirth. The husband was expected to be respectful toward his in-laws and the relatives of his wife and she had to do the same.

However forced these Solos marriages seemed to be in the past, the partners thus brought together were proud to be husband and wife (Lamarre 1950:9). This pride became more evident with the birth of children. Because of their matriarchal society, Solos women were not considered slaves. Despite the fact that they did practically all the work, they kept their status as important figures in any family.

Abortion was almost unknown in the old Solos society, due to the people's pride in their children. Sometimes it was brought about by accidents, as it was customary for women to carry heavy loads on their backs. Another possibility was a woman's attempt to hide from her husband and others in the clan a pregnancy resulting from adultery. According to Blackwood (1935:117), a woman would never abort a child of her husband, no matter how many children she had.

Today abortion is rather frequent, especially among women of second generation Christians. The increase in the practice reflects a change in cultural values and the attitudes of women toward childbearing. Childbearing no longer seems to have the same reverence among the Solos women. Women are no longer motivated by a strong sense of service, through childbearing, to the clan. Those who have many children no longer feel special pride in being outstanding in the clan. On the

contrary, they somehow are made to feel that they fall short of self-control with regard to the marital act. What was a source of great pride in the old society has suddenly turned into a source of great shame. This is because married couples feel isolated and no longer experience that haven of safety between the two families involved in their marriage. The encouragement a mother received in the old society does not exist any more. The wife practically has to run the family alone, a task that was shared in the old society.

Sometimes a woman becomes pregnant before the other baby is weaned so she resorts to an abortion. In addition, the increase in abortion may be related to the change in respect of the lineage: the matriarchal society of the Solos is gradually becoming patriarchal. Women who were once the legal owners of children and the important figures in a marriage, are taking the servant's role. The husband is becoming the master as well as the legal owner of the children. In the old society the women did not mind raising and caring for the children without the father's daily help because the children belonged to her legally. Now the children belong to the father in every way, even bearing his last name through imposed Western culture, but the father rarely helps with the care of the baby. The wife, in desperation, does all she can to stop having a new baby too soon.

Yet some women go through with their pregnancies even though it may mean being a parent to an illegitimate child. Such a child is then taken into the family of the girl if she is not married. If she is married, the child is raised with the rest of the children. Rarely are illegitimate children made to suffer for their accidental birth for they are given the same status as other members of the family. Because the strict laws of old have been discarded through Christianity, there has been an increase in adultery which has led to an increase in illegitimacy. Free choice of partners has also resulted in premarital sexual unions so that it is not uncommon for couples to marry after pregnancy has been established.

Chapter 3

Marriage impediments

Although parents made it their first concern to betroth their children as soon as they could walk, there nevertheless existed many impediments to marriage. These were dictated either by the natural law or by the precepts of the clan. When Christianity was introduced Solos marriage already possessed many of the impediments that Christianity was trying to impose. In certain instances, the Christian marriage impediments were more lineal in nature than the Solos marriage impediments. Where something was an impediment for Christian marriage, it was not necessarily so for the Solos marriage. For example, the impediment of consanguinity in canon law extends to the third degree inclusively, while the Solos custom extended this beyond the sixth degree (Hopkins 1928:98). Canon law also forbids marriage between brother-in-law and sister-in-law at the death of one of the marriage parties, but Solos did not possess this impediment because it was the custom that the brother had the right and duty to beget children in the name of his dead brother and in some instances the nephew had the right to marry the widow of his dead uncle (Rivers 1914:48). Some impediments proper to the church as a Christian society did not exist for the Solos people, for example, those given in canon law under 'impedimentes impedientes'. The fact that Solos were not allowed to marry partners not chosen for them could be regarded as a parallel to these impediments. Thus the Solos had almost all the nullifying impediments given in canon law. Before Christianity, the impediments were nonage, impotence, insanity, existing marriage bond, affinity (only in the direct line), consanguinity, laziness, totem differences, haret hameng, cowardice and sorcery.

Nonage. Canon law sets the marriageable age for girls at at least the completion of the fourteenth year and for boys after the sixteenth year. For the Solos, marriage was strictly forbidden during the period from childhood to puberty, in spite of the betrothal of children. Marriage was legalised after the girl had had her first menstrual period by the engagement ceremony and the handing over of bridewealth. Cohabitation took

place much later. So the strict prohibitive age for the Solos even to legalise the marriage was from childhood to the age of puberty. The marriage was not consummated until after the marriage ceremony.¹

Manapei (impotence). The obvious signs of impotence also formed impediments among the Solos people. People whose genitals did not develop or were defective or mutilated and were unable to perform the sexual act, were excluded from marriage. Likewise, those who had partial deformity of their genitals were excluded from marriage, even though they could have perhaps performed the sexual act and had children.

Cripples called pinington were excluded also because of their inability to protect their family.²

Insanity. Insane persons of the following types were barred from marriage: boponoan (those completely and perpetually insane), babaru (those who were borderline), beverehu (those who had defects in their speech and defective nervous systems) and korong (those who were deaf and dumb) as well as gokorei (epileptics). They were excluded from contracting marriage because they were unable to take up the responsibility of raising a family.³

Laziness. For those who think that all Papua New Guineans are lazy, the fact that laziness formed an impediment to marriage may appear ridiculous. Nevertheless, it was there. Those who never corrected themselves remained unmarried for the rest of their lives. This impediment naturally came about because marriage required that a man and woman take full responsibility over their family (Montauban and O'Reilly 1958:3).

Existing marriage bond. The existing marriage bond here refers not only to the proper marriage bond brought about by the handing over of the bridewealth or the consummation of marriage, but also to the bond effected by the betrothal and the engagement ceremonies. A boy or girl betrothed or engaged could not seek to contract a marriage with another person (Hopkins 1928:96). If this impediment of marriage was violated it incurred the death sentence. As long as their first wives were alive, ordinary Solos men could not seek to marry another,

¹ Cf. Canon 1067.

² Cf. Canon 1068.

³ An impediment in canon law exists by the ruling of Canon 1067 par.1 and 2, in the sense that the insane are like children, and by the ruling of Canon 1081 par.1 and 2, they could not elicit the act of their will.

but certain important men exempted themselves. That is the reason they were not given the privilege of a ceremony when marrying a second or third wife. This indicated that they were cognisant of the fact that only one wife was legal.¹

Totem. As mentioned, totem was not identified with the clan and the impediment to marriage did not exist within the same totem group. A marriage impediment existed between the two different totems. It was imposed because of differences in status, being in fact, a caste impediment. Thus the naboen and the nakarik intermarried only among themselves. This also points out the fact that the totem was not identical with the clan which consisted mainly of blood relations and in which marriage was strictly forbidden. Many clans were part of the naboen and nakarik without necessarily being related by blood. If a member of the naboen wanted to marry a member of the nakarik, many ceremonies of dispensation had to ensue before marriage could even be considered.

Haret (imposition of taboos). Haret was a prohibition on eating certain kinds of taro, fish, birds, animals or vegetables. An aunt usually performed the ceremony. It established an impediment of marriage between the one imposing the taboos and the child. The usual thing was to impose upon the child the personal taboos of a grandfather or grandmother, depending whether the child was a boy or a girl. Through this a special relationship was established between the person and the child. The person imposing the taboos had the duty to see that they were kept, and to supply that child often with food. The haret not only imposed an impediment of marriage between the person and the child, but also between the child and his or her children. The latter seems to have existed in the church before the code.² It stands to reason then that an imposition of taboos by an outsider was avoided and a relative preferred.

Hameng (adoption). Adoption was resorted to as a result of barrenness (hising). Adopted children came mainly but not exclusively from the relatives of the woman. If the wife died and the adopted girl was mature, neither the husband nor his brothers and nephews could marry her because she was considered as his own daughter. Likewise, if a boy was adopted the widow could not marry him, nor could her sisters and nieces because he was a proper son according to custom. This prohibitive impediment was very strictly observed (Fox 1924: 19).³

¹ This impediment is treated in Canon Law 1069.

² Canon Law 1079.

³ Cf. Canon Law 1059.

Singut (affinity). For the Solos people, affinity invalidated marriage between father-in-law and daughter-in-law and between daughter-in-law and the father of her father-in-law; and on the son-in-law's side, between mother-in-law and son-in-law, and between son-in-law and the mother of his mother-in-law. These prohibitive degrees were referred to as anis and neihis.¹ Since the uncles and aunts were identified in the lineage as father and mother to the children, the same impediments also existed for them. Thus, the uncle could not marry the wife of his dead nephew. They were also limited by the prohibitive degrees of anis and neihis.

The second aspect of prohibitive affinity existed between the parents of the partners or between the parents of one partner and the uncles and aunts of the other or between the uncles and aunts of both partners. This was called suhan. These were the only relationships within affinity where marriage was prohibited. The impediment did not exist between the brother-in-law and the sister-in-law. According to custom the young brother had the right to marry his dead brother's widow and beget children in his name (Ivens 1930:102). The first cousin of the dead man also had the right to marry the widow if there were no brothers. Should the wife die and a younger sister be unmarried, she had the right to marry her dead sister's husband (Rivers 1914:56). This was encouraged to keep the solidarity of the two families, although for the latter case it was not obligatory.

Pinopossa (consanguinity). In the Solos society, the prohibitive degree of consanguinity was the most extensively and scrupulously kept (Hopkins 1928:98). This forbade marriage in the direct line between all ascendants and descendants whether legitimate or natural.² It prohibited marriage between blood relatives to the sixth degree inclusive and beyond.³ The tracing of relatives to distant degrees was possible because the people preserved their genealogy. The children were gradually acquainted with their blood relatives, even with those who were from other clans through intermarriages. Thus the clan and all its extended lines and beyond it were followed closely.

Marriage was strictly excluded within the pinopossa, nahunu and barevan,⁴ and within the 'particular relationships' listed in the Appendix. As long as the people knew they had a common

¹ See Appendix.

² Cf. Canon Law 1077.

³ Cf. Canon Law 1076.

⁴ See Appendix.

ancestor or ancestress they felt they were brothers and sisters. From this came about the free use of the terms father, mother, brother and sister which could refer to uncles, aunts, cousin sister and cousin brother, disregarding degrees of these relationships. So within the clan (where practically all blood relatives lived), the above mentioned terms were freely used.

The use of those terms was not just a greeting or to show respect, but the persons were truly looked upon as mother, father, brother, sister, and so on. This mentality commanded a person-to-person relationship and prevented incest (Rivers 1914:38-9). This custom has decreased as people have been gradually led into isolation even from their own relatives and parents into a state of individualism and selfishness.

Incestuous unions have become frequent. If the church allows prospective partners who are related to each other in the fourth degree to marry, or gives them a dispensation in the third degree, then nothing will prevent the people from going further. In any case, in the old Solos society consanguinity was a grave impediment to marriage and the principles underlying Canon Law 1076 were already acknowledged before Christianity was introduced.

Cowardice. Since a person assumed the responsibility of caring for and protecting his wife and children it was natural to require that he be courageous. Although the clan as a whole protected individual families, each husband as head of a family had the duty to protect them. A man with cowardly tendencies would not be chosen to marry. If he was betrothed before this discovery the betrothal was broken, unless he overcame it through rigorous training in the use of weapons in mock battles. If a coward was detected before the age of puberty, he was dealt with severely at the initiation ceremony, to help him overcome it. The Solos way of life had no place for cowards.

Sorcery. A practising sorcerer very often was prohibited from marriage. No one would allow his daughter to marry a man of this kind, unless the father of the girl was threatened by the sorcerer himself. On principle though, such a man was avoided and barred from contracting marriage.

Conclusion

As shown, the Solos already possessed the major impediments to marriage outlined by the code of canon law. These were dictated to their ancestors centuries ago by natural law and also by commonsense in order to protect the purity and integrity of the tribe.

Chapter 4

The impact of Christianity on marriage

The definition of marriage in the Christian sense can be summed up as follows: marriage is a sacrament in which two marriageable people of the opposite sex associate in an undivided life-communion by mutual agreement, for the generation and education of their offspring and in which they receive grace for the fulfilment of the special duties of their state. Furthermore, according to Western thought, marriage is a state where two people leave their parents and other relatives to start an independent family of their own. In Christian marriages the parties involved freely choose their mates for a life long partnership in marriage through personal love, and the parents simply advise rather than interfere with the choice.

The Christian mentality on marriage is reflected in the regulations found in the Code of Canon Law (1012-1143).

The Solos marriage mentality

As mentioned, Solos marriage involved not only the partners but their respective clans. It was a social means to form allegiances between otherwise hostile clans, a bridge between status differences and totems, and a means of raising the status of the couple (Hopkins 1928:108).

The whole life of the Solos centred around the clan and its communal activities, legends and myths. Theirs was a good way of life, simple and happy: they never went hungry and they took pride in their family gardens. They were wise about the best soils for different kinds of food plants, the best sites for their gardens; they were wise about timbers, knew a great deal about the properties and uses of native plants and had names for them all.

This was the situation in which the missionaries found the Solos when they made their first contact in 1910. What they saw was a tribe that differed from the others both in language and skin. They were built solidly and were not cowards, their

eyes were friendly, they were men of strong character and in faith were promising members for Christianity.¹ The Solos at that time had wider boundaries than the present Solos. By 1923 there were 7,500 Solos. They seemed happy with the new teachers of Christianity and slowly submitted to the rules of the missionaries and regulations of the church. If there was any confusion at this time, it was not evident.²

Gradually, the chiefs began to lose their prestige and power; the storyteller had no audience to strengthen native traditions and through the imposition of the obligations of Christianity, a new way of life emerged and the old way was discarded. A change of mentality could be detected when in 1913 and again in 1920, cargo cult beliefs sprang up in Lontis; they were revived in 1932 and 1933 (Tippett 1967:209).

Since 1935 the Solos belief in their legends has begun to lose strength and credibility. The gardeners and fishermen of Buka began modernising their techniques; the former way of life was changing rapidly. The biggest upheaval of all was the changing of their mentality (Montauban and O'Reilly 1958: 40). The new generation on Buka, like everywhere else, have repudiated their legends, their companions for life. Certain new myths have sprung up but they have no resemblance to the old themes. There is racial liberation and expectation of cargo. They have, moreover, abandoned certain customs.

When the Japanese became the new masters in 1942 the Solos people were jubilant over the departure of the whites; the missionaries who remained were merely tolerated. Since the end of the war, there has been much unrest. The people have a desire to be free and independent.

Now the Solos wants to achieve his individuality. He no longer depends on his legends and customs; he does not look any more for the good way of life; nor does he heed the words and counsels of the ancestors. Today nothing is believed and tomorrow all will be forgotten (Montauban and O'Reilly 1958: 40). The old people feel helpless and hopeless and the young are terribly confused. The missions might be doing much in the field of education and in propagating the Christian faith and caring for the sick, but they have created new and deep divisions among the Solos (Fox 1967:49).

The evolution has begun among the Solos. Totopiok (a mythological wild man) frightens no one - the people prefer

¹ See Epistolae, 1926-28, no.47, Versiaux Archives, Rome.

² J. Schlieker, Epistolae, 1 December 1952, file 5SS208, AMF.

Tarzan or Mickey Mouse. Time passes quickly; the once-revered ancestors have lost their meaning for the Solos: the young work hard to adapt to a new way of life and ignore their ancestors or pretend they are very naive. There is only interest in copra, co-operatives, gambling, drunkenness, mistresses, and little love affairs (Montauban and O'Reilly 1958:41).

The missionary mentality

In 1899 the Marist missionaries founded their first station on Faisi in the Shortlands, having come directly from Samoa. From there they gradually made contact with the people of Bougainville and Buka.¹ The influence of Christianity on Buka began with the establishment of a mission station at Burunotui on the west coast, in January 1910. From there missionaries made their way to other posts on the island. In 1923 the Gagan mission was established; this marked the beginning of the gradual disappearance of the customs of the people.

The missionaries found the Solos people practising non-Christian customs such as initiation ceremonies, taboos, marriage rites and polygamy. They had one thing in mind: to destroy anything connected with paganism and immorality; they had no consideration for cultural values. As local customs were gradually eliminated they were replaced by the Christian religion with all its practices and regulations. When the missionaries saw the polygamous practices of the chiefs they made it their duty to ban this practice as immoral. However, they eradicated not only polygamy, but also the naturally good marriage practices. The people were made to think their marriage practices were evil and deserved damnation in the everlasting, unquenchable fire of hell. A people so prone to fear of natural forces and spirits had no choice but to succumb to the new religion and new marriage regulations (Oliver 1955: 461). It is little wonder that by 1923 - in seven years - the number of pagans was reduced to seventy. Within the same seven years there were 188 Christian marriages celebrated.² This is indicative of the swift change of the Solos people's culture. Within less than fifty years they have been left with nothing they can now claim as their own.

¹ Chronology of the Vicariate Apostolic of the Northern Solomons. This chronology has been compiled by the Marist Fathers, and is to be found in their archives.

² Statistics in Epistolae, 1922-30, AMF.

It was not uncommon for overzealous missionaries to declare that marriage contracted outside the church was invalid! The people, now wishing to become Christians, could not help but feel guilty about their natural marriages contracted according to their custom (Lamarre 1950:9). More than the destruction of any other practice among the people, the destruction of the marriage customs and regulations deprived the people of the security of being anchored in a culture whose traditional values gave them sustenance and support. The discarding of many practices which by their very nature were not immoral has brought a sense of loneliness and cultural displacement, arising from alienation from the traditional village culture on one hand and being merely thrown into a Christianity clothed in the Western culture (Hastings 1970:7).

The missionaries of different nationalities (including French, German, American and Australian) came with a diversity of mentalities and so their approach to the people in teaching them the Christian religion varied. These differences sometimes spread confusion in the minds of the people. For instance it was recorded in the archives that one priest 'makes the people step lively with the stick; his station is well run. The people pray together and with much vigour. He uses his eyes and voice to great advantage, when his people are out of step, all for the service of God'.¹ Of another: 'He is doing well at his station but his manners of dealing with natives left much to be desired. Would he succeed? Time will tell. In any case if he had been at any other place his catholics would have left him and become pagan.'² Yet another example: 'It is recommended that the native customs in the matter of marriage have not fallen into disuse so before you bless the marriage, make sure that the conditions for marriage are fulfilled according to native culture.'³ These three quotations are examples of diversity of mentality based on nationality.

Problems encountered by the missionaries

It would be unfair to blame all missionaries for the destruction of the cultures of various people among whom they brought the Christian religion. Yet many overlooked the naturally good

¹ P. Bertet, Epistolae, 2 December 1912, file 5SS208, AMF.

² A. Binois, Epistolae, 1938, AMF.

³ Rev. M. Boch, Epistolae, August 1928, AMF.

customs of the various cultures in their desire to destroy paganism and put in its place Christianity. Paganism just happened to be clothed in these cultures, so there was nothing to do but to destroy the naturally good customs with zeal.

Christianity also borrowed the Western culture - the Roman culture - as a carriage for her doctrine. Since it was a visible society it had to have visible signs - thus the imposition of external rites and rituals. To maintain these, local cultures had to be suffocated.

When the missionaries came to Oceania, they were met by the harsh conditions of nature, hot and humid climate, sickness and strange foods (Oliver 1955:37-8). Many died of malaria or other debilitating diseases, and the people were not always friendly towards strangers. The missionaries' biggest problem, however, was the lack of understanding of the local mentality, customs and languages. Although some missionaries tried their best to understand the local people, many came unprepared to cope with a culture so different. Some lacked the interest to discover the full value of the local culture. Others thought they had nothing to learn from the local people. Because of such attitudes the missionaries have succeeded in keeping themselves impoverished regarding these other cultures, happily keeping themselves always on the fringe of the people's daily life and cultures (Hilliard 1969:50).

Until Vatican II missionaries had no way of adapting or using their initiative in developing local customs into Christian practices. Now that Vatican II has relaxed the rigid legalistic attitudes of the past centuries, the missionaries are left with practically nothing of the people's customs, the people have no personal and cultural values and cannot fit into the new world either in religion or social life.¹

Problems encountered by the Solos

The problems related to marriage are increasing and will increase further under the impact of a new culture so little understood by the people. There is an increasing tendency towards free love, premarital relations, and incestuous sexual unions due to the breakdown of the people's kinship exogamy (Codrington 1891:23) and the custom of brother-sister,

¹ Constitutio: Gaudium et Spes, n.57-9, Acta Apostolicae Sedis, LVIII, pp.1077-80.

father-mother relationship which protected them (Burton 1930: 32). Divorce has occurred in isolated cases; abortion too has become common. The family has become an independent entity: the couple have become isolated from their clansmen: they no longer feel responsible to their leaders for the stability of their marriages. Children born of these new marriages no longer feel obliged to know who their kinsmen are, except those nearest to them. The older generation is shocked at this attitude while the new generation remains ignorant and indifferent.

Parents do not teach the children anything, leaving the task to the schools which are not equipped to teach what should be learned at home. There is a gap between the family and the mission. The people believe that what they had in the past was all bad because the church did not recognise its worth, nor capitalise on it by merging their way of life with religion. Their sense of dignity is gone.

Solos wealth is not material wealth. The most vital things to the Solos are his traditions, his culture, the opinion of his clansmen, brotherhood, tolerance, and being accepted in the closeknit group. These are his riches (Montauban and O'Reilly 1958:38). Destroy or undermine these, and he is left in a vacuum with no sense of belonging anywhere (Oliver 1955:231). The subtle destruction of the inner man leads to a multitude of cultural illnesses that bring further problems in their wake.

There is no strong sense of a Christian community or village unity (Tippett 1967:174). Leaders are not acknowledged, the councillor as the representative of the government is merely tolerated; the people feel they have had too many 'rulers' telling them what to do and they are confused as they get nowhere. Besides, in religion they realise there are a half a dozen denominations all claiming to be the true religion (Tippett 1967:338). To church and government, which claim rule over them, they have to pay obedience (Tippett 1967:212). Thus service once rendered only to the clan must be given to these two institutions as well as to private Europeans in plantations (Oliver 1955:231). Their marriage customs have been overlooked and abandoned, and church regulations and government marriage ordinances have been imposed instead.¹ The mission imposed the Roman marriage custom, petrified in the code of canon law, as though divinely dictated ceremonies, and the government imposed Western regulations (Hillman 1970:31).

¹ F. Wache, Epistolae, 9 May 1930, AMF.

Both advocate marriages initiated by free choice. One of these two authorities excludes divorce, while the other allows divorce in most cases. The moral laws and rules of life are read to the people out of moral books written by Westerners; the laws of the state of government are based either on Roman or English laws.

Christianity should have utilised the tribal system to its advantage so that the transition to the modern world would not have affected the marriage customs to the extent that it did, especially the change to a paternalistic trend and the insistence on the father's last name. Such integration certainly would have helped produce a more enlightened and meaningful religion.

These are but a few of the many problems in the minds of the bewildered Solos who find themselves strangers to themselves, their mentality, their way of life that once made them proud of their worth and inheritance (Montauban and O'Reilly 1958:40). The world is passing them by, a world they know nothing about and no one bothers to explain it to them.

The educators know too well that in order to eradicate the mentality, they must concentrate on educating the young and leave the elderly alone; but this is a mistake. One has to be in their situation to realise the sense of loss these people feel, to hear their lament: 'gone is our world we once knew, the simple life, the friends, the social dances, the hospitality. Now is the children's world ruled by the missionaries and the teachers. There is nothing left for us except to wait for death' (Fox 1924:314). Those old folk have submitted to the mission and government officials who often accuse them of laziness, irresponsibility and immorality. Yet this seemingly irresponsible attitude came as a result of a general take-over and what appears to be laziness is not that at all (Murray 1925:47-8). The people really do not know what is expected of them other than observing the commandments and being supported. Furthermore, Christianity came and led the people by the hand - made their decisions for them by taking the leading part as superior beings, showing them what to do, making them dependent solely on them, eliminating the sense of forming their own proper consciences. It is an unhappy inheritance of the past; the tragedy of it all is that the defect was seen in the past and was never corrected (Tippett 1967:91).

Solutions

Marriage, which was once the concern of the parents and relatives, and which has been taken away by imported practices

to be left in the hands of the partners alone, must again be made the concern of the parents. While the boy or girl chooses his or her partner, he or she should let the parents feel they still have a part in the choice as in the old days. Let the practice of the bridewealth (set a minimum) be kept as a significant part of the marriage ceremony, introducing into the ceremony some of the customs which remind the people of the special status of marriage through the bridewealth. Instead of a ring on the girl's finger, native money could be put around both persons; this will remind them of the uniting factor in their marriage. The proper support and unity in marriage is signified not by holding the little finger but by embracing the whole person. Furthermore, family life at home for the Solos is not expressed by a ring but by sharing a meal. There is no reason why Christian marriage could not be carried out according to the old traditions and ceremonies. The Church in the person of the priest attends the Solos ceremony and at the proper time blesses the marriage and administers the Holy Eucharist. Meanwhile, as of old, the elder presides to render advice on the nature of marriage in their lives as Solos. The priest then could conclude, by briefly pointing out the sacramental aspect of this union. Marriage is to be lived in real life, not to be thought of simply as a sacrament, a theological abstract. The attainment of perfection in marriage can be reached only by mutual service of the husband for the wife and the wife for the husband (Sullivan 1964:142). This can only be possible if the concept of the institution of marriage is clear and within the sphere of the people's understanding and mentality.

Let the children as of old, be taught their own customs and ways, things which concern their immediate everyday life. How many of the girls of today go to the gardens with their mothers to learn how to plant and work and take interest in the household affairs as before? How many boys go with their fathers to learn how to fish, hunt, make bows and arrows, canoes and how to build a house, and to work in general? The obedience once owed the parents is rare now because the children must be kept at the mission station to do what the missionaries and teachers tell them. Up to six years of age the parents have control of their children; then they lose them to the mission. Too often parents are blamed for not teaching or for not having control over their children but these children are kept at the school all day while the parents work in their gardens or plantations. In reality the missionaries are the ones responsible for these children. Because of this, the children do not share in the responsibilities of the family as of old. When they grow up many leave for studies

elsewhere. A gap then lies between the Church and the family and the people do not know how to bridge it. I have striven here to suggest certain policies for the instruction of marriage and the family in this confusing time of transition.

Conclusion

When a nation comes to self-realisation there is always a reaction against the parent nation under which it has been a colony both in government and religion. The intensity of the local reaction depends on how the people have been treated by the colonisers. The time of 'awareness', of 'selfhood', unfortunately is a time of remembrances of the mistakes of the colonisers.

Oceania, happily, did not receive the bad treatment of some of the other colonised countries, such as the African countries. Papua New Guinea and the Solomons can only recall the brutal murders and disruption of many families by the first explorers and later by the black-birders of the nineteenth century (Fox 1924:24). A feeling of resentment, when it comes, will be based on the fact that the people's customs have been mercilessly disregarded and discarded by the white men. As more Pacific Islanders learn to read the novels and anthropological books written about their people - in most cases in an over-exaggerated way or giving only half-truths - then that feeling of resentment towards their so-called civilisers will increase. This is an inevitable reaction.

All that has been said in this study is not meant merely as a smear on the undoubted achievements of missionary workers. The Solos people owe what they have today - the Christian religion, education, medical care and so on - to these people and to the government who put an end to tribal wars and brought law and order. Nor were the problems they created the results of direct or intentional destruction of the customs; rather they were the unhappy results of time and circumstances and the general attitude of the Church towards pagan lands and her evaluation of doctrines regarding faith and morals. One thing is clear: the Solos cannot go back to their old customs. The problems, if they are to be solved, have to be solved in terms of today's time, environment and thought. They have to be solved in terms of the present and with foresight for the future, by those who have a feeling for the past way of life. In the end an indigenous church, upon which Christian faith is grafted and modified by Melanesian beliefs, may well give its Melanesian communicants a greater sense of their own moral and spiritual resources than of the efforts of outside cultures.

Relationships within the Solos tribe

1. General relationships

<u>Putun katun</u>	=	tribe
<u>Pinopossa</u>	=	blood relatives
<u>Hanuma</u>	=	totem relations
<u>Nahunu</u>	=	relations on lineage side, mother's side
<u>Barevan</u>	=	relations on the father's side
<u>Singut</u>	=	relations by affinity

2. Particular relationships

<u>Tubun</u> or <u>vuvu</u>	=	grandfather or grandmother
<u>Tubuni</u>	=	grandson or granddaughter
<u>Tamen</u>	=	father
<u>Tinen</u>	=	mother
<u>Napean</u>	=	child
<u>Napeantimon</u>	=	son
<u>Napeantahon</u>	=	daughter
<u>Amuniasin</u>	=	brother or first cousin) boy to boy
<u>Matohen</u>	=	sister or first cousin (girl to girl
		) boy to girl
		(girl to boy
<u>Tuhen</u>	=	uncle
<u>Kauo</u>	=	aunt
<u>Engon</u>	=	nephew or niece
<u>Inaas</u>	=	cousins

3. Affinity relationships

Suhan = (a) relationship between grandfathers and grandmothers of the partners in marriage
(b) relationship between the parents of both parties in a marriage

<u>Anis</u>	=	(a) relation between the husband and the parents of the woman (b) relation between the uncle of a woman and her husband
<u>Neihis</u>	=	(a) relation between the wife and the parents of the man (b) relation between the uncle and aunt of the man and his wife
<u>Mounat</u>	=	brother-in-law
<u>Moutian</u>	=	sister-in-law
<u>Anisabus</u>	=	relation of the man and the first cousins of his father-in-law and mother-in-law
<u>Mounatabus</u>	=	relation of the man with the second cousin brothers of his wife
<u>Moutianabus</u>	=	relation of the wife with the second cousin brothers of her husband.

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Index

- Abduction, 30, 32
- Abortion, 42-3, 53
- Abstinence, from food, 4, 29, 41;
from sex, 8, 14, 41
- Adoption, 46
- Adultery, 8, 21, 30-1, 41, 42-3
- Affinity, 46-7
- Agriculture, 3
- Alienation, 52-5
- Ancestor, 17, 47, 50-1; and cargo,
12-14, 15-16; name of, 8, 22;
worship of, 2, 10-14
- Animism, 10
- Aunt, 18
- Authority, of husband, 26; of
maternal uncle, 27

- Barrenness, see Childlessness
- Betrothal, 33-5, 39, 42, 45-6;
acceptance of, 35-6; legality of,
36; ways of, 35
- Boka, 1
- Bougainville, Louis de, 1
- Bougainville, Island of, 1
- Brideprice, see Bridewealth
- Bridewealth, 32-6, 40; as legalising
factor in marriage, 31, 44; pigs
as, 4; provider of, 22, 27;
significance of, 31, 33-4, 56;
teeth money as, 4
- Buka, Island of, 1-3
- Buka passage, 1
- Buka tribes, 2; see also Solos;
Tasi

- Cannibalism, 11
- Canon Law, 44, 48, 54
- Cargo cult, 9, 50; Christianity and,
12-13; defined, 12; eradication of,
15; rituals of, 14
- Carteret, 1
- Cash cropping, 3, 51
- Ceremony: betrothal, 35-6; engagement,
27, 35, 36-8; handing over of bride,
35, 39-40; imposition of taboo, 46;
initiation, 40; marriage, 27-8, 31,
35, 38-9; nahinous, 27; tiku, 31
- Change, Christianity and, 49-55
- Charms, love, 8, 30-1
- Chief, 6; descent of, 6-7; duties of,
17, 23, 27, 38; fall of, 50; quali-
ties and privileges of, 6-7
- Childbirth, 21, 42
- Childlessness, 30-1; and adultery, 26,
29; and divorce, 29-30; and polygamy,
23
- Children, 42-3; duties of, 21; legal
owner of, 6, 22, 43; marriage of,
22, 26; names of, 22; relations with
father, 26-7; role of in marriage,
21, 26, 28-9, 40; significance of,
21, 26, 29; status and, 6, 21, 42
- Christian, marriage, 49, 51-2
- Christianity: acceptance of, 13;
advent of, 43, 49, 51-5; cargo cult
and, 13; effects of, 9-10, 43, 50,
51-2; expectations from, 10; marriage
and, 18, 49
- Church, 54, 56, 57
- Clan: crime against, 30; defined, 17,
21; life within, 3, 21; marriage
and, 6, 17, 44, 49; members of, 5-6,
17; relationship within, 18; Solos
and, 49; territory of, 3
- Cohabitation, see Conjugal life
- Conception, 41
- Conjugal life, 31, 39-40, 42-3
- Consanguinity, 44, 47
- Consent to marry, 27, 32-3
- Contraception, 29
- Cowardice, 48
- Crafts, 2

- Dating, 26
- Death, 4, 29, 44; childbirth and, 32;
exogamy and, 17
- Divorce, 28-9, 53; and childlessness,
29
- Drums, 7-8

- Engagement, 31, 34, 44; ceremony, 27,
32, 36-8; as preparation for
marriage, 27; taboos after, 31
- Exogamy, 6, 53; blood relation, 17-18;
clan, 17; local, 17; totem, 17;
tribe, 17

- Family, breakdown of, 43, 53, 57;
qualities admired in, 22; role of
adults in, 6, 42; role of children
in, 6; Solos, 6, 42
- Fear, 32, 33
- Feast: burial, 4; call to a, 5; compe-
tition in giving a, 21; display of
power through, 4-5, 23; invitation
to, 5; nahinous, 4-5, 27; purifica-
tion, 41; reconciliation, 34

- Fights, tribal, 5-6; causes of, 5-6, 31, 32
 Fishing, 4
 Food, abstinence from, 4, 29, 41; in marriage ceremony, 36-9, 46, 56; as offering for the dead, 11, 11n; prohibition of certain, 18
 Fornication, see Adultery
- Gagan River, 2
 Galip nut, gathering, 4
 Generosity, 21
 Government, 54
- Hakus, see Betrothal ceremony
Hanoi, 35
 Happiness, 29
Hekokot, see Engagement ceremony
Henene, see Marriage ceremony
 House, 7-8, 39; see also Tsiuhan
 Husband, duties of, 26-7, 37-8, 40, 42, 48
 Husband-wife relationship, 20, 41
- Illegitimacy, 41, 43
 Impotence, 45
 Incest, 17-18, 53
 Inheritance, 6, 24; see also Matrilineal society
 Insanity, 45
 Initiation, 48, 51
 Inter marriage, 18
- Kinship, marriage and, 17-18, 19, 53-4
- Law, 30; see also Canon Law
 Laziness, 45, 55
 Leadership, ascendancy to, 7; wealth as claim to, 7
 Legends: Gerian, 11-12; Matumbu, 12; role of in Solos life, 8-9, 11, 15, 41, 49-50; tukee, 12
 Lineage, 21, 22
 Love: conjugal, 25; defined, 24-5; demonstration of, 24; measure of, 29
- Manism, see Ancestor, worship of
 Marriage: between totem groups, 17; ceremony, 27-8, 38-9; Christianity and Solos, 49; consummation of, 45; defined, 49; indissolubility of, 27-8, 31; legality of, 31-2; readiness for, 31; responsibilities, 45; significance of, 20-1, 25, 32, 40, 41, 49, 55; as social institution, 20-2, 39-40; taboos and rites, 21
 Marriage, customs and practices, 41-2, 44, 54, 56
 Marriage, impediments, 44-8
- Marriage partners: choice of, 17, 20, 26, 28-9, 31-3, 39-40, 44; role of uncle in choice of, 20; qualities looked for in, 25, 31, 36, 40
 Marriage problems, 53-5; solutions to, 55-7
 Marriage regulations, 17-19
 Marriage, traditional: breakdown of, 18; legality of, 31
 Marriage, training for, 20-1, 24-5, 29, 32, 36, 40, 41-2
 Marriage, western, 18, 20, 49
 Marist mission, 51
 Matrilineal society, 43; descent in, 22; inheritance in, 6, 24; role of women in, 6, 42
 Men, role of, 26-7
 Menstruation, 31, 36, 45
 Missionaries, 13, 51-6
 Missions, 49, 51-4
 Modernity, 50-1
 Money, 7, 34, 37, 39, 56; in ceremony, 27; shell, 34; teeth, 4, 22, 34
 Monogamy, 22, 45-6
 Morality, concept of, 30
 Myths, see Legends
- Nahinous, see Feast
 Names, 4, 42
Noksingun, see Betrothal
 Nonage, 44-5
- Parents, 42; duties of, 21
 Parkinson, 1
 Pigs, 4-5, 36
 Polygamous marriage, 23-4
 Polygamy, 7, 22, 51; practice of, 22-4; sign of prestige, 22-3, 30
 Pregnancy, 32, 41, 44
 Premarital sex, see Sex
- Rape, 22, 30
 Relationships, 42; clan, 18; totem, 18
 Religion, see Manism
 Rites, fertility, 21; offering to dead, 11n
 Roles, changes in, 52-6
- Sago, 2, 4
 Sex, 41, 45; impotence, 45; knowledge of, 41; premarital, 43, 53; in cargo cult, 14; sacredness of, 21
Sinnahan, see Bridewealth
 Solomon Islands, 1
 Solos: character, 5, 8-9, 49; clans, 3, 5-6; diet, 4; environment, 3; language 3; legends, 11; life, 3-4; named, 3; religion, 10-11, 51-2; women, 4
 Solos society, breakdown of, 5, 44-5, 50, 52-5

- Sorcery, 48
 Spirits, 10-11, 32
 Spirit worship, see Manism
 Status, and children, 6, 21, 40; and marriage, 40; and polygamy, 23; of women, 43
 Taboos, 40, 42-3, 46, 51; childbirth, 21; food, 18; name, 42-3; marriage, 21
Tasi, 2, 5, 8
 Totem: differences, 46; intermarriage between, 19; practices, 19-20; relationships, 19; types of, 17-18, 46
 Tribe: Buka, 3; exogamy, 17; marriage within, 20; relationships within, 19
Tsiuhan, 7, 21, 32, 37-9, 41
 Uncle, maternal: role of, 5, 6, 20, 22-4, 26-7, 32, 35, 36
 Vatican II, 53
 Verguet, 1
 Virginity, 22
 Wealth, 7, 22, 23, 54
 Wife, duties of, 23, 37, 40, 44-5
 Women, Solos: characteristics of, 8; duties of, 4; role of, 26; status of, 6, 43
 World War II, 50

Abstract

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Traditional Marriage and the
Impact of Christianity

The author gives an account of marriage as practised by the traditional Solos, an inland people found in the island of Buka in Bougainville District. The study argues that the traditional marriage institution and its ramifications were completely compatible with and contributory to the stability of the social structure and that the introduction of Western concepts of marriage, like free choice of marriage partner, has brought about alienation and social disintegration.

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