TSUHANA
PROCESSES OF DISORDER AND ORDER IN IAU
TSUHANA:
PROCESSES OF DISORDER AND ORDER IN HALIA

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Statement of Authorship

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For Mariana

[Signature]
Statement of Authorship

I hereby certify that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted for a higher degree or diploma at any other tertiary institution. Except where the contributions of others are acknowledged, this thesis is the result of my original research.

Thiago Cintra Oppermann
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1. Introduction

1.1. "I will tell you the story of the coconut."

The story of the coconut says this: a long time ago, a couple had two sons. The firstborn was larger, the second-born small. Their names were Hamoana [firstborn] and Hatutu. Their parents cared for them until they were no longer infants, but then the parents died. They died, and left the boys to worry. They were still children. They were mournful [haromona] and pitiful [loumo]. The first born worried: "Eh? When our mother was here we ate good food with our father, and now we have no father, we have no mother, what will we eat? It will be hard." The second born replied, "We must find the way to find good food ourselves. There isn't just one way. Father, if he were with mother, would give us small things that we could sell and get a little money to help us along. But you and I, we don't have a father and mother. I alone am not able. But you and I must try and try what we can." So they fished for small bait by the beach. Then they would take the fish to the mission and sell them. "That's it! You and I have found our own way of getting money."

One day, they went fishing again. They caught some small fish, some large. Then they sold them, got a little bit of money. "You and I have quite a bit now." So they grew up, and once they were adolescents [leiata] they could catch the largest fish. But again, they began to think [bakate]. "Eh? It would be better if you and I made a canoe. We'll make a canoe and we shall catch fish in the ocean beyond the reef. The truly great fish are there, no?" The younger brother said, "We'll do just that. But you and I cannot just follow your ideas." So they made a canoe, a mona [sown plank single-hull canoe]. They took great care preparing it. "You and I made this canoe; now we can fish beyond the horizon." Presently, they purchased some vines from which to make fishing-lines from the missionary. "Oh, tomorrow you and I will go to the great sea beyond the bay, catch the largest fish and make the most money." The younger replied: "Tomorrow we will do that. Today, you and I will go fetch some taro, and cook it on the fire, and scrape it down."

In the morning, they placed the taro in their mona. They marshalled their strength and paddled away. They paddled and paddled – out of the bay far to the horizon. The little brother said "Eh, maybe you will stop and fish here." The older brother disagreed. "No, the water is too dark here, we can't see the fish coming." "Where will we find the proper place?" "Oh, I know. We'll go there." They paddle further still and arrive at the place which we called Lölbila – it's not here, it is very far away. It is where the spirits [lékane'] are now. "That's it. We'll stop here and fish." They put their hooks in the water, and catch enormous fish. "Puah! Now we will get the big bucks!" They catch so many fish their canoe fills up. They tie the fish together through their mouths, into bunches.

The younger brother speaks: "Eh, my brother, I feel very hungry now." "Ah, you eat. I'll keep fishing." The young brother eats the taro and the older fishes. He eats all the taro. And now this thing comes, from beneath the clouds, rising like smoke. It is the spirit they call Ruruhuna ['smoke']. The younger brother tries to warn the older: "Eh, my brother! What is that thing? I think something terrible is coming." The older brother says, "No, it's nothing, it just a cloud. It isn't a thing." So he keeps on fishing and fishing, while his little brother watches this thing. "Eh, brother, you pull in your line now because I can see
something terrible right there. It’s sneaking up on us.” “No, it’s still at his own home.” “No, I’ve seen it come. It is very close now.” His brother doesn’t listen to him. “Brother, draw back the string, or this terrible spirit will destroy us.” Now the older brother listens to him and winds his line. By now, the Ruruhuna is approaching quickly. The older brother is surprised: “Eh! Is it coming for us?” “Hurry, wind your string and paddle!” They paddle as quickly as they can, but the spirit approaches. “Oh, my brother, it is very close now! It will get us, and it will eat us now!” “No. You think for yourself. We will cheat it with fish.” “And what will we sell?” “No, forget it – it is not for us to sell the fish, because this thing that approaches, it is something terrible. We must throw the fish for it to eat.” “Alright then, you are my older brother.”

The thing closes in ready to kill them, and they pick up one bundle of fish and throw it to the Ruruhuna. It eats the fish, and they paddle away. The little brother scolds his older brother. “It’s just for this reason I told you to wind your line, to wind it quickly and you said it was not a spirit. And what now? We are done for.” They paddle, but the spirit eats all the fish and sets upon them again. It comes close, ready to kill them and they throw another bundle to appease it. They paddle and paddle, the smoke closes in, and again they throw a bundle of fish. Now they can already see the outline of their island in the far distance. “You and I are exhausted now, but still we have to paddle strongly.” They paddle and throw more fish, and so it goes as the land approaches. “Quick, paddle, our island is near.” “Yes, but I know that you and I can’t make it. The thing is still following us, but there are only two bundles of fish left. How will we do it? You and I will not be able to reach our island.” And the big brother says: “Brother, don’t worry. If it eats us, it is alright. It will eat us and perhaps we shall meet father and mother. You must not worry.” “No, I worry. I worry for us. I wish that one of us should live.”

The little brother asks “who will remain, you or I?” and he answers his own question: “If this thing is very close, you will cut me.” The big brother says: “No, you will cut me.” “No. You are strong, you will paddle quickly. I am small, and it would not do for it to eat us both.” It approaches again, and they throw the last bundle of fish. The little brother speaks: “Don’t think about it, just cut me. When it comes, I am telling you, you will cut my leg. Don’t cut my arm. If you break one of my legs off and throw it, we can still paddle together, I will still help you.” And so they seal their pact. The spirit approaches again. “Brother, cut my leg.”

Ruruhuna is only diverted. “Paddle! We can still paddle! Paddle strongly!” Just as the spirit finishes one leg, the brother cuts the other. “Cut my flank, so I can still paddle.” They scramble desperately, and near the beach. “Strong now! You take it from here!” says the younger brother. He can’t sit up properly anymore. “I will just try to paddle, but all my strength is gone. All my parts are gone.” Still the Ruruhuna approaches. “Now! Cut my belly, that has my penis, and throw it to him!” The older brother cuts his belly and throws it to the spirit. They are now very close to the reef. “Oh, I know – if you cut me here, where my heart is and give it to him, it will be enough for you to arrive at the beach. But not yet – cut my arms first.” The spirit devours the arms. “So this is it. I cannot work anymore. I will give you my last words. Only two pieces remain, so you will arrive with my head at the reef. You must paddle strong. You go while it eats my heart.” And now the Ruruhuna approaches for the last time. The brother cuts the head off and throws the body to the spirit. “I am finished. You go now, and do things according to your own thinking.” But he instructs him so: “If you arrive back at the village with my head, you will dig a hole in the pal singi [the taboo side of the tsuhabu clan house], put my head in and cover it with leaves.” And so the spirit eats his heart, and he is gone. The lonely brother paddles and paddles strongly, but when the spirit is about to eat him, he arrives at the beach. He lands with only his brother’s head. The thing arrives at the margin of the reef and is startled, turns back and flees.
"I must follow my brother's advice. He told me to bury this head in the singaid and I will have to see if something happens there." He did not know what it was. His brother hadn't said. He just buries the head and waits one, two, three, four and ten days, and after the tenth night the shoot breaks through the ground. "What is that?" It is something new, the brother wonders. After twenty days, it has grown large and after thirty the leaves open. "Eh? What is this? I must watch this!" It grows rapidly, and in short order it is a mature tree, bearing fruit. One nut is this green and another is this white coconut. Only two coconuts develop. The two nuts grow large and Hamōna goes to sleep. His sinauho [dream] comes to speak to him: "Eh! You go and remove these two coconuts, these two things hanging on that tree, and take off their shells." In the morning he wakes up and thinks, "my brother himself told me that I should take these two things. I must do as he says." So he cuts them and shells them, and as he removes the shells he is surprised: "Eh! My brother's eyes! This thing has a mouth, and eyes too! It looks like my brother's head. But this other coconut, what is that? It is white – what does that mean?"

At night he sleeps again and his vision returns. His brother gives him the vision. "You go and look inside this thing. You can drink and eat it." He does so, breaks it in the middle and eats it. He eats both coconuts. "How is it with this coconut?" He is surprised, because now two bunches of coconuts have sprouted. All kinds of coconut are there. "Eh! All kinds of coconut are hanging on these two bunches now – what's with this? First there was one black and one white." Again, his body gives him a vision. The vision makes him see. This one is black and this other is white – all these other colours that you see around they come after these first pair of colours. It is like this: it is the story my elders told me. And so the brother knows. He knows the meaning of all these colours: all these colours, you see, will arrive. There will come black men, white men, the Malays [malai], Chinese [kongkong], the redskins, the half-caste whites and half-caste blacks. It is clear now.

He sleeps, and his brother returns in a vision to tell him: "You sharpen all your things now. You go gather all your weapons. Bows, arrows, spears and axe – and this little dog too, you will take him." "Why?" "You will go back to the man who ate us." "How will we go there? Will we paddle this mondo like before?" "No, it will not be like that." This is a vision talking: he can hear the voice, but he cannot see who is speaking. This is what we called poku. "Just ready your weapons. I will show you. I will show you how to fight this thing; you will go, defeat it and retrieve my bones. It has shat my bones and they are now laying there. You will see a skeleton without a head, and know that it is mine. All the others it is eaten have skeletons with skulls." He prepares all the weapons, axes, arrows, bows, paku and barn [sword-clubs]. "Tomorrow, you will fight it." "But how will I go there? Will it come and fight here?" "No, you will go to where it is, and bring back my bones. You will climb on top of this coconut. I will come with you, I will carry you. You don't know why you planted my head, and now you ask me how you will go? Just do it. Sit down on top, and call out to this spirit. Tell him to come eat your excrement from your arse. Make him angry, and he will come for you."

The older brother does as he was told and the coconut springs up into the sky, farther and farther up and arrives where the Masalai lives. The poku reassures him: "Don't worry, you will not fall. Just sit at ease, as if you were in our house." He is not afraid. He does as his dead brother tells him. They arrive at the spirit-place.

Now he calls out: "Eh! You spirit, you fucking bastard, you ate my brother, come eat shit from my arse!" "Eh? What kind of man talks like that to me? Oh, my friend, you are seducing [matamole] me. You come now, we'll fight." The spirit surges and tries to seize this child, it tries all its powers, but it is not enough. It cannot take this child. Hamōna waits, and the spirit uses all its power. "When it has used all its power, then we will kill it." Ruruhuna becomes a strong wind, and tries to topple the coconut. But no, the
coconut sways but is not broken and so the spirit's power is wasted. Runuhuna tries all its powers. "All his powers are finished. Now I will fight you." "Ah, you can fight me, but I am not finished, I am still here. But you will not be able to kill me." The brother sets about killing him. He tightens his bow and loosens the arrows to strike the body of the spirit. He shoots them again and again, until ten have struck this spirit. The spirit weakens and the poku encourages his living brother: "Kill him, spear him!" The spirit tries to climb the coconut, but the brother shoots him down. When the spears and arrows are finished the poku says: "now cut him with the axe." Hamoana approaches close to the spirit and starts cutting into it. He cuts and cuts, starting with the legs and working his way to the heart. "Break him like you broke me!" He cuts the neck, and finally the spirit is dead.

Hamoana then searches for the bones of his brother. He takes the bones, and jumps back onto the coconut. The coconut flies up again, around and comes back to the village. He takes the bones but he doesn't bury them. He carefully places them in a bokis kontrakt [an indentured labourer's trade box]. He decorates it beautifully. Now they prayed, they called out on this box. When you wanted for something, you called out from this box. Power came from it to aid their village. And now this younger brother became poku. The poku would speak, but you would not see them. In this way Hamoana got the power to work all kinds of miracles in his village. It is this power that he got from his brother who had been eaten. This brother is a power man, because he has been made power.

So it came to pass that the mission knew that he had this power. The priest comes, and demands that Hamoana make miracles appear. So he takes the head of his brother, the head which is the coconut. "This coconut, I tell you, will become a man. I will place this coconut, and you will see." He tells the priest: "We shall sit here, and the coconut will speak." They sit together. "Alright, now you can tell me something you know." It's the coconut speaking! The priest is speechless. "Eh! Whence this faith [Tok Pisin: biled]?" He sits down and thinks: "This man, God has twice given him speech. But I, I myself am I priest and I am not able to tell this coconut to speak. I am man who only reads what others have put in a book. I am a man who teaches men about good order [u markato a niga], all friends together... but this man here, what does he have? Listen now, I am telling you, I will not rubbish your work. I am not going to rubbish you, but I will go study [English loan word studjim] your work and how I got my own ideas, and come back to get your story. Ok."

The missionary goes to study what kind of thing he was seeing when the coconut spoke. Hamoana gave the coconut to the priest, and told him to go shell and eat it. "Ah! I can't eat this coconut because it talked!" "No, no, you go, you must know where the spirit is. You - you know about this way. It is not the coconut, but spirit... But you look at this coconut, I will shell it for you - see? It has eyes, a mouth and nose. See?" The missionary says no more. He takes the bokis kontrakt and carries it away. It is in the mission now. The missionary speaks: "I, I will teach all men with this power." This man [the younger brother] is lost inside the mission now. He is lost inside the mission.

This little story is just that. In the story they told me, this man [the young brother's spirit] is lost within the mission. And if you and I would like to see this man, we can go within the mission and they will show it to us. It is this talk that my big men gave me. But how? Will I go into the mission and ask them how? "I would like to see this thing" or what? No. The truth is that the priest has this thing in his right hand, and we are in his left hand [i.e. he will not let them come together.] But you look here, this coconut, it is a coconut, isn't it? This thing, I tell you will go to the whole world, all countries. In our country of Buka, we would like to find this thing we cried on. That's all. I will give you this knowledge: you do it like this. You can drink it. You can put things inside if you like. You can eat its man [Tok Pisin: milk]: it is man of this man. And it is his blood.
1.2. A tropical demiurge

A number of features of the origin of coconuts suggest a particular historical period. The bokis kontrak is an emblem of indentured labour. A pine box, around 90 cm long and 45 cm square, it was the single most important item in the labourer’s possession – the link between the cash economy and the village. But it was also characteristic of an early phase of indenture: a time when the indentured labourer was the sole link to the cash economy, when he brought the rewards of indenture back to the village as goods in a case, rather than as cash. In the origin of coconuts there is a mission, but no government; it is not where the brothers pray, it is where they trade. Rokou, the narrator of the story of the coconut, is explicit about this: the bokis kontrak is the ‘first thing we cried on.’ The mission steals it, and the villagers are left to follow it into the church. The first mission in Hanahan arrived in 1908, but widespread conversions did not take place until the 1920s. Already in 1913, the then German administration had to suppress an ostensible ‘cult’ movement in the island. The changes wrought by the mission loomed and cast a pall over the whole of Halia society that is easily discerned amongst the themes of the origin of coconut.

This period postdates the earliest contact between the Buka and whites. There are few traces of those first interactions in present-day Buka culture. The Halia often note that whites are called u ton taulala, the ‘men of roving islands.’ These are thought to be tall ships with sails. There are stories about early incidents of cannibalism of whites. Then there is often-repeated claim that the name of island, ‘Buka’ derives from the arrival of the first white man to arrive, as part of Louis de Bougainville’s expedition of 1768. Supposedly, unable to understand the whites, the locals kept asking ‘bouca?’ Somewhat forcibly, this is rendered as ‘what [is he saying]?’2, which the whites mistook for the name of the island the Halia call Leitana. It is characteristic that the very first interaction between whites and Bukas is regarded as miscommunication, for the Halia would continue to feel misunderstood, and still do. But there is little to convey to us the attitudes of those then alive. This is not so with the period of colonization proper, the time between 1890 and 1920 reflected in the origin of coconut.

That period leaves an imprint on the basic subject of the narrative. The story, after all, takes place before there were coconuts. Well, when could that have been, here of all places?3 While the origin of coconuts conjures the artefacts and crises of a particular epoch, it is not clearly set at a specific time. Rokou himself also places the brothers amongst the truly first generations of men and women, ol profet lain (the prophets) who lived together at Mt. Bei, the mountain from which all Buka trace their migration. There, the brothers have what appear to be different lives, but in fact the meaning of those stories, and of the story of coconuts are complementary. The parallel secret and open narratives are an example of what is called a rangana hatalinga, the manipulation of opposites – literally, ‘talk of the ear’, talinga (ear) being the name of a hamlet which, it is said, worked at night and lit palm-brushes for light during the day. Though its meaning is local, this is characteristic of the manner in which the Halia in general organize knowledge.

1 For an extended discussion, see Graves (1983).
2 Halia boka, “isn’t it”. This corresponds to Tok Pisin laka, frequently used at the end of sentences.
3 Coconuts have been dated in nearby areas to at least twenty three thousand years ago, long before the arrival of the Halia’s distant Austronesian ancestors (Specht 2005:266).
Rokou and others are dismissive of the suggestion that the coconuts did not exist before 1900. (They also understand that missionaries arrived long after ol profet lam had departed.) Indeed his story contrasts with another narrative that is often heard amongst younger men, that there really were no coconuts at all before the arrival of white men. This idea circulates as part of an abject suspicion that nothing in pre-colonial Buka culture was worthwhile. Even the most distinctive features of Halia life, such as the sown-plank *muna* canoe – a hallowed emblem: one is displayed at the Bougainvillean Parliament with great pride – would have been introduced by outsiders. Upon reflection, few people hold onto such beliefs; everyone knows that *muna* are indigenous and long ago, women fetched water from the *kukunei* beach springs in specially prepared coconuts. But more importantly, the origin of coconut has precisely the opposite meaning of the young men’s tale of Halia resourcelessness. It is a narrative of resourcefulness, of the consequences of *bakeats* – a word that means at once ‘thought’, ‘lightning’ and ‘Satan.’

Another question we may ask is why just this cast of characters and this historical period should be implicated in the origin of coconut. The answer is that there is a profound difference between the coconuts that were and the coconuts that are. Before about 1860 coconuts existed within an entirely indigenous intellectual world, the precise contours of which we can now only guess at. But first with sporadic blackbirding, and then much more intensively from 1880 onwards, Rokou’s grandparent’s generation were compelled and recruited to work in coconut plantations. These plantations, distant lands of smoke located in Samoa and then later in New Britain, were melting pots in which diverse groups of Pacific Islanders and other peoples were thrust together. The echo of this resounds in the origin of coconuts: it is also the origin of human racial differences. Still, the late 19th century was a period when men were taken away from the island, exposed to the new economy, then sent back with goods and more likely than not, word of the prodigious interest whites displayed in this plant. The island itself remained outside government control of any sort until 1901. Shortly before WWII, the German administration forced the population to plant coconuts for copra. Some of these original palms have been preserved at Hahalis, the village in which I would conduct most of my fieldwork. They stand some forty meters high today and though they still bear a few nuts, their preservation isn’t a matter of economic calculation. These palms were in fact the very first thing pointed out to me when I arrived in the village. They mark the beginning of a fundamentally different political and economic organization.

1.3. All persons must be one person

In its own way, this thesis will tell the story of the coconut.

More exactly, it will examine one of the less obvious protagonists of that story: the *tsuhana* clan house as it has emerged after the new order of coconuts and cash cropping sunk roots into its *pal singil*, its

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4 Buka was a main area of recruitment for work in plantations and in the German native police force, along with Bougainville and Neu Mecklenburg (New Ireland) (Sack and Clark 1979:178, 211).

5 Rokou’s use of the word *Malai*, is significant: Malay labour was never used during the Australian period.
taboo yard. The history of the *tsuhabna* in the age of the coconut is complex, with a wide meaning. *Tsuhabna* clan houses, the Halia insist, are their form of government. North Bougainvillean social organization in general, and the Halia in particular, is in certain key respects ambiguous. The *tsuhabna* is the main means by which the ambiguity is resolved, or at least deferred; it is also one means by which ambiguity is generated. The system of hereditary ranks that is so characteristic of these Austronesian societies is nothing other than the *tsuhabna* system. Indeed, the *tsuhabna*, *teikal*, *petis*, *gohus* and other figures who fill the matrix of prescribed power are physically identified with the *tsuhabna* and its parts. These houses do not work as office buildings to 'house' the operation of political society; the activity of their construction is itself the political organization of society. The completed buildings are only the visible expression of a complex, totalizing system that reaches into every home and has implications for the livelihood of every person. The force of expectation makes the house's presence felt even when it has yet to be built. It continues to cast a shadow over the lineages that erected it decades after the *sipi*, the physical material of the house, has rotted away. Indeed the influence of the house multiplies and intensifies as it recedes into distinct memories governed by incompatible intentions. When perhaps for the first time in a generation, a new *tsuhabna* is completed at a hamlet, ambiguity and competing claims must be purged, and unity must be established. This often leads to conflict and superposed rather than reconciled claims. The Halia consider this very much unacceptable, yet the means for overcoming the problem also exacerbate it. They thus find themselves in crisis.

The *tsuhabna* offers more than a single image of order. It provides several means with which to imagine the fundamental political problem of the one and the many. This is the meaning of the frontispiece of this thesis, the *kits* broom made of sago frond spines tied tightly together. Should one spine be removed, the *kits* falls apart. This is a figure returned to again and again by leaders and followers alike. The model for this model, as it were, is the *tsuhabna*. Here first of all, *a katun boboto e a toa katun*: 'all persons are one person.' This is a state of orderliness that has a unique set of meanings within the field of Halia political kinship, and in the context of the political and economic problems the Buka confront. Attaining unity is at once the nominal goal and imagined precondition of every political project in Buka. However, this has different meanings for different people at different times. Today, its usual meaning approximates the image on the frontispiece of Hobbes' *Leviathan*: that is, all will be bound together, and act as if moved by one will. The intent is explicitly authoritarian. But whereas, the logic of Hobbes unfolds within the the contractarian horizon of civil society, for the Halia the image is developed with a somatic ontology of power: according to one exposition, in any group or venture someone will be the head, possessed of intellect and foresight, and others will be the belly, the seat of emotion and strength — a view which the Buka readily scale to the organization of Bougainville generally, with themselves as the head, and the main island — former home of the Bougainville Revolutionary Army — as the belly. There are very important differences between such ideas and the contractarian model of Hobbes, the doctrine of legal constitution, covenant or for that matter the concept of laws separate from individuals and their social relations; but there is also overlapping themes and superficial similarities which come into play as the Halia consider how to translate their forms of social organization into systems of government, law and contract.
Yet authoritarianism is not the only meaning expressed in the saying that all men are one, the tsunbana assemblage or in the image of the kits. These are also vehicles for ideas about equality. Pooled together the strength of the community is unstoppable. Dissolved into its constituent parts the community is plagued by biakkesesi, damaging, mutually demeaning competition. In this condition, people become self-seeking (bihiese, 'each one by/for himself'), fight and cease to care for their neighbours and kin. Jealousy (biomi) corrodes any effort at development. The order of tsunbana is not supposed to be like this. It ought – viewed from a certain aspect – to be an order of love freely given without expectations of return, or hatoatong (Rimoldi and Rimoldi 1992:158, 195; E. Rimoldi 2005:104). The tsunbana is an institution built by sacrifice, friendship and reproduction; we shall see just how closely allied these are. A tsumono, that is a chief, cannot fully articulate himself as a good chief unless he welcomes strangers and provides for his people; but if he is a truly noble tsumone, he is not even supposed to draw attention to this fact. In the kits all are fastened together and alike. For one to benefit without all benefiting is understood to dissolve the bond between them.

1.4. Authenticity and dissension

But is the story of coconut even a Halia story? This particular myth and very similar ones are distributed throughout Papua New Guinea in a pattern that is difficult to reconcile with pre-colonial transmission. Omitting the distinctive ending, the story is identical to one collected in New Ireland by a colonial officer in 1939 (LNAR 1940:22-23), and very similar to the Tolai myth recorded by Bola (1977). This is not surprising, given the long history of contact between Buka, New Ireland and the Gazelle via Nissan Island. But a nearly identical version was collected from a non-Austronesian group in the Gulf of Papua (Pokana 1978). The societies in the intervening areas of the Cape and Massim have different myths, as do nearby groups in Bougainville, Choiseul and New Georgia. The Halia version is very similar to that told in the Mortlock Islands, a Polynesian outlier with which the Halia had some contact in pre-colonial times, but in the form of hostilities. It seems plausible that the origin of coconut has a source in the plantation milieu: the smoke monster, the far away island and above all the fact that the coconut heralds the advent of racial differences signal this. There is also the political implication of the story. The Buka were forced to labour and plant coconuts, and later set about on projects of emancipation and self-transformation, such as the Hahalis Welfare Society which were fundamentally mobilizations on the basis of copra. The brothers go to the land of Ruruhuna twice: once by accident and are devoured, but they return on top of the coconut to claim for themselves greater power. In 1946 a patrol officer wrote: “There were, and still are, some old men in northern Buka who worked in former German Samoa, and these men brought back, and still foster, some revolutionary ideas” (PR 1 1946).

6 Folk etymologies for this include 'to give each other an earache’ (kekekese, earache) or 'mutual masturbation' (keke, semen). Also bihkekesesi, substituting bi- (repeated action prefix) for bia- (mutual action prefix).

7 Tuluun, the Carteret Islands, were originally populated by a Polynesian group closely related to the present-day Nukumanu (Mortlock Islanders). The islands were taken over by Hanahan Bay Halia some 350 years ago, according to local oral history.

Or perhaps the story is much more recent than that. "I've heard that story. It was in a book a schoolteacher brought over a few years ago" said one informant, while another tried to convince me not to include the story in my book: "It is a story for frightening children to sleep, it is not a true story." Perhaps Rokou made it up from bits and pieces he had heard around the place -- no doubt someone did that, sometime. The question of authenticity is taken much more seriously by the Halia than by most contemporary anthropologists. After all, what sense is there in asking if it was truly a Halia story? Had it arrived last year only to be identified with by Rokou and reprocessed by his powerful and authentically Halia imaginal faculty, would it be of less interest? Would it be of less value as an oral historical source -- or, as a testimony to an archetypal encounter with the colonial coconut and Rokou's interpretation, would it be double the value? For the Halia, the answer is a categorical "no": if the story is foreign, it is not Halia. The elements of history no less than the protocols and structure of tsibana must be self-generated, autochthonous, authentic. For them, affirming Halia authenticity against cultural intrusions is essential. But in this respect also, the origin of coconuts stands as a nearly perfect example of the problematic of Halia history.

For all the elevation of the ideal of unity, Halia culture and its sister cultures nearby are conspicuously disunited. This is very readily apparent when interviewing informants and cross-checking their ideas. There is often little consensus on specific points about social organization, land ownership, migration histories, genealogy or the protocols of rituals. Recent political history, perhaps less surprisingly, is recounted in radically different ways by its fractious protagonists. Major cultural complexes seem solid from the point of view of one village, or one hamlet, but five minutes travel will find another hamlet where the complex is a malicious lie, or even more puzzlingly, has never been heard about. This lack of agreement is extremely significant partly because of the belief, which is universally shared, that there ought not to be disagreement, that there is a single truth to migration histories and land and that there is a single true kastom. Almost anything the Halia can perceive about their society and culture, they perceive in several incompatible ways; but there is a pattern and structural logic to their disagreement. In particular, there are identifiable means by which disagreement is suspended and lived with. Informants insist that major cultural topics have to be discussed in forums which include both major pinaposa totemic classes and ideally representatives from a diversity of tsibana and localities: in such a forum, a subtle political practice regulates disclosure of information, and a provisional consensus is sensed out without truly impinging on the fact that much remains hidden, and held to be more powerful than what is disclosed.

Forced into facing the fact that a neighbouring group has a different understanding of history, Halia leaders will often say: "it's their story, they know -- we know otherwise." This is a reflection of an ethos of aggressive passivity, caution and recognition that one will not easily defeat one's rivals' lies. It does not reflect a laissez-faire spirit, much less an attitude of relativism. The specific contours of this ethos play the reality of dissent against the aspiration to unity -- an aspiration that ultimately makes sense because there is no unity.

The attitude common in contemporary anthropology, that there could be different truths to different points of view is alien to the Halia perspective, or at least to Halia aspirations. The Halia draw a distinction between three kinds of narrative: masakou mana, 'true history', babatate 'fables' or in Tok
Pisin, ‘stor oblong poretim pikinin’ (stories for scaring children) and masakou gamon ‘false history’. Masakou may be true or false, and its significance hinges on this; babatate are not expected to be true, but may be. There are many different versions of Halia history, masakou mana: but does this mean one ought to consider these as myths, as babatate? No, for the Halia it means that someone is not telling the truth. The Halia themselves recognise a strict principle of empirical factuality for sorting out true history from the many histories that they hear: but they face great difficulties in accomplishing this because of the kind of evidence that they are presented with, and because of the means by which knowledge circulates in their society. They are emphatic that if one could see for oneself, there would be only one truth. But the eyewitnesses are dead. Even so, truth claims also have a powerful valency in the reactions through which social institutions take shape, and the dead are not perfectly silent.

1.5. A fractured landscape

Why is disunity such a problem for the Halia, and why is there so little consensus? The problem of unity is at the forefront of Halia concerns because they perceive their society to face serious challenges that require cooperation, order and discipline. What are these problems? The list is long and will be familiar to anyone with experience of Papua New Guinea: young men are out of control, they drink, fight and fornicate; leaders are corrupt, workers are lazy, cash cropping is an unrewarding treadmill and the village attracts no investment. Government services are in a state of collapse. Efforts to establish businesses fail repeatedly under the weight of kin obligations, but if they succeed, those same kin ties are stretched to breaking point by the uneven distribution of rewards. At the same time, those rewards are desired with a burning passion. Young men dream through music videos and films infused with sexual freedom and masculine omnipotence; they live through drudgery, frustration and subordination. There is a perceived lack of personal security in the island and the police is considered nearly worthless; the trauma of the Bougainvillean civil war remains unhealed. Sorcery is out of control. Religious sects bicker amongst themselves; the tsunono are no longer obeyed, tsbana are built by men who have no right to them. There is, in sum, a landscape of pervasive anomie. But of the many problems that trouble the Halia, two must be considered as especially grave and dominate the villager’s time: the closely connected questions of land and government.

The Halia today are plagued by chronic land disputes. These have a very different dynamic to the kind of disputes that make headlines in the international press: those which arise from compensation payments in the case of mining, or from negotiations between villagers and logging companies. In such cases, there is an external agency with very large quantities of money which faces off with a community that must win and somehow divide spoils. This type of conflict has a privileged place in recent literature on land tenure in Melanesia, for the obvious reason that very large sums of money are at stake, with potentially very serious national ramifications. Indeed, the Bougainville conflict stemmed from one such dispute. By contrast, the disputes in Buka are overwhelmingly between villagers. Although these may involve external revenue streams, these are minor – for instance, the sale of gravel, compensation for a garbage dump, rent of land for telephony pylons. The conflicts typically involve land for cash cropping, or land the possession of which is an index of power within
the traditional village power structure. For the most part, there is strictly speaking no shortage of land in the area studied: the main limits on cash crop production in Buka are labour and capital factors, and the price structure of tropical agricultural commodities. Large plantations are indeed underutilized or even abandoned: still, they are fought over. Control of land is understood within a hegemonic struggle for territory: if claims over a section are not enforced, rival claims will be asserted. The concerns are thus framed within a long time horizon, encompassing the survival of social groups over generations, in a discourse that activates profound anxieties regarding reproduction and alliance. For the most part, the conflicts revolve around small areas, but they are both chronic and pervasive. Indeed, there is virtually no section of any Halia village that is not embroiled in some form of land dispute, either directly or as parties to nearby conflicts. The conflicts are extremely difficult to resolve. Not for being small are they judged less severe, and indeed they have an utterly fundamental role in contemporary social organization.

Halia leaders consider there to be fundamentally two types of conflict relating to land: disputes over tisiski, that is to say land properly speaking, and disputes over mitsunono, the authority of the tsunono. Land disputes proper concern boundaries between tsuhana or villages, whereas disputes over mitsunono concern which lineage will have control over a specific tract of land. Ultimately, however, both types of disputes are closely interwoven. Since colonization there has been a transformation in the character and source of political power through which the role of the tsunono as landowner has become more central, if not innovated upon from scratch. As may be inferred with a reasonable degree of confidence, the traditional tsunono's authority stemmed above all by having power over people, a power demonstrated by two equipotent, and indeed closely related acts: the exercise of authority over life and death, and the power to host, settle and renew the community (Rimoldi and Rimoldi 1992:37; M. Rimoldi 1971:48; E. Rimoldi 1982). The tsunono formed a key element in, though he was by no means the sole guarantor of a system of warfare, sorcery and social reproduction. With the development of a cash-crop based economy and the entrenchment of routes to prestige and power based on control of this economy, under conditions of dramatic demographic expansion, power over land has become decisive. The critical instrument for the regulation, expansion and cultural articulation of this power is the peculiar form of state system that has developed over the last fifty years, which combines on the one hand the legal framework of ownership and machinery of courts and litigation, with a political system characterised by profoundly entrenched patronage, indeed a state system that must be understood as being constituted in such terms.

1.6. The paradoxical need for the state

The Halia refer to the tsuhana as gavman blong peles – the village's own form of government – but it is in fact more than that. The order of tsuhana represents a prism through which the kaleidoscopic pattern of land conflict and social anomie can be recombined into an imaginary plenitude – yet in practice, the reassembled picture changes depending on the location of who is holding the prism. The difficulties do not end there. The tsuhana by itself cannot achieve the goals desired for it. Halia political discourse traces the contours of a paradox: the only force the tsunono chiefs consider
powerful enough to establish good order is the *tsmbana*, but the system of *tsmbana* 'on its own' is incapable of achieving the desired order. To reassert and reaffirm the *tsmbana*, the chiefs and their supporters turn to the idea of integrating the 'traditional' order with the state. But many of the reasons why the *tsmbana* system is perceived to be faltering are said—by the *tsunono* and their critics alike—to be the already-deep integration of the *tsmbana* into the awful mess of the state. Indeed, the criticism is apt, for the paradoxical character of Halia projects of state lies in the fact that there is indeed little sense in speaking of a system of *tsmbana* 'on its own' apart from the system of malfunctioning state institutions and all-too-finely functioning network of patronage and clientelism centred on actually existing Papua New Guinean and Bougainvillean governments. That is to say, the reestablishment of an order true to the character of Halia society focused on the *tsmbana* is a project that seeks to build an authentically Halia house using materials and tools that are not themselves derived solely from Halia society and which at every step of construction further indebts the builders to the problematic broader political sphere.

For instance: once the Halia established their Council of Elders in 2007, a dispute immediately arose regarding the genealogical status of the man elected to be president. An attempt was made to exclude him on the grounds that his matrilineage is recognised as landowner in Lonahan, in the neighbouring Tsitalato constituency. The issue was resolved through the intervention of the Autonomous Government of Bougainville Member for Halia, who applied the definition of Bougainvillean citizenship found in the Bougainvillean Constitution to the specific case of Halia 'citizenship'. That is to say, the local political process reached a stalemate and the significant question of *who is a Halia person* was decided by the deployment of juridical fiat. It would be a mistake to see this as evidence that the Halia lack cultural sovereignty—that they are dependent on an external authority to decide on even such a basic issue. It was, after all, just as much a resort to legal manoeuvring to challenge his status as Halia. But the more basic mistake in this respect would lie in the idea that there is something fundamentally external about the Bougainvillean constitution, the apparatus of state, or the office of the ABG Member. These 'inauthentic', culturally alien documents are part and parcel of the world the Halia inhabit and through which they are constituted. That is a world with contradictions—contradictions that are productive just as they are disruptive. Even the ideal of good order that could be reassembled through a *tsmbana* that has encompassed and reproduced within itself the power of the state is an ambiguous composite picture: even in the greatest leaps of idealization, obedience to the *tsunono* sits uneasily with an effective police and judiciary, the necessarily partial and obscure negotiation of kinship clashes with the demands of bureaucracy and transparency, demands that are the *tsunono*’s own.

The very institution of *tsmbana*, the master-symbol of Halia order, has a genealogy which like so many Halia genealogies demands doubt even as it admits none. There are clear indications that the reasons *tsmbana* are built today are not the same as the reasons they were built in the past: above all, there is the motivation to translate it into the structure of the reorganized Bougainvillean state, a process which demands most of all that the *tsmbana* be represented as 'the traditional authority.' This concept of 'traditional authority' indeed has a specific meaning in the basic law of the Bougainvillean constitution. At the same time, 'traditional authority' has a multiplicity of meanings for the *tsunono* and other political leaders, a multiplicity that orbits around the idea of genealogically enfranchised,
culturally appropriate authority. It would be a mistake to think that in their hands one finds an undisturbed notion of tradition which had to be phrased by compromise into the Constitution: far from it, the **tsamano** and political leaders have transformed the meaning of traditional authority, and could do nothing else, since they themselves have been transformed. Yet the paths to status and authority in Halia society retain much continuity with the cultural framework of the past, and the suggestion that the transformation of authority results in a loss of authenticity cannot be brokered. The transformation is authentically Halia. But there are profound changes in a system that no longer relies on violence, in which the sacrificial complex that once underwrote the expansion of alliances has been sublimated, in which culture has been reappropriated through Christian narratives, in which land control is decided in courts and court-like informal sessions, for the purpose of establishing hegemony over cash cropping resources the exploitation of which is by now a century-old tradition.

1.7. Buka and the Halia

Buka is the second largest island in the Bougainville group, separated from the main island by the Buka Passage, a fast-flowing 100m-wide channel. The Parkinson Range rises along the leeward West Coast, reaching height of 600m at Mt. Bei, the mythological origin of the island's population. This is the territory of the Solos, the 'lati' (bush) people, whose language is unintelligible to the 'tan' (beach) peoples - the Halia and Haku to their East and North. The windward East Coast consists of an almost uninterrupted cliff from Hangen, near the Buka passage easing off in the Haku territory. Apart from the hills, most of the island was formed by the uplift of a Pliocene atoll (a fact with important ramifications for mythology, as we shall see in Sect. 8.4 below); at the village of Hahalis, the coastal cliff, once the atoll's outer wall, rises to a height of 60-80 meters from a narrow beach. Inland, the terrain slopes more gently to near sea level, forming a central lowland. Limestone foundations entails that there are numerous caves but no rivers except in the Solos territory. The soil is well drained up to three kilometres inland, where it becomes boggy and well-suited for taro cultivation. In the dry season, water is collected from sinkholes and from beach springs, some of which are below the high-tide mark. The island is ringed by coral reefs, though in the exposed East Coast these are narrow and battered, offering challenging conditions in which to launch canoes. The stiller waters of the West stretch to a number of coastal islands, the largest of which are densely-populated Petats and Pororan. The reef here is extensive and provides abundant marine resources, which the islanders trade for Halia tubers in a biweekly market at Queen Carola Harbour that is still partly non-monitized.

The earliest human occupation of Buka is attested at 29,000 years before present, at a cave near Malasang (Wickler and Spriggs 1988; Wickler 2001). The current population, however, speaks Austronesian languages which are thought to have arrived with the Lapita expansion 2,800 to 3,200 years ago (Wickler 2001:241; Spriggs 2005). Note that the distinctive Buka form of late Lapita pottery has not been found elsewhere in the North Solomon (Walter and Sheppard 2009:49), possibly

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* Note that the market was abandoned in WWII due to a combination of taro blight and lack of fishing equipment, only resuming much later, in the intervening period, monetized exchange took place at Buka Passage. (Packard 1971:106).
suggesting a long history of distinctive Buka and North Bougainvillian cultural practices. In Buka itself there is an uninterrupted sequence of pottery from the arrival of Lapita to the present, with the latest stylistic phase having been established approximately 500 years ago (Specht 1972).

Buka is divided amongst three linguistic groups: Solos, Petats-Pororan and Halia. Halia is further divided into three dialects, Haku, Halia and Selau, the last of which is spoken in the Selau peninsula of mainland Bougainville (Halial is also spoken in the Carteret Islands.) These languages are closely related. They are classified with Taiof, Saposa, Hahon, Tinputz and Teop – spoken in mainland Bougainville and surrounding coastal islands – and Nehan, the language of Nissan Island, as a distinct group of Austronesian languages. South of Teop and Hahon on the Bougainvillian mainland, there are additional Austronesian languages with a substantially different structure and vocabulary (Tryon 2005; Ross 1988). A somewhat distinctive form of Tok Pisin is spoken in Buka; virtually no adult is unable to speak it, and most children are fluent by the time they enter their teens. The Halia language indeed shows influence from Tok Pisin – numbers above ten and kin terms for father and mother are usually given in Tok Pisin. The agglutinative structure of the language allows for the ready incorporation of foreign words, which come to acquire unique meanings as foreign nouns are modified into Halia verbal forms. Elementary education is conducted in Halia, whilst Primary School teachers often use Pisin, a fact that is resented by most villagers, who value Halia and English very highly.

Whilst there are substantial differences between the mode of life of the Habon and Teop, at one extremity, and the Haku at the other, all these cultures show deep family resemblances and can be considered a cultural area distinct from Austronesian and Non-Austronesian groups in Central Bougainville to the south. In certain respects, these societies are closer to those to the north, especially Nissan, with whom the Haku intermarried and traded Buka taro for Nissan pigs. Historically, there was substantial intermarriage between the North Bougainvillian and Buka groups, and individual settlements of Halia have a variety of different migration histories, mostly within Buka and Selau, but spanning the whole of this North Bougainville Austronesian (NBA) region.

1.8. The relationship of this thesis to Bougainvillian history

The history of Bougainville and Buka is complex, and has been treated in considerable detail (Reagan and Griffin 2005; Oliver 1973, 1991; Laracy 1976; M. Rimoldi 1971, ch.3), especially in relation to the Bougainville Conflict (Reagan 1998; May and Spriggs 1990; Denoon 2000; Harris et al 1999). I will not rehearse it in detail here; knowledge of this background is presumed of the reader. After Beatrice

10 Whilst Haku and Halia are very much mutually intelligible to native speakers, Selau presents difficulties for other Halia speakers. The question of whether these are distinct languages is entirely politicized. We may adapt the Yiddish saying that 'a language is a dialect with an army and a navy' to Buka as 'a language is a dialect with a member of parliament'; Halia have shared an Provincial electorate with the Haku but not Selau. They are now represented by three different Autonomous Region members, and many people insist that they are distinct languages.

11 Eg. ara e go proactivata – "we must be proactive" (proactivize). The imperative form go ma, is often replaced by go mar, ultimately from English must via Tok Pisin.

12 Halia and Haku mythology accounts for the abundance of pigs in Nissan by saying that pigs fled Buka when men started to build tsubana and feast them with sacrifices.
Blackwood's encyclopaedic *Both Sides of Buka Passage* (1935), the subsequent ethnographies by M. Rimoldi (1971), E. Rimoldi (1982), their combined *Hahalis and the Labour of Love* (Rimoldi and Rimoldi 1992) and Sagir (2003, 2004, 2005) have all emphasized the historical development of the local societies. This bibliographic landscape was one important factor in my choice of field site, since it would, I believed, provide a solid platform from which to launch an in-depth analysis of social transformations and long-term political processes. Indeed, I chose to study Hahalis and Hanahan partly because of the history of research in these villages, believing that I could make use of previous research to better understand the Hahalis Welfare Society, its ultimate fate, to follow the community through the years of the civil war and the development of the contemporary Papua New Guinean and Bougainvillean state systems.

As my fieldwork progressed it became apparent that the focus of the existing literature has created for Buka the reverse problem that once plagued anthropology: instead of a neglect of history, there has been a tendency to historicise social institutions to the point their structural logic has been relatively neglected. Often, this choice was motivated and fully justified by the important implications of local history, which has a very rich texture. M. Rimoldi (1971) made a defensible choice in glossing over the organization of Halia society when reporting on the unfolding drama of the Hahalis Welfare Society; Sagir’s (2003) resort to a somewhat mechanical segmentary model is understandable when his primary task was to condense thirty years of institutional history; E. Rimoldi’s (1982) close-up view of the relationships of affect in the Hahalis Welfare Society is perceptive, turns funny and moving, whilst her analysis of brideprice as a transformation of human sacrifice is deep and substantially accurate, its implications are not drawn as fully as they can be. There are many difficulties with these works, but their presentation of historical materials has made them permanently useful.

Beatrice Blackwood’s *Both Sides of Buka Passage* cannot serve as a counterweight for this historical focus – *not*, it must be stressed, because of its outmoded, *Notes and Queries* style, but because of extent of social change in the island. This, and the organization of *Both Sides of Buka Passage* means it has effectively the status of a primary source; a very good one, precisely because within it description dominates utterly over analysis.

History does not have to be the antagonist of structural analysis, but if events are cashed largely in term of proximate causes, personal choices and vicissitudes of other, exogenous events, one risks leaving social organization unintelligible. Ultimately the very historical actors one would wish to understand come to be submerged in chronicles; the context of their actions dissolves in the details of biography. Yet for the most part, the real reason history and anthropology ‘clash’ is not a contradiction in the theoretical framework of the disciplines, but the fact that the practical requirements of writing and the procedures for research are different. Careful, rigorously documented historical argument is a laborious task that inevitably takes up space – so is ethnographic fieldwork, the presentation of case studies, and so too is the kind of analysis that renders cultural complexes and social processes intelligible to outsiders (and, I hope, insiders as well). While some true masters of the art are able to succinctly put ethnographic cases in historical perspective in an intelligible and readable format, more often than not caution might be advisable. Eleanor and Max Rimoldi’s *Hahalis and the Labour of Love* is a case in point. Here, the combination of historical and ethnographic analysis has in
some respects combined the problems of historiography as chronicle and far too elliptical ethnographic presentation. It is doubtful that a reader without a detailed understanding of Buka could understand the book as it was intended. At least, I did not: having read the book perhaps a dozen times, along with extensive historical research, it still took sixteen months of fieldwork for it to finally become clear to me. This is a great shame, because the history it tells is, in a word, astonishing.

In this thesis, I do not eschew history, but rather change its focus away from social movements and the development of state institutions. Instead, I focus on the reorganization of concepts and structures of kinship, authority and production. This choice is intended to complement the existing literature critically, not to replace it.

This thesis is not a self-contained book. It is based on existing literature as well as fieldwork, and it is intended to contribute to a wider a research programme. In its original formulation, the chapters that follow would have comprised the first half of a work, the second half would examine the organization of the Halia Council of Elders, an explicit attempt to establish what the Constitution of the Autonomous Region of Bougainville terms 'the traditional authority'. In this second part, I would analyse the attempts to transform the *tsunana* into a government, the political processes involved, the interaction between *tsunona* and electoral politics. Finally, I would write a conclusion to this expanded work noting that the ground was now set for a re-evaluation of the processes that have led to the formation of the present historical conjuncture. A grand narrative arc, then would lead us from the early sources, through Blackwood's ethnography, the Welfare period, and my own contribution would pick up from the dissolution of the movement, through the crisis to the present. In retrospect, this was a hopelessly ambitious project, but it draws the contours of this thesis' research programme. This thesis, I believe, lays the grounds for an answer as to why the establishment of a legally constituted 'traditional authority' was unlikely to yield the results desired for it; it does not explain how the actual effort by the Halia over 2005-2008 to establish this authority led to a very much anticlimactic and largely conventional local government council. Indeed, that process, which consumed the bulk of my attention during fieldwork, is dealt with only tangentially below. This is in some respects a limitation of this work: its 'ethnographic present', the reader will note, is not defined exactly. The presentation is schematic and at certain points ruthlessly synchronic: rendering a social field intelligible means also simplifying away much of the rich texture of social life and conflict. I hope to have exercised good judgement in identifying cases that illustrate the themes I see as most significant in Halia society and are detailed enough that a reader may disagree with my conclusions.

1.9. Design of the thesis

Ultimately, the purpose of this presentation is to lay the ground for the analysis of the articulation of the Papua New Guinea/Bougainvillean state system in Halia and Buka. In this thesis, I present a sustained, but schematic, analysis of Buka's political economy and its integration with the state (Chapter 2). This chapter represents the condensed and provisional conclusions of what would have been the second part of this thesis. A particularly important aspect of this, as seen from the perspective of a wider research program is the analysis of the relative weakness of 'non-state actors'.
By this I mean political organization separate from and antagonistic to the state distributive system, that is to say, not only separate from the state as a bureaucracy but also separate from the state’s halo of patronage networks. This may seem odd in a thesis that, if nothing else, demonstrates the resilience of self-generated Halia political systems. There is in fact no contradiction: the state system, such as it exists in Buka, is not disjoint from these self-generated systems. That conclusion is presented in this thesis in terms of the analysis of the articulation of systems of land tenure, authority and kinship in the subsequent chapters. It can also be presented by examining the organization of the state system directly, though it would be difficult to do this without first setting up the nature of Halia political kinship. The weakness of ‘non-state’ actors – of genuine antagonism to the forms of state organization seen in Papua New Guinea and Bougainville – is one of the most substantial questions both in the sociology of the present organization of Melanesian states, and also in the historiography of movements such as Tommy Kabu, Paliau, the Mataungan Association, the Ma’asina Rule and of course, the Hahalis Welfare Society and Me’ekamui in Bougainville. It is not obvious to me, based on my experience in Bougainville, that the commonsense answer to this – Melanesian society is segmentary and fragmented – is sufficient, at least for Buka. For as we shall see, the establishment of ‘segmentary’ clans with concerns over land tenure and descent is a transformation of Halia society, one in which the colonial state, cash cropping, and the contemporary state system has been operative. This ‘Melanesia’ of segmentary clans is, in this context, a type of utopia: a place that does not exist, the dream of which fuels certain types of change.

Exploring these historical developments and fully characterising the contemporary state system and its social projection requires solid ethnographic foundations. In Chapter 3, I trace the key dynamic within Halia political kinship: the fundamental concept of ngorere, or ‘umbilicus’, a powerful vision of matrilineal filiation which entails the analysis of society into discrete descent groups. Upon any close inspection, however, these groups are rarely what the Halia (or colonial officers, or courts) desire them to be. Halia society is built through synthetic kin-political processes. I chose this term because whilst ‘cognatic descent’ and ‘alliance’ do capture something important about what the Halia do, and I will use them selectively, these terms risk obscuring important aspects of their socio-political organization. The focalization of ngorere is very strong, and the roles of father, mother and their respective kin cannot be decomposed into an amorphous ‘cognatic’ field. The integration of non-matrilineal kin into a Halia kin group is a difficult process: not rare, but arduous. It is also entirely necessary. Notions of ‘alliance’ are less troublesome in this context, and although I have not developed this point, I hope it shall become clear in later chapters that my interpretation of Halia marriage supports a limited formulation of structuralism. Yet this too is only a gloss of more complex reality. Synthetic kinship is a political exercise, and the sedimentation of cryptic, fictitious and loosely associated kin into matriline is ultimately an expression of this.

In Chapter 4, I present a brief description of the tnhana, its architecture and some aspects of its cultural significance. The identification of house and people is close, and this description of the house continues into a description of its builders and occupants. Here, I follow Levi-Strauss’ view of the house as an intermediate form of social organization: the house is not just a building, but an ensemble of titles, amalgamated kin and above all, a vehicle for the synthesis and projection of social power (Lévi-Strauss 1987; Fox 1993). This presentation provides us the basic elements with which to
explore the order projected from (and into) these houses, or rather, the multiplicity of superimposed orders. Here I believe we shall begin to see the full force of the dialectic between a form of authority couched on synthesis and alliance, and an increasingly pressing need to press land claims that force the analysis and hence dissolution of this authority. Whilst Lévi-Strauss complained that the anthropology of Melanesia was “haunted by the idea of descent, as if the New Guinea systems did nothing else than put it in question” (1987:165), the *tsuha1a* is in this respect a house full of ghosts. At the same time, the resulting patchwork of claims, counterclaims and incompatible rectifications of the messy reality of Halia land settlement and genealogy does not yield a vacuum; rather, the multiplication of incompatible accounts of the order of *tsuha1a* feeds directly back into a further articulation of the *tsuha1a* social system such as it is, though not as the Halia would wish it to be. In Chapter 5, I discuss the resulting political geography of Halia, and relate this to demographic change and the role of cash cropping. Chapter 6 then presents an extended case study, illustrating some of the processes covered to that point: the problematic of negotiated, synthetic kinship reanalysed genealogically, the monumentalization of *tsuha1a* and the impact of landownership ideology.

The current order of *tsuha1a* is ultimately the inheritor of a system of social organization based on what I term fundamental exchange: sacrificial relations that give a basic, somatic expression to the process of social articulation between *pinaposa* totemic categories, *tsuha1a* and individuals. These sacrifices, be they carried through pigs or marriage alliances, are ultimately the expression of human sacrifice: a point first made by Eleanor Rimoldi (1982). In Chapter 7, I provide an analysis of several mythologies and marriage practices which both illustrate the dynamics of this sacrificial economy, and allow us to understand how the present has come to be conceived as perched on the verge of a type of catastrophic freedom, one which could annihilate the basis of the *tsuha1a* and the very foundations of Halia sociality. But this possibility of disaster is structured within a Halia world that, although transformed, is transformed by the Halia. The correlate of the intensified analysis of synthetic kinship units into discrete units is a situation that must, given the means by which matrilineal groups reproduce themselves, lead to serious difficulties. Chapter 8 continues this analysis through a consideration of concepts of paternal nurturance, the role of the father in shaping and socializing the child. I pursue the implications of these concepts in two directions: through mythology, to an analysis of the ontological basis for the system of land tenure that has emerged, and through the sublimation of the father as state, to the genesis of a particularly profound piece of social self-analysis, a type of geometric mytho-sociology which ultimately must face the intractable difficulty that the state is not, after all, a father.

In Chapters 9 and 10, I examine some aspects of the funeral cycle which is a necessary precondition for the construction of *tsuha1a*, and which have been subtly affected by these changes in the basic organization of kinship. Funeral rituals allow us to examine the particularly moving, even tragic though occasionally ironic way the building of *tsuha1a* has come to express the actually existing Halia social order even as this order has become more and more unacceptable to the *tsuomo*. Funeral cycles are bound with the reproduction and regeneration of the social order. In some cases, this would be literally the case, since the future *tsuomo* would be conceived amongst women and men in mournful seclusion, but always also metaphorically so, as the ultimate disposal of the remains of the dead takes place at a phase of *tsuha1a* construction in which a new order of *tsuomo*, tettabol, peits and gobus is
shown to the community. It is thus fitting, though perhaps not flattering, to conclude this study with a case in which this reproduction was conducted in a manner that was widely perceived as illegitimate, and yet served to reproduce not the imaginary order of carefully regulated *tubana*, but rather the actually existing order of claim, counter-claim, improvisation, opportunism, scheming and hurt friendships.
The road from Hahalis
2. Overview of the Halia Political Economy

2.1. The people of the road

Linking the Halia and the world economy is a road which, characteristically enough, is called by several different names: AusAID calls it the Buka Ring Road, the Bougainville Government calls the Buka East Coast Road, but for many it is the John Teosin Highway. It stretches from Buka Town to the Lontis Peninsula, following for almost the entirety of its length the cliff-top; a neglected extension connects Lontis and Carola, and another bad section connects Carola and the West Coast road. From Halalis to the Buka Township, the average truck trip is 45 minutes. Very few houses are built more than fifty meters away from the road. In daily life, its pulse is felt as much as the routine rhythm of the gardens. In the mornings and in the afternoon, there is considerable traffic. Trucks travel the length of the island collecting passengers and copra. Roughly one in every eight hamlets has a truck, ute or car of some description, but most are barely serviceable and only some are operated as mixed use PMVs (public motor vehicles), for passengers and ferrying copra. Transport is expensive and passengers travel in crowded, unsafe conditions. The condition of the road suffers from heavy wear. In the dry season, a caustic limestone dust settles on everything not shielded by vegetation; in the wet season, the road becomes cratered and boggy. Vehicles do not last long, and owners must pay for regular repairs to leaf-springs and broken wheels. Trucks struggle to break even. But the operation of trucks is a necessity even at a loss. The road is utterly fundamental to the organization of production.

The all-weather road was built in 1962 following the course of a previous track that linked the villages of the east and north coasts. The condition of that track can be judged from the fact that kiaps would report with pride when it was successfully negotiated by jeep: it was a venue for expeditions. To transport copra for sale, bags could be carried manually from Halalis to the jetty at Carola plantation, seven kilometres over a still smaller, boggy walking track; or it could be hoisted down the cliff and onto mona canoes to be rowed to the Buka Passage. The battered reef off the East Coast makes it difficult to land larger vessels. As production of copra intensified over the 1950s, this logistic situation became a source of serious discontent.

The Halalis Welfare Society made one of its main points of agitation that the government demanded tax and yet offered nothing: the road was at the centre of this. Preparations to build the road were fast-tracked on account of the increasingly unstable political situation leading up to the 1962 riot, which led to the arrest of the better part of Halalis’ population for resistance to the council tax. Whilst imprisoned, Welfare leaders were reassured that a road would be built; meanwhile in Buka, the Welfare’s rival, the government-sponsored Council was promoted as the agency through which the road would come. By happenstance, the return of the Welfare leadership from prison coincided with the arrival of the construction teams. To this day, Halalis leaders claim that their organization brought the road. Indeed, this has become practically the official view, as Teosin has come to be

The road is alongside land and labour, critical in their structure of production. But there is a pronounced "mark this stark sympathy of the land (Sahlins 1976:36ff, 1985:99-102). Once, early 20th-century administrators, wrote to the local administration that was receiving only 'a token allocation' for a road as necessary for development (ADC 1956). Their requests found little traction with an Australian administration that was generally averse to any kind of large scale infrastructure development. In 1957, the Bougainville District Commissioner, wrote to the Director of Public Works asserting that Buka produced some 1000 tonnes of copra p.a.; "In view of this, immediate work on the road is essential" (DACC 1958). Officers sympathetic to the early Welfare relayed its demand for a road as necessary for development (ADC 1960). Neutralizing the appeal of the Welfare on this score was an overriding consideration for other officers. By 1961, the local administration had received only 'a token allocation' for the road (DACM August 1961), but the decision to commit funds to the project preceded the mass arrests in Hahalis (DACM November 1961). In all likelihood, the road would have been built regardless, but it was built expediently because of the political ferment. Nor was the Buka road the only such case. Later on, the Welfare became directly engaged in the construction of a road in Siara, in northern Bougainville, again pressuring the government to commit resources to the project (PR 2 1971).

14 On the question as to the economic significance of the road it is important to note that copra was far more important in the past. The first patrol to examine the region after World War II (PR 1 1946) had noted that an all-weather road should be built to enable expansion of village plantations, commenting that this would be a relatively easy job in the mostly level, well-drained terrain, with abundant local sources of gravel. Kapa put the case with increasing urgency in subsequent reports, noting that the villagers depended on transport for further development of the booming cash economy (PR 3 1956). Their requests found little traction with an Australian administration that was generally averse to any kind of large scale infrastructure development. In 1957, the Bougainville District Commissioner, wrote to the Director of Public Works asserting that Buka produced some 1000 tonnes of copra p.a.; "In view of this, immediate work on the road is essential" (DACC 1958). Officers sympathetic to the early Welfare relayed its demand for a road as necessary for development (ADC 1960). Neutralizing the appeal of the Welfare on this score was an overriding consideration for other officers. By 1961, the local administration had received only 'a token allocation' for the road (DACM August 1961), but the decision to commit funds to the project preceded the mass arrests in Hahalis (DACM November 1961). In all likelihood, the road would have been built regardless, but it was built expediently because of the political ferment. Nor was the Buka road the only such case. Later on, the Welfare became directly engaged in the construction of a road in Siara, in northern Bougainville, again pressuring the government to commit resources to the project (PR 2 1971).

15 "John Teosin Highway", by the Haku poet Matabuna Tahun (Tahun 1998).
villagers do, to force the road to be built and maintained? They can attempt to influence the state system. But here they face a bad bargain. Viewed from the apex of the state system which maintains it, the overwhelmingly copra-based economy of the village is marginal. The road benefits the villagers, but copra is widely regarded as a dead end. The villagers are thus drawn into a system that they cannot master. The question then arises why they do not combine with other communities in a similar position. Even within Buka, cooperation to force maintenance of the road is limited. This is a critical phenomenon of the political economy of the Papua New Guinean state system: the general disorganization of society beyond a local level, and the comparative strength of a dysfunctional state that in the absence of popular political organization, wins by default.

2.2. From taro to sweet potato

The increased dependence of Buka villagers on broader political and economic systems is not only a matter of cash cropping, but extends partly to the basic subsistence infrastructure. The villagers are still largely self-sufficient in this regard, but whilst this autonomy is a matter of great pride, limitation to basic staples is resented. Subsistence is at once seen as an index of the fertility of the land and of the people identified with it, but it is also a mark of poverty. The staples themselves have been transformed, with important consequences for the organization of a political cosmology that is profoundly horticultural in character. Moreover, with the insertion of Buka into a broader economic horizon, the gender organization of production — also critical from the perspective of political cosmology — has been rearticulated.

Traditionally, coastal Buka society practiced swidden horticulture focused on *Colocasia* taro (*Halia sono*), with supplements of greens, banana and tropical fruits. The dominant protein source was and continues to be fish, with fowl, marsupials and pork appearing as infrequent delicacies.

Taro is grown in freshly cut secondary forest. The first crop of taro is planted in ground left fallow for three to seven years. The technique is basic. The garden area is cleared of woody vegetation and weeds. A large branch is shaped into a driving pile with a wedge point with which holes are dug to plant the taro shoots; this action, *su* ("to spear"), is carried out by men and women but is conceived as a sexual metaphor for penetration, a fact that is important for *Halia* political cosmology. Vegetation is rarely burned, and there is no composting, irrigation or drainage. Relatively short fallow periods and basic technique mean yields of taro are low. There are also recurring events of drought or disease that have led to severe depletion of taro in many areas: during the El Niño drought of 1997 stocks were wiped out except for a few pockets. The resulting scarcity and unequal distribution of taro has made it into something of a coveted resource, since it is extremely significant at feasts.
After the near-total loss of taro at the end of World War II due to blight, the Halia productive base shifted to sweet potato (Packard 1975). Today, villagers associate sweet potato with the coming of the Japanese. The replacement was resented, but it was also irreversible. Sweet potato offers several practical advantages as compared to taro. It is harder, more drought resistant, takes three months to mature instead of the minimum of six for taro, has greater yields by area and by unit labour, and can be planted on well-drained soil nearer the village. With the use of runner beans, introduced by extension officers in the 1960s, sweet potato gardens can be planted on short rotations, with fallow periods as short as a year. In some land-constrained villages, gardens are maintained in cultivation almost continuously, though this is clearly evidence of land stress. It is difficult to see how the demographic expansion of the last fifty years could have been sustained without this switch in the subsistence base.

Other tubers play marginal roles. Yams are not generally favoured, and African yams are more common. Cassava is plentiful, but it is a poorly regarded food and grows almost wild: its main use is in the production of kikiono puddings, which in the past were made with taro. It is grown on marginal gardens, those that have already yielded crops of sweet potato, or along the edges of gardens where the plants are often regarded as demarcation hedges and forgotten about. Since the El Nino drought of 1997, banana and to a lesser extent papaya have come to have an important role in the diet.

Taro, which has had a role in Buka subsistence for over twenty thousand years (Loy, Wickler and Spriggs 1992), is essential for feasts and possesses a rich symbolism, unlike the workhorse staple

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16 Note that villagers also told M. Rimoldi that American planes had destroyed gardens by spraying them, a fact corroborated by military histories (M. Rimoldi 1971:116).
17 Immediately after WWII, Australian patrols found extensive use of pawpaw, banana and yams (Rimoldi 1992:56-59); elderly villagers today state that the Japanese survived only by eating pawpaw.
18 "The natives feel the absence of taro from their diet and say that without it they lack their former strength and resistance to sickness. They do not favour KauKau as a staple article of diet. They consider rice as the best substitute for taro" (PR 1 1946).
19 Experiments by DASF officers in New Britain indicated that sweet potato had twice the yield of taro; Packard estimates that in Bougainville the discrepancy would be greater still (1971:117).
sweet potato. There are distinct ritual roles for cooked and uncooked taro, taro cooked with its skin (reserved for important feasts) and peeled taro. Certain varieties are singled out for specific roles in rituals and medicine. Crucial exchanges between affines focus on taro still attached to the stem ready to plant (gogohala), which is exchanged for cooked taro ready to consume—reflecting the exchanges of people between these groups (see below, Section 8.3). When new slit-gongs or new chiefs are taken to the tsuhabana, they are preceded by women cutting and scattering stemmed taro before its path, and the taro plant itself is an important sinehe ("reminder") of the power of most tsuhabana clan houses. A beautiful young woman, kukebe, is said to be 'like taro showing its new shoot', which indicates the tuber is ready for harvesting. This new shoot itself is called gobus, and this is the name given to the young male and female chiefs before they succeed their mothers and uncles. In a culture that places a great deal of emphasis on feasting and eating together, taro is second only to pork in significance. As he helped me dig my first garden, Lawrence Rangi reflected: "I eat this taro, my ancestors ate this taro; it is the same plant, the same shoot that goes back into the ground". Yet through blight and drought, most original cultivars have been lost, others have been monopolized by villages lucky enough to retain them.

![Image of people cutting and scattering stemmed taro](image)

**Fig 2.2.** The teitahol awaits the arrival of new slit-gongs, holding ceremonial taro, sono hasingiul (‘taro of the taboo yard.’)

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20 Because of the difficulty in producing sufficient taro, sweet potato is accepted as a substitute for taro in certain ritual contexts. In brideprice payments and the affinal exchanges, counted taro bundles can be supplemented by sweet potato bundles. The two sets of bundles are counted as a single number, but kept in distinct piles. Packard notes that while there are many rituals for taro cultivation, there are none for sweet potato (1971:115); today, there are general garden magic rituals for both taro and sweet potato, but none specifically for sweet potato, but there are specific rituals for taro.
2.3. Rice, dependence and gender

A more recent change in the subsistence base has been an increasing role for rice, which is a prestige food poised to become part of the basic diet. Families that can afford to do so eat rice every day, conscious that others regard them with jealousy. During the drought of 1997, and prior to that, in the period immediately after the return of the PNGDF to Buka in 1991, rice was distributed as food relief, but except under such circumstances villagers are not strictly speaking dependent on rice. Yet rice is integrated into the village economy enough that dependence on it is felt acutely.

No rice is grown locally, bar a few short-lived experiments. These small cultivations are said to have been successful and their abandonment is attributed by village leaders to the lack of milling facilities nearby. This is the source of some bitterness. Redressing the village’s imports of rice is one of the shibboleths of the village elite, and one frequently hears the view that if only a mill were made available, all the village’s rice needs would be met locally. This is understandable, given that autonomy in subsistence is a matter of pride, productive gardens signal health and power, and food has generally a great deal of significance. At the same time it is difficult not to be sceptical. Rice in PNG has a return to labour, in Kina terms, estimated at approximately K5 per day per person, but copra – the much-hated source of cash for purchasing rice – has a return of K10 per day per person, while marketed sweet potato has returns three times higher still (Allen, Bourke and McGregor 2009:412).

It’s unlikely that rice cultivation in Buka would be economical, let alone match the villagers’ expected returns on labour. A rice mill had in fact been made available, but only in Kokopau, on the Bougainvillean side of the Buka passage. When villagers say they want autonomy in the production of rice, they mean autonomy in the village. Ultimately, they mean autonomy within the scope of their own tsabana or hamlet, an autonomy analogous to that achieved through tuber horticulture.

No doubt partly due to long-running publicity promoting the ‘power’ of rice dating back to colonial campaigns for its consumption and cultivation, a diet based on rice is considered a mark of sophistication and wealth. “Vote for me, and you will eat chicken and rice every night” was the dubious promise of one very wealthy candidate in the 2007 national election. Plentiful rice for all is now retrospectively attributed as one of the aims of the Hahalils Welfare Society. A child is believed to grow more strongly by eating rice, and several men proposed to me the theory (in fact, the Australians’ theory) that Asians succeed economically because of the excellent nutrition offered by polished white rice. Much to the chagrin of traditionalists, rice is also enmeshed into traditional feasting. It is commonly served in funerals wrapped in banana leaves with tin fish; in the past these small packages contained taro and coconut pudding. A feast that does not include generous servings of rice is considered stingy, even if this is rarely remarked on directly. This is an indication of the difference between the ideological conception of a good feast, and what it takes to actually hold a feast that is considered good. Uncooked rice is part of the basic inventory of ceremonial exchange, but is not accounted for in such exchanges: that is to say, pigs and baskets of taro are accounted for in careful inventories and later reciprocated, rice must be present, but only ‘on the side’ – together with tin meat, tin fish, money and calicoes.
This expanding role of rice is considered ominous by many villagers. Rice must be purchased and to the extent that offering plentiful rice demonstrates one has a source of cash, it also attracts adverse comment about biakesekei — mutually demeaning competition — and becomes an icon of the island’s increasingly obvious economic inequality. Rice is believed to make children strong, but it is also believed (by different people and by the same people at different times) to cause general ill health. It is often understood as a sign of dependence on the outside world, a symptom of the decay of the indigenous social order. This is a common enough belief in Papua New Guinea generally, but it has a rather more forceful inflection in the local historical idiom. During the Bougainville Civil War all food imports were blockaded. There is now a virtually unanimous belief that this led to better health. I could never obtain a definite answer as to why, if that were so, everyone had reverted to eating rice, sugar and tin meat as soon as external contacts were re-established21. One explanation offered to me was that rice was forced on the population when it was concentrated at the Care Centres. This is only partly a factual description of where most people re-encountered grain and store goods, it is also an indictment of the Care Centre. Rice returned with the unwelcome overwatch of the PNGDF. But even in Hahalis, which took sides against the BRA and where the Care Centre is rarely criticised, negative attitudes towards rice persist. Another, perhaps more sober assessment is that rice is convenient and gives women a break from gardening.

This complex of rather paradoxical attitudes towards rice is an expression of the fact it straddles the subsistence sphere and the cash economy in an especially salient fashion. In particular, rice alters the gender balance of subsistence work. Unlike taro and sweet potato, which are produced by women’s work with men’s assistance, it is bought with money that men control.

Most men believe they should control cash generally and their nuclear family’s finances in particular. There are some exceptions to this22 but more often patriarchal control is given a strong, explicit defence in terms of traditional male prerogatives and Christian dogma. Men believe that both justify their ‘supremacy’ at home (‘supremacy’ is an English term frequently used in such contexts, and also in referring to the tsunono’s power). The extent to which men consider money a masculine domain is made very clear by observing what happens when women become important cash earners. This is not uncommon, since vegetable marketing is practically a female monopoly, and women’s wage labour can be very significant. Educated women have access to relatively stable and well-remunerated jobs in education and health services, and they generally attempt to direct their earnings towards ‘domestic’ expenditure such as school fees, clothing, household utensils and rice. Disputes between couples consisting of a female wage earner and an unemployed or, to speak optimistically, ‘freelancing’ husband are very common, and often violent. The paradigmatic form of such disputes is that the man is accused of spending the children’s rice money on beer. I recorded one successful, and three attempted suicides by women in such situations. Rice and beer map precisely onto paternal duty and masculine vices. Rice is food won from male labour, used to strengthen children, the ultimate

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21 Literally so, as rice, tea and biscuits were amongst the first items given to the delegation of Buka defectors who contacted the PNGDF in 1991.

22 For instance, the Pinolasa Bamboo Band, a dance troupe, entrusted the female members of the group with finances after the men repeatedly came to conflict over allegations of corruption; a bamboo band in a neighbouring hamlet that did not do the same disintegrated amidst litigation. These groups are composed almost exclusively of kin drawn from locally settled interlinked lineages, the bankatun.
expression of fatherly love (see below, Section 8.2); beer is a male drink for selfish consumption and the facilitation of adultery

2.4. Money trees

Copra is the most important cash crop in Buka, and by far the most important source of income for most villagers. Coconut's significance goes well beyond its economic role. Plantations are a matter of pride, and the coconut has an extremely important role in Halia mythology, especially the Halia mythology of modernity. Rohó, the half-legendary leader of pre-war war social movements in Hahalis is attributed with the saying that “soon, tinned fish and cloth will grow on trees”. As he told me Rohó’s story, Rokou pointed to the omnipresent palms and said: “everyone thought he was crazy and they put him in jail, but look: money really does grow on trees.” But the Halia must live with the consequences of having money that grows on trees. In myth, the origin of coconut is bound with colonialism, the origin of human racial differences and inequalities of power; it is a tale of suffering and breakdown of the bond between elder-brother and junior brothers, an icon of *tsiwhana* organization generally.

From forced plantation of coconuts under the German Administration, through the boom and subsequent failure of cooperatives in the 1950s (M. Rimoldi 1971:123-7), the mass mobilization of land and labour under the Welfare to the present landscape of individual production and pervasive conflict over land, copra has been a dominant force in Halia history. It remains central, but villagers have come to regard it very negatively. Indeed, frustration with copra and the desire to secure some alternative, more effective means of accumulation is the central dynamic of Halia political economy as seen by the Halia themselves. Any scheme that is likely to produce money without the involvement of coconuts is likely to find a hearing in Buka. The desire to flee from copra is powerful enough to motivate some rather poor decisions – notably reluctance of invest in the improvement of copra production and a disdain for alternative crops. Bukas have seen, or imagine to have seen, the rewards of rents in mining and logging schemes, and are eager to find local analogues. At times this articulates itself into an eagerness for fast money schemes\(^{23}\), and wishful thinking about underground riches\(^{24}\) It

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\(^{23}\) The most notorious of which, Noah Musingku’s U-Vistract scheme, made a clean sweep of the island, leaving no family in Hahalis untouched. Bitterness over the disappeared funds is one of the major justifications given for the generally hostile attitude villagers take to the Central Bougainvillean Me’ekamui, who have come to be associated with the Musingku. The Me’ekamui in Buka usually attempt to dissociate themselves from Musingku, but assurances from their namesakes in Central Bougainville that the ‘payout’ will come are frequent enough to not only stoke scepticism, but hope against hope and desires for revenge.

\(^{24}\) Though not developed to the same extent as, for instance, amongst peripheral Min communities (Jorgensen 2000), there is an undercurrent of rumours about gold or ‘diamonds’ to be found buried in the limestone cliff: these ideas were already current during the later phases of the Hahalis Welfare Society, when it organized men to search for riches in cave systems. Their mineralogically hopeless quest is now the subject of jokes: I gave some young men a video camera to do as they pleased, and they returned with a video in which a young man explored a cave filled with ‘rich’ (*ni*, in the local Tok Pisin dialect): that is to say, pretty stalactites. The hamlet convulsed in laughter at a screening. (These *ni* are clearly interpreted through a cultural prism: at a screening of the film *Blood Diamond*, many people were astonished to find out that diamonds were in fact stones.) Similar claims, now concerning stupendous offshore oil reserves are sometimes made by Me’ekamui partisans, and by small time politicians when quizzed about the source of funding for their many proposed projects.

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is difficult not to empathise with the villagers. As a cash crop, coconut has many serious deficiencies. Yet coconut also has some clear advantages over other cash crops that can be grown in Buka. Central amongst these are (a) the fact that coconut production schedules can be made to fit the demands of the villagers, rather than the reverse; (b) the resilience of plantations to weather and neglect, and (c) the fact coconuts are not only a source of income but also a part of the subsistence base of the village economy in their own right. Coconut palms are generally useful in a way that vanilla beans or cacao pods are not. The consequence of this is that although the villagers desire to get off what they perceive as a tedious and unrewarding copra treadmill, there are few options that meet their expectations.

2.4.1. Organization of plantations

Whilst land is held by tsu bana, coconut plots are usually allocated to individuals. Most plots are 0.5 to 5ha in size, but some are considerably larger. Ideally, everyone residing at a hamlet should be allocated a block. This includes the allied lineages that settle around a tsu bana, children residing in their father’s matrilineage’s land, and affines: the group of people known as a hunkatun, (‘people together’). Men married into the hamlet are sometimes given a plot of their own to work, but more commonly they produce copra in their wives’ land. Children have a culturally and legally sanctioned right to work on plantations laid down by their fathers wherever those plantations may be located. Whilst land is conceived in female terms and subject to a theoretically strict matrilineal regime of inheritance, plantations are regarded as the work of men. “Graun tasol i no inap, man i mas wokim”: “land only is not enough, man must work upon it.” This rationale, we shall see, has very deep roots in Halia political cosmology (see below, Chapter 8). But under no circumstances will the Halia accept that such masculine claims can “sink into the soil”, which remains under the matrilineal regime. This frequently leads to conflict in case a man has developed his, rather than his children’s clan’s land. The Halia prefer their matriliney without puzzle; they rarely succeed.

Most men have at least one block of coconuts for themselves, and most of these men have access to at least two or three such blocks: their fathers’ and their matrilineages’ land, and the blocks of their wives and children. But only if he is an exceptionally wily politician can he combine the incomes of these blocks; the streams of money are hard to merge. If a man produces copra in his children’s land to support his mother’s brother’s feasts, and fails to get permission from his affines, he can easily end up in Village Court, where the use of these funds will at best be considered dinau (debt); in all likelihood, his domestic life will become a nightmare.

There is a good deal of inequality in land, and even more inequality in the capacity to mobilize labour to work it fruitfully. ‘Rich’ individuals and well-placed tsunono may have several blocks larger than a hectare; a few holdings approach 20ha. Holdings of this size cannot be worked by a single individual and may stretch the capacity of a nuclear family; typically such men and women will allow others to come make a round of copra for a fee. Also, because very large plantations are developed by a number of individuals acting in concert, it can sometimes be difficult to lay claim to an entire large
block. This is a particularly salient problem with former Welfare plantations which were built by mass cooperative effort in the 1960s, but it is a problem in anywhere a man has not directly participated in the planting but has a claim over the trees.

A substantial minority of men, especially young men, do not have any plantations of their own. They often aid their relatives — sometimes for wages that varied between K5 and K15 per day over 2006 to 2008, or even pay in kind. Young men, and members of marginal lineages without plantations of their own may be allowed to work at a relative's plot for a cut of the profit and even this is often waived in the case of relatives that are on good terms with each other. However, remaining on good terms often entails a degree of submission — ‘kism tokorai’ is the operative euphemism here. The landholders will allow the family to make copra, so long as they get permission (tokorai); this is always presented by the landholders as if it were a mere formality, but in practice it is quite far from that. It can involve implicit demands on labour, and it can also simply become a delaying strategy; from the point of view of landholders, not insisting on this prerogative could be a prelude to a challenge to title. The strictest landownership ideologues — an inhomogeneous collection of traditionalist tunono with an eye for business and Buka ‘expatriates’ who tend to be especially concerned about land title — often null the notion of levying formal fees on production on their land. Me’ekamui leaders occupy the extreme position in this respect, insisting that the tunono is ‘lord’ rather than ‘chief’, and proposing means for levying tribute from what they see as his demesne; here there is a conjunction of explicitly feudalist notions, precarious capitalism and transforming kinship relations increasingly reliant on state institutions, especially courts, for inflection.

2.4.2. The historical development of the plantation organization

The current means of organizing plantations evolved gradually. From the early 1950s the administration initially encouraged cooperatives, although this was seen as a second best option to individual ownership and production. The cooperatives proved to be engines of dissatisfaction. First, a basic issue that can still be observed in the operation of contemporary business groups is that the aggregate returns to collective labour peg expectations at a high level, which were inevitably disappointed when shares have to be parcelled out. Obscure accounts and numerous cases of

25 This practice is known as grin, referring primarily to the collection of green coconuts. Typically, grin involves mobilizing young children with the promise of lollies, but some grin arrangements involve the distribution of sacks of rice and for young men, cases of beer. Whilst at a glance the practice seems grossly exploitative, it is a measure of the technically superexploitative nature of copra production that the man who dishes out lollies must plan very carefully, since even here losses are common (and seen as very amusing). Note that lollies are much cheaper than market rate sweet potatoes or rice. Young men sometimes prefer to be paid in kind to evade fights over money, another telling aspect of the practice.

26 Compare Sagir (2005:371): Haku tunono assert that their authority (nisunono) derives from God. The Me’ekamui’s position here is influenced by Social Credit, and congruent with the intense, if heterodox Christianity that is characteristic of both movements. The Catholic Social Credit journal Michael (http://www.michaeljournal.org) is distributed by them. Its main tenets are interest-free money and producerism: the opposition of workers, industry and primary producers — especially smallholder farmers — against ‘parasitical’ finance, government and welfare recipients. Its tone is authoritarian, socially conservative and frequently anti-Semitic. Whilst the intent of formalizing tunono as ‘lords’ is reactionary, it is an attempt to ‘return’ to a status quo ante that never was, and should properly be understood as a radical, transformative outlook.
dishonesty exacerbated this problem; dissatisfaction fuelled suspicions of dishonesty. Secondly, even where expectations were not unrealistic, cooperatives were under close supervision by a sometimes unenthusiastic Administration, which imposed very conservative business practices on them. By the late 1950s, cooperatives were in a state of general collapse in Buka. The Hahalis Welfare Society, which originated as a splinter group of the Tulhatu Cooperative Society, reenergised the cooperative sphere. This was initially welcomed by some sectors of the Administration, but the staunch anti-communism of many Administration personnel, however, had been adamantly opposed to cooperative organization from the beginning; their complaints gained force as the Welfare came to pursue politically and socially radical goals. Insofar as cooperatives were accepted, the preferred model was of individually-owned plots with cooperative marketing. However, even those members of the Administration opposed to collective ownership of plantations and land remained sympathetic to cooperatives and collective effort:

Anything of a communal or collectivist nature in agriculture has been discouraged, the emphasis being placed on individual (family unity) cultivation. [...] Whilst discouraging communal cultivation we have encouraged communal effort. This takes the form of work parties clearing a number of individual blocks one after the other, the work party being comprised of the future individual cultivators themselves. It was suggested to the people as a counter to their argument that one man on his own could not clear and plant an economic sized block. that is not really correct but we realised that the work involved would effectively discourage a lot of would-be cultivators... (BDAR 1960, original emphasis).

Throughout this period, it is arguable that the Administration was fundamentally misled as to the nature of land tenure — ownership of land in the traditional register can only and with ultimately very significant consequences... the advice of the kiaps that 'collective effort' was desirable confused the key issue that in Halma concepts of the relationship of male and female labour, work and soil, input of (male) effort into (female) land established ownership claims over the plantations. Collective efforts establish collective claims of ownership.

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27. See Snowden (1981) for an overview; cooperatives were often seen as pedagogical exercises, initially made pressing because of large disbursements of war damages compensation. By 1960, £327,661 had been distributed to 15,408 claims in Bougainville, most of it by 1952 (TNGAR 1960; Rimoldi and Rimoldi 1992:75). Buka received a large proportion of this. Cooperatives were intended to soak up capital and prevent its 'misuse'. The Administration's fears were justified by the fact that, almost immediately, compensation payments found their way into a 'cargo cult' based at Novar, Mondo's 'Bank'.

28. This cooperative was founded by groups in central Hanahan; Hahalis and southern Hanahan (Hanakhalana) joined later, but left dissatisfied, founding the Hahalis Welfare Society. After this, the Tulhatu Cooperative Society limped along until the early 1970s.

29. As late as 1968, some qualified optimism remained: "Sufficiently organised...this group would have great potential," although "the Accounting systems of the Society are doubtful as is the honesty of some of its Leaders" (BDAR 1968).

30. "Community Plantations (sometimes called "Village" plantations) are a problem. The traditional social and economic organization makes such schemes attractive. A tendency [sic] for Official thinking to favour some embryo form of communism or collectivism has not helped. A lot of these communal plantations are to be found in the District and have been established for, in some cases, a considerable [p12] number of years. During the latter portion of the year under re-view Department of Native Affairs Officers took a firm stand against any further encouragement of such schemes." Bougainville District Annual Report 1958/59, p11. One report describes community plantations as a symptom of "Group Idiocy" (BDAR 1961:18).
Throughout the 1960s, cooperative production was not exactly abandoned but rather politicised. The Hahalis Welfare Society mobilized mass collective production, under a regime of apparently democratic oversight modelled after the meetings of cooperative societies. In practice, however, it seems this egalitarianism was a façade, or at least an aspiration that clashed with the partially transformed *tununo* order that remained at the core of the movement. The Welfare faced much the same problems as the cooperatives had, with members resorting to clandestine marketing to improve personal returns. The effort involved in this is testament to the depth of dissatisfaction – at least one physically very powerful member would travel 20km over hidden bush tracks carrying bags of copra.

Meanwhile, in the Administration-aligned sphere, some cooperative production continued with supervision by the *kiaps* and the Catholic Church, which invested heavily to deter the spread of the 'cargo cult'. Entrepreneurial villagers, who since the early 1950s had accumulated large plantations emerged by the late 1960s as forces to be contended with in the village economy. The administration's attitude to them was far more positive than towards proponents of collective plantations, but they could also be seen as disruptive: *kiaps* attempted to control what they perceived as their involvement in sales or 'rent' of land, which were prohibited, though it is not by any means clear what the exact arrangements involved in these transactions were. At the same time, the Administration arbitrated a number of cases of conflict over plantations between the Welfare and its opponents, and between the Welfare and members seeking to leave the movement. These cases are notable for entrenching the precedent that men should have access to plantations they or their fathers planted, whilst landowners should be consulted before such access was granted. These terms still prevail in contemporary land cases, and more than forty years later, the fact that the stipulation of access and control postpones rather than eliminate the need for an ultimate decision remains problematic.

### 2.4.3. Elements of the political economy of frustration

Husband: “This coconut: how much I have held this one coconut. I picked it up, and carried it, heaped it, and then shelled it, and carried it again, and then put it in the drier, then looked after the fire, now you and me are holding it again, taking the flesh out.”

Wife: “They're like children.”

Copra presents a number of disadvantages for village development. It is important to review these to understand the context in which the political economy of the village has developed. These suggest that many of the features of village life that are considered dysfunctional by the villagers and by some observers can be understood as narrowly rational responses to the market organization of the commodity that provides the main point of entry of the village into the wider capitalist economy.

The first and most serious problem with copra is that it pays little, and it pays less than it once did. Copra prices underwent a long-term secular decline of approximately 0.3% each year from 1960 to the early 1990s. It has since recovered in real terms, but at a price of increased volatility. Indeed, amongst notoriously volatile tropical commodities, copra prices stand out as especially unstable.
Compared with cacao, coffee and palm oil – PNG’s other major agricultural exports – the price of copra has twice the average monthly variation between 1990 and 2007; only rubber shows greater volatility. Copra oil – the main coconut export – is the third most volatile commodity.\(^\text{31}\)

Price instability further complicates marketing and production arrangements that are not favourable to begin with. Maintenance of coconuts and driers is haphazard and plantations are often left unattended for months as prices hover in the lower ranges, while marketing arrangements begin to lapse. When time comes to reactivate plantations, they are often in a very poor state and require large inputs of labour. Villagers are reluctant to do this until the price is comparatively high. Since relatively little production takes place in the village when the price is low, prices for transport and inputs such as hessian sacks plummet. When the price of copra rises, after an initial lag there is fervent activity and soon the supply line congests. In mid-2007, as copra spot prices in Buka headed and then surpassed K800 per ton, hessian sacks nearly disappeared from the island, then returned at up to K15 per bag, more than seven times their usual price and about a quarter of the return that could then be expected on a bag. Copra had to be carried to Buka Passage in palm frond baskets, but making these depletes the trees.

Since income from the plantations is uncertain, there is a disincentive to planning. Production is ad hoc. Villagers either exploit high prices or organize teams to go work copra in response to a specific cost when they have no choice but to seek money from the trees. More than one informant summarized this attitude by saying “the plantation is our bank.” When they must ‘make a withdrawal’ for school fees, new sports uniforms or bong maloto funeral feasts, they produce copra – otherwise, they are quite happy to let their ‘investment’ sit there. From the villagers’ perspective, this is an attractive aspect of copra plantations: they are a store of value, and they can fit production around their own priorities. It is also inefficient. A coconut plantation in a state of neglect can take up to two years to fully recover its productivity, and measures designed to increase productivity such as replanting can take longer still. Investment in improvements such as forced air driers is negligible. Villagers have settled on low expectations about copra income, so this lag period is not seen as a missed opportunity. All this exacerbates problems of labour mobilization, discipline, capital maintenance and effective utilization: flexibility from one perspective is disorganization from another.

All tropical commodities are volatile over the medium term, with cacao and coffee being notoriously susceptible to price shocks. Measuring volatility is complex. Discriminating between predictable and unpredictable changes is a difficult statistical problem. In the following table, I present only basic properties of monthly movements in price, adjusted by GDP deflator, all in percentages. Copra is the most volatile commodity when looked at in quarterly prices, and it is the second most volatile in monthly terms. The kurtosis measure indicates the degree to which the standard deviation is attributed to outlier events (in this case, large one-off price changes) rather than persistent movements. (Source: Bank of Papua New Guinea).

<table>
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<th>Statistical properties of monthly percentage changes in real price, January 1990 – June 2007</th>
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<td>Copra</td>
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<td>Mean</td>
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<td>Kurtosis</td>
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One important result of this is that banks and even microcredit agencies scoff at the notion of lending against copra incomes\textsuperscript{32}.

The villagers’ attitude towards copra may seem complacent, but it is in fact profoundly anxious. The price of copra can easily take a political turn. With prices halting at K400 per tonne in September 2006, rumours of a producer boycott began to circulate – a whispering campaign bloomed and meetings were held to discuss how to proceed. Even relatively conservative leaders were considering withdrawing their copra from sale. Eventually the National Member of Parliament for Northern Bougainville returned to ‘remind’ all that should supply of copra cease it would be difficult to sell Bougainvillean copra again. Similar comments were made, perhaps with even greater force, by proprietors and managers of the main purchasing agencies; yet this did little to assuage tempers. The villagers, after all, are not offered forward contracts and had little patience for the explanation, which they read as bikut businessmen embroiling themselves in dinan. The issue did not come to a head partly because of the limited dependence of villagers on the cash economy. Families simply lost interest in working for returns that often sunk to less than K25 per 100Kg bag after transport costs were factored in. Since villagers are not compelled to work for what they regard as absurdly low returns, they don’t. But this also means they also have little incentive to take political risks: the result was an uncoordinated withdrawal of supply, not the concerted political statement of a producers’

\textsuperscript{32} Whilst microcredit operators will occasionally lend to copra producers, they will usually do this so that the operator can branch out into another type of enterprise. The well-publicised effort to produce coconut oil as biofuel in Haku is the single partial exception to this, but that project has the backing of a major local business owned by a German married into Buka.
strike. So thoroughly forgotten was the issue that after prices recovered in 2007, the villagers elected Fidelis Semoso, the head of a purchasing agency, as Regional Member for Bougainville.

One may ask: who better to represent the seller than the buyer? But one may also note the important underlying fact, that much as copra production fits around the interests and practical schedules of the villagers, it does not drive, let alone compel political organization. Copra production does not require the mobilization of workers in any large numbers or for a specific season. In a context where subsistence is more or less assured, this allows the organization of copra production to be to a large extent a function of political organization. If there is a serious effort at mobilization, large-scale cooperatives are viable: the Hahalis Welfare Society is testament to this. But if there is no political will, small groups and individuals will make do, and cooperatives face a difficult job maintaining discipline for this reason. The Welfare is also witness to that. The plantations mould themselves to efforts of social organization, or their absence. In this respect, copra is more like rubber and coffee than palm oil or sugarcane: it is a commodity that is friendly to smallholders, at least on first appearances, but which by the same token does not compel smallholders to form large associations for production.

The respect villagers have for men who enforce poor terms of trade on them is more understandable in light of the fact that copra is a weak point of entry for villagers into the national political economy of Papua New Guinea. Whilst copra has an overwhelming presence in the lives of the Buka and of many other Bougainvilleans and Papua New Guineans, it is much less significant when seen from that economy’s commanding heights. Copra itself is a nearly forgotten export commodity – it is the least significant of the seven main agricultural exports, behind tea and rubber. Most of the copra produced in Bougainville is milled in Madang and Rabaul, and the oil is then exported or used in local industry, which is significant but limited. Even so, considering copra and coconut oil together, coconut products rank only fourth amongst PNG’s agricultural exports, behind palm oil, coffee and cacao. All agricultural products account for less than a quarter of total exports. Since 2002, copra and copra oil combined have accounted for around 5% of agricultural exports, and only 0.9% of total exports.

Of course, this 0.9% of exports, and the somewhat more respectable percentage of GDP it makes up have important flow-on effects inasmuch as copra is effectively the sole source of income and hence demand in many areas of Papua New Guinea. Problems with copra prices and marketing can have social effects far greater than suggested by the short shadow the commodity casts on national accounts. But what this entails is that coconut farmers are in a poor bargaining position: they must hope for decent infrastructure and marketing systems, their communities depend on it, but they have very little leverage on the government with which to obtain it. It is difficult not to sympathize with their suspicion that they are all but forgotten whilst the government pays attention to bauxite mining projects.

34 In the mid 1990s, 17% of the rural population lived in households producing copra (Allen, Bourke and McGregor 2009: 323).
2.5. Worker and capitalist

Copra is the foundation of the village cash economy, but it is a foundation nobody wishes to be confined to. The main alternative cash crop, cacao, is popular but not nearly as productive in Buka as it is in mainland Bougainville. To reach beyond the economic and status limitations of copra and other cash crops, villagers have recourse to three types of income-generating activity: business ventures, waged labour and the state distributive system. The incomes made possible through these means are far greater than may be hoped from any realistic application of human labour to copra production. Extremely dedicated men and women may, working as individuals or more likely in small groups, produce one to five bags of copra in a week. Such a rate is never sustained. However, we may estimate that fifty bags a year is a realistic upper range of the productive capacity of an individual in Buka. This corresponds to an annual income of between K2500 and K5000. From this perspective, we can appreciate the magnitude of the effect of business, wage and distributive income streams. A politician may, with the right inducement, disburse ten or twenty thousand Kina to his supporters. A successful village store can produce profits of K10,000. Wages for a primary school teacher are in the order of K10,000, public servants can earn five times as much.

2.5.1. Business

There is a very large diversity of individual businesses in Buka, most at very small scales. Microenterprises include village stores, lawn mowing services, chainsaws for hire, dance troupes (‘bamboo bands’), tyre repair shops, sewing machines, video-CD hire and P.A. systems – all very small, usually run from home and clustered around some piece of hardware. Copra driers are often hired out, as are cacao fermenters. Fermenters represent an intermediate step, requiring investments of several thousand Kina to set up or else astute politics (an AusAID project provided the majority of mini-fermenters, which are now traded between villagers). Quality driers and large fermenters also require a secure land situation, and are thus an option only for the most well-established lineages. They are especially complex propositions for uxorilocally settled men. Computer services – used for typing letters, recharging mp3 players and making photos for student ID cards – are increasingly conspicuous in the village. Further up the scale, there are sawmills, tractors and trucks, with capital costs in the tens of thousands of Kina. These are the largest businesses located in Halia villages, and are typically established with the application of remittances or political distributions. At the Buka Township, there are major stores and larger business enterprises which are owned by and employ villagers. These businesses, with turnovers in the tens of thousands of Kina per year, are far beyond the scale of anything in the village.

35 For this reason some successful businessmen from Buka have purchased land in relatively unpopulated areas of Tinputz and Wakunai to establish profitable cocoa plantations; some have activated long-distance trade and marriage connections with Tinputz, Siara and Hahon to establish joint ventures.

36 A 90kg bag of copra requires the processing of 500-600 coconuts.
2.5.2. Worker-entrepreneurs

Wage labour in the local economy, including the Buka Passage Township, is very limited, but equally significant is the fact that virtually no person in Jahali could be characterised as only a wage earner. At the lower end of the scale, workers are dependent on subsistence support. Everyone short of the elite supplements their income with cash cropping. Obtaining an entry level job, for a man, is a prelude to a business scheme of some sort in the case of all but the least ambitious. Elite workers manage plantations at a high level, for instance, by bankrolling land cases and supplying capital for what investment takes place (in the period of fieldwork, such investments included two tractors and building materials for two driers, and three trucks which were used at least part of the time for copra transport). All cash cropping relies on unpaid inputs from the subsistence sector. Were the food and fuel required to cook for cash crop producers and low-end wage workers bought at market rates, the cash croppers and workers would make a loss. They are, in the strict meaning of the term, superexploited; the deficit in toil is paid largely by female labour. Further up the scale, individuals become more heavily involved in business and political activity; their relationship to cash cropping becomes more businesslike. However, this is not evidence of a difference in attitude between the low end and high end workers, so much as of the fact that better remunerated workers are able to put into practice a general desire to establish business projects.

The combination of the fact no one is forced to exist solely as a worker, and the fact that there are few wage workers contributes to a very different societal role for labourers, as compared to an industrialised economy or even an agricultural economy relying on paid day labourers. They are workers in town, but in the village they operate as sources of capital, as businessmen. Men are especially keen to represent their work activity as either a partnership with a business, or as temporary activity that will lead into business. Amongst women, this self-conception is a cutting edge attitude corresponding to the most ideologically mobilized fraction of NGO staff and businesswomen, who distinguish themselves as proactive investor-workers in contrast to subservient workers in traditional female service employment, such as nurses, cleaners and teachers. This later type of female worker often sees their jobs as like a very special and productive garden. ‘Mi kaikai lo tawn’: “I eat in/from the town”, ‘tawn i gaden blong mi’: “the township is my garden.” These comments are often offered by workers defending themselves against charges that they do not work as hard as other villagers. In general terms, a job is seen as great privilege, and workers as privileged for having work. By virtue of this, they have a resource few others have.

The fact that people have flexible strategies for accumulation does not mean that economic class is an insignificant factor in the village. Far from it, there are extremely important class-like structures, class roles and a very specific and highly significant type of false consciousness associated with it. What must be understood is that these class structures are dynamic, quite subtle and not obviously analogous to roles in an industrial economy.

37 Feeding workers is normally an obligation even when they are paid a wage; their food is either sweet potato grown by the extended family of the employer, or store-bought rice. Rice is substantially cheaper than sweet potato at market rates, which is also factor entrenching rice in the local economy.
2.5.3. Ideological Configuration

Members of the elite segment – in this context, those able to establish businesses and bankroll their inevitable losses – are on the whole acutely sensitive to the importance of land title. This is especially true of elites that are not resident within Buka. In several cases, elite established outside Buka have hired local men to act as their representatives, researching and driving land litigation. The reasons for this are readily apparent. First, these ‘expatriated’ villagers are educated and understand the value of land in a ‘rationalized’ fashion, they see the contours, desirable or foreboding, of land as capital, within the horizon of a broader Papua New Guinean discourse on landholding. Such calculations are further stoked by their understanding of the significance of the demographic situation (see below, Section 5.7). Second, being away from the village is a recipe for disaster if one has designs on becoming an effective *tsu1ono*, and if one is not recognised *tsu1ono*, there will be serious difficulties if one also wishes to establish land claims. In practice, continuous involvement in village life is the true ground on which title is established. Those who remain away are especially inclined towards emphasizing ‘juridical’ genealogy as something separate from socially embedded, negotiated kinship, which comes to be regarded as corrupting and false.

There are skills required for a *tsu1ono* which are not easily recognised even by the *tsu1ono* themselves: the graceful handling of compromises which are overtly repudiated is one of the most important such skills. These are very different skills to those learned at a university, Parliament or large business, let alone those demonstrated at a formal court session. But money collapses all indexes of success unto itself. The elite *biskot* businessman, worker or politician is a monument to his or her own *save* and the villagers themselves regard this kind of *save* as much more valuable than their own skills at maintaining a good village. In fact, to the extent that the *tsu1ono* – stimulated by the discourse of elite workers, praiseful NGOs and anthropologists – reflect on their own skills as crucial to the maintenance of good order, to that same extent they wish to place a monetary value upon it. In the projects of state sketched and pursued by the *tsu1ono* integration of the *tshibana* and state translates directly into a project of paying the *tsu1ono*. To the elite workers this is seen as evidence of the venal and self-seeking debasement of the *tsu1ono*. ‘Traditionally’ they would have discharged their duty for free. Likewise, the revelations in the course of any land dispute that there are layers upon layers of compromises and pervasive ambiguities over kin appears to the elite segment in terms that are intelligible to them: as corruption of law-like descent. Villagers – who live with the consequences of land disputes as an existential threat – naturally agree with their educated cousins since nothing could be more obvious to them than that something is profoundly wrong.

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38 One preeminent family in Hahalis includes three very successful ‘expatriates’ – villagers who relocated to Port Moresby. The émigrés include a woman with the rank of *tei1ahol* and man with rank of *pe1ts*. Since they are absent from the village semi-permanently, they appointed a man with no title to look after their affairs; the man conducted what amounts to ethnography, scouring the island for lore attesting to his patron’s land claims. In return, he was paid and given full support as their proxy in village affairs.

39 This Tok Pisin term (and its Halia equivalent, *niate*) are usually translated as ‘knowledge’ or ‘knowing’, but it is important to emphasize, especially in this context, that it primarily refers to *capacity* and *know-how*. A *save* is not only a person who has extensive factual knowledge, but one who can do something with it. (Amusing examples of this would be Rambo or Steve Irwin, the Crocodile Hunter, who are both *save*.)
All this contributes to an elite attitude towards ordinary villagers that vacillates between paranoia and paternalism. People who obtain extensive education or remain away from the village for extended periods of time see issues of land and leadership in terms that are superficially the same as many other villagers, but which have come unmoored from underlying social practices. They think in terms of titles and exclusion and of right, and they tend to regard the actual mechanisms of traditional land control and leadership as dysfunctional, as ‘wantok’, ‘corruption’ and organized lying. They glimpse the significance of the fact land may emerge as capital even as they complain of the decay of an imaginary, pure traditional realm. They speak the language of matrilineal descent – but to establish the fundamental condition of a market ontology, that is to say, a legal framework of contract for land. At the same time, they are profoundly concerned that land sales would be the vehicle for the villagers’ greed, yielding only ultimately-suicidal short-term gains. This impasse is resolved by insistence on strict unilineality – under the constraint that it is they who should be found to be the landholders. They frequently assert that the contemporary system of land control is a perversion of a traditional order characterised by clear delimitations, exclusion and the sovereignty of the tsunone features, which as we shall see, are very likely to be the actual innovations. ‘Buka expatriates’ are by no means alone in having these attitudes: superficially they command almost universally assent. One of the few points of consensus in the village is that things are bad, and land conflict is the most visible measure of this. But the ‘expatriates’ are unusually forceful proponents because they have knowledge, are witnesses to their own success and embody a different sort of leadership. They are not as bound as others, who might express the same sentiments yet be constrained by the practical realities of Halia culture and society. Whereas tsunone embedded in the socially concrete practices of land and kinship negotiation may believe and aspire to decisionistic clarity and to see the order of land fixed once and for all, their social position subverts any such attempt. Because of their resources and status, the ‘expatriates’ can force the issue, and because of their social position, they must. And finally, they are also especially significant because it is they who more often than not represent the ‘keston’ system to the outside world.

### 2.6. The state system

Assessments of the Papua New Guinean state are almost uniformly bleak. The health system is in profound disrepair and faces chronic shortages of supplies and labour, understood to be potentially catastrophic in the face of major challenges from HIV and resurgent infectious diseases. The education system is plagued by shortages and lack of training, whilst the government lacks the capacity to enforce standards on village-based primary and elementary schools. Higher education is rapidly decaying. The legal infrastructure for economic development is opaque and the bureaucracy that administers it is notoriously inefficient and corrupt. There is extensive unregulated business activity. Large-scale economic development projects are negotiated in an atmosphere of almost un concealed nepotism and illegality. The police force is frequently seized by fights between internal factions; it is brutal (Human Rights Watch 2005, 2006), ineffective and comprehensively permeated by corruption. On virtually every register, the state simply fails to provide the kinds of support and services which a very diverse cross-section of the population desire.
The harshest criticisms of the PNG state system are reserved for its political machinery: its hallmarks are brazen clientelism, incompetence and nepotism. Pork-barrelling is virtually institutionalised in the form of discretionary funds made available for members of Parliament to spend in their own electorates: over more than a decade, efforts to curb these and control their disbursement have been checked by political resistance and innovative schemes for influencing the flow of cash. Funds are disbursed in a patently self-interested and often vindictive fashion. Whilst Papua New Guinea has an unbroken record of democracy since independence, electoral violence must be regarded as extremely disturbing, especially in light of the fact that less intense coercive practices are common during elections (Standish 1996, 2002; Reilly 2002; Dinnen 1996).

A recurring theme in the analysis of the Papua New Guinean state is the relative absence of policy-based or ideological political agents or parties. The political system is instead characterised, at every level, by an opportunistic struggle for control of what may be termed the means of distribution. Papua New Guinea has a primarily extractive economy. Its export sector is overwhelmingly dominated by mining and logging, whilst the bulk of the population works in agriculture. The tax and royalty base of the state is therefore largely dependent on sectors that involve a comparatively tiny fraction of the population, whilst the economic improvement of the remaining majority has electoral but not fiscal benefits for the government, at least in the short term. Viewed from above – from the position of entrenched parliamentarians – there are strong political incentives for careful distribution of services, resources and bribes, but these do not have a direct role in generating further funds for distribution. Viewed from below – from the point of view of villagers – the resources to which politicians have access to dwarf the potential of the copra-based village economy. To secure funds, politicians must enter into the governing coalition; to establish a governing coalition, its leaders must shell out positions and resources. (Papua New Guinea has a large cabinet including on occasion several ministers without portfolios. This is also the case in African countries with similar clientelistic political systems.) The primary task of this governing coalition, however, is to obtain rents from commodity export. To secure votes, politicians must distribute these rents. Whilst this is not a straightforward proposition, and whilst politicians face a very hard task being re-elected, the result of this system is a type of state-mediated class formation in which politicians acquire interests that are structurally similar to their rival or allied politicians, but not their electorates. The somewhat counterintuitive result of this is that despite the woeful condition of state institutions, and despite electoral instability, the broader social system of the state is characterised by relatively powerful state actors.

This description may seem out of kilter with the conventional idea that in Papua New Guinea, the state is held at ransom by powerful 'landowners' who are able to insert themselves as 'gatekeepers' to resource development, diverting rents to their own narrow interests rather than to an organized, well-

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40 Efforts to impose governance standards led to the replacement of the Rural Development Program and Electorate Development Program by the District Development Program in 2000, with tighter supervision of expenditure. In practice, politicians in Bougainville use these tighter standards to channel funds to projects that have a veneer of institutional regularity, but which continue to represent electoral and business interests. (Compare May 2005).

41 After the 2007 election, there were 28 ministers in the PNG Parliament of 109 Members, assisted by 12 secretaries. In 2009, the Zimbabwean regime struck a power-sharing deal with the opposition that involved the appointment of no fewer than seventy ministers, deputies and governors (Sachikonye 2009). See also Van de Walle (2001:103-6).
constituted government that could pursue national development goals. Indeed, it must be conceded at once that the type of relationship between the state, politicians and villagers found in Buka is not representative of all areas of Papua New Guinea, or even Bougainville. This fact is one that contributes to the relative power of the state system in Buka: the resources are resources found under someone else’s land. The state thus stands as a conduit through which villagers can access revenue streams rooted elsewhere, over which they can make no claim for direct compensation. Other areas have neither resources nor the level of political integration Buka has. Regional fragmentation and polymorphism is an important feature of the Papua New Guinean state system.

At the national level, the primary development over the past decade has been the stabilization and institutionalization of this core dynamic, though its logic remains fundamentally unchanged. Frequent replacement of politicians led to instability, but politicians were generally replaced by other politicians who either begun with, or rapidly acquired, an understanding of the political realities of distribution. Now that the system has been artificially stabilized, favour within the governing coalition is organized as a one-time auction after elections, but the political realities of distribution remain the same. The result is that parliament has become a microcosm of the wider political system, with marginal members taking on a role vis-à-vis the core of the governing coalition that is analogous to that of the electorate and member.

The near-catastrophic picture of the Papua New Guinean state has led several observers to label it as a ‘weak’, ‘failing’ or ‘moribund’ state, part of an ‘arc of instability’ (Dobell 2007; Moore 2004:9; Windybank, Saunders and Manning 2003; May 2006). Whilst the debate is dominated by considerations of Australian strategic interests, it would be foolhardy to dismiss these warnings: both because the underlying issues are very serious and also Papua New Guineans themselves are even harsher critics of their government. Several people told me they suspected Satan was at work in Parliament. They were not using figurative language. Others offered more elaborate and informed analysis with the same basic moral tenor. The most promiscuous use of the language of state failure is to be found not in hallucinatory Centre for Independent Studies publications, but in the letters and opinion pages of The Post Courier and The National. Indeed, widespread cynicism and lack of faith in government is so entrenched in Melanesia that this is considered by some observers to be a factor undermining state strength. There is some justification for this, to the extent that low expectations can promote an opportunistic attitude, especially during elections. Repeated failure of politicians to deliver electoral promises encourages voters to demand payment upfront, entrenching a political system that is fundamentally reliant on distribution of electoral inducements, that is to say, bribes.

For the purpose of this thesis, it is important to see that the ‘weak state’ position is in some ways misleading. One ought to distinguish between on the on hand different types of state strength, and on

42 The Organic Law of Integrity of Political Parties (OLLIPAC), introduced in 2002,
43 Eg. Windybank, Saunders and Manning (2003) predicted cataclysmic economic and political upheavals after the 2002 election; in fact the subsequent seven years have been characterised by relative political stability and economic growth. Hughes and Windybank (2005) suggested, counter to all evidence, that the failure of the Enhanced Cooperation Package (ECP) led to worsening security situation in Bougainville. The primary reason this is implausible is that the ECP had no presence in Bougainville, which has seen little sign of worsening violence since the peace agreement of 2000.
44 Eg. An opinion piece by Gelu (2007) cited failure to fix traffic lights expeditiously as evidence of state failure.
the other, the question of whether or not the state meets whatever norms of acceptable state behaviour one wishes to argue for. Chabal and Daloz's analysis of African political economy, though too heavily indebted to a Weberian framework, is fundamentally correct in emphasizing the fact that states which may appear collapsed or even 'vacuous' if one takes the standard of statehood to be bureaucratic European states may 'work' for certain people, specifically by creating types of politically expedient disorder (Chabal and Daloz 1999). Whether a state 'works' or 'does not work' should be assessed from the point of view of the beneficiaries of the state, its actual constituencies rather than a normative ideal of who should be a beneficiary, of ideal constituencies. From this perspective, the truly disturbing aspect of a political system such as Papua New Guinea's is not that it is weak, let alone about to collapse, but that it may be stable, or stable in its instability.

There is no doubt that by almost anyone's standard, the PNG state is bad, in the sense that it fails to meet expectations of a very wide range of participants and observers. It is poor, disorganized, ineffective, and it lacks capacity; in these senses it is 'weak' and prone to failure. However, lack of capacity, ineffectiveness and pervasive corruption do not affect all members of society in the same way. Ineffective state institutions affect most those who are most dependent on the state and those who are in the weakest position to exploit the disorder for their own ends. For those who are within the system, disorder can be advantageous: it allows the maintenance of the networks of patronage that, in any honest reckoning, must be considered as intrinsic parts of the actually-existing Papua New Guinean state understood as a social system. Pervasive state dysfunction creates a kind of quasi-commodity - state-provided services - which well-placed individuals can then use for political ends. This has the effect of rendering villagers more dependent on politicians and officials, whether or not the later intentionally set about to organize a racket. Given the limited fiscal capabilities of the PNG state, a realistic calculation must lead a politician either to deflate expectations or to concentrate the investments of resources. A politician who chooses to persuade the electorate to accept less than they have or to accept less than they have been promised by others faces a very difficult political struggle against those who strategically distribute resources to create a constituency. The latter risk making some friends and many enemies, the former risk making none of either. In such a context, it does not take Machiavellian cynicism to act in such a way that distributive networks are further entrenched. Of course, Machiavellian cynicism is hardly wanting.

2.6.1. The involvement of villagers in the state system

If disorder ought to be understood as a positive phenomenon, rather than the absence of a desirable order, it is also important not to overstate the extent to which the state is a 'hollow' bureaucracy, a façade distant from villagers. Despite the often dysfunctional nature of state and political institutions, Halia villagers are deeply enmeshed with them. Courts, the education and health systems are utterly central to villager's daily concerns. Electoral campaigns are organized by candidate's committees (Tok Pisin komititi); every hamlet in Hahalis and Hanahan had at least one man working for such a committee, but frequently more. These committees are the primary conduit of the distributive network, but they are also a means by which villagers can approach politicians with suggestions and
grievances. Clientelism is a defining feature of the PNG state system — but it is not its sole feature. Alongside the dependency fostered by the politics of distribution, there is participation, engagement, contestation and above all a presumption that things ought to be done better than they are. In many ways, villagers participate in these state and state-focused systems in a far more direct and personally relevant way than would be the norm in a first-world country.

Fig. 2.3. Matthew Nohu and Peter Sahin reconcile at Village Court.

It is sometimes said that this is a symptom of the weakness of state institutions: that they are in fact colonized by the villagers, who subvert and reappropriate them within a social field that the state cannot itself structure. Indeed, the state and the diffuse political field surrounding it are often portrayed as permeated, or even constituted by extensions of segmentary political organization. In these terms, Papua New Guinea has often been presented as an example of 'society colonizing the state' (Gordon and Meggit 1985; Migdal 1988). It is true that villagers have some leeway to shape institutions to their own ends. It is also true that political kinship is an important aspect of the state organization. But to see this as evidence of the weakness of the state follows only so long as (1) one assumes that the criterion of institutional strength is independence from the social field, and (2) one ignores the fact that when participating in state institutions, villagers assume roles that are not the product of a society undetermined by these institutions, but rather shaped by them45. Of the first

45 This is essentially Weber's typology of authority and domination, which draws a strong (indeed, epoch-defining) distinction between authority deriving from an office or discharge of a law-like rule and authority deriving from kinship or charisma. A person appearing before a court composed of her kin and exchange partners would, in this view, be suspected of facing the judgement of people rather than the rule of law. But even if we accept this view, the result is not a one-way street. In Buka, kinship is shaped by bureaucratic aspirations, and in a society
assumption, it should immediately be noted that institutional independence and state autonomy in an organic social order does not assure good state conduct or functional institutions, despite this being the clear motivation for this criticism. If 'institutional strength' is taken to mean institutions that are generally regarded as a functional, pro-social, beholden to a 'public' rather than 'private' interest, the assumption would be circular but for the importation of the ideological machinery of 'public' and 'private'. The problem with these concepts is less that they are inappropriate for the analysis of Melanesian socio-political systems than that they are inappropriate for the analysis of any political system. The distinction of public and private, the articulation of a social imaginary of 'public life', the constitution of a 'private' citizen — these are outcomes of a certain type of state organization, they cannot explain the origin of those very states, let alone serve in the analysis of different state systems.

In fact, Halia villagers aspire to reproduce the state, they desire bureaucracy: their attitude towards courts, local government councils and the state generally is that these institutions should not be structured by favour and kin. They should be professional, transparent, fair, legally constituted. In engaging with state institutions, villagers take on professionalised roles. They produce a model of sociality that is not identical to that which emerges from daily life and the organization of the ritual economy: to the contrary, they set out to produce a field of self-disciplining bureaucratic identities and rationalizing practices. They take minutes at meetings, organize agendas, produce budgets, discipline each other and themselves into official roles. The actual result of this rarely comes close to an abstract model of efficient bureaucracy. But neither does it resemble the working of*tsubana. It is misleading to criticise these efforts as constituting simply theatre, or the manipulation of symbolism — as if the true power of the persons of magistrates, police officers, councillors and such resided in a 'traditional' sphere, whereas the titles of 'magistrate', 'police officer', etc... were adopted for the sake of status only. In fact, the articulation of the state system at the microsocial level is characterised both by this type of status-seeking and its critique. Indeed, this is a pervasively common local criticism of local bureaucracies: that the officers are officers in name only (*ol i gat nem tasol*), that they lack expertise (*sava*), that they do not work but rather play-act (*pilpilai nabaut*), wasting time in meaningless discussion (*toktok nating, mauswara*). The solution to this, however, is always that the officers ought to behave as officers, and that people with *sava* should be placed in charge. The critique, therefore, further entrenches the desire for government even as it exposes the situation as hopeless — a disclosure that is not without political utility. The significance of this observation becomes acute when we turn to the effort to adapt the *trahana* as a form of constituted government. Here the critique is reversed: it is the title of *tsunono* and *peis* that are *nem tasol*, taken up by men who play-act at *nitsunono* and *tsubana* protocol. These traditional roles have been reconceptualised in terms of offices.

A similar point may be made of the political system, at local, provincial and national levels. The hostility towards politicians and impressively realistic cynicism with which villagers regard the operations of government does not translate into a renunciation of government as such. Villagers have internalised government. They have, to the extent that this is possible, adapted it to their conditions: formerly constituted without bureaucratic organization, that is the more remarkable change. Alan Rumsey makes a similar argument for the prototype case of 'segmentary' violence in the PNG highlands (Rumsey 1999).
but at the same time they have adapted themselves to it. In this respect, the experience of the Crisis casts unclear shadows: the village continued to exist on the strength of its autochthonous structures of authority, but almost everyone, including many ex-BRA fighters, regard the withdrawal of state services as a major crime for which PNG owes compensation to Bougainville. What sense could there be in these criticisms, were the state weak and remote from the actual social field of the village?

2.6.2. *Weakness of non-state actors*

State strength can be understood absolutely, in relation to abstract norms of state behaviour; it can be understood by comparing a state against other states. But it can also be understood by examining what kind of organized opposition there is to the state. Whilst it is true that relative to other states and relative to ideals of state function, the PNG state is weak, relative to other internal actors within Papua New Guinea, the state system is not nearly so weak. PNG has few social movements or political associations separate from the state: the major exceptions to this are religious organizations, but although these are significant political forces, they preach discipline, modernization and respect for leaders more often than resistance, the sin of rebellion. Yet virtually no other type of organization is able to articulate itself both *apart from the state system and across communities*. The primary dynamic of political associations in the village is to pressure government officials and to seek to install favourable politicians in parliament. The political pressure is, so to speak, ‘vertical’ whilst ‘horizontal’ links between villages (let alone similar classes and groups in separate provinces) are extremely limited. This is a pattern that is actively promoted from above and from below. When men and women excel at organizing the ‘grass roots’, they are invariably and in short order approached by politicians; more often than not they themselves seek out the government’s aid. The state-centred political system is, in other words, a sink for political initiative.

Bougainville would be expected to be an obvious counter-example to this, and to a significant extent it is. Hahalis itself provides one of the most impressive cases of endogenous resistance to the colonial government, the Hahalis Welfare Society. Later, the secessionist movement was effective in resisting the PNG state in the most dramatic fashion imaginable. The BRA’s successor organizations, the Me’ekamui factions, staunchly resisted participation in the peace process by which the Papua New Guinean state reasserted itself over the Region. A large section of the island remains outside government control even today: there the government has little presence, let alone a monopoly on the use of force. Unquestionably, this history clearly demonstrates the vulnerability of the colonial...

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46 The relationship of church and state is, of course, very complex. The Bishop of Bougainville is an influential man, and his views are not always popular with politician – yet the Catholic Church explicitly shuns temporal government, and in no sense seeks to replace the government. For many important figures, churches – especially the Catholic Church – have been the platform from which to launch political careers: Alexis Sarei, the first premier of the Province of Bougainville, and John Momis, the current President of the Autonomous Region were both ordained priests; Joseph Kabui was a seminarian: all men left the church before entering politics. These biographies reflect the fact that clerical education was (and remains) highly valued and heavily promoted. They also reflect the fact that a clerical career was perceived as limiting for the politically most ambitious men in the island. Also symptomatic of the conservative effect of churches is the fact that politically dissenting religion in Melanesia is often assimilated to the paradigm of cargo cult by the orthodox, an accusation of heresy that is still ideologically effective and enforceable by state repression.
and postcolonial states to organized resistance. It furnishes proof, as if any were needed, that the Papua New Guinean state is not especially strong. But more detailed examination of these cases illustrates the capacity of the distributive state system to coopt and absorb challenges. The Hahalis Welfare Society succeeded in resisting the colonial government: but this position of resistance was forced upon its leadership, which always desired integration — in its own terms — within the colonial system (May 1982:8). Once the intransigence of the Australian administration was replaced with nationalist lionization by the Papua New Guinean state, the movement unraveled: if we look beyond the figure of John Teosin, who by then had partly withdrawn from politics, Hahalis' leaders became the vanguard of the state system in eastern Buka in the 1980s. The BRA represents a completely different level of antagonism and a genuine rejection of the Papua New Guinean state. We cannot know if the incipient government established by Kabui and Ona would have developed along radically different lines. We do know, however, that the PNG state was ultimately able to rearticulate itself over most of Bougainville. It did so through an effective, though sometimes ruthless, campaign of counter-insurgency. Two key features of this campaign were the cooption of former BRA sections47, and the fact that in several areas — especially Buka — commitment to orderly government and participation in the state system had by 1989 become deeply entrenched. That is to say, the PNG government was ultimately able to convert opposition into support, partly because the BRA government failed to establish countervailing structures of discipline and control. In doing so, it could draw on pre-existing support. The peace process, which relies on a referendum on independence sometime after 2010, cannot be understood as an unconditional victory for PNG, but the political development of the Autonomous Region since its inaugural elections in 2005 illustrates the inability — and unwillingness — of pro-independence politicians to force Port Moresby's hand.

Whilst the continued existence of the rejectionist Me'ekamui illustrates the limitations of this process, a closer examination yields a mixed picture. For Me'ekamui ideologues, the fact 'but i kapsait pinis' (blood has already been spilled) is understood to mean that Bougainville is already independent. This radical attitude is one of the main factors attracting younger men into the organization. Attitudes towards independence in Bougainville range from vehement support by a majority to private apprehension by a generally educated, elite minority. The vision of history the Me'ekamui offer is very much in line with popular views. The Me'ekamui are also organized as a would-be shadow government (or rather, since there are multiple Me'ekamui factions, several would-be shadow governments): there is an independent chain of command, there are 'ministers' and most importantly, there is an armed militia. The organization also has its own ideology of development, stressing self-sufficiency, Christianity and economic ideas drawn from Social Credit and radical cooperative movements. The Me'ekamui are by far the most vehement proponents of 'traditionalism' in government, espousing the view that the tsuhabana is government. As such, the movement represents an extreme of independence vis-à-vis the state system. Indeed, during the 2005 ABG elections the movement did not field candidates, and formally prohibited its members from actively participating in election campaigns. The trajectory of the movement, however, has conformed with a general pattern of cooption and opportunism. For instance, Patrick Nisira, the man who would in 2010 emerge as the

47 A fact particularly resented in Hahalis, which mostly aligned itself against the BRA: not only did a corrupt government reorganize itself in the island, but it did so by favouring the enemies of many tsunamo.
vice-president of Bougainville was elected to the Regional Parliament in 2005 by skilful leveraging of his past as a BRA commander and connections with the National Alliance, the governing party of Papua New Guinea. His campaign organizer was at the time a Me’ekamui leader. Meanwhile, Thomas Tohiana, one of the most senior Me’ekamui leaders in Halia – who is married to the president of the Buka Town Council, herself a key figure in the local chapter of Rotary – entered the Halia Council of Elders as a hereditary, unelected tsunono by joining the faction led by National Alliance party member Robert Tabuta. Tabuta compared Francis Ona to Hitler in an interview I conducted in Tohiana’s presence, and went on to support Francis Semos, former PNGDF bureaucrat, in his successful bid for the regional seat in the 2007 national election. Tohiana continued to support him in the council. By that time, the north Bougainville/Buka Me’ekamui was fielding its own candidate in the national election – in a campaign which, aside from populist and Social Credit inspired critiques of ‘the money system’, was entirely consistent with the normal modus operandum of PNG politicians.

2.6.3. ‘Civil society’

Non-Governmental Organizations have been identified as means by which the government could be brought into line with desired norms of governance (Haley 2008). If any part of Melanesia should inspire confidence in this direction, it is Bougainville. The Region is famous for its vibrant peace-building NGOs (Hakena, Ninnes, and Jenkins 2006; Sirivi and Havini 2004), notably the Leitana Nehan Women’s Development Agency and Inter-Church Women’s Forum. The later is an example of the diverse and intensely committed religious community development sector. The importance of the work carried out by these organizations should not be underestimated. Broadening the scope of ‘civil society’ institutions, it should be noted that there is also a vibrant, though fractious ‘civil society’ to be found at a village level. In 2007 Hahalis, for instance, had no less than four school boards, including two rival boards for the primary school. There are endless formations of associations and quasi-corporate groups in the village, many of them with social reform agendas – although a pecuniary angle is rarely absent. Village Courts are the site of an extensive community or ‘civil’ life, resembling the processes narrated by Michael Goddard (1996, 2009). There is an especially intense involvement by villagers in sports (nobody would bowl alone, if there were bowling alleys in the island, compare Putnam 2000). Sports are indeed conceptualised by the tsunono and politicians in virtually functionalist terms, as a means for diverting the potentially troublesome energies of ‘ol yut’ (youths).

However, the reality of the social articulation of these groups does not correspond to the norms idealised for them by ‘civil society’ theorists. In that thoroughly normative discourse, civil society is conceptualized as a layer of autonomous organization by citizens, distinct from both private enterprise and the state but promoting prosocial roles for both. Whilst many large-scale NGOs have professionalised staff possessing acute ideological commitment to a view of civil society as socially transformative, modernizing counter-weights to the corruption represented by government, their social position within the Buka social and economic structure is effectively that of an elite. By contrast, the other type of ‘civil society’, comprising the small-time community organizations of the
village is in fact embedded in the village social life. But this does not make it a natural counterweight to the power of the state system, for this organic civil society is in no sense detached from the social structures that give rise to the relative power of the state. Quite the opposite, it is often through participation in this complex associational life that villagers become enmeshed into distributive political systems. The basic problem for those hoping 'civil society' would represent a force for reform is that civil society takes place in the actually existing society, rather than some normatively acceptable construct. The tools which they apply to reshaping society are crafted from the same material as society itself.

For instance, School Boards – to take a paradigmatic example of a 'civil society' institution – have vibrant discussions about what kind of education there should be in the village, and such discussions often broach complex and deep topics – but these discussions rarely lead to any specific course of action. In practice, the boards are largely preoccupied with fundraising amongst villagers, and pressuring politicians for funds. That may sound like precisely the desired role civil society, but it means that demands by school board and gifts to schools become critical to the articulation of the state distributive system. In less kind words, School Boards request and receive bribes. Indeed, because of the reforms to the 'slush funds' available for politicians, schools are a perfect vehicle for electorally-minded transfers of resources. One such disbursement led to the headmaster of Hahalis primary school starting a P.A. hire service; some villagers saw this as smart, forward-looking fundraising, others identified it as corruption. However one sees the issue (the ethnographic datum is that there is diversity of views), this should not be mistaken as some kind of subversion of the state system; it is exactly what the operation of the state system amounts to. At the same time, it is important to note that this is not incompatible with School Boards operating as self-conscious promoters of bureaucratic rigour or 'good citizenship'. Indeed, more than almost any other type of association in Halia, School Boards represent themselves as models of civic rectitude. In Hahalis, this went so far as prosecuting parents who failed to pay school fees: a policy that in reality goes so far against the interests of the villagers that not even the state would risk it. The rationale for the prosecution was that parents who sent their children to school without paying fees were stealing from parents who met their obligations. This reasoning represents a radical interpretation of the governments' policy; its 'neoliberal' appearance is far from accidental, it is a result of the internalization of a logic of fiscal responsibility delegated by the government. The affair yielded some sharply ironic results. Not only was the man who, with the school principal, had initiated the prosecutions the very first person drawn before the Village Court charged with default, all three magistrates hearing the case were themselves on the list of defaulters. The school principal himself sought the fees partly so as to expand the business enterprise his fraction of the School Board had built upon school equipment.

48 School fees, in turn are a classic form of donative exploited by sitting politicians. Papua New Guinea does not have a system of universal free primary education. Instead, governments ‘pay for school fees’ at strategic moments, without reforming the system. Recently, national and regional members of parliament have undertaken to pay for school fees at the Hutjena Primary School, the largest in the Autonomous Region. The payments are undertaken personally by the members of parliament, in the name of the students from their electorate (Post Courier 2010).

49 Both the National and Regional governments had expressly instructed that no child should be denied education because of their parent’s failure to pay school fees.
The plethora of associations and quasi-corporate groups that populate the village's political economy are even less distinct from distributive networks. The fundamental purpose of many of these associations is to obtain funding from politicians and businessmen who are invariably engaged in the political field. For instance, the *tsunono* repeatedly called for the organization of women's groups in the village. Taking steps to encourage the women to form such groups when they had become discouraged by the collapse of a previous group under accusations of corruption, a village politician stated the rationale as "*bikos plenti moni i stap blong ol wimini*": because the government offered money for women's groups. The reality is that such groups do in fact help women; but there is a complex relationship between them, village power elites and the state. It is nothing like an *opposition*.

If the forms of civil society organization that exist in the village are not autonomous of the state (and, from the perspective of their constituents, it is not desirable that this should be the case), the formal organization of NGOs is both embedded into an incipient class structure, and it is also ensconced within wider political systems.

When NGO staff consider these problems, they naturally see that they are serious. NGO staff are not, with very few exceptions, cynics. They feel themselves committed to represent the villagers, but their attitudes are not representative of the villagers' own attitudes. Even if they avoid paternalism, their perception of social realities comes from a different perspective. NGO staff are often educated, professionalised people who have sophisticated readings of their own culture — not, it should be noted, necessarily accurate readings, but certainly ideologically effective. NGO staff in Buka, for instance, have a very proactive outlook towards women's rights, and read local 'traditions' of matriliney and *teitahol* in these terms: but there is in fact little justification for this, it would be a noble lie were it not sincerely believed. A less clearly noble facet of this is that the very doctrine of 'transparency' that NGOs would like to impose on the state comes to be applied on the villagers, and onto themselves. The many skills of the *tsunono* (and indeed of the *teitahol*) that revolve around striking carefully not-quite-denied compromises on leadership, negotiating and sometimes revising historical kinship, building alliances and working on exchanges which today must necessarily have economic and political implications strike the NGO staffers, and anybody else who has become accustomed with the jargon of transparency, as 'corruption.' Indeed such forms of social critique have become so internalized that they merge seamlessly into the dynamics of sorcery accusations50.

In the economic landscape of the village — a landscape subjectively measured in the meagre and hard-won income of bags of copra — the income available to permanent NGO staff is very attractive. On the one hand, this yields a discourse of suspicion. NGO intermediaries are seen as benefiting from the NGO, to the exclusion or disadvantage of ordinary villagers. On the other hand, NGOs have a critical *credentializing* role in the village political economy. Men and women who excel at grass roots organization are drawn into courses and workshops which provide both real skills, and the pieces of apart from love magic, most types of sorcery target either an entire community (eg. *lutaraban*, which induces laziness and moral laxity), or specific figures such as *tsunono* claimants responsible for ordering and leading a community and *teitahol*, responsible for reproducing a lineage. The later types may 'misfire' and affect others in the target's *bunkatan*. These forms of sorcery are secret know-how, which depletes the reproductive and productive capacity of a community for selfish reasons. Corruption is secret know-how that depletes businesses and quasi-corporate groups, again for selfish reasons.
paper that function as credentials. The skills allow such individuals to rise to the top of the village political structure, but this is also a means by which models of bureaucratic rationality, the value system of transparency and proceduralism are reinforced. The skills of the *tsunono*, the improvised, compromising, diplomatic skills required to maintain the village *i markatu a nigga*, in 'the good path', to *lhabana i ban* to 'settle the settlement', are not obviously identical to the skills required to run an office, to maintain ledgers, to conduct meetings with agendas and minutes. To the extent that this latter set of skills is privileged and the former is associated with corruption, the effect of skills development is often paradoxical. It reduces the effectiveness of 'traditional authorities', nominally lionised in the local NGO ideology.

It would be entirely misleading to cast the *tsunono* as a block that opposes this encroachment of instrumental rationality onto the fluid improvisation of community: the *tsunono* share the value system that motivates men and women to seek skills from training. Indeed it is them, most of all, who perceive the community as corrupted by the very skills that I will argue serve to in fact organize the community, and this is reflected in the projects of state they imagine, which have a specially strong emphasis on extending training to themselves.
3. Matrilines and their Context

3.1. "Mipela bibainim mama"

"We follow the mother": Halia society is self-consciously matrilineal. This is a matter for extensive ideological elaboration, notably in relation to the articulation of land in terms of legal claims and its productive capacities in a cash economy. Matrilineal descent provides the only legitimate basis upon which tsaruna may be built, and is therefore at the centre of the issue of the transposition of the chief’s authority into the circuit of state organization. The discourse of descent is also elaborated through the lively political activism that emerged in the context of the Bougainville Crisis - a war fought over manawaran (i.e. mother-land), with peace brought about by the manawaran (i.e. organized mothers-landowners), according to a common narrative. The local understanding of matriliny is reflexive; but the character of the reflection has many layers, and it is a reflection against an imperfect and broken mirror of institutions and discourse that are not themselves organized by the Halia alone. When they now set out to produce institution and discourse, it is with these somewhat awkward tools that they proceed.

This yields sustained misrecognition. Upon discovering my interest in local custom, one tsunono explained: mipela ol maritain (‘we are the matrilineal ones’). He clearly expected me, an anthropologist, to understand this as a straightforward description of Halia social organization. But contemporary anthropology is strongly opposed to the idea that there is anything straightforward about matrilineal kinship. The translation of matriliny to maritain is not transparent, and the return leg is no easier. The ASOPA - trained colonial officers who framed land tenure in legal terms were working with their own bowdlerised versions of ethnographic accounts, such as Blackwood’s, that already had severe limitations. The civil society discourse that superimposes matriliny, a Christian-inflected moral ‘matriarchy’ (what may be termed maternalism) and concrete steps to ameliorate women’s conditions is similarly ensconced in ruthless simplification. The lost complexity is well captured by the iconic representation of maternalism, the figure of Mama Maria (St. Mary) as teitaño. Here is the deification of woman as mother, with an erasure of the sexual basis of motherhood: but the foundation of social and political power in sexuality is utterly central to Halia concepts of social organization. And yet, these discourses of motherhood and landowners are socially effective coordinates of matriliny; they play a serious legal and political role and ultimately help shape a social reality which cannot be analysed entirely within the conceptual field they encompass.

52 The Australian School of Pacific Administration provided a one-year training course for patrol officers, including training in social anthropology. Though the teachers at the institution were anthropologists of a high calibre, much of the subtlety of anthropological practice and theory had to be streamlined out of the course.
53 See Hemkens (2007a, 2007b) for a discussion of the role of Marian veneration in the Bougainville conflict and PNG more generally.
The result of this is that in present-day Halia, the anthropologist at first encounters ghosts of paradigms past reincarnated as very serious, indeed lethal possibilities of social organization. The corporate lineage, a bad theory, returns as an impossible fact—a 'reality' that paradoxically can never be achieved. It must be stressed that that is not the way the Halia see it. For them, the logic of kinship is transparent and ancient. The elements which contemporary studies of kinship would read in their society as continuations of older practices—the complex negotiation of residential groups around the tsununa, the elaborate but necessarily discreet means for concatenating shallow matrilineages—they see as historical accidents and compromises. Conversely, for the historically-informed researcher, the present-day rigid inflection of matriliney as unilinear descent is difficult to dissociate from the framing of land tenure in legal terms; the discourse of corporate organization, which superimposes the tsununa with the language of middle management and state bureaucracy is even more obviously indebted to a contemporary context. But what for such an observer seem like the products of colonial history are for the Halia the core of their identity, which colonial history has rendered impossible to maintain. From their perspective, it is because of cash cropping and legalistic swindling that lineages are not able to sustain themselves and depend on compromising allies, or that the tsununa order fails repeatedly to achieve the corporate character they believe it should have.

3.2. Ngorere

In the contemporary language of Halia kinship there is a central place for the idiom of a toa ngorere, 'one umbilicus' or a toa bōsō 'one navel' (or 'womb'). What I call 'a lineage' in this thesis, the Halia refer to in these terms. Two issues arise almost immediately. The first is that there are normative uses of ngorere—what people state ngorere is or should be—and then there are actual social deployments of the term in various contexts. These do not always coincide. The reflexive use drives at something close to the classic formulation of a landholding corporate group formed by unilinear descent and filiation, with sub-lineages ranked by order of birth of ancestral sisters. Actual usage is substantially more complex: as we shall see below, decisions—even if tacit ones—have to be made as to who to include and who to exclude from ngorere. The second issue is that ngorere was less central to Halia practices of social organization in the past than it is now, although unquestionably the umbilicus has always been one of the core elements of the cultural matrix of kinship. One hesitates to say that an ideology of descent has been invented: rather, tendencies inherent in the pre-existing social system have been radically intensified and transformed. The causes of this are several, but foremost amongst them must be counted the effect of cash cropping, state-mediated land tenure, the increasing importance of the nuclear family, and the demographic transition. All these factors have contributed to and shaped the transformation of a system in which social power was accumulated through the negotiation of relationships between people, into one characterised by hegemonic competition for land.

The idiom of ngorere is amongst the most powerful items in the vocabulary of Halia political speech. It is, in a word, vital. To claim a relationship of a toa ngorere is to affirm to be flesh of one another's flesh: it has a visceral, emotional meaning. Complaining about a particularly cruel betrayal, a tussono clasped his belly and lamented to me: "none e bōsō?"—he is my navel, but also 'womb'. Ngorere, writes
Rimoldi, is “said to be the only part of the flesh that will not burn” (1973:59): it is irreducible. By contrast, the cognatic category of *a toa rhabating* (‘one blood’) is rarely deployed politically, though it is used to determine incest. Significantly, *binas* cross-cousins are linked by a bond of blood (Rimoldi and Rimoldi 1992:180).

*Ngorere* isn’t a question of law or norms, though it can certainly become that, especially in the context of litigation over land. The primary sense of *ngorere* is somatic. The ‘facts of birth’, above all the connection binding child to mother are believed to determine basic aspects of the child’s social and physical identity. These aspects are ‘inherited’, so long as this is understood with a meaning more akin to that of the inheritance of an uncle’s physiognomy than his wealth. Likewise, groups conceived of on the basis of relationships of *ngorere* are not so much corporate – ‘legal persons’ established by artifice and contract – but more like natural kinds. Persons form a single *ngorere* because they are connected to each other, they share a maternal substance: they are sort of quasi-biological unit. Groups identified by *ngorere* are often referred to as *kainu* – ‘person’, of indefinite number – or even *tsom*: ‘that man.’ Hence the ambiguity that a ‘man’ said to have build a *tsubana* ten times may have done this over a period of a hundred years. This is true in the case of families and it is also true in the case of the largest expansions of the totemic categories of *pinaposa*: members of these are said to be distinguishable on the basis of differences in the creases of their palms (Blackwood 1935: 43)\(^4\), physiognomy and other physical features such as the shape of the calf and vulva\(^5\). These groups are believed to be cohesive, to act, feel and plan in a concerted fashion. If one member is thought to have been attacked by sorcery, any other *ngorere* member may fall victim to it. *Tsunono* who have successfully built *tsubana* clan houses and face jealousy often express intense guilt when illness befalls their kinsfolk: the whole community, but above all his lineage, is vulnerable to an attack on him or his house. When in the past, pacts were sealed by human sacrifices, a person could only be taken from the lineages making the pact. That clan then retained *nitsunono*, vested through the pact; afterwards, when the pact lapsed the *nitsunono* and honour of sacrifice would return to the sacrificing lineage.

Wherever a dispute arises over kinship and descent – and therefore the normative boundaries and organization of social groups – it is the stipulated historical actuality of *ngorere* that is appealed to. Whereas much recent anthropology of Melanesia has been couched on a criticism of the idea that descent groups exist before their interactions within a (fundamentally cognatic) social field, this is exactly what the overwhelming majority of Halla believe, and aspire to. The connection of *ngorere* precedes any ritualization or public negotiation of relationships: so much so that it is precisely possible to *discover* relations of *ngorere* that had not been known before. The view that this kind of discovery (confirmed by subtly political sacrifices) is *precisely* the kind of negotiation and ritualization

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\(^4\) I had my friends attempt to classify my left hand – which has relatively unusual fused palmar creases – and the result was inevitably that I belonged to *pinaposa* of whomever I was asking.

\(^5\) The diamond-shaped *kolebo* symbol of the two *pinaposa* are drawn with slightly different widths, reflecting this (see below, Section 8.4).
that constructs (or worse, 'invents') actual kin bonds is strictly that of the outsider65. The phenomenal presence of ngorre is that of a pre-existing thing, indeed the key pre-existing thing.

These ideas bloom into a utopian vision of order. There is only one ngorre between each mother and each child, and therefore only one true picture of how society should be arranged. If only this picture could be known and acted upon, the many compromises of genealogy could be undone, and the scrambled settlement of groups away from their true land sorted out. The true landowners would prevail, and the tsunono would be heard and obeyed because he would be matskuma, 'straight', immune from genealogical aspersions. But, the Halia lament, that picture is unknown to most people. The tsunono who are said to know it, do not divulge it. Why not? The other side of a past and future utopia is a present dystopia of secret deals and silences pregnant with suspicion of bribery and corruption. Indeed, in present-day Buka we may observe both a vision of perfect orderly organization that owes much to the encounter between colonial and post-colonial regulations of land, and the emergence of corruption as a regulative principle of actually existing kinship, a prism which fuses together sorcery and the tensions of a struggling cash economy.

Beliefs about 'groupishness' are usually held about other people's ngorre and kin. "Those people over there are always plotting to take our land": this is the reciprocal complaint of the Nakaripa and Naboen in Hahalis, categorizations of people who are in fact involved in extremely serious conflict amongst themselves. In the case of their own ngorre, the difficulties involved in maintaining lineage solidarity and cooperation preoccupy leaders. For them, the crisis of present day Halia society is almost invariably cast as the lineage (or clan, or village, or the whole of Bougainville) not acting as a toa katum 'one man/people.' It is vitally important to note that this problematic of unity is manifest at the level of the lineage group, or for that matter the family and homestead. There, it has the character of a pressing practical problem, a matter of interpersonal relationships. It ought to be modulated by love, yet it often is not. As we turn to the question of large-scale political mobilization, it will become clearer that this provides an immediate experience and framework for understanding the wider difficulties of political and economic organization in Buka and Bougainville. Conversely, it also makes disciplining the family a part of the unique local brand of statecraft.

3.3. Lineage Depth

The first clue that the emic picture of matrilineage is insufficient and that actually existing Halia kinship cannot be structured entirely by the principles of ngorre is the fact that lineage depths have grown since the early colonial phase. Beatrice Blackwood indicates that the depth of genealogical memory in 1929 was not great - extending two generations prior to the eldest persons then alive (Blackwood 1935:41). Rimoldi and Rimoldi describe the locally settled lineages - about whom biological kinship was well-understood - as 'shallow', with deeper genealogical connections being

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65 When presented with such an analysis, my informants assumed reflexively that I was accusing them of lying; accusing others of genealogical invention and manipulation of sacrifices is a standard means for delegitimizing their claims.
implicated in a tangle of “alliance and fictitious kinship on the head of the tsubsana”, that is to say, assembled by political means (1992:81). M. Rimoldi earlier emphasised that links of filiation between ostensibly matrilineal groups are often putative (1971:59-60). Moreover, genealogies across locations — much more common than the ideological elaboration of autochthonity would suggest — are less clear and more frequently contested. Knowledge of genealogy is stored and retrieved socially, by people who selectively prompt and check each other’s stories, and once distinct social groups are involved, the aggregate knowledge fractures.

Halua genealogies today sometimes extended to 9 generations before the oldest living generation, and whilst most range to only 4 or 5, that fact is hidden from public view: such a horizon is considered shallow and delegitimizing. A 9-generation span from the oldest living present generation corresponds to the three generations before the eldest generation alive in 1929, the time of Blackwood’s fieldwork, and indeed, the earliest remembered biographical material places the base generation around two generations before German colonization. This correspondence with Blackwood is quite striking, and can be explained by the appearance of written means for recording genealogical information, and the development of a rationale for doing so. Women tend to have more complete genealogical knowledge than men, but even ‘experts’ do not recall the five or six generations above them; genealogies in that range are effectively composed by negotiation. Yet there are few occasions where an entire genealogy is recited: this is limited to court and preparation for court. The main public occasion in which ancestral links are announced is sacrifices to fire. But there is no requirement that they be called in order or that the call be comprehensive, or include only the spirits of ‘true’ ngore. There is a recollection of migration and recognition of descent-like relationships between groups that extend back before explicit kin relations. Traced in this mode, kin histories are followed through migration chains to the original settlement of Buka at Punen, and if this mythology has a time horizon, it is a Biblical one. These historical mythologies serve to distinguish different groups that come to be settled in one area, but they are nebulous as far as genealogical details are concerned. Priority of settlement is important, and sometimes facts yield to the desire for hallowed antiquity. Even the genealogies within the 9-generation horizon for which explicit information is proposed are not always transparent. To the extent that they come to be known to other groups, they are virtually always contested. There is very little by way of agreement on the especially important subject of the order of birth of early ancestors.

At present, ngore lineages are profoundly invested in compiling and maintaining — virtually as military secrets — family trees and genealogical records. I experienced significant difficulties obtaining genealogical records; much of the information I obtained could not be cross-checked. So long as I organized interviews about historical events affecting the village, myths and details of ritual protocol my informants insisted that representatives of different groups had to be present. When I turned to

57 Kin diagrams in Max Rimoldi (1971) and Eleanor Rimoldi (1982) are also within this same horizon.
58 Punen and its surrounding landscape is rich in mythological associations: it is from Mt. Bei that the first tshunana was constructed; it is there that men and women lived in original plenitude; nearby, Solos rumour places the Rod of Moses and other Old Testament artefacts.
questions of genealogy, or historical events particular to a group, these were provided only in secret and my informants became clearly concerned that the information should not be leaked to their opponents. The reason for this is that in the absence of records, memory alone serves to maintain what have become the principle means of legitimation of claims to tenure and rank, and these claims are above all served by the belief in the tsunono’s exclusive knowledge of details of genealogy. Should someone else acquire the information, their lies could be woven around it, and hence become immune to legitimate challenge. There is a pervasive belief that rival lineages are lying. In point of fact, the genealogical records which I was able to compare frequently showed irregularities, even amongst lineages that are friendly towards one another.

3.4. Synthetic and analytic forces in Halia kinship

While the figure of ngorere dominates the Halia language of kinship, Halia social groups, including lineages – indeed the very relationships of ngorere – are established by a special kind of negotiation: one that must take place, as it were, within the space of its own silence. This is implicit in the very idea that there is a ‘true picture’ of kinship. Why is it that only tsunono know the true picture of descent relations? The answer is that it is they who struck the compromises deviating from the true picture. Viewed from any distance, Halia society is composed of these compromises at least as much as it is by ‘true’ relationships. Why are there compromises at all? One part of the answer is that truth and conviviality do not always go well together. A tsunono must ensure a habana i ban – literally, ‘to make the settlement a settlement’; to ensure “that peace be upon the village,” according to one colourful local translation; “maintain a settled place” in Rimoldi’s more prosaic translation (Rimoldi 1971:48). Expelling ‘intrusive’ lineages is a serious failure of this basic aspect of the tsunono’s duty. However, the ground has slipped from beneath this ethos. Once, exercising this capacity to host was a viable strategy to power; today it is liable to backfire. “In the past we would welcome these punihuna” – said one tsunono, speaking of a group given a limited right of residence – “Today, we cannot do it; they want our land, and they have money for bribes.” He spoke mournfully: the alternative – to exclude – is not only a failure of duty but also of friendship.

Halia political kinship is pulled in different directions. The rigid interpretation of matriliny, considered alongside the great significance placed on primogeniture and order of birth, militate to centre attention on the umbilicus and to analyse the genealogical system into separate, ranked lineages. It is this way of seeing the social structure which the present-day Halia consider correct (matiskana, straight): there ought to be a single proper set of relationships prevailing between distinguishable groups, regardless of the consequences. But in another direction, Halia society is based on the political combination, friendship and social synthesis of different lineages.

This synthetic tendency is enhanced by fact that the kin terms are extended to co-settled lineages, whilst settlements groups – called bunkatun ‘people together’ – are usually composed of several lineages politically ordered around a tsuhana clan house. There is a strong tendency for the social bonds between these groups to express themselves as fictitious kin relations, later cemented as cryptic
kin. Classificatory kin are often integrated into the 'true' genealogy, that is, the genealogy which is supposed to represent actual connections of ngorere. This kind of integration, which is very common and indeed the basis upon which tsunana accrete bunkatun, is considered illegitimate. A person who manufactures such a claim to attempt to secure land or a tsunana is believed to be exposed to lethal consequences. "The ground eats liars," a tsunono of Ielelina told me, pointing sharply downwards. He was himself challenged in his position, and produced this as evidence of his version of facts being correct. That is to say: the belief that 'the ground eats liars' does not prevent the integration of classificatory kin into genealogies. It prevents admission of the fact that integration has happened, and so perversely facilitates it. The doctrine is also a powerful source of motivation for feuding groups not to communicate their histories to each other, or even amongst themselves. Hence tacit compromises, secret alliances and vaguely accepted adoptions proliferate. Suppressed as legitimate commodities, these return as unregulated contraband.

Relatives residing with 'true' ngorere are classified with them; they are often distinguished precisely, but only so long as they have a socially meaningful existence. There is often debate about the true connexion between persons supposed to have been siblings in previous generations: were they true siblings ('of one mother') or only putative matrilineal relatives (sungku)? On these debates now rides the security of tenure and livelihood of hundreds of people. Yet, held in living memory, the branches of the family tree do not merge so much into a single trunk as into thicket that must be untangled. When the time comes for clarifying the situation, accepted methods yield uncertain results. For instance, shared names are taken as evidence that two lineages have common ancestry, because names are recycled between generations within one's own lineage. Applying this as a principle, one man deduced that all people were in fact members of a single lineage, because names are in fact shared by virtually all groups. Drawing the opposite conclusion, another man, a member of a lineage of the Nakaripa totemic class argued that since his and his rival's Naboen lineage shared names, his rival was lying about his descent and could therefore be excluded from land ownership. In practice, there are several ways a name can be given without 'following the mother', to say nothing of the common practice of giving children the nicknames of their parents.

It is the residential group that collaborates within a tsunana that forms the critical basis for social organization: a factor that lies superposed with militant unilinealism. When, during sacrificial fires for a recently deceased person the ancestors of a locality are called to, these include not only his or her own ancestors: it is critical that the most powerful founders of the settlement be spoken to, whether or not the recently deceased belongs to their lineage. Indeed, at important sacrifices the ancestors of

59 This was intended as the expression of a powerful concept of solidarity, and attributed by the informant to the Welfare: but since this would also mean that everyone would be part of a lineage-like construct, there would be a tsunono of all, identified with the leader of the Welfare. This view is clearly heterodox and flatly rejected by most surviving Welfare spokesmen, except those who wish to parlay position in the Welfare into generally high status.

60 If a person is insulted in some systematic way — say, a man is habitually accused of tara, sorcery; a woman's polio (pini) is frequently remarked on — he or she may give this name to a child or his wife. This is done for a number of different reasons: whimsy, humour, to shame the issuers of insults, or so as to cure disease. Names may also be taken when a person crosses some significant biographical mark: the death of a child or parent, for example. Some of these names are drawn from the pool of birth names, but they can also be chosen at will. This picture is now further complicated by the practice of taking names from the father for use in school and government forms. See also Blackwood (1935:78-80), M. Rimoldi (1972:78).
all the lineages that have resided in hamlet will be called to, as well as powerful *tsunono* whose alliance was important in building the *nitsunono* of the core group. And here there is ample room for manipulation: though the fire will supposedly not light if something is out of order, there are innumerable ways to encourage it, and conversely, innumerable signs to denounce a fire as manipulated.

These facts do not count for much from the Halia perspective, save to the extent they demonstrate the scale of the collapse in social order they believe has taken place. The relationships between people, *tsuhana* and land must not be a function of human decision, and least of all one’s own will. Men can only compromise and taint the true order of things; that order is not the product of human action, alliances and compromises, it is an inheritance of blood and soil. Only the first to arrive at a particular place are its ‘landowners’: this cannot be altered, only obscured. Halia historical memory holds relatively few incidences of occupation by force, and although it is entirely clear that warfare was central to the organisation of political kinship, the cases that are remembered are recalled by the dispossessed, who accuse the occupiers of fabricating claims of prior settlement. Through a paradox that seems to stalk the periphery of Halia political consciousness without entering it, the social and geographical order is in fact entirely the product of human decision and alliances. The only witnesses to the past that know the truth at first hand are the dead – who in the course of any significant enterprise are contacted by means of *buts*, sacrifices. Yet even here a subtle form of politics takes place. Despite its sanguine rhetoric of natural, incontrovertible connections, Halia kinship relies heavily on the political organisation of the *tsuhana*, where these processes of negotiation and sacrifice reach their apex. While this is not how the system is represented by its participants, it has inescapable consequences for them. With increasing conflict, the *tsuhana* becomes necessary just when it becomes impossible.

### 3.5. *Pinaposa*

At its broadest level, Halia society is organized into *pinaposa*, four totemic categories that classify every single person indigenous to Buka and the surrounding Austronesian area. By this same term, however one can refer to specific local instance of the totemic class, or again to a single family, or a lineage, or a collection of lineages that travelled together and who retain connections by putative descent – what I shall term a *clan network*. These different kinds of matrilineal groups can be invoked as need arises, and though it rarely causes confusion, the term *pinaposa* provides an idiom for the expansion, synthesis and superposition of descent groups of different scales. This telescoping effect is particularly important in relation to the conceptualization of marriage (see below, Chapter 7). For clarity, I shall use ‘*pinaposa*’ to refer exclusively to the broadest social category. Reserving the term in this way presents a number of advantages over attempting to represent the maximally encompassing meaning of *pinaposa* as moiety, sections or clans, as this terminology comes with the association of

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61 The main exception to this is the occupation of the Carteret Islands: but in this case, the *tsunono* of Hanahan bay, whose ancestors vanquished the original Polynesian population, state that it would be in principle possible for the Mortlock Islanders to claim back the islands.
certain models that are not appropriate to the Halia context. Some confusion in the literature can be attributed directly to these choices.

In Halia, there are four pinaposa categories arranged in what can perhaps best be described as two cycles of opposition. The first cycle of oppositions separates Nakaripa, the people of the kerion (fowl) and Naboen, the people of the manu (sea-eagle). The figures of manu and kerion are only the icons of a complex discourse which at first appearance seems to place Naboen as the ‘ruler’ and the Nakaripa as subordinate, but which is in fact suffused with a play of opposites that can be deployed tactically to negate this interpretation. Socially, there are very few indications that the nominally superior status of the Naboen translates into any sort of privilege over the Nakaripa. A second iteration generates two more totemic classes, the Nakas as a ‘subclass’ of the Nakaripa and the Natasi from the Naboen. The subordination of these categories to the first cycle pinaposa is much more dramatic than that of Nakaripa to Naboen. In Buka and nearby islands, Nakas and Natasi have only lineage tsabana and not the manihil or patu – and even so, their claims to independent tsabana of any kind are often challenged. Nakas and Natasi land is invariably a subset of Nakaripa or Naboen land respectively. It is important to note that this fact does not translate into Nakas and Natasi not being ‘landowners’: the category of ‘landowner’ is partly derived from the colonial and post-colonial legal system; the relations of subordination, dependence and connection to ground that governed relationships between Nakas and Nakaripa, Naboen and Natasi are no more easily translated into these new idioms than other aspects of the regulation of people and land.

The overwhelming majority of the population in Halia are either Nakaripa or Naboen. There are far fewer Nakas and Natasi. There is considerable regional variation in the organization of these four categories. In Haku, the Nakas are fully articulated as a third force in village politics, and their totem, the dog, is painted in the signs of various public buildings alongside the eagle and fowl. In Halia, the situation is radically different. The Nakas and Natasi are a small numerical minority and are politically marginalized. In any land case, they face an enormously difficult task – perhaps owing to the carelessness of previous ethnographies, now regularly used in court.

This category structure is found in all of the societies in Buka and the nearby coastal islands. The Selau group of northern Bougainville, who speak a distant dialect of Halia, also have the same system, as do the northernmost Tinputz-speaking, culturally Halia groups including that studied by Blackwood. In the Tinputz heartland, Hahon and in the Saposa Islands there are some modifications, but the basic distinction between cognate categories of Nakaripa and Naboen remain, overlaid with additional subcategories (Blackwood 1935:35-34). South of Tinputz, the structure is substantially different: there are settled clans with totems, but no overall organization into a nested oppositions: "Mipela i brukku - we are independent" – said a Taperoi chief, using the expression for Bougainvillian secession. These Austronesian groups have more in common with populations further south, whilst the moieties-like structure of Buka resembles that of New Ireland (Allen 1967:80ff). Including only those groups with the four-way pinaposa structure, we may estimate a population in excess of 40,000 people; the Halia themselves do not exclude the Tinputz and Hahon, and indeed they readily extend the pinaposa system to encompass the totemic systems of the Non-Austronesian groups of central Bougainville. This extension is itself very interesting, and reveals the manner in which concrete
pinaposa groups come to be structured: that is to say, by elicitation. Naturally, the category of all Nakaripa or all Naboen does not correspond to a real social ‘group’; only the bravest man would venture a speculation as to the common descent of everyone, and this is only recognised as a possibility by the Haia informants I spoke with.

3.6. Nakas and Natasi

Shortly after arriving in Hahalis I was approached by several men who asked me to explain my project. I did so and fielded questions. One of the very first questions I was asked was this: “Na bamas klen i stap, tru tru?” “how many clans are there, really?” Some people, I was told, thought that there were four. But some tsunono believed that really there were only two. Who was right? This question had apparently been causing a great deal of consternation lately. Political institutions, be they the Patu Assembly that brings together the chiefs of Hahalis, or the all-Halia Council of Elders, ought to have a balance between the pinaposa. But who qualifies as an independent pinaposa? Some people say that only the leaders of the senior Nakaripa and Naboen lineages should be represented, that only they truly have tsunana and only they may stand as chiefs as representatives of their communities. According to this view, those claiming to represent separate, autochthonous pinaposa other than Nakaripa and Naboen are in fact lineages with very low status but still part of a dual system.

There are some grounds to believe that the articulation of Nakas and Natasi as pinaposa is recent. The German planter Richard Parkinson visited Buka in 1902 and wrote that “the whole population falls into two main classes” (1999:287). Blackwood wrote that “in the island of Buka and its adjacent islets there are, in general only two clans represented at the present time” (1935:34). However,

In some of the Buka villages there are a few individuals who belong to a clan called Nakas, associated with the dog. At Novar, this clan was described as ‘half Manu, half Kekeleo’ ... At the village of Tung, Nakas was described as a new clan. At Petats they said that there used to be representatives of Nakas, but that they were all dead. It might be revived in the future, if any of the Petats men were to marry a woman of that clan from elsewhere and she were to come and live in Petats. (Blackwood 1935:35).

Based on his fieldwork in the late 1960s, Rimoldi concluded that the Nakas and Natasi were not distinct groups in Halia, in contrast to the situation in Haku, where these groups were unambiguously present. The Nakaripa and Naboen occupied (and still occupy) much more clearly distinct territories in Haku, and the border area between these territories are settled by the Nakas, on the Nakaripa side and the Natasi on the Naboen. This, it is worth noting, is already a schematization of a more complicated picture; the essential matter, however, is that the Nakas and Natasi were settled by and ought to obey the directives of tsunono from the primary pinaposa. In the Halia area the geographical picture is even less clear. Rimoldi claimed that after an exhaustive search around Hanahan, he only

62 The Haia, like all Buka, use the Tok Pisin word klen to translate, not only the maximal pinaposa, but every other sense of it except for the immediate matrilineal unit, which is rendered as famili. On the one hand, this renders a straightforward translation to the English (let alone anthropological English) ‘clan’ problematic – on the other hand, that is exactly what they do, adding another layer of complexity to the problem.
found some lineages about which there were vague rumours of Nakas status (M. Rimoldi 1971:53). He surmises that the term was in fact used as a type of slander, used for a class of ‘workers’:

The Nakas were scouts and fighting men of the tsunono. They carried the fight to the enemy and won the ground for the tsunono who established the settlements and brought order to them. Yet they also provoked unnecessary conflict of their own accord. They collect hair or betel nut for sorcery at the bidding of the tsunono; they ‘hear his talk’ and carry his messages ... and announce and police his decisions. (M. Rimoldi 1971:45).

He identifies these roles with the peits, whom his informants associated with the Nakas (ibid). (This raises some difficulties, as we shall see below.) Whilst the roles attributed to the Nakas by Rimoldi are exactly those reported by my own informants, the characterization of the Nakas as a type of worker category seems striking, since Nakas lineages are today readily identified in Hahalis. There, one Natasi lineage built a placeholder tshana known as iabasa during my fieldwork. (These Natasi are claimed to be ‘recent’ arrivals - but by this informants mean that they have ‘only’ been in Hahalis four generations prior to their eldest living members, who are in their seventies.) The Nakas in Hahalis, like those elsewhere in Halia, are not settled as a separate hamlet, though they typically occupy spatially separate parts of some Nakaripa hamlets. The Natasi, on the other hand, have two hamlets, Topin and Turia which are in most respects identical to the hamlets of the Naboen or Nakaripa. Their land title is contested, but in this too they approximate the norm since that is the case across the board.

In some areas it can be profoundly disadvantageous for a person to be considered to be part of the Nakas or Natasi groups. It can be considered an insult. The most commonly heard explanation about the genesis of the Nakas and Natasi is that they are the outcome, presumably in the far past, of incestuous unions amongst either Nakaripa or Naboen, echoing an explanation heard by M. Rimoldi (1971:53). Contemporary Nakas and Natasi are the first to point out that this is puzzling, since such a union would still produce a child of the same gender as the mother; the rivals of the Nakas and Natasi are however second in line to point out the same thing, its implausibility adding support to the notion that there are in fact no Nakas or Natasi. Another explanation, much less common, is that Nakas is the fruit of the union between binas cross-cousins - which are uncommon but certainly not unheard of, and do not in fact result in Nakas. What this explanation has in common with the previous is that the union is taboo. Offences of this order are often given as a rationale for episodes of forced migration in clan network histories - when these histories are told by the network’s enemies. A third, essentially idiosyncratic explanation is that the Nakas and Natasi are patriclans - which, like the other explanations, is obviously untrue but has in common with them the consequence the Nakas and Natasi would be severely underprivileged categories with ‘no land rights’ or tshana, given the intense ideological focus on unilateral uterine descent. The other roles attributed to the Nakas - warfighting, policing, sorcery - are also associated with pollution, greed and danger.

The Nakaripa and Naboen use the allegation that a group is Nakas or Natasi to deny them land title or position in the village. One of the segments of the Natasi group in Hahalis lost a land dispute with the local Naboen, because enough witnesses came forward to place the Natasi ancestral lands in
Ielelina, a village north of Hanahan. But in Ielelina, the Naboen will only accept the Hahali’s group as ‘guests’. This kind of problem would be typical except for the fact that it is unusual for a Natasi group to feel confident enough to take the issue to court.

Due to these difficulties, members of these classes will sometimes deny that they exist as independent groups. They will say that Nakas and Natasi are really only different terms for Nakaripa and Naboen, adding that because of intermarriage ‘anyone who claims to be pure Naboen is a liar’, and therefore, that they can have *tsubana* and land title. This last step is regarded as a non sequitur by their opponents. But this is not the only way low-status moieties conceive of themselves, nor is it the only strategy open to them. Because allegations that a Nakaripa lineage is Nakas can occasionally cause serious quarrels, even fistfights, I had proceeded with extreme caution in my investigations until one day I happened to be copped into aiding a beauty pageant in Hahalis Primary School. I was not a judge – I would not understand the meaning of the subtle *sinebe* and traditional clothing – rather my job was to test the confidence of the contestants by asking some general questions. Each grade presented a boy and girl, all the boys were Naboen, and all the girls were Nakaripa. The seventh grade girl stood up and announced to the whole village and the supposedly intimidating anthropologist, in English: “My clan is Nakaripa, sub-clan Nakas”. When I later expressed surprise at this, my hosts laughed and wondered in which village I had been living in for eight months.

M. Rimoldi’s denial that the Nakas and Natasi are *pinaposa* seems at least as odd as Blackwood’s denial of the dualizing aspects of North Bougainvillean Austronesian societies, but Sagir’s solution to this – to abstract a quadrripartite structure glosses over an important structural and historical dimensions of the issue (Sagir 2003:69, 2005). There is no question that the Halia and Iaku can project their social organization into quadrilateral schematizations, notably the *looka* diamond which represents the relationship between the four groups (we shall see a particularly impressive example of this below (Section 8.7). But this is a possible inflection of the system; it is not a structural basis for it. For instance, whilst marriages between Nakaripa and Naboen are not in fact governed by explicit rules, at least there is a variety of positions as to whether they should practice endogamy or exogamy: for the Nakas and Natasi, there is not even this speculation. This relates to the fact that Nakas and Natasi were socially and politically subject, and the organization of marriage as exogamous or endogamous is important above all in the case of high ranking lineages.

Historically, if M. Rimoldi’s characterization is accurate – at least within the Halia area – what has been observed over the past forty years is the crystallization of a structural category that has by now a status very similar to the other *pinaposa*. The *peis*, in turn, has solidified from a role within the *tsubana* into a distinct hereditary rank, with status second only to the *tsunono*. These transformations would make sense within the context of the general shift from a synthetic to analytical emphasis in kinship, the escalation of the discourse of landrights and the entrenchment of territorial concept of political control. This, however, could be an overstatement of the actual change: M. Rimoldi’s position can still be found today, amongst the fiercest ideologues of Naboen and Nakaripa ‘supremacy’, and it may be more plausible that his research was influenced by such informants in the past than to suppose Halia society has been so utterly revolutionized. Conducting her fieldwork approximately ten years after Max Rimoldi, Eleanor Rimoldi found that Nakas and Natasi were sometimes said to have been
included in *habats* oath-setting human sacrifices (1982:120; see Ch.7 below). Ironically, some of M. Rimoldi's informants who in the past 'hid' as Naboen and Nakaripa have since 'outed' themselves as Natasi and Nakas. It is also important to note that the *accusation* that the Teosin lineage is Nakas rather than Nakaripa is often made by its enemies, perhaps one reason for his skewed information, if indeed it is skewed\(^3\). These dynamics are typical of lineages with relatively recent historical links to Haku, such as the Teosin group.

Having said so, there is no question that change resembling the crystallization of Nakas and Natasi as *pinaposa* has been taking place. There is increasing militancy by the Nakas and Natasi to obtain some measure of equality with Nakaripa and Naboen. A notable example is the former vice-president of Bougainville, Joseph Watawi, a member of a Natasi lineage located in Selau. The Natasi in Selau have a level of political organization similar to the contemporary Nakas in Haku. A formidable figure, he defends publicly the independent standing of his *pinaposa*. He has campaigned on this platform amongst the Natasi of Halia, including those of Hahalis who share a migration history with his lineage. In Haku, the Nakas have emerged as a major political force, and in some villages outnumber the Nakaripa and Naboen. The Haku Nakas argue that since they were the warriors who won territory and controlled warfighting sorcery, they are the original inhabitants – reversing the tables by negating their subject status as warriors rather than commanders. This influences the Nakas in Halia and elsewhere, but still, the difficult position of the Nakas and Natasi in Halia remains. In Hahalis, a group which sought to establish its own credentials as senior Naboen by boasting about profound knowledge of warfighting sorcery found itself accused of being Natasi 'wearing Naboen shirts', a damaging charge they strenuously denied.

### 3.7. Dualizing organization

The *pinaposa* are totemic classes with a rich symbolism. When a Halia person wants to find out the *pinaposa* of another, the question asked will typically be "*aha te apea iamulul?*": "What is your bird?" Nakaripa are the people of the fowl, *kerion* (*keshelion* in the southern Halia and Hagogohe dialect), whilst the Naboen are the people of the eagle, *manu*. The precise meaning of the totems is not clear: if there is a generally accepted myth of origin for these categories, it is a well kept secret. This contrasts to the individual clan-networks, each of which has an elaborate historical mythology. However, there are a number of frequently made associations (Table 3.1).

Each *pinaposa* interprets the totems to justify its superiority. The Nakaripa like to point out that the Naboen are a magnificent bird: an eagle, a truly rare animal. In fact, they will say, one rarely sees them — reflecting the scarcity of Naboen. The eagle is a rare creature of the sky. It swoops down for prey only briefly, then returns to the treetops. The fowl, by contrast is constantly working the ground. They are also more plentiful. Ergo, Nakaripa are the primary landowners and so have the real power. The Naboen in turn say that the Nakaripa fowl is a creature with a very small head, which is readily caught and eaten. It is a worker, but it scrambles around helplessly never achieving anything. The

\(^3\) I could not settle the issue to my own satisfaction.
eagle eats fowls, and it is the ruler. I never saw a showdown between Nakaripa and Naboen on these issues, but when a gathering includes only members of one category, it is not uncommon for boasting to acquire a self-consciously comical character64. Yet these relations, insofar as they capture the conceptual associations of worker, land, sky, rulers and predation, are anything but a joke.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nakaripa</th>
<th>Naboen</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fowl</td>
<td>Eagle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worker</td>
<td>Ruler</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ground</td>
<td>Sky</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lesser</td>
<td>Greater</td>
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<tr>
<td>Junior Brother</td>
<td>Elder Brother</td>
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<tr>
<td>Queen</td>
<td>King</td>
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Table 3.1 – Some Associations of the Main Moiety Distinction

The relationship between Nakaripa and Naboen in certain respects approximates a moiety division. This is clearest in the semi-formal structure of *hostile cooperation* in which they are embedded: the *hatbuna*, or ‘making *tsunono*’ of a leader of one group must include ‘witnesses’ from the other, who retain a strong sense of competition and even hostility even though, and in essence because, they remain interdependent. Formal conflict resolution likewise requires the participation of the opposite *pinaposa*. This is true of contemporary reconciliation ceremonies carried out in the course of disputes occurring amongst the members of a single *pinaposa* or single *tsunona*, but it is paradigmatically the case in *bhaba* (‘mutual fire sacrifices’), peace-making ceremonies which have a critical function in Halia historical mythology. Furthermore, exogamy between the groups is strongly desired in certain circumstances because it establishes cross-cousin relationships across the *pinaposa*: cross-cousins are the key sponsors of *tsunona* construction, and if cross-cousins are of opposite *pinaposa*, the articulation of Halia ideas of political cosmology is more complete than if they are not. The highest rank of *tsunono*, the *mumobil*, has a mediating function, he is “obeyed by both Nabouin and Nakarib whom he represents, one to the other” (M. Rimoldi 1971:49). Finally, and very importantly, the relationship between Nakaripa and Naboen is a gendered distinction. Nakaripa is conceived of as female, whereas Naboen are male. It is typical to hear the explanation that Naboen is King, whereas Nakaripa is Queen. These features of the *pinaposa* categorical structure resemble a ‘moiety’ distinction, and the Rimoldis have used this framework for discussing it.

The precarious position of the Nakas and Natasi allow us to see an important aspect of the Halia socio-political system. This system is not exactly a dual organization in which all groups have a predetermined relationship to their opposite number. It is more accurate to characterise the Halia and North Bougainvillean Austronesian social systems generally as containing a *dualizing potential* rather than as strictly *dual*. Under certain circumstances, related to geographical settlement pattern, historical articulation and the vicissitudes of political kinship, the potential for duality is involuted into a

64 They also often chose the Rugby League clubs accordingly – Manly Eagles for Naboen, Eastern Sydney for Nakaripa, Canterbury-Bankstown Bulldogs for Nakas.
hierarchical four-fold organization. Sagir's characterization of Haku society as quadripartite is in this respect accurate up to a point: in Western Haku groups the recursive division between Nakaripa and Naboen, Nakas and Natasi is almost fully articulated, with contemporary Haku Nakas going so far as to claim muubil status. In other areas similar concepts and social processes yield the apparently dual appearance of society in Hahalis, an area with primarily Nakaripa and Naboen settlement. Yet again, in some areas in central Halia the configuration loses its dual character and tsuhana are built by builders and sponsors drawn from amongst a single pinaposa and exogamous marriage rules are explicitly rejected. Informants from these areas downplay the importance of cross-pinaposa conflict resolution; yet here too the same principles of social organization are involved: in effect, groups in such areas have pursued a strategy of self-directed accumulation of power, one that is couched on the same principles underpinning the dualizing organization elsewhere (see below, Chapter 7).

The core of Halia socio-political organization is the cross-legitimation of the tsuhana, and the ultimate articulation of this is the opposition of Nakaripa and Naboen. At one pole, Halia society is acutely oppositional: Nakaripa and Naboen square off against and for each other in tsuhana. But it is possible to expand this division: the Nakas and Natasi are generated from within the same conceptual matrix as the Nakaripa and Naboen, as lower orders and 'sub-moieties'. It is possible to attempt to radically exclude the opposite pinaposa. It is also possible to attempt a reverse gambit: to proclaim higher status by identifying one's group as a higher order of pinaposa. In what is unquestionably a recent development, some Naboen lineages have 'rediscovered' that they are in truth 'Tuboen': people of a larger and even rarer eagle. But this is liable to backfire: 'Tuboen' is in fact the Tinputz cognate of 'Naboen', and lineages attempting this manoeuvre have found themselves ridiculed for undermining their own credibility. The strategy is weak now: yet it is attempted. Perhaps one day it will not be weak.

3.8. The kinship structure of the buiten

In concrete social life, people are organized around tsuhana and claims to tsuhana, and tsuhana are always the outcome of political processes, negotiations and compromises. The core lineages that compose the tsuhana – those that 'have ground' at a hamlet – are organized in a hierarchy, but here Rimoldi and Rimoldi's view that this is a political matter subject to negotiation is more accurate than some other perspectives found in the literature, or for that matter within Halia discourse itself. A distinction is drawn between the 'first to arrive', and those who came later and this is the primary means of asserting seniority (compare Sagir 2003:43, 2004). Lineages jostling for position often maintain that they are the original settlers and attempt to characterise their rivals as later arrivals. From minor jabs in the course of daily life through to the apex of court disputes and the moment of violence in which a man strikes another while telling him to 'go back to Solos', there is much to support the view that priority of settlement is at the core Halia concepts of rank. 'They are on top of us' or 'they are on our hands', they are 'our children': all these delineate an axis of seniority, priority of tenure and paternal/affinal alliance.
Sagir's account, however, applies to Buka a model developed to account for the settlement of small Pacific islands. It is not entirely clear why this is the most appropriate analogy, since deep oceanic colonization was a movement which would presumably have been far harder to reverse than the settlements in question here. A junior lineage separated from its senior by days of travel in the open sea could presumably establish its own rank structure in relative isolation, whereas in Buka lineages frequently claim that although they arrived later, they remained senior due to relationships established at earlier phases of migration. There is, and it appears there always was, regular interaction between the different nodes in a migration network, and there are cases of reverse migration. Alternatively, a group can claim that it is very senior and for that reason it was asked over to become the tsunono, or the 'true tsunono's pepeito (guardian). Rank is not in every case a reflection of 'landownership,' and although 'landownership' is normally based on priority of settlement, this is not always the case. Nakas and Natasi group are prone to claim that they arrived first as warriors and therefore have land rights by way of priority of settlement, despite the fact, which is clearly established historically and structurally, that this type of settlement was established on the instigation of the Nakas and Natasi's senior Nakaripa and Naboen tsunono. Here we see again an aftershock effect of the transformation of the tsukana organization into an organization of land, where ideological priority of settlement counts for more than priority of rank within the tsukana — a rank that was not always established by prior settlement.

3.9. Sungatu

Lineages settled together form long-lasting alliances and over the course of generations it can become difficult to tell exactly how they are related. This difficulty is greatly increased by the fact that the belief that only the 'true man' — the tsunono, and lineage, that has claims to land by descent — may settle in an area is so unavering that latecomers are revised as cryptic kin: if they have resided together, they are assumed to be connected in some way even if it is not known exactly how. The complementary result of this is that a bunkatun which may indeed be a coherent genealogical group, may, if the occasion arises through conflict or opportunity, be disavowed. This category of simultaneous inclusion and distancing is sungatu. This term is frequently translated as 'maternal kin' or even 'mother's clan' (e.g. Allen and Allen 2005:115). These are good translations in some respects — sungatu is a category of presumed matrilineal kinship. Yet this glosses over the use of sungatu to exclude: when a tsunono deems a settled lineage bisunguti, this implies subjection and potential exclusion. "Nori e bisungmimir puku' — 'they are only my sungatu': that is, not true ngorere. In the translation of this into the legal language of land disputes, such a group has an interest in the land, but not land rights: nobody wants to be in this position, but it is better than nothing.

In the past, the classificatory mode of sungatu was apparently more clearly distinguished than it is today. Rimoldi comments that villagers distinguished between sungatu turn buis (sungatu by the hair) and sungatu turn boso (sungatu by umbilicus). The reference to hair referred not only to the "idea that the hair can be cut or fall out whereas the umbilicus cannot be changed" (1973:59) but more importantly, the hair, as seat of the tsunono's nitsunono and authority indicated that these people were
only sungutu by virtue of the tsunono’s alliance. To allege in public someone was sungutu turn buku was regarded as an insult; today the distinction appears not to be made, and sungutu is usually already a category for disavowing ngorere. Ngorere, which was always important, has become decisive. Those who were sungutu turn bois were, in effect, maintaining a fiction:

Groups which are invited from elsewhere and given a settlement site on which to build a palbaw [i.e. a local tsunono] are regarded as recruits to the sungut [...]. The accredited groups called on for support may with the passing of time even be called on to provide the next tsalabol or tsunono. Assertions of pre-existing matrilineal links between house and ‘guest’ appear rather transparent. Shared patrilateral ties to the same group are common features of groups so organized. (M. Rimoldi 1971:80).

The entire set of idioms that M. Rimoldi reported for the division, expansion, combination and distribution of tsuhana sections is largely obsolete today – the system as it has evolved is hypersensitive even to the assertion that such arrangements might have prevailed in the past. But this does not mean that fictive kinship has disappeared; it means that admission of fictional kin status cannot be voiced in public, which forces either analysis or sedimentation of the sungut as ngorere. This, and the implausible claims it generates, is a major reason land disputes are essentially irresolvable given the terms desired by the Halia even above the requirements of courts.

3.10. Foreigners and Refugees

We may observe an interesting transformation in the language of kinship used to classify buntatun lineages. Rimoldi records the distinction between them in these terms:

The ‘authentic’ group is known as pinaposa matsko [straight pinaposa] while the group which has come into the buntaposa is known as pinaposa sal. Sal refers to anyone who sets out for some destination but fails to arrive and ends up somewhere else. (1973:59).

He continues to note that matrilineal kin drawn to settle nearby to occupy the land are considered pinaposa matsko even if the precise relationship is not known, and so were the descendents of women who had been “bought outright” by the tsuhana’s lineage65. In contemporary Buka, it appears that these groups are readily reconceptualised as sal in the context of political and especially land disputes. The sal themselves are rarely referred to as such: they are instead ‘demoted’ to sungutu. Or they may be entirely removed from the sphere of putative kinship. Indeed, the image for these ‘latecomer’ lineages has evolved from one of ‘misdirected’ person to one of ‘refugee’. The term appears to have entered the local Pisin in the wake of the Bougainville Crisis66, and has since acquired a coloration borrowed

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65 M. Rimoldi refers to the expression sakabesi for this kind of transfer of rights ad generissem (1971:59). He states that the expression also included the ‘purchase’ of pigs and land. Contemporary Halia flatly deny that land can be purchased, and the expression sakabesi is generally used in the context of recompense for misuse (eg. a fine). Setting this aside, it is clear that some women were integrated into lineages in this manner, at least in the past.

66 Indeed, Hahalis hosted a ‘Care Centre’ full of ‘refugees’, a matter of great pride for Hahalis tsunono, not only owing to their hostility towards the BRA, but because the village demonstrated its capacity as a well-organized host. But it is significant that these persons are rarely referred to as ‘refugees’: in Hahalis, they are much more
from Australian usage, known from the local press. ‘Refugee’ groups are thus threatened with summary expulsion, with an explicit analogy to the widely reported deportations from Australian immigration detention centres. This is by no means a matter of empty rhetoric. In one important case in Hahalis, a group that lost a land case refused to accept the verdict and organized a mob to burn down the houses of their rivals, exiling them to a nearby settlement.

Older men and women point out that expelling lineages is an appalling failure of the tsnono’s obligation to be a good host, but just as the younger men often work a pragmatic politics of reducing the ‘refugees’ security to better manipulate them rather than expel them entirely (which is problematic for legal and social reasons), the older men and women state that under certain circumstances the tsnono would be forced to expel serious troublemakers.

From pinaposia sal with putative kin links to a ‘refugee’ to be removed, the critical dimension is integration into the political structure of the tsuhana. Long-term cooperation with the tsnono and the core lineages leads to a situation in which lineages becomes extremely close. In this way, the tsuhana is the vehicle both for the integration and implicit differentiation between lineages: that is to say, hierarchization, a political exercise in social power, with winners and losers. The organization of a tsuhana requires the mobilization of the bunakate; it requires a decision on the precise arrangements of succession, which are often far from clear. The ranking of the lineages can then be negotiated – though that might be the wrong word, since it takes place through a process that is at all times cast in terms that disavow the agency of those negotiating.

3.11. Stabilization of the pien tsuhana

There are some paradigmatic paths to settlement complexity, the most common of which is permanent or semi-permanent patrilocal settlement by the pien tsuhana, the children of male members of the lineage. These may continue to reside on their father’s hamlet long after his death and may even raise their own children there: but only with the agreement of the core lineages. These arrangements are called punlama, and in theory only afford the pien tsuhana the right to build a house

commonly termed ‘care centre’, eg. Ol care centre i bin kam stop long praimari skul. “The refugees stayed at the primary school.” Note use of pluraliser “ol” before “care centre”. “Care centre” is also frequently used as a verb, eg. contrast mi bin care centre long bap “I sought refuge [care-cantered] over there” against mi bin go long care centre long bap “I went to the care centre there [but not necessarily as a refugee]”. This is not the case with the word ‘refugee’ itself. I never saw an accusation that an allegedly late-coming lineage was a ‘care centre’, and people found my direct question to this effect strange. The critical difference is that a refugee, as per the discourse in the Australian-influenced PNG media, is an unwelcome guest, whereas the care centre is a welcomed guest – whether the hosts act honourably (the Hahalis leadership position) or disgracefully (the position of many people who suffered deprivations whilst at the Hahalis care centre.)

67 From 2000 to 2007, Australia maintained an offshore immigration detention centre in PNG’s Manus Island, as a part of the ‘Pacific Solution’ approach to asylum seekers, whereby they would be kept away from Australian territory so as to prevent the lodging of claims. I was repeatedly told that Australia’s attitude towards refugees was commendable. Even amongst the most committed members of the NGO community in Bougainville, with extensive links to social movements in Australia and Asia, there is an attitude of incomprehension towards refugees – “why would they leave their own land?”
(luma), and then only in consultation with their patrkin, who occasionally impose onerous or even exploitative conditions.

Whilst Halia land claimants attribute *puluma* to low status, the reverse is often the case so long as there is no aspiration to permanent control of land. One reason for this is that patrilocal and even more so, patrivialocal settlement is often motivated by the high status of the husband's father. The children of such men have better access to education, business and political opportunities; such men may help their son's *tsuhana*, increasing the renown of both father and son. Conversely, maintaining residential rights is far easier if one is a highly valued individual. For instance Romeo Tohiana, the president of the Halia Council of Elders is a notable example of a man who resides patrilocally: his ancestral land is in Lonahan, in South-Eastern Buka, but he is settled at Tutugi with his father's matrilineage, close allies of the Teosin clan. To ensure his continued residence, he cooperates closely with the landowners – both his Naboen patrkin and the other Nakaripa lineages of Tutugi. He is in fact a very valuable ally, but his continued settlement also has a sacrificial dimension. "I have killed many pigs with them: this is like rent," he explained. Rarely a feast takes place in Tutugi without his discreet yet unmistakable contribution. His children's security is partly safeguarded by his marriage a Nakaripa lineage which has a very strong claim to land nearby.

![Diagram](image)

*Fig. 3.2. Stabilization of pien tuhana (B) as part of bunkatun by following the same road.*

*Puluma* arrangements are typically only for the lifetime of the father; on his death the children should move back to their mother's land. While few Halia accept the possibility that a *puluma* may become permanent, there are a few cases of long-term alliances set up by exchanges of *pauin* ceremonial currency. But more importantly, recurring classificatory cross-cousin marriage can lead to long term stabilization of the *pien tuhana* as a resident group. The least problematic means of doing this – because it establishes no land claims – is to have the *pien tuhana* 'marry back' into his father's lineage or one of its co-settled matrilines. *Hinas* or cross-cousinship is a relationship characterised by intense taboo and shame, and in principle, marriage between them is utterly taboo (Blackwood 1935:68; Rimoldi and Rimoldi 1992:71). However, genealogies often contain such marriages, and marriage
between _classificatory_ cross-cousins is in certain circumstances preferred (see below, Section 7.3). Such alliances sometimes take place over several generations. Examining a number of genealogies, one encounters a repeated pattern (Fig 3.2) where after a woman B has been married into a local lineage A1, her daughter finds a husband locally. After one or more such instances of 'marriages on the same road', the arrangement reverses, with her DDS marrying a local woman. He can only remain settled if a clear position has been staked in the local group: in the past, this could involve the group A allowing B's descendants to take over the temporary leadership of a _tsuhana_, or to act as _peits_. These arrangements, in the present context, however, are considered extremely problematic.
4. The Architecture of Halia

4.1. The Architecture of Halia

What, then, are these *tsuhana* that so captivate the Halia imagination? They are houses paradigmatically used to host feasts, which are built by the set of allied lineages settled together at a locality – a group that may involve between four and thirty households. These houses are utterly fundamental to social and political organization, to the extent that it can be difficult to state this without a degree of circularity. A locality is thought to be a group organized around a *tsuhana*, or at least a claim to possess *tsuhana*; alliances are first of all alliances within the *tsuhana* and between them. As we shall see, this spatial organization is by no means a straightforward matter. The organization of kinship and marriage is inflected through the houses. This circularity – that *tsuhana* define the groups that build *tsuhana* – should be virtuous. The construction and organization of a house are critical for the regeneration and transformation of the social field – and also, though this is not intended, its creative disruption. And while the houses are no longer built as often as they once were – and they are built in different ways, for different reasons – they remain the paradigm through which good social order and the state are understood. They provide the framework and aspiration for their own idealisation, that of a good order, and good state.

*Fig. 4.1 Boatsia's idealization of his lineage's tsuhana. (Compare Fig. 4.5)*
Most *tsuhana* are not especially striking buildings. Only amongst the inland Solos people are they still built following the traditional architectural prescription of arched sago frond roofes (Fig. 4.1); the *taui* (‘sea’) peoples, including the Halia begun modernising their designs in the 1960s. This makes their *tsuhana* more inconspicuous, since sleeping houses are nowhere built according to the traditional design which resembled the old *tsuhana* (Blackwood 1935:388). A casual visitor travelling down the East Coast road today could be forgiven for not noticing the new style of *tsuhana* amongst the many small chapels, stores, community halls, and classrooms. Every few hamlets there is a house with open walls, typically built from permanent materials, always at a central position (Fig 4.3, 4.4). The posts, rafters and woodwork of most *tsuhana* are decorated in the subtest fashion possible, if at all. Except for the large slit-gongs called *tui* (Tok Pisin *garamut*), furnishings are spartan – typically, there is a board bed and benches. The ground must be dirt\(^{68}\). In most cases there is little about the building to give away its tremendous significance. One effect of this is that the one kind of *tsuhana* that is extensively decorated – the *lamankee* ‘house of carvings’ – stands out as exceptionally beautiful and powerful (Fig. 4.5). *Lamankee*, however, are very rarely built: only a few lineages may build them, at costs that are considered exorbitant. The only one presently standing in Buka is at Nahirei, a hamlet of Hahalis. Its fraught construction almost led to the disintegration of the Nahirei community.

Without ostentation, the *tsuhana* are houses befitting the Halia political ethos, which has a strong focus on avoiding any suspicion of individual boastfulness. *Tsunono* are hereditary leaders, and succession is normally matrilineal. But a man is only truly recognised as *tsunono* if he has demonstrated this by building a *tsuhana*. (A *tsunono* is sometimes said to be nothing other than *ton* *tsuhana* – a ‘*tsuhana* man\(^{69}\).) To do this, he must achieve recognition from his allies and rivals. It is they, not him, who permit the *tsuhana* to be constructed. A *tsuhana* built by Fiat is generally said to be worthless. We shall assess below if this is true, but in principle and in practice a *tsunono* cannot ‘call out his own name’, lest he be himself called a dove, *kuhu* or owl, *keur* – terms that are onomatopoeic and serious insults (Rimoldi and Rimoldi 1992:34). He cannot ‘make himself\(^{70}\); his authority must be recognised by others. This should not be confused with actual passivity, let alone resignation; only *overt* ambitions must be carefully modulated.

The *tsuhana* is also characteristic of the reverse aspect of this political ethos. Undertaking to build a *tsuhana* is perceived as immensely significant, difficult and dangerous. Building one is amongst the most important goals of anyone with a claim to position. *Tsubana* are the critical markers of land tenure, and in this respect are existentially important for the group led by the *tsunono*. A great deal of scheming and preparation is necessary to demonstrate such claims, but if the *tsunono* and his supporters arrange it just right, the house will be built ‘for him’. This is very often the culmination of his life’s work. If he conducts himself perfectly, it will appear to be built because it is right for that to

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\(^{68}\) A practical reason for this is that betelnut sputum must be mingled on the floor. A man who spits outside the *tsuhana* may be suspected of collecting sputum from within the *tsuhana* for sorcery.

\(^{69}\) This usage of the term may be a recent coinage. Elderly informants assert that the *ton* *tsuhana* was a man who, under orders from his *tsunono* would look after visitors to the *tsuhana*, bringing betelnut and food; hence he was part of the *tsekotsekoka* – the ‘fetchers of [betel] leaf’, that is to say, a servant or worker. However, the modern usage of *ton* *tsuhana* as equivalent to the *tsunono* is unambiguously dominant amongst the majority of *tsunono*. The meaning of the expression is explicitly formulated as ‘he who has *tsuhana*.’

\(^{70}\) Rimoldi (1971:65): “A man cannot *batunono a poiana paisu*, ‘make his own skin *tsunono’’. 72
happen, not because he desires it so. This all takes place in an atmosphere of significant, but largely concealed tension.

Tsunono always characterise their work as a great burden (Rimoldi and Rimoldi 1992:64): the tsunono is accordingly the heaviest burden of all. A false claim to tsunono is considered at least dangerous, and potentially fatal. “The earth eats liars.” “If the tsunono is not straight [matukana] it will not stop feasting” after the extensive cycle of pig sacrifices: the house then “feasts on the clan.” The deaths that ensue are termed sihil, a word formed by reduplication from sil a word meaning ‘to kill’ that is used specifically for sacrifices of pigs.71 Powerful, necessary but dangerous spirits are conjured by the construction of a house, and if the feasts are not conducted to completion in the correct fashion they will cause serious harm. Deaths because of sihil are categorically not a type of sorcery – that would be an expression of the malevolent intent of the living. Attributing deaths to sorcery is rather a way of protecting a tsunono against malicious rumour. The houses are ‘something huge’ – kapan, the word also used for ‘bigmen’ – and they are considered very beautiful; the extreme difficulty of placing even small insignia on the posts means that the subtlest details are apprehended as immensely significant. This and the covert jealousy large feasts attract is assumed to tempt dangerous men into sorcery. Deaths amongst the builders can thus be interpreted by the builders themselves as sign that the house is in fact straight: so much so others have resorted to dirty tricks. But privately, there are always concerns that the deaths might in fact be one’s own fault. Whilst most tsunono are physically unassuming, they each have a distinct identity. Each tsunono has some combination of icons, protocols, designs and architectural features that are termed its sinebe, “reminders”: these are shared, or more exactly fought over, by different tsunono, but their combination is typically unique. New tsunono often display these in painted boards, though this is an innovation only partly related to an older Solos tradition of carved boards illustrating aspects of local mythology. Sinebe are sometimes associated with food taboos observed by local groups. For instance, the shark is a sinebe of the Hanhakalana and Tutugi tsunono, and the core lineages of these tsunono should avoid eating it; red sugar cane is a sinebe of the Nahirei lumanakeesa, and should be avoided by them: it is associated with the blood that flows from the scarifications which was this group’s specialization. Distinctive variations in the procedure of rituals, songs, and bodily decorations are also termed sinebe. Each tsunono has a complex lore, and knowledge of this is extremely important. The placement of each sinebe on a tu slat-gong (Fig. 4.2), for instance, requires a feast and sacrifices; this invites spirits, who may be dangerous, and it consumes pigs, which are expensive.

71 Contrast with pōli ‘murder’, matu, ‘death/to die’ and kapolis ‘passed over to another side’ or ‘transformed’, the preferred euphemism for a natural death.
Even small breaches of protocol are evidence that the tsunono and his advisers don’t know what they are doing and are therefore ‘the wrong men’. Since protocol is complex, partly secret, partly unique to specific tsuhana – and most of all, because it has changed considerable despite the strict traditionalist ideology – there is never shortage of ammunition for rumours. The group of locally settled and associated lineages that build tsuhana may number over one hundred people, and the total feasting cycle may take several years. Consequently, there is a very high likelihood that deaths will take place while a tsuhana is still incomplete or shortly after its construction. Opponents of the tsunono may seize on these as evidence of something being ‘not straight’; in turn the tsunono building the tsuhana are stalked by genuine fears for the lives and health of their clan. This is not to say, however, that some tsunono do not leverage bluffs on the notion that lying would be suicidal. The net effect of the belief that lying is fatal is not to prevent people from lying; it is to create a perverse kind of evidence of honesty, namely that one is still alive.

4.2. “We do not make tsuhana for no reason”

The construction of a tsuhana is not a trivial affair. Tsubana are built to demonstrate a point but they cannot be built whenever it suits the ambitions of those who have points to make. The construction of a tsuhana is linked to the life-cycle feasting of the tsunono, and in particular to mortuary feasts. The tsuhana cycle must encompass more than one death, and more than one birth; it must encompass the reproduction and transformation of the political order of the groups within it. At the climax of the tsuhana’s feasting, there has to be a new generation of tsunono and teitahol, pesis and gobus to show to the community; but the feasting cycle would never get so far were it not for the deaths of previous tsunono and teitahol. When the hamlet and the tsunono find themselves in the precise configuration of births, deaths, comings of age and funerals that permits and demands the construction of a tsuhana, the tsunono might still not be able to build it. Partly, this is because a complex set of alliances has to be activated, but also because building a tsuhana is costly.

The cost of a tsuhana most apparent to the villagers is the large number of pigs that must be sacrificed for the feasts that mark each stage of the tsuhana’s construction. Typically, a small ‘placeholder’ tsuhana also known as iabasa – the smallest and least taxing tsuhana-like house – requires the killing of
Fig. 4.3. The Bioga tsuhana. The three crescent insignia on the front posts are particular to this Nakaripa lineage.
Figs. 4.4 and 4.5. The extremes of *tsuhana* construction. Top: an *iabasa* 'built by force', without consensus of community of *tsunono*. Bottom: the Nahirei *lamaheroa*, with its display of 130 pig jaws, only a fraction of the pigs sacrificed during its two-year-long construction.
at least fifteen pigs, and this is a radically truncated construction cycle leading to a structure that 'stands for' (Tok Pisin *makim*) a *tsuhana*. A 'true' *tsuhana*, which is rarely built without the prior erection of an *iabasa*, may consume over forty pigs in addition to those of the *iabasa*; the largest *tsuhana* take over 70, with Rokou's *lumankesa* having reached a claimed 214 (Fig 4.5). The jaws of pigs that contribute to the construction of a *tsuhana* are displayed hanging between the house's trusses – a detail that complicates the *tsunono*'s façade of humility, which ought to be preserved throughout.

While 214 pigs is a very large feast by any standards, it is a colossal number when viewed from the local perspective. The far more common set of 15 or so pigs killed for the smallest *tsuhana*-like constructions is already considered a very large number. Indeed, killing three pigs, or even a single pig is remarked on as a heavy burden, and the recurring demand to provide pigs for funerals is frequently blamed for lack of development in the village. One reason for this high perceived cost is that pigs are in fact relatively scarce and expensive. Pigs are not raised intensively. They are allowed to rummage around and are seldom systematically fattened or even fed much beyond the level required to secure their loyalty. Since an average hamlet will have affinal and migration-network connections to several other villages, and will have to be present at most funerals within Hahalis, there are mortuary feasts at least once a month, and the number of pigs undergoes constant attrition.

High costs and sparse numbers are only a small factor in the high value placed on pigs. The most important reason pigs are perceived as a heavy burden is that they have a great *sacrificial value*. Pigs are the vehicles for society-shaping transactions between *tsuhana* and between lineages. This has to be understood on the basis that the *patu* 'coalition *tsuhana*' which established maximal political-cosmological articulation, required the performance of human sacrifices. Pigs (and in the past, fish) offered in smaller *tsuhana*, are still within the horizon of this sacrificial economy. That is, pigs are the coin, but the value is ultimately human life itself.

4.3. The *Tsuhana* Construction Cycle

The construction of a *new tsuhana* is predicated on both mourning and life-cycle feasting reaching certain thresholds. In the funeral mourning cycle, which is treated in detail below (Chapter 9), the *tsunono* and *teitabol* of the previous *tsuhana* must have died, and their mourning carried through to the feast of *snukupo*. A house that has already been feasted through to completion may be rebuilt or feasted again, omitting this component. However, a *new tsuhana* is one built by a *tsunono* who was also *gobus*, the first born, when this man becomes the leader: this almost invariably occurs after the old *gobus* and his younger brothers – along with other senior men within the house have died. At that time, there must also be a new generation who will inherit the positions within the house, the *gobus* of the *tsunono*, *teitabol* and *peits*. The life-cycle feasts of these individuals must have advanced enough for the *tsuhana* to progress. Specifically, the feast of *halualung* must have been held for the new *gobus*. Immediately prior to this feast, the young *gobus*, often still a child, makes his first trip over seawater, accompanied by a small delegation. Upon his return, his feet are washed by the women of his *tsuhana*,

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and the feast is held for them. In the course of all these feasts, the *tsunono* must be accompanied by his sister.

The critical transition from the funeral cycle to the *kinalala* cycle is the feast of *suakopo*, which is held after the death of the *tsunono* or *tialahol*, but on the condition that several other deaths have accumulated and that *tsuna* construction has political support from other *tsunono*. For *suakopo*, a small ramshackle hut called a *soapili* or *biouats* is constructed, which signals to the *tsunono* what they almost certainly will have already known before arriving at the feast, the intent to build a *tsuna*. It is also possible to erect the *soapili* for *bahuang* (this is sometimes said to be compulsory) but it seems that in contemporary practice, for the cycle to proceed from that point on it must follow on from funerals. The *soapili* erected at *bahuang* is then only a demonstration of the capacity and right to build a *tsuna*; if the young *gohus* returns from overseas to be feasted at his mother's brother's *tsuna*, no *soapili* will be built. Ideally, the cycles coincide; whilst deaths cannot be planned for, the timing of *bahuang* can be.

While *suakopo* is often described as the end of sorrow (*baromana*), it is not the end of the funeral cycle: that is only truly terminated after a new *tsuna* is built. With each death amongst the *tsuna*'s lineages, *korkoriana*\(^2\) is collected. This comprises 'dirty things': typically hair, pillows and personal effects closely associated with the deceased. These are stored and disposed of after the construction of a new *tsuna*, during a feast termed *korkoriana* or *bakulipo*, at which point they are either buried or – more commonly – burnt. In *Halia*, this must be done before dawn. *Hakulipo* can take place many years and in some cases decades after death. There is no rush to eliminate *korkoriana*: while these objects are intensely polluted and dangerous things (pillows and hair taken from the *tsunono* are

\(^2\) Allen and Allen (2005) gloss this as “dirty; taboo to eat, as one’s own pig.” This definition is precise insofar as it captures the combination of revulsion and affection involved.
especially infused with nisunono), they are also a powerful emotional link to the deceased and a source of power. Once the korkoriana are disposed of, the tsuhana builders are gogoso ('clean') and can carry the cycle to completion. However, the feast of korkoriana is performed only once for a tsuhana; it is a part of the inauguration of a house. The subsequent bong malato feasts held within this new house will yield korkoriana to be disposed of in a subsequent edition of the house.

Similarly, the completion of the gobus cycle only takes place at tasa, the final feast of the kinalala sequence, where in a climactic moment termed kibarnits ('showing') the gobus, tsunono, teitabol, peis and others are displayed within the house, the structure of which is explicitly analogous to their own relationship to each other. It is utterly critical that the community, especially other tsunono witness this. They may offer a short speech affirming that the order they have seen is the true order, but they may also remain silent. With this, the reproduction of the social order is complete, although it does not in any straightforward way represent a handover of actual power from the tsunono to the gobus who may yet be quite young at this time, even a child. The young men and women shown in tasa must thus await their own children's coming of age and their parent generation's death to initiate a new cycle. For this reason, tsuhana construction cycles are quite protracted: whilst some houses are feasted several times over the life of a single man, the interval between the construction of wholly new houses may span forty years or more — although on this point caution is advisable given the dramatic alterations in the character of these cycles over the last seventy years.

Commenting on the 'inauguration' of a tsuhana in Tung (on the west coast of Buka), Blackwood noted: "In accordance with the practice of making the most of an occasion, this feast, which was primarily intended for the new men's house, was also made to serve for the burying of the pillow belonging to Gonu's father, and for piercing the nasal septum of four boys who had reached the appropriate age" (Blackwood 1935:392). Since her observation of this feast came within weeks of arriving in Buka, it would be harsh to judge that she missed the broader picture, but the fact remains that the integration of initiations and funeral rituals into the production of a tsuhana is anything but a matter of mere expediency. The cycle of kinalala merges together and completes three of the four most important ceremonial cycles that have survived the social transformation of the past century. The only significant aspect of Halia ritual that is largely disjoint to the tsuhana cycle is marriage and affinal exchanges. But even so, it remains implicit, since the axis of affine/father/cross-cousin is critical to tsuhana construction, and the teitabol must have born children: and whilst marriage and brideprice are not integrated into kinalala, sexuality and reproduction certainly are.

The piercing of noses observed by Blackwood was an element in an elaborate cycle of initiations that was completely abandoned by 1945. But in a transformed fashion, the life-cycle feasting of the gobus is still marked: the infant gobus may not be taken to the gardens. This prohibition is lifted after one year: the baby and his age-mates are feasted, but it is the gobus that even here leads the feast, eating first

73 In a number of cases, politico-genealogical manipulation has led to gobus being shown within tsuhana which, many years later as adults, they come to repudiate. They do this seeking to assert their 'true' lineage's independence at a separate tsuhana.
amongst the other children. Eventually, balualung is performed, and in some cases it is quite elaborate: motorboat excursions around the islands are not common, but for that reason useful displays of status, and specially of paternal aide to the gobus. A southern Hahalis group with several wealthy members was, as of 2008, organizing a trip to Cairns for its young gobus and friends so that an especially forceful message could be sent with balualung. After subsequent trips overseas, especially international ones, gogolatas - a scaled down version of balualung is held: and though this feast is now carried out for non-tsunono, it more elaborate in the case of the tsunono. Whilst balualung is an opportunity to display wealth, funerals have become a critical point for the articulation of the political independence of hamlets. The cycles fuse during tsuhana construction. During the season of kuma (nightly dancing) from the feast of tabunaluma to korkoriana, sexual liaisons between visitors and women from the local group are tolerated, and indeed the kuma can only end once a child is conceived. That child is considered the child of the tsunono (compare Sagir 2003:103). Once kuma ends, the funeral remains, or korkoriana, can be disposed of. In the past, the articulation of the two cycles was even more dramatic. Years before kuma for the new tsuhana, during the funeral phase of gun women and men mourning a very senior tsunono would be secluded inside the old tsuhana. They had to obey several dietary taboos and could not be seen outside (Blackwood 1935:512). During this time the usually stern proscnption against infidelity was suspended. According to Eleanor Rimoldi, a child born to the gun would be considered the gobus (1982:180-182), although it is perhaps more accurate to characterise the child as produced by the tsuhana (see below Section 7.7). In this way, the two branches feeding into the kinalala cycle would be closed into a single, tsuhana-centred loop mediated by a special type of sexual relations.

The critical feast at the beginning of the tsuhana cycle is a private one, the bagum tere pina posa - the meeting of the lineages within a particular tsuhana. Tsubana elsewhere in the migration chain that will collaborate in the building are also typically invited, and it is important that the pepeito, usually the closest allied cross-cousin group of the senior lineage should be present. However, only the most senior representatives of these groups will be present; pien tsuhana, children of uxorilocally settled men, will typically be represented by their matrilateral tsunono, even if this tsunono resides elsewhere in Buka. These observers will assist not only in determining the correct protocols for a specific tsuhana, its sinebe, and the most feasible strategy for construction, but they will also help in the two crucial tasks of socially recollecting genealogical positions and tsuhana history relevant to the establishment of the new order, as well as facilitating and witnessing the inevitable compromises. This meeting ought to end in a pact sealed by sacrifice, which 'binds the talk', kislilua n range. In the case of the very well respected Munkelekele tsuhana of Hahalis, the bagum tere pina posa had all the hallmarks of a typical council meeting, with an agenda, minutes and notes posted on a blackboard. This was complemented

74 These taboos are lifted at a feast called haniungal ['make them eat ngal'], which takes places after hiningal - the yearly blooming of the ngal (Canarium) around June. At haniungal, the mother and child are fed ngal, in the form of nuts and kikiono posongal, Canarium and and banana pudding. Haniungal feasts that I witnessed focused on the mothers and their firstborn children, but also the grandparents - the generation of current tsunono and intalubol. The grandparents are first to eat after the children. Like other feasts in the gobus cycle, this is an occasion for surprisingly bawdy jokes, especially between affines. At one haniungal feast, the grandmother of one of the guest children - a cross cousin of the gobus - announced her arrival by taunting her daughter's husband's father that he should be filled with semen for her, because she was ready. Under ordinary circumstances, this could only be the prelude for a brawl, but despite the presence of a dozen small children and several stout Catholics, it was a moment of great hilarity. See also Rimoldi and Rimoldi (1992:34).
with a small meal and sacrifice. Once there is some clarity as to the procedure that will be followed, the decision to build still must be demonstrated: this takes place at a subsequent feast named kotskots - ‘cutting’ - in which the bunkatun of a tsibana that will commit pigs for the feasting cycle designate piglets for this purpose by cutting their tails. Each man living at a tsibana ought to contribute a pig, even those who, as affines (ha lis, u hitu) or pien tsibana, did not participate in the bagum tere pinaposa.

4.4. Martul

The side-posts of a tsibana are especially significant: they are counted in pairs, so that the left and right posts are considered together, while the front, back and centre-posts are not counted. A five-post tsibana therefore has ten lateral posts. The front posts are called pal matana (or ‘side of the eye’), the central posts are bagululuma (middle of the house), the back posts are pal bion (back; bion is a large tree). These are usually identified respectively with the petals ‘out in front’, the tsunono at the centre and the gobus who will follow him at the rear. The smallest tsibana have three posts, and the house may be expanded by the addition of more posts until it has ten posts. It then must be left to rot and a very large feast is held, the cycle then repeats: or at least, this is the idealization that most tsunono give to an aspect of the system that has been dramatically changed. Posts, in theory, may be added either when the house is rebuilt, or by annexing more posts to an existing house. This is considerably more difficult to do with permanent materials, and in some cases houses that have five physical posts are claimed to in fact have more. If a new post is added to an existing house, only a reduced tasa series of feasts is carried out. I did not see any cases of such an extension, though Rokou was planning to add to his already magnificent lunaakeesa, if only the severe problems of Nahirei could be overcome (see below, Chapter 6). In Hahalis, four tsibana had five posts, and two had three. The only tsibana built mostly from bush materials, with five posts, was also the only one which faced fewest challenges to legitimacy.

According to Rimoldi and Rimoldi, there was traditionally explicit competition between tsibana to add posts to tsibana (Rimoldi and Rimoldi 1992:73). Once a tsibana reached ten posts, a special feast would be held and the house termed lumamnio ('overfull house')75; the tsunono would then have to begin the cycle again. In Halia, this rarely takes place today. It is difficult and expensive to add extensions to tsibana made from permanent materials and though some Halia tsunono expressed to me their plans to add posts, the only tsibana with more than five posts I saw were in Haku. Instead of gradually adding posts, Halia tsibana are built in qualitative steps: the iahasa with three posts, full tsibana with five. It may be that this reflects the disruption of the construction cycle in Halia, but it is worth noting that there is a complex lore about the provenance of the posts, known as martul, and the identity of the men who added posts to the tsibana in Halia. Martul are conceived of as markers of matrilineal descent: no tsibana has its origins in Halia, they are all descended via migration networks

75 Rapuna, the tsunono of Basbi, called this house the ‘deaf house’or ‘silent house’, and gave this account: “No one has seen this house. When the tsunono had finished the house [ie. added ten posts], he would call everyone: I would call Nahirei, Talinga, Hanahan - everyone would come with pigs. We would go to the bush and make a big noise, as if we were brining in the sipi [tsibana building materials]. Everyone would be waiting for us to come with the posts, but when we arrive, there would be nothing. That’s why nobody has ever seen this house.”
from elsewhere in Buka. Each time a group migrated, they would be given a post from the old tsubana to begin a new one (note that martul is formed by mar- ‘road’ and inl ‘post’). If tsubana posts were added regularly in the past, there is no clear explanation at the present as to how the identity of these posts is preserved. But the individual posts of the Nahirei lumank.usa and the Talinga tsubana are said to have been built by distinct tsunono, including those who travelled, many generations ago, to settle these areas. The issue is complicated by the common practice of identifying man and house, and tsunono with his lineage: a ‘man’ who builds tsubana five times may have done so over a period of a century.

It is interesting that whilst other aspects of Halia exchange have intensified – for instance, bong moloto and even the feasts of kinalala – the pace of tsubana construction has not, and if anything, there appears to be a tendency for the house to become permanent, indivisible and so to speak, monumental, an embodiment of kin history read analytically. It has come to signal land title, even as its construction still remains within the sphere of kin-political organization, marriage alliances and fundamental exchange, that is to say, sacrifices and their sublimations. In a sense, the sublimation of the sacrificial economy through which pre-contact tsubana were articulated has led ultimately into the formulation of the order of tsubana as law and state: but this a process that at every step mobilizes and intensifies the dynamics of tacit compromise, revised genealogy, and kin synthesis, even if these become ever more incompatible with a dogma of order, unilineality and historical factuality.

4.5. Those with Names

“A tsubana must have three people.” This is an assertion with a number of meanings, not all of them fully consistent, but a frequently encountered explication is that there must be a tsunono, his sister the teitabol and the peits. These persons are identified with parts of the tsubana. The tsunono’s primary role is to be the decision maker and ultimate leader of the tsubana. He should not be exposed to danger, and is typically identified with the central post of the house, protected from the outside. The peits speaks for the tsunono to the others within the tsubana, and he enforces good order – especially during feasts. He is always the first to eat, to protect the tsunono and others from sorcery or poisoning. The pal singin side of the tsubana is his domain, and he alone may enter it. The teitabol is the tsunono’s sister, and the tsubana is sometimes said to be her house; in the lumank.usa, she is represented by a statue above the central rafter (see fig 6.3 below). Teitabol are regarded with awe and are considered amongst the most important people in society, on a par with their brothers, but the nature of their significance is different, and they tend to wield little direct power over political affairs.

To these figures, one may add a number of other ‘men with names’: the ngolongolokarekul, ‘treader of dew’, whose job was to precede the tsunono in excursions, sniffing out traps and sorcery laid on his

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76 Settling the critical issue of succession requires at least some degree of clarity regarding tsunono, teitabol and gohus, alongside the peits, his sister and successor. However, since tsubana are often built by coalitions of lineages with residual claims to independent tsubana, sometimes the expression is glossed as referring to the need for a tsubana to combine at least three lineages which rotate the office of tsunono. This is considered by many as heterodox.
path; *bolasia*, 'banana-leaf tarp', who would hold the *tsunono* as he was being scarified, so that the *tsunono*'s blood fell on him rather than flow directly to the ground; *tsun bhambalal*, usually a cross-cousin residing with the *tsunono*, who enforces *bamal*, expiation for offences against the *tsunono*; *tsun kuahu* 'ash men', who carry out sacrifices; *tsun kabete* and *tsun busil*, 'guards' and 'bowmen'. *Tsun ton*, rainmaker-navigators stood on par with the *tsunono*, the *lumanlangits* (house of rains), did not operate like a *tsubana* – they cannot host feasts, for instance. However, in large *tsubana* complexes *tsun ton* would be integrated into a complex division of specialised labour along with the other 'men with names.' (None of these men, however, dedicated themselves only to the activity that distinguished them.) At present, however, most of these roles have disappeared entirely or are only significant in some ceremonial contexts; the *tsun ton* and *tsun bhambalal* are the most significant exceptions, but notably, they are not strictly speaking within the ranked matriline of the *tsubana*. That is to say, *tsubana* 'offices' have been streamlined considerably. Partly this is because old roles become irrelevant and new roles fail to be assimilated into the house structure. But a very significant factor is that today there is a fierce competition for the title of *tsunono*, which has come to be understood as the *landowner*. Men with minor titles claim to be *tsunono* and *peti*, a process that not only makes the construction of actual *tsubana* more important, but makes it more difficult.

### 4.5.1. The *tsunono*.

The *tsunono* are in principle hereditary leaders. The primary axis of succession is that a *tsunono* will eventually be succeeded by his eldest sister's firstborn son, but on his death the title of *tsunono* is first passed onto his own younger brothers. In practice, only after they are deceased does their sister's son become *tsunono* (Blackwood 1935:46; M. Rimoldi 1971:64). For most practical purposes, the younger brother will act as any other *tsunono*, but in certain respects his position is qualitatively different. It would be unusual for such a man to initiate a major *tsubana* building cycle, especially if his elder brother had already built a *tsubana*. This would only make it more difficult for his sister's firstborn son to build his own *tsubana*. It is sometimes said that the deceased *tsunono*'s younger brother is only *pepeito* (guardian) of the first-born *tsunono* in waiting. Whilst the *tsunono* is conceived in strictly genealogical terms, age is a critical factor in Halia attitudes to leadership. A man under the age of 40 is simply not considered a plausible candidate for leadership in most circumstances: a man must have a 'crown' of white hair or a bald patch before he is to be *tsunono*. If a 'young' man's uncles all die before he has come of age, a man from outside the sibling set of the *tsunono* might be appointed to take over the affairs of the clan. Such a man would always be said to be *pepeito* and emphatically not *tsunono*. Yet if

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77 Rimoldi (1971:63-5) notes that the young *gohus* is said to 'hide' until his uncles die; it may be added that at stake here is both the protection of the *gohus* from sorcery and jealousy, and the protection of his uncles' ambitions.

78 The 'youth' representative in the local government of 2007 was 45. This is one of the reasons the BRA came to be looked upon with a great deal of suspicion in Buka, since it offered opportunities for leadership for young men; these types of leadership – in armed conflict – were apparently a more relevant threat to the *tsunono*'s authority than business or trade expertise, since young men often excel there without widespread resentment by the *tsunono*. The same is emphatically not true of secular politics. When in 2005 the ABG held its first elections, Patrick Nisira, a former BRA commander in his early 30s defeated, several senior *tsunono* and grizzled *savuna*, this was a shock.
the pepeito is not a near relative such as the tsunono's mother's sister's son, this virtually always becomes the prelude to usurpation: beyond a range of second degree cousins, genealogical reckoning becomes much more controversial and there will be disputes as to the true connection of sisters three generations in the past. For all the rhetoric about the heavy burdens of office, there is no shortage of designs on securing it, ambition drives motivated recollection, and genealogies are in fact replete with translations of co-settled groups (punuuna) into putative matrilineal kin (bisunguus) and thence to de facto norgeere.

Whilst Halia kinship terminology does not distinguish between younger and older brother (and barely distinguishes siblings from parallel cousins), first born children are called hamōa, a word also used of the first fruits of gardens (which were traditionally offered to the tsunono). More specifically, the young boy and girl who will grow to be tsunono and tsitaol are both called gobus until their succession79. The word gobus also means the new shoot of a plant, especially the new shoot of taro which signals that the tuber is ready to harvest. A man who succeeds his brother may be tsunono, but he was never gobus. This means that he will not have undergone the cycle of feasts and taboos which mark the young gobus as special from virtually the moment of his birth. This, above all, is the reason such a man may feast an already existing tsuhana but not initiate the construction of a wholly new tsuhana.

It is difficult for a boy to grow to be a tsunono if he lacks a sister at all. If a lineage is langokots [kots: cut, lango: dead branch], lacking potential child-bearing women, the tsunono will not be able to construct a tsubana; in fact, he would not be able to participate in most of the ceremonies that establish his status from the time he is a young boy. In such cases, a replacement can be sometimes found for his sister. If this substitute is drawn from a distant relative, this may be relatively uncontroversial, but there are often severe disagreements about the nature of putative kinship links. In contemporary practice, the stand-in sister is not adopted by the tsunono's lineage: the tsubana effectively changes hands. Or at least, this is the theory. Lineages are not quite as clear cut as Halia ideology portrays it, and the situation often arises that there are putatively matrilineal kin with no known genealogical connections. In such cases, the transfer can be understood as proving that the lineages were in fact related, so that no transfer actually occurred. One reason for this is that actually creating a new tsunono is difficult and bloody affair, to the extent that it is believed possible. Were the issue simply the replacement of a well-defined terminating lineage, there would be nobody left to complain: but the lineage is always embedded in complex alliances and quasi-genealogical bonds. Additionally, transfers are often pressed on lineages that understand themselves as not technically langokots, but rather geographically fragmented: serious issues then arise when splinters attempt to migrate back to their tsubana, now usurped. These issues are much less arcane than they may seem: in the past, these practices were more common because of the smaller population and higher mortality. Several large-scale land conflicts in Hahalis, including the vexed question of the precise position of John Teosin's lineage, relate to these issues.

79 The tsunono himself is sometimes termed gobus, and in Haku the gobus is identified as the leader of the patu, or highest ranked tsunono within a coalition of tsubana (Sagir 2003:89).
4.5.2. Source and character of the tsumono's power

While our understanding of this history is limited by early sources, it is clear that the tsumono has undergone a complex development partly mirroring the process of colonial and postcolonial state formation within Halia society. Beatrice Blackwood cautioned that it was difficult to establish the character and extent of the power of pre-colonial tsumono (1935:49). At the same time, she relayed the "bitter regret" that Pinari, one of the leading tsumono of southern Selau, felt for having lost the power over life and death (1935:50). This power spanned both the regulation of violence directed to outside groups, that is to say, warfare, and violence within the group. This is a notorious theme in the Rimoldi's work, where one may distinguish between at least two types of political articulation of normative, prosocial murder and sacrifice. First, the construction of a grand coalition tsubana, or pati required human sacrifices, and the tsumono of this house took on the special title of munibil (stem of the black palm, from which weapons are manufactured). Accordingly, lesser tsubana and the nitsunono of ordinary tsumono are placed in a horizon of intelligibility where power is fundamentally power over life and death. The critical role of sacrifice in the organization of marriages, a major aspect of coalition-building, likewise entails that the tsumono is born of sacrifice (see below). In such cases, the victim had to be drawn from within the kin group conducting the sacrifices. This will be explored in detail below (Chapter 7).

The second form of killing was a direct application of the power over life and death. Tsumono, however, were unable to do this individually: only by a secret When the tsumono deemed it necessary to kill an individual – the reasons given for this typically include rogue use of sorcery or unsanctioned violence, incest, theft or spying on the tsumono's designs – they would convene a secret meeting in the bush. They would decide on execution and make a pact of silence by eating a half-cooked pig. Executions would be conducted by physical force or by authorizing sorcery. This ceremony, termed kornpakā, is in all likelihood long abandoned, but there are pervasive rumours that it was reactivated during the Civil War, and that the executions in Hahalis in 1978 were rigged by a prior secret conclave (Rimoldi and Rimoldi 1993, Chapter 7). The expression 'kornpakā' has today come to be applied to secret death-pacts by men without rank of tsumono, or at any rate by men whose rank is challenged and whose decisions would not be backed by a consensus of village tsumono, as is implicit in the traditional view. This slippage is indicative of the general dissolution of the tsumono's power over life, once channelled through the tsubana system, now 'privatized'.

Other lethal inflections of the tsumono's power – cannibalism and warfare, are more obscure. While some aspects of warfare ritual were reconstructed during the Crisis (especially offensive and defensive sorcery, and pollution taboos for fighting men) the control of fighting by tsumono is not at all clearly attested in that period, though the several attempts towards establishing it are certainly illuminating. Halia doctrine distinguishes between different types of tsumono and a critical disjunction is between powerful fighters (men who won their tsubana through blood) and hereditary political leaders (men who have tsubana 'by the umbilicus'). According to Blackwood, it was possible under some circumstances to elevate a man to tsumono by sacrificing war captives:
If a man had killed a great number of men, then it was decided he should be made tsunono. A raid was made on an enemy village, a prisoner was taken and brought back alive. His skin was cut until the blood flowed. The men who were already tsunono washed the tsunono-to-be in the prisoner’s blood. This was done in the presence of all the people so that all should know that he was tsunono. The prisoner either died under this treatment or was killed, and the assembled people ate him in front of the principal house in the village. After this had been done, if the sister of the new tsunono bore a child, he was tsunono from birth, and so the rank was perpetuated (Blackwood 1935:47).

Blackwood offers this account with ‘reservations’, as it was based on a single informant from Teop, an area she did not research in depth. The story, however, rings true to themes still evident in present-day Halia society: for instance, the critical role of the tsuhana and ‘witnessing’, the fact the man did not make himself tsunono, but was made. I presented this account to Halia informants, who denied the specifics of this ritual, particularly the washing in blood but accepted as possible that such practices may have once taken place. However, it is important to note that Halia informants would often defer their judgement to historical documents. They did not know, specifically, what men did in the past ‘when they fought to eat each other.’ Whilst this is often denied, elderly experts state emphatically that powerful fighters could become tsunono, even the denial can in some respects be regarded as evidence of this, since the logic appears that no man could be a powerful fighter without being tsunono. (Unless he was an out-of-control killer: again reflecting the requirement that the violence be prosocial and normative, and implicating the role of ‘witnesses’).

4.5.3. Tsunono and Exchange

Rimoldi stated that whilst “pigs give a man his name”, the tsunono’s authority was not a function of his prowess in exchange, but rather his “hereditary title, his nitsunono, the type of ‘work’ of his clubhouse and its structural relationship with others and its relationship to the ground” (Rimoldi 1971:82; Rimoldi and Rimoldi 1992:74-5). This is a point that is frequently restated by Halia who have familiarized themselves with anthropology. In the terms most directly relevant to the Halia themselves, the tsunono’s authority is the tsuhana and it is in fact impossible to acquire the right to build a tsuhana through exchange. However, constructing tsuhana necessarily involves killing a large number of pigs, which are organized in a type of exchange. The networks of alliances that supply pigs to a tsuhana are based on reciprocal or asymmetrical hierarchical exchanges. The importance of this can hardly be underestimated, and though tsunono readily dismiss large pig kills as boastfulness (a markato hakula, a serious insult) and demeaning competition (biakesikesi), there is also no shortage of boasts or competitive drive. The critical issues in tsuhana exchanges are first of all the fact that it is the

80 For instance, a major dispute in Hahalis concerns a lineage that descends from the sister of a powerful fighter who by their own reckoning acted as an assassin and fighting man on behalf of the most powerful tsunono in Hahalis and elsewhere, but who was a problematic enough figure that the Germans executed him, by the reckoning of the lineage’s rivals, on their ancestral tsunono’s own advice. Relatively neutral ombers assert that this lineage does indeed have rights to build tsuhana at several different places throughout the island; even the rivals assert that they do have limited landrights, subject to the authority of the descendents of the men who hired the strongman. But their status remains marginal, and their case is built upon asserting that even as the strongman acted as the agent of other tsuhana, he retained his own ‘base’ tsuhana. That is to say, he was already tsunono.
sacrifice of the pig that is the core of the 'exchange', and in this respect it is best to refer to the cycle of exchanges centred on the *tsubana* as sacrificial economy: the value of pigs is human life. Secondly, *tsubana* sacrifices break down into two classes: pigs killed by the group assembling the house, and those provided for the house. The former are expected to be present, and are required for sacrifices. But it is the later set of pigs, given to the *tsunono*, that is the most important at the climax of the *kinalala* cycle. The house, as informants sometimes stress, must be built for the *tsunono*; and he is placed in debt by this.

4.5.4. *Nitsunono*

The quality or strength of the *tsunono* is termed *nitsunono*. This word is formed with the nominalizer *ni-*, which, for instance, converts *tagula* (strong, strongly) into *nitagula* (strength), or the aforementioned *mal* (bitter) to *nimal* (bitterness). It is a concept that has to be understood in relation to the specific social and ideological construction of the *tsunono*, which do not have exact analogues in European society. Rimoldi and Rimoldi state that it 'defies translation' and immediately suggest that "if we accept...the analogy the Buka like to draw between *tsunono* and 'king' then *nitsunono* is akin to royalty, regal power and kingdom, making a closer association between the various attributes and the physical person." (1992:35; see also M. Rimoldi 1971:44). These analogies are intriguing – all the more so because they have changed over the years – but they are only as enlightening as our grasp of the Buka concepts of 'king' goes. The specific association with the body of the *tsunono* is that *nitsunono* rests on the head of the *tsunono*, and in the cases of very high status chiefs, on the shoulders as well (M. Rimoldi 1971:46). It is accordingly a mark of very profound respect that a person should be carried on a litter above the head-level, for instance the *teitahol* during marriage. In the most sombre sacrifices, the *tsunono* touches the basket of offerings on his crown before delivering it to the fire. The head and hair of the *tsunono* is dangerous and polluting. The pillow on which he sleeps is one of the most important *korkon'ana* ('dirty things') which are disposed of at critical funeral rites; the pillow side (pa* tingleh*) of his sleeping house and *tsubana* is strictly taboo, as is the roof over his house and the *tsubana*. Fruit trees growing over the roof of these houses are also taboo. A woman who finds herself above the level of the *tsunono*'s head can be compelled to marry him (or find herself given by him to an unmarried kinsman), a practice that is very rare but not entirely extinct in contemporary Buka.

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81 The analogy of *tsunono* and king is today unfashionable, and in its place one often encounters the figure of the *tsunono* as the president of a company – who does not himself manage its business publically, and communicates with the workers by way of intermediaries. The assertion that the *tsunono* is a lord, not a chief is today associated with the Me'ekamui faction, and has a specific meaning with its programme.

82 Less commonly, a man may be raised – even on the shoulders of *tsunono* – to accord respect. This was done to visiting AusAID officials in 2000, sparking a storm of controversy (E. Rimoldi 2005:105). Some of my informants stated that it would have only been acceptable to accord this honour to an actual Australian leader, not his minions.

83 In 2007, a girl of 15 who was found on a tree above a *tsunono*'s house in Selau was given to him in *hamal*. This divided the *tsunono* in Hahalis. Some asserted that this was unacceptable – "em i bin wai bipo, tazol nam yami mas tinging long ole human rights" ("it was acceptable in the past, but now we must consider human rights.") In free conversation after a meeting, the members of the village council of chiefs debated whether pigs should be given
An important aspect of nitsunono missing from Rimoldi’s presentation is the role of sacra: physical nitsunono which can be stored and, under certain special circumstances, transferred. Two distinct kinds of ceremonial currencies, beroona (shell disk strings, manufactured in the Solomon Islands, especially Malaita) but much more emphatically paiau (porpoise and flying-fox teeth strands, produced locally); keesa statues and posts of old tsuhanu (sometimes stored in caves); the disk-shaped perere emblems worn by the tsunono, items used in prosocial forms of sorcery, including rain shrines and lethal sorcery; and traditional weapons such as sword-clubs and bows. All these are, or can be regarded as, nitsunono. The Halia readily extend the concept of nitsunono to cover other cultures’ holy and emblematic objects: when a Maori group presented the village leadership with a traditional feather coat and two tiki figures, the villagers readily recognised these as nitsunono (the items were divided evenly between the moiety-like pinaposa and stored by tsunono). Two additional special cases can be included here: the otobo and balbal roofing for tsuhanu which is a characteristic gift from the father and/or cross-cousin group to the tsuhanu builders and is often the most visible transfer of nitsunono from ‘father’ to ‘son’.

This concept of countable and transferrable nitsunono exists alongside the liquid, polluting notion implicit in the doctrines associated with the head and pillow. The nitsunono in this sense is an uncountable quantity that leaks and contaminates nearby objects. This the Rimoldis term the “most abstract” sense of nitsunono (Rimoldi and Rimoldi 1992:35), but it is also very much concrete, substance-like notion. It can be ‘raised’ or ‘lowered’, by insults or a transgression against his privileges: and if that took place, the only way to ‘raise’ the nitsunono was through sacrifice: emphatically, not sacrifices carried out by the tsunono himself, but sacrifices in his name, for him.

4.5.5. Hamal

In traditional Buka society, the tsunono was distinguished from other persons through a number of practices highlighting and preserving his status. Other members of the community, and other tsunono must pay respect (hatsieti) to him. Should offenses be committed against him, other tsunono would enforce his status by demanding expiation – a practice known as hamal, literally ‘to make bitter’ (hence tsunono of high rank were said to have a rang a mal, ‘bitter mouths’). It is important that the insulted tsunono himself cannot demand hamal; it is incumbent on other tsunono, above all his ‘father’ and/or ‘cross-cousin’ group, known as his ton bambahamal, ‘man of hamal’: but since this man also polices the tsunono’s own behaviour, their relationship can be tense. Demands for hamal can be pressed for a number of reasons, such as assault or defamation against the tsunono or in some cases a person representing the tsunono, use of wealth items that the tsunono ought to have preferential access to, both traditional and deriving from the cash economy, and numerous other insults. An assault against a tsuhanu is understood as an attack on the physical person of the tsunono – indeed, in practice, assaults against the physical person of the tsunono are not taken as seriously as the damaging of slit-gongs and keesa statues. These certainly demand hamal. Perhaps the most significant class of insults are offenses instead. Others found this substitution unacceptable, stating that the practice was acceptable and marriages by hamal had taken place in the village into the 1970s.
which involve the positioning of persons, especially women, above the tsunono's head— or, in the case of high ranked tsunono, his shoulders. In the past, batietsi by women for tsunono required them to crawl past them. In most cases of hamal, a person would be forced to pay compensation in pigs; in the case of hamal of women, they would be forced to marry the tsunono without his lineage having to pay brideprice.

4.6. Teitabol

The tsunono's sister is the teitabol. When the feast of kinalala climaxes, she is shown through the tsuhana, "for it is the teitabol's house in that she has borne the children who ensure the continuity of the tsunono's lineage" (Rimoldi and Rimoldi 1992:65). At this time, the taboo on other women entering the house is rigidly enforced. In the humankeesa, a statuette of the founding teitabol is fixed on the central internal beam; when, during marriage, a teitabol is taken to her groom's hamlet, she is elevated and carried by the tsunono. Whilst a woman who found herself above the tsunono's head level would ordinarily be a target for hamal, here the placement of the statue and elevation of the bride signal the supreme power of the teitabol. The tsunono say: "she is on our heads." The teitabol is the first born daughter of a tsunono: but unlike the tsunono and his sister's son, both mother and daughter are often referred to as teitabol whilst the mother is alive. Sometimes young girls are said to be teitabol. She is also referred to as gohus, and as she grows up she obeys many of the same taboos as her eldest brother.

The question as to the extent of the teitabol's power is vexed. The teitabol must be respected. Assaults or any verbal aggression towards her are considered extremely serious. A man who approached the teitabol at Basbi drunk at night to request the keys of her absent husband's truck was forced to pay compensation of a pig; the father of a youth who was caught sneaking into the teitabol's daughter's bedroom for a tryst was forced to pay two pigs. These were regarded as relatively minor incidents; it is notable that they did not end up in Village Court but were handled through reconciliation ceremonies. Hamal for tsunono is in practice enforced only occasionally, and tsunono's complaints about this fact are greeted with private joking about their elevated sense of self-importance. Respect for teitabol, on the other hand is a very serious matter, and doubting the especial seriousness of an attack against a teitabol is equivalent to doubting her status as teitabol, that is to say, it is equivalent to a challenge to the authority and land claims of her entire lineage.

The Teitabol is regarded as profoundly important: she bears the responsibility for the continued existence of the tsuhana. Indeed a word is applied to them which is ordinarily translated as 'sacred': giagono (Allen and Allen 2005). This connotes both power (nismunono) and purity (gogoso, cleanliness). Though it is sometimes also translated as 'taboo' (by the Halia themselves, as Tok Pisin tabu), it involves a concept of prohibition quite distinct from what may be termed 'secular' taboos, or hobots. Such taboos may reserve a betelnut tree, reef or garden patch, and represent an intervention of authority (especially the tsunono's authority) in the organization of resources (it is occasionally explained as Tok Pisin 'hanir'). Giagono has connotation of permanent exclusion, not contingent on
the will of any one man. It is the term used for the single pig reserved for the tshhana builders for the final feast of kinalala, ritual sacra and paion. These are the key physical embodiments of the imaginary of social reproduction. At the same time, gágonó has connotations of virginity or more accurately sinlessness, firmly articulated in the present period in relation to the cult of the Mama Maria, St. Mary. This isn’t an innovation ex nihilo. In the past, the tsalabó had a prerogative known as oba that allowed her to opt out of marriage, which is valued quite negatively by some women, or which could function as a prohibition imposed on her by the tsunono (Rimoldi and Rimoldi 1991:334). Her younger sister would then continue the lineage. Eleanor Rimoldi explains this in terms of the tsalabó shielding her sister and the lineage from the jealousy-motivated sorcery that is expected to be directed against her (E. Rimoldi 1982:220-221; Sagir 2005:49ff). While oba is a long-abandoned custom, it is still recalled vividly by both elderly tsunono and tsalabó as a key piece of the lore explicating their special status. In the contemporary Catholic transcription, the construction of the tsalabó as sacred and sinless overlap and mutually reinforce each other, but gágonó is not straightforwardly ‘sacred’ in the sense of ‘pure’ and ‘virginal’ because in Halía, these concepts are themselves not in a direct opposition to the nexus of reproduction.

The opposition of sacred and secular power cannot be translated without modification from a European context to Buka, but there is something of value in that distinction for the analysis of the particular importance of the tsalabó. Specifically, the tsalabó’s status as gágonó, ‘sacred’, does not translate automatically to ‘secular’ power, if this is taken to mean involvement in political affairs of the community, a domain of profane exchanges and concrete profits. The tsalabó does not have power over life and death, critical to the definition of nisunono. Again, whilst it is inaccurate to say that her power is ‘merely symbolic’, it is also true that the very high valuation placed upon these women does not yield for them power over men. The future of the lineage depends on her, the authority of her brother stems from her, but in controlling the daily affairs of the village, her role is primarily that of a counsel. This is not, however, negligible.

A tsunono would be foolish to make serious decisions on behalf of his lineage and tshhana without consulting his sister, and because the tsunono wish above all not to project any hint of disunity her opinion carries a lot of weight. Women generally are deeply involved in the feasts and exchanges of the funeral cycle, and they exercise a considerable degree of autonomy in such contexts – to the chagrin of men. Women’s labour is ultimately the foundation of the Halía economy, and they are utterly central to the construction of a tshhana, since they will tend the gardens. They decide when the gardens are ready to be harvested, and are thus able to influence the timing of feasts. The tsalabó speaks for the women of her clan. Finally, the role of tsalabó as stores of genealogical knowledge and historical lore should not be underestimated. Women in general have a superior understanding of kinship histories. They were invariably summoned when I asked to collect family trees: it was taken for granted that I wished to speak to them, and the tsunono seemed distinctly fearful that they would

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84 Compare Foster (1995:47): in Tanga, children of big men could be placed in seclusion to heighten their status, but the custom was abandoned because it attracted sorcery.

85 A NGO worker with the status of tsalabó claimed that during kurnpakó, the half-cooked pig eaten by the men had to be passed underneath the crotch of the tsalabó. All tsunono I interviewed dismissed this claim, but even if it is true, the tsalabó’s role here appears to be that of a witness and ceremonial facilitator: she is present alone, whilst the men are assembled together.
have to face their sisters’ wrath if they misled me. The extent to which this constitutes a potential for political power is very considerable.

Yet whilst the men have extensive networks of organization and dominate every sphere of village and state politics, women’s explicit political organization was in the past rudimentary, and in some respects continues to be. Traditionally, they did not have public forums in which to organize as men did, and the role of the *naka* secret men’s society in disciplining women is denounced in the strongest terms today even by self-consciously traditionalist women. This picture has partially changed. There is a great diversity and number of women’s organizations in contemporary Buka: women’s sections within churches, women’s sports, women’s groups, and non-government agencies organized by and for women. Without underplaying the very important role of women in contemporary Bougainvillean society, it is worth noting that not only are many of these agencies and organizations dependent on external funding and motivation, they are all without exception independent of the traditional hierarchy. *Teitabol* are often especially vocal within such groups, partly because of the socialization of the *gobus* which encourages the child to press demands that must be met on pain of insults to the honour of the *tsahana*, partly because *teitabol* lineages usually command greater resources and are able to educate their children. But these are ancillary effects. And to the extent that women find a voice through these groups, they denounce their own exclusion from wider political society. That this critique is based on an allegation that women’s ‘traditional’ power has been usurped by men cannot be taken at face value. Colonialism, patriarchal churches and misogynist business and political networking undoubtedly dramatically aggravate the exclusion of women, but there is little reason to believe that they create this exclusion from scratch.

Contemporary Buka ideology posits the *teitabol* as ‘female chief’, and this figure has a preeminent role in discourses of peace building and civil society. These are complex discourses which find points of leverage within established Halai cultural structures as well as Christian, especially Catholic notions of sacralised motherhood. Alongside actual political engagement with the difficulties facing women in Buka and Papua New Guinea, local activists believe a range characteristic civil society mythemes such as the supposed resilience of women against corruption, the notion that women’s participation in business networks renders these more ethical, the purity of mothers. No one experiences the falseness of these mythemes more than the women who propose them: these discourses compose a layer of socially effective representation – an ideology. ‘Maternalism’ and the doctrine of ‘women chiefs’ can gain traction because the ‘sacred’ power of the *teitabol* is not rigidly opposed to the ‘secular’ power of the *tsunono*, and *teitabol* do have a very high status in the traditional sphere; but that there is an emphatically defended need for the ‘restoration’ (in fact, the establishment) of women’s participation in the ‘secular’ sphere arises precisely because women lack power in the later.

### 4.7. The *peits* and the multiplication of chiefs

As noted above, historically there were far more ‘names’ within the scope of *tsahana* organization than the present core set of *tsunono, teitabol, gobus* and *peits*. Other roles have become obsolete, and those
whose ancestors once filled them now vie for recognition, either as *tsunono* — a strategy that is dangerous, since it risks *tsuhana* fission — or as *peits*. The *peits* is the only figure other than the *tsunono*, his sister and his successor who retains a clear, distinct profile in the Halia authority structure. His role is to serve as the mouthpiece of the *tsunono*, transmitting his decisions to the *tsuhana*’s settlement group, and to police feasts for improper behaviour, especially insults to the *tsunono* and *tsuhana*. Alone amongst all other individuals, he is immune from the pollution of *ntsunono* above the *tsunono*’s head, and therefore is responsible for affixing the ridge-cap to the top of the *tsuhana*. The *pal singil*, one side of the *tsuhana* — typically the inland side — is taboo to all others. Deliveries of betelnut and food should be placed in a section of the *tsuhana*’s front dais, from which only the *peits* may take it. He should taste the food before the *tsunono* and others, and test it for poison. According to some informants, the *peits* would also be in charge of the actual performance of *tsora* and *tsuluna*, that is to say, harmful types of sorcery; these are considered at best as necessary evils, and then only when ordered by exemplary *tsunono*. Rimoldi and Rimoldi report that these public roles, above all the facts that the *peits* is in charge of labour mobilization, sorcery and immediate collection of gifts for the *tsuhana* lead to the *peits* being considered ‘greedy’ (1992:35). Yet despite the fact that the word ‘*peits*’ also means ‘greedy’, this is an association that contemporary informants do not make unprompted. Max Rimoldi’s own primary informant, Thomas Goena, has the status of *peits* and asserts this is a type of ironical joke, and that in fact the *peits* is very nearly the *tsunono*’s equal: self-interest aside, he is certainly correct to emphasize that the *peits* is considered indispensable as *gosas man*, a leader who ‘goes first’. This contrasts markedly with M. Rimoldi’s claim that the *peits* is associated with the Nakas *qua* a marginal, disliked category of workers and scouts without clear genealogical basis (M. Rimoldi 1971:45; Rimoldi and Rimoldi 1992:36). In practice, today’s *tsunono* do not often rely on the *peits* to relay orders to the *tsuhana*, and possibly the association of *tsunono* in general with scheming, land manipulation, sorcery and greed has surpassed any especial association of the *peits* with greed.

Most of these roles are retained by the contemporary *peits*; the main area in which the *peits* has lost pre-eminence is that with the complete abandonment of the initiation complex shortly before World War II, he is no longer responsible for supervising initiants during their exclusion. Even so, there is a clear tendency for the role of the *peits* and the role of the *tsunono* to become confused outside ritual contexts. This, and the fact that there are different accounts of how to recruit a *peits* for a *tsuhana* contribute to the multiplication of *peits* claimants. The problem of determining the *peits* is so pervasive that during the tea break of a meeting of the Halia Council of Elders Constitutional Committee, a senior *tsunono* called out and told this joke:

Listen, Tsunono! I’ll tell you how you can find the true *peits*. It is easy. First, you must kill a pig. Then you have call out all the men who are fighting for the *peits*. You invite them all over for a feast. Now, you will mix poison into the pork. Then you will say: “You all say you are *peits*? Tell me then, who can tell me if this food is poisoned?” The true *peits* will obey, and will find the poison, because the job of the *peits* is to taste food for us. And he will die, because it is his job to die.

Uproarious laughter followed this very serious joke. There are at least two different ‘canonical’ accounts of how to determine the *peits*. According to one, the *peits* must be a different lineage to the *tsunono*, comprising the descendants of later arrivals who are ‘sheltered’ by the *tsunono*. According to
the other, the peits 'cannot be found amongst strangers': instead, the peits lineage must fuse with the tsunono's own at some distant generation, by way of the younger sister of the tsunono's lineage's ancestral teitabol. Both these explanations are used by different tsuhana to justify their model of organization, and both lead to the basic question of how it could have come to pass that a man was tsunono without there having also been a peits. The peits, after all, is structurally integrated into the tsuhana; certain aspects of the ritualized construction can only be performed by him, and none of the numerous feasts necessary can take place without his stewardship and policing. No one admits that the role of peits can be transferred from one lineage to another.

The canonical accounts of the determination of the peits can best be understood by relating them to a basic feature of Halia kinship, the tension between the assimilation of lineages into the fictitious kinship of the house — its synthetic aspect — and the separation of lineages into distinct roles with different degrees of control over the resource base — its analytic dimension. Viewing the peits one way or another provides, depending on the context, strategies for excluding or hierarchically including rival and allied groups. That this process can be seen at work in the explication of the basic dyad of tsunono and peits illustrates well the degree to which the tension between analytical and synthetic kinship is enshrined at the core of Halia political organization.

The question of who is peits, then, is open to the dynamics of kin politics even before the effects of the elimination of the other 'names'. This, however, leads to a far more complex situation. Certain tsuhana roles are superficially analogous to functions exercised by the peits: the ngolongolokarekul scouted for sorcery and according to some informants also tasted for poison, whilst the tsom busul and tsom kuahu enforced security and led fighting men. Stated baldly, the equivalence of these roles is denied. The peits is a qualitatively more significant figure, the equal of the tsunono in certain domains, his right hand in others, and his own guardian. But if people set about reflecting on genealogies and oral histories, they often must resort to remembering what deeds and what capacities their ancestors were renowned for. This is nowhere near certain. The result is the exasperating situation inspiring the tsunono's joke.

If it is this set of ambiguities that facilitates claims to peits, the question remains as to what motivates the claims. The joke again provides a clue: the motivation of the claimants is not to taste poison and die. Rather, there are two closely connected reasons. One is the question of land, and the transcription of the tsunono as 'landowner': the peits has a clearly defined role in relation to the tsunono and certainly cannot be evicted from land. In fact, peits lineages are generally understood to be 'landowners' with the tsunono even in the cases where the peits is believed to be recruited from late arrivals. The other motivation is the prestige associated with having a 'name', and its political correlate: the peits should not be the 'ruler' of a tsuhana, but he must be closely involved in its activities. The tsunono can only disregard his peits at a severe cost to his own prestige and authority, for the appearance of unity is central to his own legitimacy. This key political role is reflected in the fact that peits are often admitted into the Village Council of Chiefs. Thus both in the domain of security of tenure and in the determination of the use of land and productive resources, the peits is in a stronger position than someone whose relationship to the 'landowner' is not clearly defined within the order of tsuhana.
The peits and the tsunono are both spoken of as chiefs (Tok Pisin, sip). This is a narrower category than bikman, which also includes experts (sawman), politicians and businessmen (bisisman, biksal); for instance, a non-Buka Papua New Guinean or foreigner may easily be called bikman (as I was by my all-too-ironic friends), but only representatives of a culture with chiefs will be called sip. There is, by all local accounts, a prodigious expansion in the ranks of men claiming to be chiefs. Yu lukim, maski man i git liklik waiwras o kela i kamp, em i sip pinis: “See, even if a man gets a little bit of white hair or bald patch, he’s already a chief.” Most onlookers suspect a pecuniary angle, either in terms of land claims or direct government compensation: the Halia Council of Elders, whose constitution includes remunerated offices for hereditary chiefs, also dispenses money to village Councils of Chiefs, which in turn strive against solvency to pay their own members. Virtually all onlookers discern a desire for status. In both respects, the critical attitude is often warranted, though it ought not be mistaken for a rejection of the hereditary system: the multiplication of chiefs decried most of all by the men who already have well-established statuses.

The disintegration of a system of hereditary authority is often signalled not by the extinction of hereditary titles, but their multiplication. Inflation debases the currency of authority. Most of the men who make serious efforts at establishing themselves as chiefs have some type of hereditary claim; at a minimum, their claims are cast in prescriptive terms. It would be self-defeating to attempt to carry a claim to tsunono status solely on force of character. It would be marakato baka, ‘the way of the dove’: singing its own name. The ideological enemies of the tsunono system are few in number: the system is far more vulnerable to its defenders.

4.8. Those without names

Who are the men and women who do not have titles? It would be categorically false to describe them – a vast majority of the population – as commoners. There is no homogeneous group of people in this sense, especially if one imagines a commoner to be a person who is genealogically isolated from an aristocracy. Virtually everyone in Halia, including the peits, is related in one fashion or another, to a tsunono. But there is no homogeneity in this dimension either. As we shall see in the next chapter, there are different ranks of tsunono, and tsunono with varying degrees of political skill, presiding over more or less successfully integrated alliances. Though there are accepted principles for the hierarchical organization of lineages – primogeniture and order of arrival – in practice ranks in this sense are nowhere near as clear as is idealized, and political processes dominate over prescription. Lineages that are geographically dispersed may contain branches that are related to their local tsunona.

Were the Hahalis Council of Chiefs to follow through with the demands by its members that they be paid K35 per weekly meeting, their fiscal position would be untenable. The solutions to this problem – to pay less or not at all; to have fewer meetings; or to have fewer members – all pose intractable problems, which illustrate the village’s political economy. To have fewer members triggers the vexed question of selecting ‘true’ tsunono. To have fewer meetings leaves business unattended and the village vulnerable against the organized politics of other villages. To not pay removes not only one of the primary incentives for collaboration by the ‘chiefs’, it also reduces the status of their work.
only as affines or by patrilateral links. In other words, there is no clear set of ranked lineages in Halia practice, though such ‘ramages’ do exist in Halia aspirations.

The critical division amongst the *bunkatun* – the *tsuhana*’s settlement group – is between the distinct lineages, typically up to four, which build the *tsuhana* and their affines, in-married men, women and their children. The latter, the *pien tuhana* (‘children of the settlement’) are the most disadvantaged group in terms of security of tenure and correspondingly, the group in the weakest position in relation to the *tsunono*. They must contribute to the hamlet in order for their continued settlement to be tolerated; yet this is often stabilized over generations to the point that cryptic kinship linkages become sedimented. Moreover, such people need not be ‘commoners’: they may have very high status elsewhere, and though they are often used as labour by the *tsunono* and the *tsuhana*’s core lineages, this can only be pushed so far.

In the literature, the term *tsotokokokala*, *pinolaso* and *ton tokui* – ‘fetchers of [betel mustard] leaves’, ‘the feeble ones’ and ‘workers’, respectively – are cited as the *tsunono*’s workforce and ‘subjects’ (M. Rimoldi 1971:62). In contemporary usage, *tsotokokokala* is something of an insult: “they only fetch our mustard” is a way of denying that a group has any formal position within the *tsuhana*, and it is one of the only expressions that finds the *tsunono*’s entire lineage opposed against a ‘worker’ group. But the status of this as evidence for a ‘commoner’ category is confounded by the fact that this is invariably an assertion about potential land claims. *Tsotokokokala* in fact share the same obligations as all other *bunkatun* in contributing to feasts, and are as marginalized in core deliberations as junior relatives of the *tsunono* himself. The expression *tsin tokui* (‘working man’), by contrast, is typically praise given to particularly productive members of the community; the suggestion that someone is only a worker is rarely made outside of the context of attempts to define and enshrine ‘traditional’ *tsunono* prerogatives – prerogatives that must be defined and enshrined because they are absent. It thus remains a possibility that when Blackwood arrived at her conceptualization of the *tsunono* as an aristocracy facing off commoners, this corresponded to, or at least surmised in inadequate language, a balance of power between groups within the *tsuhana* which is now cast entirely in terms of claims to land ownership.

4.9. Those with Tok Pisin names

In contemporary Buka, those without names can acquire names: but they are Tok Pisin names. A man or woman with know-how in anything from sorcery through corruption, mathematics through to business expertise is *saveman* or *savemeri*; a person who brings in beneficial curative sorcery from other parts of Papua New Guinea, or acquires such powers through dreams is *buidoka*; a businessman is *bisinisman*, and a truly successful *bisinisman* is a *biksol*. Members of Parliament or council, policemen and militia commanders (*komanda*) are likewise given titles. All these titles are dependent entirely on personal achievement (or the semblance of personal achievement). They are sometimes also *tsunono*, *gobus*, *teiabol*. But to attempt to convert *biksol* business success into a *tsuhana* is to build a *tsuhana* 'by force': it may fail, it may succeed or it may partially succeed and for that reason fail all the
more harshly. The tsunono are very much opposed to allowing men to buy their way to tsunaba, but being very rich, very powerful, very dangerous or having great expertise does place a man in a position analogous to the great warriors and leaders of the past who were invited to join tsunaba. The tsunono do not so much wish to repel them, but to modulate their input into the community—and to a large extent, they are successful at this. Even a man who does have some claim to tsunono status—Robert Tabuta, the younger brother of a deceased tsunono, and a successful political fixer—could not find traction for his plan to initiate the construction of a tsunaba. This relatively step in protocol, not as brazen as other efforts (he did not attempt to falsify a claim outright, and his land claims are less insecure than most) led to a serious backlash and he abandoned the project.

Sagir constructs his presentation of the dynamics of political organization amongst the Haku in terms of the resilience of the traditional order of tsunaba and tsunono in the face of the emergence of rival paths to social power (Sagir 2003:268ff). There is no doubt that there are rivals to the tsunono, but the difficulty with his approach is really on the other side of the coin: the social transformation of the past eighty years has been internal to the ‘traditional’ order. The tsunono are not a group apart from, and antagonistic to those younger men who have sought to advance themselves through business, the state-focused political system or paramilitary organizations such as the BRA or the BLF. On the one hand, there are difficult, often mutually exclusive choices faced by individual men seeking to advance themselves as businessmen, politicians or as effective tsunono. Actual integration into the tsunaba structure requires men to remain in the village, whilst political advancement beyond the local council sphere demands at least temporary relocation to Port Moresby, or before the Crisis, Arawa. Success in business often requires men to commit to an ethos of accumulation that is in tension with the demands of exchange. Such men are even more attuned to the importance of land title than others, and they have the money to bribe and to be suspected of bribes. They are motivated to push exclusive land claims and do so, but this corrodes the social foundations on which tsunono must base their authority. But the tsunono themselves are entirely enmeshed with the state-focused political system, and hardly antagonistic to business. They seek not only to parlay their status in the ‘traditional sphere’ into advantage in these areas, the very ‘traditional sphere’ in which they have status is constituted within a capitalist economy, and has been for a long time. Their political power in the village has the ideological and to some extent legal backing of the state. They are aware, or at least they are forceful proponents of their own usefulness as ‘grassroots’, ‘authentic’ leaders untainted by the ambitions of the biksot or violence of the self-proclaimed komanda. The very notion that there is a resilient chiefly sphere is an aspect of this political strategy, the production of authenticity. A production, which, ironically, is authentically Halia in its self-effacement: once constituted, it is immediately seen as ancient.
5. Spatial Organization

5.1. Overview

The social geography of Halahal is characterized by the superimposition of different orders of organization: the domain of *tsuhana*, the changing but at any one stage concrete categories of everyday association, the boundaries established by the state. Of these, the order of *tsuhana* is by far the most important as seen from the local point of view. The *tsuhana* system involves hierarchies of houses built by settlements and alliances of different scales. The geography implied by this network of houses, however, does not correspond in all cases to actual social divisions and organized settlements in the village. The unity required to build a *tsuhana* must be forged - or to put it in a manner consonant with the Halahal perspective, this unity must be restored. Yet the source of disunity is often enough the organization of the *tsuhana* itself. The process of 'restoration' leads to a great deal of friction. It is resisted by those who would be 'restored' to subject positions. There is virtually never a consensus as to who should be 'restored'. Ultimately, this effort at social ordering cannot escape the underlying reality that the project of 'restoration' itself is a product of current circumstances.

The village leadership imagines that by aligning the state with the order of *tsuhana*, these points of friction could be suppressed: their view is that the hamlets would be made to listen to the *tsunono*. This desire represents a statist coordinate of utopia, where the *tsunono*’s actual reliance on the fractious hamlets is overcome by autocracy. But the state’s boundaries reflect the *tsuhana* organization only very loosely; participation in the state alters what a *tsuhana* is. Indeed, because the various colonial and postcolonial states have attempted to make use of the *tsuhana* geography at times when *tsuhana* organizations of different types were preeminent, the result has been that different state-recognized boundaries are not fully consistent: Halahal the census village does not quite match Halahal the Village Council division, for instance. The result is a landscape marked with contradictions ready to bloom into conflict. These contradictions do not all stem from the inertia of the state to social change.

The extent of the disparity between the order of *tsuhana* and the concrete associations of everyday life can be gauged by the fact that there are in Halahal no more than eight ‘true’ *tsuhana* and by some suggestions only four, but there are some 14 to 22 politically effective hamlets – as indexed by their capacity to bury their dead in their own cemeteries, host mourning cycle feasts, and demand political representation in the village Council of Chiefs, known as the Halahal Patu Assembly. Several of these hamlets compete to assert their *tsuhana* as ‘true’. Yet even this political order already glosses over the underlying social field. There are over 32 named localities which approach or achieve the status of de facto hamlets – that is to say, physically segregated settlements focused on at least one matrilineage. Many of these are integrated into wider political structures or remain too disorganized or too weak to assert their claims, but they are nevertheless distinct groups – and given the present dynamic of insecurity of tenure, few lack the ambition to see their situation stabilized. Their integration into the
social order focused on the eight canonical *tsuhana* is the focus of an essentially impossible project of unification. There is not one order of *tsuhana*, but several.

### 5.2. The Village and Hamlets

Hahalis village occupies a 4-km stretch on the southern approach of Hanahan Bay, from Hakulu on the border of Halia and Hagogohe, to Panuna, where the village borders with Hanahan. Map 5.1 shows the northern half of the village; this is the heart of the village's social activity, and the focus of fieldwork in this thesis. The southern half is a more sparsely settled length of plantations and scattered hamlets. Administratively, the village is divided into four 'Wards' and this organization is adopted by the villagers for a number of purposes: sports competitions, school fundraisers, court hearings and the intermittent activity of *lain* communal work days. Some churches and associations are also organized in terms of Wards, although the Catholic Church has its own administrative structure in the village. Seen from the local point of view, the Ward organization is a mere expedient: the real, historically and genealogically justifiable divisions of Hahalis are its *tsuhana*. These are not represented in Map 5.1. Characterising the relationship of the *de facto* hamlets represented here and the *tsuhana* is not a straightforward task, nor is it politically inconsequential.

The largest traditional division within the village is a broader pattern of lands belonging to the two main *pinaposa* totemic classes, Nakaripa and Naboen (Map 5.2). Hahalis is one of two Halia villages that have major settlements by both major *pinaposa*, and it is the largest Naboen settlement. Other Halia villages are predominantly Nakaripa territory. The *pinaposa* are settled in contiguous blocks, although there are 'intrusive' settlements which are subject to considerable debate. The origins of these enclaves often relates to the resettlement of affinal allies, or long-standing marriage exchange structures, but a large array of other justifications is often given for their presence. The extent to which these settlements are able to mount land claims varies considerably.

In Hahalis, there are also self-identified members of the 'minor' *pinaposa* Natasi who claim land tenure. These claims are not generally recognised: but significantly, the rejection is partly motivated by the status of these lineages as land owners elsewhere in Halia. That status is recognised by court decisions. M. Rimoldi claimed that Nakas and Natasi *pinaposa* were not organized as distinct groups in Halia in the late 1960s. Yet the present situation does not stem from a recent introduction of these categories. It reflects changed strategies of legitimation – a genealogical, or analytical strategy offers a possibility for autochthonous landholding for these groups, whilst an integrative or synthetic strategy confines them as subordinates within the broader *tsuhana* structure. By encouraging clear-cut genealogies and strict filiation-based concepts of descent, courts strengthen the tendency to look at political kinship analytically. Furthermore, courts are reticent to hear conflicts over land tenure involving groups of the same *pinaposa* totemic class. This is a consequence of the conceptualization of

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87 The institution of *lain* (Tok Pisin 'line') originated with colonial patrol officers who would line the villagers up, take a census and give orders for the maintenance of the road, patrol houses and such. The village leadership has taken over this institution: once a week, each Ward rings a bell and the villagers assemble to receive news and orders. This is profoundly resented by most villagers and attendance is generally poor.
as corporate land-holding 'clans', a dubious proposition since *pinaposia* are better understood as encompassing units of different kind and scale depending on context. If two groups are of the same 'clan', courts will almost always refer disputes to reconciliation, but since reconciliation is often perceived as futile, litigation also induces groups willing to make a land claim to differentiate themselves as radically as possible from their neighbours. However, it is important to note that whilst litigation is a major motivation for the villagers' desire for clarification of genealogies, it is not the only reason: analysis of cognatic groups into lineages is deeply embedded into Halia kinships concepts and is fuelled by a number of endogenous factors.

The village as a political division is a product of colonial organization (M. Rimoldi 1971:39), but unlike some areas elsewhere in New Guinea this did not involve the relocation of settlements to any significant degree. The colonial administration instead reclassified and exploited the pre-existing political geography. Most coastal Buka villages were formed by consolidating and grouping together pre-existing coalitions between *tsinbana*. Each of these coalitions covered an area roughly equivalent to a present-day ward, though some were considerably larger. Some Halia villages, such as Hagus, correspond to a single such coalition, at least under some interpretations of historical connections amongst *tsinbana*. Contemporary Hahalis by contrast encompasses *tsinbana* from four coalitions, while Hanahan is composed of three. However, the border between these two villages divides in two the Hanhakalana coalition of *tsinbana*. This was once a powerful integrated assemblage of Nakaripa settlements, noted in older maps as 'Hanahan II'. At that time, the border of Hahalis stood at Hasuno, the beginning of Naboen territory. This situation persisted until the early 1960s. Hanhakalana was the core of the faction that broke away from the state-supervised cooperative movement which had encompassed Hanahan I and II, launching the Hahalis Welfare Society. But within the early Welfare, there were tensions as to the purpose of the movement. The northern Hanhakalana faction took a narrower economic view of the project while the Bashi/Tutugi faction led by Teosin escalated its political and religious transformative aspects. The former gravitated towards the powerful anti-Welfare groups in northern Hanahan ('Hanahan II') and eventually left the organization, whilst Teosin became *tsunono tara hoboto-* 'tsunono of all' – by the involvement of the central Hahalis Naboen. Ironically, in this case the colonial government's 'village' division had been relevant to local conditions prior to these political realignments, only for the facts on the ground to shift out of frame. Elsewhere in Halia, analogous if less colourful histories can be found.

Whatever the source of the village division, it has been wholeheartedly adopted by the villagers. Whilst one might expect Hahalis to have an unusually great degree of village solidarity given its historical conflict with the anti-Welfare groups in Hanahan to the north and Tahetahe to the south, the attitude of village elites is comparable in every village visited. All have a source of pride or historical injustice upon which to erect a façade of unity. Indeed, the unity can become more than a façade without seriously disrupting the deeply entrenched internal factionalisation and land conflict which is a ubiquitous feature of the Buka social landscape. There are real spoils for the village elite should they maximally assert their joint claims to land and people: for instance, under the 2006 constitutional arrangements developed for the Halia Council of Elders, the village-based Councils of Chiefs are paid a fraction of head taxes collected by the Halia-wide Council of Elders. The dispute between Hahalis and Hanahan thus finds village leaders organized in cohesive blocks, despite the fact
these leaders are embroiled in vehement intra-village conflicts. The justification for this is partly couched in terms of tax income, partly in terms of territorial ambitions. On the whole, the forces stacked in favour of integrating territory are more powerful than those inducing villages to splinter, though those certainly do exist.

5.3. House and homestead as a socio-geographic units

In contemporary Halia kinship, the nuclear family has acquired a great deal of importance even as the dynamics of matrilineal organization have remained the bedrock of social organization. One expression of this is the emergence of a well defined ideal type of house, which figures preeminent in Halia discourses about wealth: it should be a large permanent house, made of high-quality materials, with glass windows, a generator and lighting, a septic latrine, and most important of all, a large water-tank. This ideal is typically supported with appeals to the father’s responsibility for providing for the nuclear family (Tok Pisin/English loan word famili), but in practice a large house becomes the nucleus for the articulation of broader kinship responsibilities. Young men will often reside with their kin in large houses, and while this is sometimes considered annoying by the ‘fathers of the house’, they add to the lineages’ workforce. Houses are important economic factors – they are often used as informal tradestores, microbusinesses clustered around a tyre repair kit or video screen, and large houses are used to host fundraisers, a critical part of the organization of quasi-corporate groups.

Halia villagers build as well as they can afford to. From a sample of 138 sleeping houses in Hahalis, 49 were ‘permanent’ constructions of sawn timber or fibreboard, a further 24 were improvised buildings using extensive chain-saw or hand-axe shaped planks, whilst 25 were composed predominantly of improvised or ‘bush’ materials. Only 26 houses lacked iron roofing (which is occasionally avoided because of heat). But the quality and size of the houses is much more concentrated: twelve houses in this set were large, professionally built high-quality structures approaching the ideal. Only a fifth of the houses had some type of water tank, including improvised tanks. More than half of all houses make extensive use of bush materials and are relative small, simple structures with a single room or a large room with a divider. There are few latrines, and only a single septic toilet in the entire village. Portable generators are common, but diesel generators suitable for routine lighting are very scarce.

Although modernization of house designs has been underway since the 1930s, the aspirational ideal is out of reach for most people. Halia culture, a tsabana-building culture, is profoundly invested in houses as physical manifestations of moral order: a well-built sleeping house reflects not only the income of the man who built it, but also the correct, vital inflection of male labour and female productive capacity. The prevalence of shoddy houses in Halia, in contrast to the high quality houses of Hagogobe and western Haku is a sore point, while iron roofing and water tanks are the most common type of political gift.
The distance between houses varies considerably. In settlements with relatively fewer wealthy individuals, houses tend to be packed together more closely; in Haku, population density dictates this is the case even where most houses are high-quality permanent constructions. In Halia, and in Haku where possible, there is a marked tendency for larger houses to be separated from other houses by wider distances: frequently there will be a well-maintained lawn or hedge of colourful plants delineating a yard. In areas such as central Hanahan, Gogohe and Malasang, where there is a high concentration of wealthy individuals, there are indeed some who go as far as erecting fences. The implications of yards and fences on social space are significant. The justification for fences is most frequently given as security or aesthetics, but it is quite clear that they are erected to deter visits from other villagers, especially drunk relatives, who are less of a threat than an annoyance. The intent is clear enough, and fences are the object of frequent resentment and even scorn from other villagers. Of an election candidate who lives within one such fenced house a man made the following comment: “na wapen i tektoke mi man blong pelel? Hans blong en i banis pini?” — “Why does he say he is a man of the village? His house is already fenced off.”

5.4. Han and hamlets

Halia hamlets typically comprise five to twenty homesteads, each consisting of a sleeping house (luma), a separate kitchen-house and additional buildings, in a physically compact arrangement. The expression used to refer to such a settlement is han. This is a term with somewhat loose reference. As noted by M. Rimoldi, han refers to “any discrete cluster of houses, anything from a handful to well over 100” (1971:36), and moreover the expression is used both for the entire group of settlements supporting a tsuhana and their component clusters. This reflects the possibility of thinking about the tsuhana as the fundamental social unit, or recognising the groups within the tsuhana as autonomous. That is a choice with serious repercussions, but in daily life, except where political organization or land claims become issues, it is the latter perspective that is taken. These individual settlements correspond to actual social divisions, while the tsuhana is a project of order that may or may not be realised. Han is also used to contrast to village and town, and to denote place of origin — usages perhaps influenced by Tok Pisin pelel.

The vast majority of hamlets are adjacent to the road. In the past, many hamlets were situated near the beach; earlier still they were sometimes built on easily defended shelves halfway up the cliff. Beach-side hamlets have all but been abandoned in most of Halia, corresponding to a substantial shift of orientation from the sea to the plantation. The result is that settlements, with few exceptions, are built alongside each other following the cliff face88. Placing a settlement inland of another demands that one of them be regarded as a minor player, with residential rights only. Contemporary Halia land tenure is conceived in terms of the projection of a segment of the beach inland, with progressively

88 This is a distinctive settlement pattern for the tan (‘beach’) population of Buka and Selau: inland Solos villages are organized quite differently (Terrel 1977).
vaguer boundaries in the forested inland area⁹⁹. One important effect of this pattern is that local population densities, which are already high, are made effectively greater. Hamlets are compressed against each other, and at places the village becomes a continuous strip of habitation.

Ideally, the houses in a hamlet should form a square oriented to the *tsubana* and its dancing ground, an arrangement which is common but not universal. In Map 5.3, we may observe a close approximation of the ideal (the hamlet of Bitoga), a compact but not clearly organized hamlet (Tsimpisin), and a somewhat more dispersed settlement pattern (Basbi and Munrahana). In this map, I have coded buildings by political affiliation to the main matrilineages – male children of the ‘landowning’ matrilineages, junior associated matrilineages and distantly related ‘refugees’. As can be seen, these matrilineage-focused groups usually settle in clusters, but they are not perfectly correlated with the hamlets. Social divisions can be more important than spatial proximity. For instance, Nakaripa A and Nakaripa B houses in Basbi are only tens of meters apart and their occupants must walk past each other daily, yet they interact only occasionally due to the state of formal feuding (*pan*) between them, which stems from their claims over ‘land ownership’ and the right to build *tsubana*. The location of houses apart from the main lineage cluster is a very common source of conflict; the Nakaripa B house on the southern side of the road junction, for example, had its construction delayed for a year due to conflict: its location represented a serious escalation of land claims. The gardening land of each of these feuding groups, however, is clearly separated. Note that M. Rimoldi states that before pacification, the gardens of an allied group of *tsubana* were clustered for the purpose of defence, but by the mid 1960s, they had become more dispersed (M. Rimoldi 1971:38); the present pattern can be seen as the reproduction of this within a context of much higher population density, in which enmities form within denser settlements.

The groups of people who cooperate together in daily life and reside in a relatively compact area are called *bunkatun* (‘people together’), or *bunhaposa* (‘those who give birth together’) the latter explicitly accounting for the fact not all settled lineages are descended to the core matrilineage (Rimoldi and Rimoldi 1992:73,81). Since the *bunkatun* should be the group of people who cooperate to build a *tsubana*, and are effectively defined in terms of who ‘hears’ (*bengo*, also ‘obey’) the *tsumono*, this too is a political category. The kin composition of the *bunkatun* and of *tsubana* is consequently a somewhat complex issue. In basic, somewhat idealized terms, *bunkatun* are composed of one or more core matrilineages (*ngorere*) with rights in land and *tsubana*, together with a *pien a tubana*, ‘children of the ban’ who are in the first instance the children born to patrilocal settled male members of the core matrilineages. However, it is common for the *pien tubana* to marry their father’s classificatory relatives, sometimes in recurrent patterns lasting as long as genealogical memory: *pien tubana* become in this way ‘embedded’ within the hamlet and gain rights in residence (*punluma*, a lot for houses, *luma*). Additional matrilineages allied but not necessarily married to the core matrilineages may also remain settled, under the arrangement of integration-with-distancing called *bisungutu*.

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⁹⁹ However, note that the segment projected is always a *tsubana*’s landholding. If competing lineages dispute land within this area settle in distinct segments between the road and the cliff, their gardens are typically built apart but not directly inland of these segments.
Each de facto hamlet has its own cemetery, which is close to the *tsuhana* or *tsuhana*-surrogate built by the group (Naboen B has a cemetery in Hasuno; the border of Hasuno and Tutugi is disputed.) The main ancestral cemetery for this area is the large one in the centre of the map; historically, however, this was the border of this territory — also common location for cemeteries. Funeral cycles are central to *tsuhana* construction, and graves are quintessential land ownership markers. They are not unambiguous markers, because what matters is not only that a body is buried, but that it is buried *without securing permission from other landowners*: that is the mark of autochthonous status. But one can, of course, bury a body without asking — risking conflict. Such was the case when Naboen A inaugurated its small cemetery in this map, in September 2008. Conversely, one can insert oneself in a funeral to 'allow' the burial, which was the collective response by both feuding Nakariipa parties against this fragmentation of their territory. The ability of a settlement group to bury its dead at a local cemetery will in this thesis be the operational definition of the groups’ constituting a de facto hamlet. It is not a perfect definition, but useful so long as we understand disputes over particular cemeteries as part of the dynamic of hierarchical integration.

Bitoga, Basbi, Munrahana and Tsintsin are often said to be 'small names' (or 'only names'), while Tutugi is a 'big name'. From one perspective, the small names are essentially toponyms, strictly the name of an area where, as it happens, houses have been built (a space termed *punluma*.) Munrahana is typical of these place-names, meaning ‘beneath [mun- , 'base of'] the Canarium [rahana]’. The name ‘Tutugi’, by contrast, refers to a *tsuhana*, and in this case, it is claimed as the name of the local ‘clan.’ This is especially difficult to parse in the genealogical terms intended, although Sagir uses it as the basis for his identification of named ‘sub-clans’ amongst the neighbouring Haku (Sagir 2003:78). Here, it suffices to note that the 'small names' represent discrete, self-conscious social groups embroiled in a feud, the object of which is a claim over the entire area of Tutugi. None of these groups would be satisfied with having 'supremacy' over *only* these small areas. For their claim to be reduced to this would entail that they have no right to land or to *tsuhana*, but rather only a *punluma*: a lot for houses, granted by the landowners90. For them, and for almost all other *tsunono* consulted, Tutugi must be ‘a single ground’ — a *tsu titisiki* — with only one *tsuhana*. The *tsuhana* ought to integrate these groups into a single, clear hierarchy. They ought to form one *bunkatun*. From the elite Halia point of view, it is this political integration that is significant; but the very task of integration only makes sense as a problem because the effective spatial organization of clans is not integrated.

5.5. Orders of *tsuhana*

Individual house settlements must negotiate a place in the structure of the local settlement: whether they are *punluma* integrated into a landholding lineage’s *tsuhana*, or a hamlet in its own right, or a full *tsuhana*, is the outcome of historical compromises and political manoeuvring. The meaning of a single house, or grave, is embroiled in intrigue. But from the Halial point of view, the order of *tsuhana*

90 Strictly speaking, *punluma* is any area assigned for house construction, (as per Rimoldi 1971:36), but the settlements of landowners are rarely discussed in this way, since it carries this implicit distinction between the right to build houses (stemming, for instance, from patrilocal settlement) and actual land ownership.
establishes the true relationships between people and land. The compromises serve to obscure this order, they do not constitute it. As we will examine below, there is little doubt that the current landscape reflects a social system straining to cope with demographic and social change, and the imagined order of *tsuhana* is not insulated from these changes. Indeed, there are several overlapping modalities of political integration, which are the result of transformations of a social system that was primarily focused on the organization of people, and which has come to be primarily focused on the organization of territory. In the late 1970s, Eleanor Rimoldi could remark that “the prestige of the *tsunono* in the past was partly built on the land that he shared rather than the land that he owned, but the system of cooperative alliance is under threat” (1982:98); that threat is not presented by cash crops as an exogenous force, it comes from the interplay of forces within the very order of *tsuhana* and the cash crops within it. The political system of rank, which corresponded to the functioning of *tsuhana* alliances and above all the political integration of kin groups into the *tsuhana*, has translated into a system of land control wherein the *tsuhana* functions as a type of marker: the most important marker, but not the only one.

5.5.1. HAKORU AND THE BAMILLET

Ordinary *tsuhana* are termed *bakorun* (eg. fig 4.4). These are houses ‘for singing’ (*kunu*) or for feasting (*kori*, food; *koru* = chewing betelnut). Hako *s* ‘naked’, because their side-posts (*martu*) were traditionally undecorated *bih* (black palm). These are by far the most common type of *tsuhana*. The *tsunono* of such a house takes no additional title. The house is built by a single *bunkatun*, with help from the core lineage’s allies and affines. It is the *bunkatun* that will feed the dancers who will come, night after night, to dance during the *tsuhana*’s *kinalala* season, which may extend for months.

In theory, all *tsuhana* today are built by the lineages that have rights to build *tsuhana* in their *ban*; this right is understood to be strictly matrilineal. *Tsunono*, graves, and knowledge of lore of *liihane* (wild and personal spirits) are the three criteria around which land claims are made, and no *tsuhana* may be built by a group that does not already have a title to build *tsuhana*. A partial exception to this stems from the fact that lineages that claim the right to build *tsuhana* sometime attempt to build *tsuhana* without finding support for their project. But that is an exception that proves the rule, because the result of such building is *ban* fission. Another exception was that in the past, it was common for a *tsunono* to allow his son to build a *tsuhana* in his hamlet, so that the father could increase his son’s *nitsunono* (Rimoldi 1971:73). To this end, he would give his son a piece of roofing (*otoba*) or a rafter (*balhal*), a sign that he could build the house and also a linkage between their two matrilineages and *tsuhana*. Because *binoa*, baskets of the type presented in *tsuhana*-building feats are given out to *tsuhana* rather than individuals, this would also mean that food would not be short after the *tsunono* and his son attended the feasts. This practice is largely extinct today.
undermine a group’s claims to landholding status are edited out, whilst links that support it are retained. That is not a difficult interpretation of the Hanhakalana case. But looking at the issue more widely, this would be remarkably thorough editing. It appears likely that for the most part, tsubana histories are accurate.

The parent tsubana upstream in the migration route retains an important role in the construction of a tsubana downstream. Its lineage ought to be close advisors: each tsubana has distinctive insignia and variations on ritual protocol, collectively termed sinebe, and relatives within the network of migrations hold this knowledge. Failing to display the proper sinebe is considered potentially fatal. These distant relatives must be invited if the tsubana is to be built; they ought to be involved in the decision to begin construction. But the reverse is also the case. The tsubana downstream are usually keen supporters of the interests of their relatives upstream, and indeed, it is typical for relatives within a migration-network to consider themselves as holding land rights in its other ‘nodes’. Actually enforcing such rights is an unlikely proposition, but migration-networks cut across hamlets, villages and the district organization into nearby language groups, and forms a separate and normally extremely effective layer of organization.

5.5.3. Tsunono Pan and the ‘Parish’

Tsubana are found organized in sets of typically four adjacent tsubana, amongst whom there may be a number of different political arrangements. At one extreme, several tsubana in such a group may be integrated together into a coalition tsubana known as patu, a special house with a distinctive political form. A patu must include both pinapana totemic classes, and may also incorporate many more than four tsubana, and span an area equivalent to the entire Halia electorate. But we shall see below, this type of tsubana is contested, because in Halia it is associated with the specific patu which became the vehicle for colonial power. Patu has thus been understood in term of maximal political organization. This has led to the description of the smaller patu-like coalitions, even those involving a degree of formalization, in other terms in Halia. In Haku, where political geography has developed quite differently, patu remains the standard term for the leading tsubana presiding over a roughly village-sized coalition.

Operating with Hobgın and Wedgewood’s (1953) geographical concepts, M. Rimoldi (1971:36) terms these neighbourhoods of tsubana ‘parishes’. On the one hand, he cautions that “it would be wrong to place too much emphasis on the parish as a discrete and self-contained political unit”, since it was embedded in a wider network of ritual alliances and had flexible borders (Rimoldi 1971:38). On the other hand, he identified a degree of political integration in such an area that is far greater than what is observed today. Within the parish, there would be several groups who have rights to build their tsubana and would do so but for the fact that the tsunono joined together to ‘push forward’ one of their rank. This man took on the title of tsunono pan (great tsunono). These groups would pool resources to build a tsubana at the tsunono pan’s hamlet, whilst their own tsubana would ‘sleep’. The tsunono pan would have only “temporary pre-eminence”: “He is first among equals for a time by the agreement of
his peers and even through their exertions" (M. Rimoldi 1971:37). Emphatically, the *tsunono pan* was not necessarily a representative of the lineage with "untested rights to all parish land", arising from priority of settlement: that lineage produced the *lumankessa* and its *tsunono* had a permanent and formally higher title, that of the *tsunono mal* (Rimoldi 1971:36).

By 'parish', M. Rimoldi is referring to an area similar to Tutugi, incorporating up to five *tsubana* and a population of around two hundred (eg. M. Rimoldi 1971:38). But that case makes plain the problem of applying 'parish' land title in the present, post-Civil War context. The 'temporary pre-eminence' of the *tsunono pan* conflicts with the claims of autochthony by the *tsunono mal* – and in many cases, there is an attempt to revise *tsunono pan* status as *tsunono mal*. That is precisely what the Bitoga lineage claim the Teosin's group did at Basbi, and it is also the criticism directed at the Nahire *lumankessa*, one of the few such houses built in living memory (see below, Chapter 6). The case of Tutugi is particularly dramatic given the extensive resettlement of the area, but it is by no means unique. The clear tendency over the last thirty years has been for *tsunono* who are able to mobilize a network of witnesses to press claims over parish-sized areas. In these claims, though courts are usually careful to state that lineages co-resident with the *tsunono* group retain more than only use rights, there is a very strong tendency for the *tsunono to assert exclusive right, marginalizing his co-residents and neighbouring *tsubana*. This may lead to immense bitterness and the rupture of the *bunkatun* which ought, in principle, to provide for the feasts at the *tsunono*’s *tsubana*. That harms the *tsunono*’s legitimacy. But the alternative – allowing other groups within the *bunkatun* to build their own *tsubana* – is thought to guarantee challenges to land tenure92. In asserting his rights thus, the interests of the *tsunono* as host of a large group of people and his interest as landowner almost coincide, but not quite: *tsunono* are inexorably driven towards exercising those 'untested land claims', only to find the result is that they are severely undermined. Then, the only force capable of maintaining their position is the court.

The transformation that this type of land dispute has implied for the social landscape is thorough enough that the category of 'parish' must be said to be obsolete. The distinction between small and big names is a remnant of this local organization, which could only operate when the *tsunono* with the "untested right to all parish land" could allow the hamlets within the parish to build *tsubana* without fear that these houses would escalate into 'true' *tsubana*, and when the *tsunono* of these hamlets could feel secure in tolerating the existence of the land claim. Former modes of areal integration have been supplanted. Today, it is the Ward that presents a venue for organization between competing hamlets: precisely because there, a strictly secular order prevails independently of the *tsubana*. Corresponding to this shift, the very expression *tsunono pan* is now divorced from any recognisably genealogical or

92 This, under one interpretation, will be the folly of Kuletu, a man who allowed his rival hamlet within Kuletu's 'untested right to all parish land' to build a *tsubana*-like house only to find its status inflated by the rival's allies, and ultimately by his own actions: a case we will examine in detail (see below Chapter 10).
political scale of rank, and is used virtually exclusively as an honorific – indeed, as the Halia translation of Tok Pisin bikman, 'bigman'.

5.5.4. Tsunono Mal and the Lumankeesa

Unlike the tsunono pan, the tsunono mal ('bitter tsunono') truly represents another scale of rank, which was at least in principle genealogical. He was 'a tsunono to be mourned' (M. Rimoldi 1971:40), who could build a special tsuhana, the lumankaesa (M. Rimoldi 1971:66). For him a complete funeral cycle would involve the practice of gum, in which the mourners would remain secluded within his tsuhana (or sleeping house) for a period that may extend to several months. His designation as mal ('bitter'), related to the belief that a rungmen i mal: his mouth was capable of causing bitterness, nilmal (see 'bunaal', Section 4.5.5 above). He could cause 'bitterness' simply because his words carried especial weight. He had but to pronounce a person as undesirable for that person to fall ill or die – the terrifying force of his nitsunono fused with the practice of lethal sorcery (tsora). Informants frequently stated that one of the marks (siwhe) of the tsuhana of the tsunono mal was that it would have the 'terrible things' (a manka om) hanging in plain view. This is no longer done for the simple reason that lethal sorcery has been lost to the lsunono, and has come to circulate secretly, privately and in an unregulated fashion. In the house of the tsunono mal, tsora was not a destructive, antisocial force such as it is today, but rather 'gavman bloong peke' – 'the village's own form of government'. This expression is acute, insofar as the tsuhana system represented a monopolization of sorcerous violence. Its use required the sanctioning of the munubí, or cooperation of the other tsunono in kornpako.

The deregulation and privatization of sorcery has affected tsunono mal lineages in a sharp fashion. High status attracts jealousy and lethal sorcery, which is said to deplete the ranks of senior lineages. With the loss of the prerogative to sorcery, such lineages are vulnerable. High status associated with sorcery, as is the case with the tsunono mal, attracts not only jealousy but also recrimination by others who believe themselves to be targets of sorcery.

In the past, the tsunono mal, as first to arrive, would extend his power by bringing in lineages to settle locally: they could do this in a subject position, but he could also call a powerful warrior, sorcerer or an effective leader to take on the position of tsunono pan. But increasing power by expanding the number of settled groups under one's aegis, let alone upgrading their rank, is a losing proposition when these titles are converted into claims to land ownership. This system, in which having few members in one's lineage and delegation through intermediaries are the hallmarks of power is very difficult to explain to courts, especially since the evidence can just as easily be turned to support a lack of senior status: this makes priority of settlement the sine qua non of land tenure, and goes some way to explain the genealogical gerrymandering that is characteristic of contemporary Halia land conflict. The 'nominal and untested' claims have to be tested. This is further complicated since the next formal level of rank, the munubí – which is today often confused with the tsunono mal – is characterised by not having especial land claims, and indeed, and is indeed a type of stranger-chief, a formalised, intensified and genealogically sedimented version of the tsunono pan.
The *lumumkeesa* is a strikingly different type of house, it is the “house of statues” (Rimoldi and Rimoldi 1992:66). Whilst ordinary *tsuhana* are ‘naked’ and have a restrained if bold aesthetic, the *lumumkeesa* is intricately decorated. Its posts are carved with elaborate patterns which reflect the relationship between the different *pinaposa* totemic classes. The patterns are called *goum*, the same word that described the scarification once cut into the bodies of persons of rank. The three front posts and the three back posts are carved with statues (*kesa*) representing the *peis*, *tsuono*, *gohns*. At the centre of the house, a statue representing the ancestral *teitahol* - whose house this is - stands above the rafter. At the back, the house is guarded by representations of the *tsun kabete* and *tsun busal*, fighters and bowmen.

Rimoldi and Rimoldi state that only the *tsuono* *mal* had the right to build the *lumumkeesa*. Today, some lineages that claim *mal* status, do not claim *lumumkeesa*, and some lineages that claim *mal* status make claims to *lumumkeesa* that are regarded as untenable. It is likely that the Rimoldi’s report was accurate, and this change reflects the breakdown of a clear rank structure given the infrequency of *lumumkeesa* construction. It is also possible, as is claimed by critics of the *lumumkeesa* at Nahire (Chapter 6), that *lumumkeesa* houses had specific ritual functions partly separated from the rank and political organization.

5.5.5. Patu and the munihil

The *lumumkeesa*, just as the ‘naked’ *tsuhana*, is built by a locally settled group, and the ‘three men’ within it are all drawn from this group: its *tsuono* has a higher rank than other *tsuono*; his authority is in certain respects limited. In particular, he is ‘heard’ by the members of his own lineage and though powerful and commanding respect, can only work in cooperation with the other *tsuono*. The *tsuono pan*, in turn, is a temporarily preeminent *tsuono* commanding an alliance of clan houses that collaborate to build his *tsuhana*; but that house remains his lineage’s *tsuhana*, and is not radically transformed by the fact that other hamlets contribute to its feasts whilst suppressing their own *tsuhana* cycles. The *kinalala* cycle of such *tsuhana* may be especially extensive – with protracted dancing seasons for *lumumkeesa*, large numbers of pigs, and careful control of spirit forces – but they are qualitatively similar to *bakoru* feast cycles. This contrasts to the third main category of *tsuhana*, the *patu*. This house is built by a formal coalition of *tsuona* which must include all totemic groups: it cannot be built only by Nakaripa or Naboén, it must include both. And though all *tsuhana* are built with the aid of ‘cross-cousin’ and ‘father’ groups (who will often be of the opposite *pinaposa*), these sponsors are not ‘inside’ the *tsuhana*. In the *patu*, *tsuhana* of the different *pinaposa* are joined together.

The *patu* feast cycle, moreover, is said to have involved a qualitatively different type of sacrifice: ‘this house could not eat pigs, it ate men’. The extent and role of human sacrifice in the construction of historically attested *patu* is debatable. According to some informants, such sacrifices would have to be conducted in large numbers, every time the house was built, according to others, only the establishment of the original alliance required sacrifice. Whilst the *patu* sacrificial cycles that we have the most information for are of this later type (see below, Section 7.4), it is likely that in the past the
cycle involved more violence. There are two types of killings implicated in the establishment of *patu* coalitions: firstly, oath-setting sacrifices, a type of autosacrifice with victims drawn from within the *patu* coalition, and secondly, cannibalism in warfare, where the victims are taken from outside the coalition. The former is explicitly conceived in terms of producing coalitions and establishing peace; the latter are much more poorly understood, but elderly informants assert that it was intended to produce anger, and to reward warfighters through the distribution of human flesh from crucial, high-status *tsuhana*. The organization of the highest level of Halia authority in the past would have involved both, but whilst cannibalism and warfare were rapidly suppressed, autosacrifices – conceived in part as the vehicle for the elimination, or rather sublimation of cannibal warfare – remained crucial to the organization of Halia power. The Hahalis Welfare Society either instigated sacrifices or accepted sacrifices made in its name to remake John Teosin as a type of transformed paramount *tsunono*, and rumours persist that traditional paramounts relied on sacrifices well into the 20th century.

The word ‘*patu*’ is used for a type of homicide compensation payment, but the Halia I interviewed were somewhat surprised by this and did not regard it as important for explaining this *tsuhana*. Instead, they emphasized that in this context, ‘*patu*’ refers to the stone of a mango93. The stone remains once all the flesh has been removed; only then can it be planted for a new tree. Likewise, the *patu* as *tsuhana* is the *tsuhana* from which all other *tsunono* in a coalition of several hamlets (or a much wider area) shall ‘take their *tsuhana*’. Though the *patu*‘s local group still has the responsibility for feeding guests to its feasts, the construction of a this house involves the contribution and sacrifices from all lineages involved together. While the *patu* is erected, these groups do not build their own *tsuhana*, despite having the right to do so. Once the *patu* is ‘complete’ – perhaps many years or a generation after the initial feasting – there is an especially significant sequence of feasts where these groups take a piece of the *patu* to add to their *tsuhana*. The structure is then burnt. In this way, each of the groups ‘within’ the *patu* are said to have ‘gotten their *tsuhana*’ from the *patu* – although their right to build *tsuhana* are ancient, predating the construction of the coalition *tsuhana*, and indeed, the *patu* was built by their combination. A clear analogy exists between this and the father’s granting of a piece of roofing (*etobo*) to aid the development of his son's *tsuhana* (see below, Chapter 8).

The *tsunono* for whom the *patu* is built takes on a special title, that of *munibili* – the ‘stem of the black palm’94, from which weapons, and the critical *martu* side-posts of ordinary *tsuhana* were fashioned (Rimoldi and Rimoldi 1992:38,225). This reflects one of the roles of the *munibili*: only on his orders could there be warfare (as opposed to individual aggression) between the groups within the *patu* and those outside. Just as the *patu* must necessarily house both Nakaripa and Naboen (and Natas and Natasi, in the contemporary view), the power of the *munibili* is not based on projecting his own interest but mediating between the *pinaposa* (above, Section 3.7). The mythohistorical explanation of human sacrifice finds its exact personal correlate in the *munibili*: just as *hahats* (mutual sacrifices)

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93 This is probably the older meaning. Viz. Proto-Oceanic *patu* “stone” (Pawley and Ross 2006:45); Halia also has haviu for “stone”, from the same root.

94 While I retain Rimoldi’s translation as ‘stem’, the prefix mun- means ‘base’, it indicates the place at which the tree has sunk its roots. It has a connotation of strength, holder-of and source, rather than slenderness. It is satisfactorily translated as Tok Pisin *bas*, as in *bas blong kokonas*. Hamlets are frequently named as the ‘base’ of different trees: *Munbei*, ‘base of the mango’, *Munsekelkele* ‘base of the betelnut’.
establish peace, exogamy and cross-cousinship between Nakaripa and Naboen, the sacrifices of Nakaripa and Naboen elevate the munibil. We will examine this process in detail below (Chapter 7).

Munibil is by virtually all accounts the supreme rank in all Halia areas (including Haku and Selau). It is, however, a unique title. Whilst munibil is according to most informants transmitted by ngoreere like other 'names', it is explicitly established by the concerted will of a group of tsunono – an 'election', in one informant's didactic term. Other tsunono titles are presumed to be ancient and have obscure origins. The tsunono who is raised to the position of munibil is also not the most ancient lineage, that with the most land or highly ranked in the pre-patu phase. In fact, the opposite is the case; the munibil is often a stranger. Through his elevation, the stranger becomes powerful yet not a king: whilst the munibil is an extremely powerful figure, he does not have the power to compel other tsunono to do his bidding, seize their garden products or force marriages. In these matters he has, so to speak, auctoritas but not potestas. Amongst the tsuhana that have joined in cooperation to elevate him, there is no prescribed hierarchy but rather a shifting set of alliances (Rimoldi and Rimoldi 1992:64). The munibil is not first amongst equals: the sequence of patu construction is radically different from the construction of ordinary tsuhana, and his nitsunono is qualitatively greater; but neither is he a sovereign who might grant land rights and fiefs.

The very expression 'patu' invokes the transience of the house. But in practice, the munibil was a genealogically transmitted name. However, here there is a degree of complexity and uncertainty, since patu coalitions could be formed at what appear to be very different scales. According to some informants, the genealogical transmission of the munibil was occasionally not followed, and instead the coalition tsuhana took turns in the leadership. According to others, the patu would be dissolved with the death of the munibil, and a new cycle of elevation would have to take place. These two possibilities – genealogical descent, political organization – represent different strategies for organization, and are related to fundamental tensions in the Halia social structure between the imperative of descent and the necessity of alliance.

5.5.6. Geographic scope of the patu – colonial paramount as stranger-tsunono

There are different accounts of what should count as a patu, what the scale of the coalition should be, and what the house should look like. In contemporary contexts, right to the patu is often assumed to entail very high status and – though this is a very much contested proposition – extensive land rights. There is thus a kind of scramble over who has patu; this and the assumptions motivating it, are regarded as nearly unintelligible by the factions who insist on the composite nature of the patu. Conversely, the scramble for the patu leads to a motivated reading of certain types of tsuhana as 'like a patu', with varying degree of credibility. For instance, it is sometimes claimed that the humanbusul ('house of bows') was a type of patu because the fighters from different tsuhana were represented within it, and indeed, actual patu were clearly motivated by considerations of mutual defence. But the assimilation of the humanbusul to the patu is without doubt a minority view, and a somewhat quixotic one at that. Again, according to one view, the humankeesa is said to be the same as the patu, partly
because its carvings represent both *pinanpasa*, partly because of the very high status of *lumankwesa* building lineages. But this again is extremely doubtful. Yet others claim that the *patu* is simply a *tsabana* that has gone through a complete cycle of ten posts. This uncertainty reflects contemporary political agendas; in this case it is clear from interviews with elderly informants who witnessed actual *patu* that actual *patu* was a house *sui generis*, with its own architectural design and *sinebe*.

A further layer of complexity regarding the *patu* and *munibil* is that there is a degree of uncertainty as to the geographic scope of the coalition he led. In the maximalist version, a single *munibil* - a lineage founded with the elevation of Saka and terminating with the sisterless brothers Sahara and Helung - presided over a coalition which in Halia encompassed all villages from Tohatsi to Sing, the later now the southern border of the Hagogohe administrative division. In this view, other *munibil* presided over Haku, Tsitalato and Solos areas. The Halia *munibil* was established at Ómahe, in northern Hanahan, but his direct matrilineage terminated in the 1970s leaving a complicated dispute as to whom should take his *nitsunono*. M. Rimoldi limits the authority of the Ómahe *patu* to the Hanahan bay area and Banis, and portrays this as a concrete fact of social organization in the late 1960 even if a serious rupture existed between Welfare and the anti-Welfare faction centred on Hanahan. There is some reason for caution, however: Goena, his main informant and still to the present day the most vocal proponent of this interpretation, is married to the daughter of Saka’s final successor, the sisterless Helung, and according to one interpretation of the inheritance of Helung, the couple’s children would succeed Sahara. This is not to discount Goena’s testimony, because M. Rimoldi is undoubtedly correct in assessing his insights into his own society as profound (1971:iv). Goena’s position is contested, but it has its supporters. As such, it represents the assertion of one interpretation of the higher order of rank in Halia, but it also serves as an example of the political nature of this rank ordering. At all times, however, one must bear in mind the fractious nature of the Halia social field.

M. Rimoldi himself notes that there were other centres of power within the ‘district’: a network of ‘male’ and ‘female’ rain-shrines (*lumanglitis*) was centred on a figure called the *munalangits* (‘base of the rain [shrine]’), whilst the *ruko* initiation cycle and warfighting sorcerers obtained the rituals from the *munoruko* (‘base of the *ruko’*) and the *munabirako* (‘base of war magic’ respectively) (M. Rimoldi 1971:50). Warfare, however, was contingent on the *munibil’s* approval (ibid, 43). Evidently, the *munibil* had a categorically important position in some form of Halia-wide political integration. The precise character of this and the extent of the *munibil’s* powers is less clear. Ómahe was, and remains, at the centre of a network of intermarriages between high-ranked lineages throughout Halia (Helung’s wife’s mother was from the *tsunono* lineage of Talinga in Halalis, but not *teitabaloh*. It was also the location of the *sising* (place for butchering) for the Nakaripa of all Hanahan Bay Halia; the flesh of captured enemies would be distributed from the Ómahe *tsabana*. This picture, however, is consistent with the specialisation of the apical *munibil* as concerned above all with the regulation of violence – whether external warfare, or the internal, sublimated warfare between Nakaripa and Naboen. By the Rimoldis’ account in the colonial period there was a focalization of these roles on a single person. The *munoruko*, a resident of Hanahan, became Paramount Kukurai, and married the *munibil’s* daughter – and his son became the last Paramount Kukurai, fusing together the three domains of power: sorcery, government and the most powerful *tsabana* (Rimoldi and Rimoldi 1992:38-9). The *ruko* itself had been dramatically intensified by the importation of new rituals from Bougainville (ibid). We may agree with
the Rimoldis that it is not known if something like this accumulation of powers had occurred before, but in one key respect – the role of the state – it must be unprecedented. Power accreted on the munibil, drawn, it seems, by his critical function in warfare: a power which has an especially important role since it translates directly into the sacrificial complex.

It is significant that M. Rimoldi considered 'the district' as the largest meaningful category of political geography: the 'district' corresponded to the area around Hanahan Bay; the babana i Hanahan, distinct from the babana i Haggoge (M. Rimoldi 1971:39). Yet Saharia projected his status as munibil to an area much larger than this district. His domain in fact corresponded to the political divisions established by the German administration, which organized Buka into four Paramount Kukurai. The question then arises: is the munibil, in this maximal sense, an indigenised category of Paramount Kukurai? The question has been posed by the Halia to themselves many times: the issue arose again in 2008 in the context of a dispute between the Halia and Solos over land near Banis, the single Halia settlement on the West Coast. Who had 'supremacy' (the English word is often used in contexts such as this) in this area? Some discussants argued that the scope of Hanahan's control was limited and that the Solos paramount had control in this area. Goena himself asked: "Is the Paramount something from before?" Nobody could answer definitively.

An explanation of the munibil attributed to John Teosin (although it is likely to be apocryphal) illustrates a 'minimalist' version of the paramountcy. According to this view, the munibil was appointed during times of impending warfare to serve as a type of sacrificial leader. He would be expected to die in the fighting, whilst the tsunono stood protected behind him. But the munibil that was appointed to deal with the German colonial officers was not killed, and was instead given additional powers in the new order. The story might be difficult to credit, but it does capture two core facts: the munibil was radically transformed by the creation of the paramountcies, and the munibil stood as the maximal articulation of the tsunono ethos – and this is an ethos characterised by a relentlessly pursued ideology of sacrifice. This perspective has essentially the status of a rumour: one that is circulated by tsubana which do not have a stake in the succession to Saharia's position, as a demonstration of the supposed artificiality and colonial roots of the munibil as a permanent chief. It attests to the type of delegitimizing strategy that is possible by the mobilization of mythohistorical narrative; yet this strategy works by making explicit the tacit grounds of the munibil's actual power. In fact, the munibil was a type of 'stranger-chief' (compare Fox 2008), who was brought from outside to mediate and rule, only to surpass the power of the lineages that elevated him; but just as this formed the grounds for his power, it opened the possibility that his foreign status would undermine him. This volte-face could not be accomplished but for the fact that never, in the transformation of the stranger into the terrible ruler, is the power invested by the tsunono fully alienated from them; that is to say, the stranger-tsunono never becomes a stranger-king, a sovereign.

95 And also unlike developments elsewhere in Buka. In Hakó, where the pre-contact population density had been higher and the spatial organization between pingapau more explicit, the munibil has not become an overall leader of the entire district, but rather the leader of a smaller, roughly village-sized coalition.
5.6. The dynamic and logic of land conflict

If the foregoing exposition leaves several questions unanswered, it is partly for the reason that there has been a profound historical transformation in the nature of political power and the organization of land tenure in Halia which means that there are several different orders of integration and also multiple interpretations of these orders. What must be stressed throughout, however, is that from the Halia point of view, these ambiguities and contradictions appear first of all as failures to attain the true order of tsunono, the outcome of compromises and interference. This point of view is of course keenly attuned to the fact the situation contains the potential for grave conflict; the Halia are intensely interested in the effects of colonization and capitalism on their own society. But the subtlety of the transformation lies in the fact that the very means by which they judge their present situation to be a crisis are themselves transformed.

5.6.1. Conflict over land is endemic

The order of tsunono outlined above bears only a partial resemblance to the concrete situation on the ground. At present, groups in Hahalis have constructed four full-scale tsunono and five placeholder houses called iabasa, erected to signal the intent to build a full-scale tsunono. The other tsunono exist as claims. While that means that they are as real and significant as the people making the claims, it is relatively easy to construct a claim, much harder to translate it into a building. The iabasa are in practice built without mobilizing a network of alliances - and still less do they draw in the tsunono's rivals, as must be the case with a full tsunono. They thus do not become 'true' tsunono until later, and represent something in between a demonstrated ('seen') house, and a mere claim.

In theory, to build a tsunono a hamlet must be unified: this is a practical necessity, but the desire for unity goes well beyond simply practical aspects. Establishing such an order involves deciding on a hierarchical organization between different lineages that ought to be 'within' the tsunono. Several of the tsunono now standing at Hahalis were built whilst side-stepping these considerations, by securing the support of strong external allies.

For reasons such as these, even completion of a tsunono does little to ease conflict. Two of the five placeholder tsunono in Hahalis are entirely rejected by a majority of tsunono. Of the four full-scale tsunono, that of Bitoga – the most recent to conduct kinalala, in June 2009 – is under severe challenge from within Tutugi and from a broad alliance of tsunono allied with the Teosin faction, who boycotted its feasts. The Nahirei imankessa – a triumph of organization – has serious internal problems and faces coordinated external challenges. The tsunono at Hasuno was disowned by the last representatives of the main lineage that ought to have constructed it, all men, because of external influences over the line's succession. Only the Talinga tsunono is relatively free of criticism – due to the opposition having been crushed in a devastating land case. Even so, the organization of the Talinga bunkatan shown at their tsunono is simply disbelieved by a large plurality of tsunono, including some of Talinga's own allies.
5.6.2. Lack of consensus as a positive social phenomenon

“All men fight over land and leadership”. It is possible to assemble a picture of the lack of consensus regarding *ntsunono* and *tsisiki*: that is, disputes about which of the settled lineages ought to build the *tsuhana* (the question of who has *ntsunono*) and disputes about the location of borders (ground, *tsisiki*). Since no two *tsuhana* are built inland from each other, I have arranged the views of ten *tsunono* regarding borders and ownership of the main *tsuhana* of Hahalis into an array of bar diagrams (Fig. 5.1). Colours represent the lineage that should lead, and the extent of each coloured rectangle reflects disputes over borders, where significant. Where there are two colours in one rectangle, the *tsunono* polled believed that two lineages should strike a compromise. Note that the number of *tsuhana* varies between accounts. These accounts do not all represent the basic four to eight *tsuhana* of Hahalis: some *tsunono* included groups that have what they regard as strongly established rights, although they are still ‘on top’ of one of the ‘true’ *tsuhana*, which retains theoretical land rights over it. All the accounts except for (8) are from *tsunono* of different lineages within Hahalis; (8) is provided by a strong but critical ally of (1) residing outside Hahalis. A noteworthy aspect of his account is that the southernmost area is assigned to a Salasa, Hahalis’ neighbour in Hagogohe; as discussed above, another dimension of disagreement is whether the northernmost hamlets (Tutugi) should be assigned to Hanahan.

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*Fig 5.1. Ten accounts of landownership.*

None of the accounts match. Only two lineages have unanimous support, and even in those cases the extent of their lands is disputed. But the disagreement isn’t total. Any one account matches others at several points. This reflects political alliances: 7, 5, and 2 are often in opposition to 10, 9 and 4 in almost all village activities, and they witness for each other in court cases. Court is, of course, very significant and these lineages often ‘caucus’ together to sort out their stories: all the more remarkable, then, that their accounts do not match completely. These alliances can only hold so far. Pushed into conflict any one *tsunono* will find a point of major disagreement with any other *tsunono*, including his allies.
The subtlety of fighting over land stems from the fact that there are very few political contexts in which the totality of the land settlement is discussed. For the most part, the entire procedure of political or land organization is couched in terms of partial disclosure of information, between groups attending to a specific issue. Nobody would be crazy enough to reveal the complete range of their knowledge in a public venue: this knowledge is carefully controlled, its historical and genealogical justification even more so. Revealing one's hand means that rivals can construct more elaborate deceptions, leaving one without recourse. (Collecting this information had to be done privately, and was quite difficult.) But this also means that virtually any view will find a combination of tsunono whose accounts share ‘family resemblances’ to it. Land disputes and alliances are built by piecemeal negotiation. Pulled into an alliance, a tsunono will find several other tsunono who partially agree with him, and there are few instances in which disagreement over the totality of the picture matters

Those few instances, however, must inevitably be reckoned with. This pattern of disagreement is a major source of instability and violence within Hahalis and in this respect, the village is representative of the situation elsewhere in Buka. Officials in the government despair of the fact that virtually no land disputes have ever been successfully resolved by courts. Mediation can extend to decades.

It is important to see that most land disputes did not appear overnight: many have been gathering pressure since the inception of cash cropping and courts, and some are partly related to ancient feuds. They relate to fundamental issues in social organization and are rarely attributable to individual malice or conspiracy, although those are almost invariably the explanations given by the villagers themselves and neither is in short supply. The men who burned down a hamlet in Hahalis, exiling the lineage which had defeated them in court felt motivated by despair; they genuinely believed that their rivals had bribed the courts and there was no recourse. Their certainty and despair has deep roots. Buka social systems have come to be built around land conflict: the inconsistencies between the tsunono are vital to the operation of the system such as it exists, even if it is considered deeply dysfunctional. They enable alliances and allow for the paradigmatic situation in which a compromise is given different interpretations by different parties, each of which regards the other's interpretation as unacceptable. That is a tense, disoriented situation – but at the same time, a dynamic one.

An important issue not shown in Fig 5.1. is that while some accounts depict some lineages as holding large tracts of land, this reflects the tsunono’s understanding that the junior lineages settled within this area must be given permission to build their tsuhana by the dominant lineage. The tsunono still acknowledge that these junior or partially subject tsuhana cannot be expelled, and have land rights in the sense that they may build houses and gardens without seeking permission, though they might have to negotiate serious development or the exploitation of large trees in the bush (where land claims generally tend to merge and overlap, for instance the cape at southern Hahalis). The Halia conception of land rights does not translate straightforwardly into a picture of mutually exclusive

Likewise, when the tsunono of Hanahan, Hahalis and Salasa convene to discuss the borders between these villages, there are heated disputes about the precise location of borders: but in these instances, the tsunono of the villages typically form blocks. The village identity temporarily supersedes the village's internal fractures. Again, the common interest of Hanahan, Hahalis and Salasa asserts itself over the inland Solos on the contentious matter of the border between Halia and Solos speakers. Although all these groups are intermarried and related by migration networks, these debates do not hinge on the disclosure of the precise identity of each tsuhana.
ownership: it translates in a tortuous fashion, for there are powerful incentives to resolve the complex situation. In any case, the ambiguity between formal, state-backed concepts of land tenure and the Italia land control system only adds to the complexity illustrated, opening further possibilities of conflict and alliance. The inevitable consequences of taking this complex superposition of politically motivated partial accounts to court are mutually contradictory court decisions, of which there are several: these too are useful, much as the incompatible migration histories.

5.7. The post-war demographic transition and its effects

Very little about Buka makes sense without some basic observations about demography, and this is especially pertinent to considerations of land conflict and political integration. The population of the island has increased dramatically since WWII. From a relatively stable pre-war level of approximately 7,500, the population of Buka and nearby coastal islands surpassed 14,000 by 1973 and reached 36,676 in the 2000 NSO census, the most recent available. Fig 5.2. gives some sense of the transition involved, in Buka and for the Buka District including North Bougainville, for which more complete

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Post-war figures are reported for the Buka District, which includes Selau, Hahon and Tinputz. Pre-war figures separate these areas from Buka and surrounding areas. I have joined these figures to produce the Buka District Equivalent series, but the reader is warned that there are differences in the borders of Tinputz and Hahon in the two periods. Estimates for the 1970s population of Buka Island are derived from other published sources for parts of Buka, and regression of the ratio of these areas and the total population.

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97 Pre-WWII data are taken from LNAR, post-war data from a number of sources including TNGAR, BDAR, patrol reports and the NSO census. Post-war figures are reported for the Buka District, which includes Selau, Hahon and Tinputz. Pre-war figures separate these areas from Buka and surrounding areas. I have joined these figures to produce the Buka District Equivalent series, but the reader is warned that there are differences in the borders of Tinputz and Hahon in the two periods. Estimates for the 1970s population of Buka Island are derived from other published sources for parts of Buka, and regression of the ratio of these areas and the total population.
While it appears that North Bougainville had even greater growth than Buka and the small islands, and began to grow earlier, this conclusion must be reserved given the somewhat erratic post-war figures for Buka.

This trajectory of growth is reproduced at the village level. Hahalis had an enumerated population of 288 men, women and children in 1946 (PR 1 1946); by 1973 this had become 524 (PR 8 1973). Today, the figure is approximately 1,700. Large composite hamlets within Hahalis now approach the size of the entire village sixty years ago. Map 5.4, drawing on maps by E. Rimoldi (1982) and M. Rimoldi (1971) and my own gives some sense of the expansion of the settlement.

5.7.1. Depopulation and the Source of the Transition

What accounts for the relatively well-defined demographic switch immediately after WWII? A study of Haku and Solos villages between 1947 and 1967 found that by 1961 fertility was close to the maximum feasible rate for a society relying on breastfeeding infants, whilst the death rate was declining98 (Ring and Scragg 1973). The results are striking, as they applied both to the Lemanmanu, a large village heavily involved in cash cropping, and Solos villages which are relatively materially deprived. Pacification, a shift in the subsistence base from taro to sweet potato and improvements in health care are the major reason for the increase. But health services in Buka were at comparable levels in the early 1950s and late 1930s. So what accounts for the lack of rapid population growth before WWII?

While the low population figures before the war probably reflect depopulation, the extent of this is questionable. Rimoldi and Rimoldi state that the population of Buka declined from more than 10,000 in 1888 to 6,800 in 1913 (1992:45-6). The 1888 figure, revising Zöller’s estimate of 12,000-15,000, ought to be regarded as a maximum. Population estimates in Bougainville during pacification in the 1920-1945 period, conducted on the basis of far better information than that available to Zöller, were consistently revised downwards, sometimes significantly so. The figure of 6,800 for 1913 is more credible, as it is based on an actual census. If even the revised earlier figure is true it suggests that a third of the population disappeared in a 25 year period. There is little evidence supporting this: there are no descriptions of large scale illness in contemporary colonial accounts or in oral history. Moreover, by 1888 Buka had been in regular contact with the labour trade for two decades (M. Rimoldi 1971:91). A decline might have gone undetected if it took the form of chronic attrition, but there is little evidence one way or another. Note that the 1913 figure gives a high gender ratio of 1.38 males for each female99. This indicates that death rates for women were significantly higher in the past, suggesting lower fertility. Subject to the uncertainty of all these early censuses, this ratio also

98 Mean birth interval after first child had fallen from 3.15 years in 1947-1953 to 2.13 by 1961. The authors explain the decline in mortality terms of "authoritarian health measures," especially in relation to malaria.
99 While this is in the higher reach of the range of sex ratios recorded culturally, it is not entirely unusual for a society shortly after the cessation of warfare (see Divale and Harris 1976); the figure could also reflect difficulties in polling women.
rules out blackbirding and the early phase of indenture as significant forces in depopulation, though it leaves open the possibility that an epidemic affected women more severely than men.

Norwithstanding the uncertainty about the original population of Buka, Rimoldi and Rimoldi are correct in their view that indenture depressed populations during the 1920s (1992:45). The adult gender balance declined abruptly from 1.34 men per women in 1922 to 0.74 three years later, not rising above 0.84 until after WWII, when indentured labourers returned\(^\text{100}\). In absolute terms, there were almost half as many males in Buka in 1933 as in 1922 but just as many females. This decline relates mostly to prime reproductive age men being absent from Buka for the period of indenture – at 2% per year, the raw mortality rate of indentured Buka workers was high, but not high enough to cause the observed effect. Meanwhile, the reported ratio of male to female children remained relatively steady, at approximately 1.1. After the war this latter figure returned to 1.05, while the gender balance between adults returned to 1.2 men per women. It would be striking if indenture were not the most significant factor depressing the growth rate, especially since it is during this period that the church repressed polygamous marriage.

5.7.2. Cultural Elaboration of Demography

This statistical series is of acute historical significance. It is during the period of indenture that we witness the underground development of the fertility-centred millenarian cult in Hahalis, which erupted immediately after recruitment ceased. The pre-war period is remembered – partly directly, partly through stories which are listened to with keen interest – as a period of intense sexual jealousy and frustration: little wonder, given the marital situation of indentured men.

Traditional Buka society featured an extended prohibition on sex after childbirth. As only the oldest and most highly ranked\(^\text{101}\) people in present-day Buka report having obeyed it themselves, it seems likely that it had fallen out of general use by the early 1950s. This reflects an extensive reorganization of the regime of reproduction. Elderly informants generally agree that in the past relations between the sexes before marriage were tense. Marriages took place once a woman was in her mid-twenties. A girl to be married was often brought to the hamlet of her future husband and raised there, potentially discouraging sexual attraction between her and her future husband. Relationships within marriage are remembered as having been characterised by intense jealousy and formality. These attitudes – perhaps exaggerated in the recollections of elderly informants\(^\text{102}\), but also likely intensified in the climate of indenture\(^\text{103}\) – changed radically after World War II. In Hahalis there was a concerted, conscious

\(^{100}\) M. Rimoldi writes that “the masculinity ratio had dropped from 1.24 in 1921 to 1.07 after the war” (1971:118), neglecting to mention that for two decades it hovered under 0.84.

\(^{101}\) Since the justification of prohibition was that to space births too close together risked spoiling the first born, observation of the taboo on sex after child birth was especially important for the chiefly lineage.

\(^{102}\) Blackwood (1935:100) estimates that sexual relations before marriage were not as common in more remote villages, and that freer liaisons were typical of villages with more extensive contact. She also believed that the age of marriage was increasing under colonial influence (ibid, p. 99).

\(^{103}\) It also bears noting that the urge initiation cult, which required strict segregation of adolescent boys from women of all ages, was essentially eliminated from Buka by the early 1920s.
effort to eliminate sexual jealousy and to increase the population – this was evident in the organization of the Baby Garden, to be understood as part of wider general effort of social self-engineering. What is perhaps most remarkable about this extraordinary and calculated effort at sexual and demographic change is that viewed in gross statistical terms it had practically no effect. Hahalis cannot be distinguished from nearby villages that did not participate in the Welfare: in those too one finds the same rates of population growth, and very similar if less overtly voiced attitudes to sex. (The extent to which the Hahalis Welfare Society reflected general cultural currents in the Northern Bougainville area should not be underestimated.) What is certainly different in Hahalis is the production of a large number of fatherless children – and an atmosphere which older informants recall as ‘free’ not only in comparison to the previous regime, but also the present day, which is regarded as the worse of both worlds: anarchic sexual relations with jealousy (see below, Section 7.8).

While an answer cannot be given with certainty, it seems clear that the explosive growth witnessed in the post-war period stems from changes that took place within Buka society whilst indenture kept the lid firmly pressed on demographic growth. Improvements in health and sanitation, the war-time change in the subsistence base, the erosion of traditional sexual mores and the repression of polygamy all created conditions for a fundamental switch in demography once the missing half of the adult male population returned. Possibly, attitudes forged or intensified during the orne when indenture constrained fertility played a role in this: the Halia today have a pronounced preference for large families. Plentiful children are considered evidence that a family is bamatsku (‘straight’) in the land it occupies – a pretender’s family would be plagued by stillbirths and infertility.

5.7.3. Demographic growth and the order of tsuhana

The question of the pre-colonial population of Buka is also significant in terms of assessing the development of the tsuhana system. A tsuhana is not easily multiplied or subdivided. There were at most eight core, or ‘true’ tsuhana in the immediate post-war period in Hahalis, and there are still eight core tsuhana today. Though there are more de facto clan houses, the construction of these causes a great deal of conflict. Generally, no one builds a tsuhana overtly intending to separate themselves from nearby landowners: every tsuhana, no matter how contested, is built to include and subject nearby land claimants.

104 On the other hand, no one accepts that a small family is signal of impropriety. A group that loses many children will almost invariably blame sorcery – they are targeted because they are ‘the right man’. Some small lineages claim very high status, using their small numbers as evidence of justified jealousy. Through the interplay of these attitudes and rhetorical gambits, lineages wage what amounts to a kind of demographic warfare, mediated by the punitive or rewarding agency of the dead. In one case, a clan with a history of stillbirths and abnormal births claimed this as sinebo, a defining mark of their clan, the icon of which would be displayed if they erected a tsuhana. The icon, in this case would be a stone related to a lilihumi named Bibiwihil, a rat that patrols births, causing deformities in improperly conceived children. A neighbouring clan, however, disputed this, and they were even smaller than the upstarts next door – claiming that they were nearly wiped out a generation ago, while the upstarts contradictorily claim to have many obscure branches to their matrilineage. Their tsuuma summed this up: ‘ol i bungre long grawn, tsol i nogat guppela lingoing’: his rivals crave land, but they do not have good reasons.
The increased population poses challenges for the internal organization of the *tsuhana* and would-be *tsuhana*. Ultimately, this has changed what a *tsuhana* is. In 1946, there were around ten adult males for each *tsuhana* in Hahalis. If the organization of power then resembled that of today, only some of these men would have been politically active and ambitious. It would then have been relatively easy — or at least possible — to accommodate them with the matrix of prescribed power within the *tsuhana*. The lineages that compose a *tsuhana*-building group — a *bunkatun* — would be small enough to have a relatively straightforward internal organization; the scramble for land rights, a direct consequence of the interplay of cash cropping and demographic pressure, also makes the internal organization far more significant.

Under such circumstances, most men who concerned themselves with political eminence would have been either directly slotted into the *tsuhana* hierarchy, or would be very closely related to someone who was. Today, the situation has changed dramatically. *Tsubana* such as Nahirei or Talinga encompass more than thirty households, Tutugi, if it were unified, would cover more than forty. The sub-lineages that compose Nahirei are each the size of an entire post-World War II *tsuhana*. There is little hope of accommodating all preeminent and ambitious men and women under a single roof. To make matters worse, the number of positions that are considered relevant has shrunk. The ritual role of the *holasa*, for instance, is now restricted to certain phases of *tsuhana* construction; only the rainmaker *kikeits* still operates, other ritualists have lost their privileged positions as sorcery has generally drifted from the controlled public domain of *tsora*, to the anarchic private domain of *poisen*. Above all, whereas in the past these roles formed an assemblage within the *tsuhana*, an inclusive organization of power, they are now excluded within the schematism of land ownership and militant unilinealism. Only the *tsunono* and *peits* have come to be construed as the ‘landowners’: claims which are legally viable only as long as the *tsunono* and *peits* represent a tightly-knit group of families. So we find the

**Fig 5.3.** Number of lineage members per generation for seven preeminent Hahalis matri-lineages as inferred from cross-checked genealogies. Demographic growth is much more dramatic in some lineages than others.
paradoxical situation in which the tsuhana becomes disorganized just as the centrality of the tsuhana as organizational framework is intensified.

Indeed, I owe this observation to Matthew Pomis, John Teosin’s brother, an astute and practical man who argued for flexibility in this respect. He noted that if Hahalis only had eight tsuhana, many people would go without food at feasts – especially the most significant feasts of suakopo and kinalala, which include distributions to tsuhana, not to individual households. Pomis, a man economical with his words, could just as well be speaking of the organization of production within the bunkatan, the control of cash cropping land, the distribution of benefits from political komiti, and any of the many economical exchanges that are partly articulated through the tsuhana’s matrix of social relations. All these, are, after all kanau (food), the fruits of labour. He is a proponent of the expansion of tsuhana for the purposes of distribution and to encourage good order in the village. Such an expansion must occur with new houses ‘sitting on the hand’ of the older ‘true’ houses. But that is very difficult to accomplish: for a tsunono to allow someone with a land claim to build a tsuhana, he must have a very high degree of trust, and the group accepting the deal must also accept the bargain that a compromise is being struck that may one day return to undermine them, and which leaves them in a subject position.

5.8. Historical background on land conflict

The pattern of omnipresent litigation over land is widely regarded, by the Halia and outside observers alike as a relatively new phenomenon related to cash cropping. Most elderly informants state that land disputes were almost unknown in their youth. There is historical support for this view. According to a patrol report of 1954,

Land disputes have been prominent only in the last four or five years, coincident with the development of copra production and almost invariably concern land on which groves already exist or are being newly planted. (PR 4 1954).

The kiap attributed this to the envious attitude of villagers who saw their neighbours putting their land to use in plantations and then sought to cut themselves into the profits, pressing “any possible claim... however dubious” (ibid). The Administration regarded this as potentially very problematic, as it could lead to the formation of a landless class (Rimoldi and Rimoldi 1992:80)\(^\text{105}\). Today, the range of causes of disputes is broader than cash crops – but with the exception of housing plots (which are themselves a means of asserting rights over nearby productive land), these are focused on sources of cash. For instance, a major component of the dispute in Tutugi is control and distribution of the proceeds of a gravel pit; a dispute between Elutupan and Tohatsi over timber resources led to two

\(^{105}\) If there was an overarching policy directive in the 1950s Australian Administration, it was to remodel village agriculture as conservative yeoman farmers, whilst preventing the formation of a ‘landless proletariat’, see Wright (2002), MacWilliam (1988). The ultimate roots of this date to J.H.P. Murray’s misleadingly named policy of ‘indirect rule’, in actuality an effort to reform indigenous society whilst ‘retaining’ politically serviceable aspects.
deaths and a looted hamlet in 2007; a latent dispute in Munasoa, in Hanahan, erupted early in 2008 when a communications company decided to locate one of its mobile phone pylons there; cocoa fermenters are a notorious magnet for disputes. Notably absent from the range of causes of conflict are tuber gardens and the reef, which are still largely not commodified.

Even so, the documentation and oral testimony must be assessed critically. Kiaps were notoriously poor ethnographers: the man who wrote the passage above speculated that there ‘might’ be hereditary chiefs in Buka. Their reports show every indication of influence by preeminent locals pushing their own, often idiosyncratic interpretations. In the case of the passage above and others like it, the view that complainants in land disputes are motivated by envy is frequently expressed today by men engaged in brazen land-grabs. It is also only the tip of a cultural complex relating to the management, control and projection of jealousy. Another explanation which the kiaps provided for escalating land tensions in the 1950s was an alleged ‘breakdown of the matrilineal system into a patrilineal system’ (PR 3 1956). Many kiaps regarded matrilineal inheritance as abnormal and a hindrance to development, and took positive measures to promote the ‘patrilineal system’ they saw: possibly, this contributes to the present-day belief that the ‘patrilineal’ aspects in Halia descent are colonial and cash cropping intrusions. But the kiaps were also blind to the subtlety of Halia political kinship, which ironically made them oblivious to the very ‘patrilineal’ aspects of the system they were exploiting, such as the role of the father in the son’s tsuhamua and the role of virtual patrilines stabilized by marriage alliances and pa’ahi. They failed to ask why some patrilineal forms stuck, while others kept slipping away despite their efforts at ‘normalization.’ Indeed, they often failed to distinguish clearly between matriliny and matriarchy – so much so that they could claim matriliny was on the way out when they ‘discovered’ that there ‘might’ be chiefs in Buka.

This antagonism to ‘abnormal’ matriliny is only a superficial issue as compared to the deeper incompatibility of synthetic kinship with the procedural forms of courts. Ultimately, a Western-modelled system of land litigation can live with property passed through the mother, but not with land as somatic extension of complex and necessarily denied practices of lineage concatenation, compromise and genealogical revisionism. Unilinealism of whatever sort is preferable to that, and Halia political kinship always had the potential for the intensification of exclusionary lineage concepts: in this respect, the situation in Buka very much parallels that described by McDougall for Ranongga (McDougall 2004:6-7)\textsuperscript{106}.

\textit{Kiaps} also identified demographic pressure as a likely source of conflict – the report of 1955 predicted land shortage in 20 years. In this the \textit{kiaps} were no doubt substantially correct, although what ‘shortage’ may mean in Buka is contingent on the way the social system adapts to the pressures within

\textsuperscript{106} But note that in the case of Ranongga, matriline are segregated to a much greater extent, with separate mythologies (McDougall 2004:204ff). McDougall is influenced by Scott’s presentation of Arosi society as ‘polyontological’ (Scott 2007; McDougall 2004:207). If by ‘ontology’ we mean \textit{the fundamental categories of being}, the Halia case cannot be made to fit into this scheme. Dynamics of strategic disclosure/occultation of ‘true histories’ are utterly fundamental both in the structure and the social performance of Halia mythohistory (beginning with genealogies), much as it is in Ranongga and Makira, there is, in Halia an absolute belief that there \textit{ought} to be only one truth. Indeed the conflict between different half-disclosed truths (or half-truths) is \textit{intelligible} as a conflict because it takes place within one and the same ontological field; in Halia different histories lie superposed, not interspersed.
its productive base. If endemic conflict is a sign of shortage, then their predictions were very much on the mark; but nobody is entirely without land, they are rather pressed into more and more complex superpositions of ever more tenuous arrangements, as land dispute stalemates become loaded with ever more conflicting networks of witnesses.

The indigenous account of the history of land tenure, in turn suffers from the basic difficulty that there is some distance between what the Halia perceive of their own social organization and the aggregate outcome of their decisions on the basis of these perceptions. The Halia, like everyone else, are not always the best witnesses to their own social system. Disputes which today unfold over land are sometimes related to pre-existing disputes that had a somewhat different character. For instance, one serious feud between Nakaripa and Natasi ultimately stems from the organization of different tsubahana in Hahalis in the 1920s. But what is a tsubahana now, and what was a tsubahana then? The worst land dispute in Halia concerns the border between Tohatsi and Elutupan, a feud which stretches as far as genealogical memory, once inflected in an idiom of kin and marriage betrayals, now articulated in the context of the exploitation of forestry resources. It is beyond doubt that demographic increase and the use of land for cash crops dramatically intensified conflict, just as the existence of courts and cessation of warfare radically altered its character.

Nevertheless, the single most troubling problem with *kiap* accounts – and in this the local view approximates that of the *kiaps* – is the implication that the concept of land ownership preceded the introduction of cash crops. In this view, blocks of land were previously allocated in a clear fashion to rights-owning groups organized in a matrilineal fashion. With the advent of cash cropping (so goes the story), this clear order falls apart because of litigation and jealousy. The law and state should enforce those pre-existing rights; litigation is suspect, because territory is presumed to be clearly known. The *kiaps*, like the present-day Halia, believed that there is, really, a consensus as to how land is organized, that there can only be one true story about control of land. There is every reason to doubt that traditional organization of land resembled this picture: the present-day *tsubahana* system and indeed even the *actual* organization of de *facto* land title does not resemble it. M. Rimoldi notes that whilst *punuma* (areas for building houses) were conceived in territorial terms with borders, land rights was focused on the *tsubahana* and the roads that its *tsunono* had an obligation to maintain: that is to say, borders were not as clear as the focal roads that carried people to gardens (M. Rimoldi 1971:32). The memory of a time without land conflict is not exactly fiction, since conflict in the past did not have the same contours as present-day land conflict. It is a memory formed of a time in which land, labour and reproduction were related in a different system, a memory now translated into the language of legitimacy and reflexive matriliny. The Halia past was not a time like the present, only without ill-intent.\(^{107}\)

It is hard to understate the importance of the notion that land ownership is *ancient* in present-day Buka attitudes towards land ownership. If one wished to construct an ‘emic’ portrait of land tenure in

\(^{107}\) It is important not to overstate the point, however. Filer (1997) argued that the ideology of landownership in Papua New Guinea is in some respects very recent, even postdating independence. This may be accurate in relation to the dynamic of land conflict to which he devotes his attention, in which villagers seek to assert claims against corporate concerns, paradigmatically in mining and logging.
present-day Buka many features would be included which are similar to the *kiap* view. The fundamental reason for this is that both *kiaps* and the villagers faced the problem of accommodating smallholder capitalism within the institutional framework of law, given the realities of social organization in Buka. It is a mistake to see the law as opposed to *matrilineral* inheritance: what it is opposed to is any overly complex political determination of superimposed rights, let alone undecidable and suspended state characteristic of present-day Halia land tensions.

5.9. The Role of Courts

The notion of jurally established, alienable rights is certainly not absent from Halia culture as it exists today: it is a major focus of intrigue and organization, because such rights are enforced by courts and are generally central to the world in which the Halia have moved for nearly a century. This has had a very significant degree of influence over the development of discourses on kinship. But there is a great deal of difference between rights established by courts or enforced by people, and the kind of ‘right’ a Halia person has to land and to *tsabana*. A rough analogy would be to western attitudes towards the body. Under some circumstances, Europeans regard their bodies as covered by certain rights, and in some circumstances the parts of the body can be regarded as property that can be sold. But for the most part, few people think of their kidneys as something they own. The framework of rights which allows me to prosecute a dubious doctor who somehow steals my kidneys is not the reason I think my organs belong to me. For the Halia, the cliché remains true that land does not belong to a person, so much as a person to the land (de Coppet 1985). The mutual determination of geography and social groups has not been replaced by a juridical conception of land ownership as the outcome of human decisions. The order of land and kin is not established by courts, state or any other social institution; it is ultimately not believed to be enforced by people. Even those who are *bapalis* (dead) can only testify in fire sacrifices and avenge through the fury of the ground: they cannot adjudicate. The dead can be deceived, and sometimes bribed – but at only at great risk, as history is as it was, immutable and deterministic. Yet at the same time, the writing is on the wall: the Halia understand perfectly clearly the importance of courts, and the instrumental value of land as a productive factor. The two attitudes coexist in a state of superposition.
Roken winding paiou.
6. Nahirei

6.1. Introduction

Nahirei is the largest single hamlet in Hahalis, with 30 households; most other hamlets have less than half as many households. While some locations such as Talinga and Basbi are larger, these are compound settlements composed of lineages that do not claim or recognise mutual descent and which are settled as distinct groups. Nahirei, by contrast, is settled by what is stipulated to be a single lineage, together with some of its pien tubana – the children of the male members of the lineage. But unlike some other hamlets, the pien tubana are not stabilized as a locally settled lineage by means of classificatory cross-cousin marriages, and are a minor force in the hamlet’s politics. The hamlet has also relatively secure borders: its ally Talinga won a land case against Munlus, the hamlet on its southeast border, and to the northwest the Topin group is marginalized within Hahalis, since they sided with the Catholic Church during the Welfare period.

Nahirei played a critical role in the sacrificial cycle that elevated John Teosin to the position of ‘tsunono of all’ within the Hahalis Welfare Society. Its present-day tsunono, the formidable Rokou, was a key figure in the ritual organization of the Welfare; a gifted musician, he composed many of the songs sung by the Hehela church. When it became necessary to reactivate certain aspects of the traditional/Welfare ritual machinery during the Bougainville Civil War, he guided the tsu kuahu in the working of the gobs oracle: a complex of rituals which allowed spirits to warn the villagers about attacks through the medium of young girls. While other old Welfare hands such as Anton Hatobu and Matthew Ponis are pragmatic organizers, Rokou is a ritual and cultural expert. He is one of the last remaining men to know how to manufacture paion and tui slit-gongs, and has a reputation throughout the island for his knowledge of kastom – though he is also not without critics in this respect.

Rokou’s position as tsunono is not entirely certain. In fig 6.1, we see the inheritance of the two main ‘names’ or positions of power within the Nahirei lineage. At the topmost generation (I), the division between elder and junior sisters a and b establishes respectively the lineage of tsu'110110 and the lineage of the prits. While this is a typical explanation for the genesis of the distinction between peits and tsunono, it is also always to some extent an idealization, and in this case it is the focus of conflicting claims.

The essence of the problem in Nahirei relates to the succession at Rokou’s generation (V – the oldest living generation; another two adult generations are not shown). The new tsunono ought ideally to be the old tsunono’s sister’s son but in this case the lineage of the tsunono has led to a situation of langokots: the teitabal produced no female heir. It is extremely difficult for a gobs who has no sister to assume the position of a full tsunono. When the teitabal has only sons, it is possible for the gobs to be paired
with a MZD, MMZDD or more controversially a more distant matrilineal kinsman. But this is often
the source of conflict, especially if, as in this case, the brother of the paired sister has a powerful
personality. (In a case at another hamlet, the ‘handover’ involved unrelated lineages of the same
pinaposa, with distinct migration histories: in that case, the receiving lineage obtains nitsunono and
status, but not land title.)

In Nahirei, there had been a similar handover, at generation III on the peits’ sub-lineage. But in that
case, the gobus had a sister who grew to adulthood before failing to produce an heir, a sequence of
events that presents fewer problems. The present situation in Nahirei would require that the
genealogical heir Kiohin (far left on generation V) take a ‘sister’ from his MMMZDDDD. This,
however, stretches beyond the de facto separation of ngorere (fig 6.2, below). As it happens Kiohin
is not nearly as competent a speaker as Rokou and he has also settled uxorilocally – rarely a viable
strategy for a tsunono except for the most skilled political operators, especially if there is any
competition at home. Rokou’s rise began with him more or less explicitly in the position of pepeito, or
‘guardian’ acting on Kiohin’s behalf, and he is still regarded as such by his rivals – which interestingly
do not include Kiohin himself. As time went by it has become very clear that the transfer of power is
final: ultimately, Rokou has been able to arrange for the construction of a tsuhana, cementing his
position in place.

Rokou’s success is all the more remarkable as his own mother is the junior of two sisters, and his
grandmother was married exogamously to Solos. His mother’s sister’s children are still settled there,
speak Solos and rarely travel to Hahalis except for important feasts; indeed Rokou’s own mother was
raised in Solos. This is a further weakness of Rokou’s position as tsunono. His opponents – all drawn
from the more populous sub-lineage of the peits – often claim he ought to ‘go back to Solos’. This, in
basic terms, is what the ‘matrilineal puzzle’ amounts to in concrete practice: a gobus who marries out
faces an uphill struggle to be taken as the leader of a distant hamlet, but a tsunono who draws
his wife to lum dooms his children to choice between impermanent settlement or insecure position. It is for
this reason that the Halia say “mipela i no paix long kok, mipela paix long kan”: “we do not fight over
cocks, we fight over cunts.” Women are married out, later there are no witnesses to the original
marriage and the identity of her children becomes suspect. A man who marries out has only his own
influence to lose, (and can live on through his work, through his son). In the present case, my
interviews with a number of *tsunono* suggests that it is not likely that Rokou's genealogy - as represented above - is falsified, and in fact it is rarely challenged formally. But when the Halia face each other in conflict, they do not face genealogies: not even today, since genealogies are almost never shown publicly, especially to one's enemies. They face each other as living testimonials to the past - their presence in this or that area is taken as evidence in its own right, and hence a situation such as Rokou's is potentially weak.

On the *pal turn bunpeito* 'the side of those with the *peits*', we again see a divergence from the canonical account of succession. Here a combination of early deaths, exogamy and lack of aptitude has led Hagli to the office of *peits* in generation V. He is therefore *pepeito*, a guardian while a genealogically acceptable heir is found amongst the numerous descendants of his aunts. He is also *langokots*, and has only brothers - in this case, this boosts rather than hinders his position, since he cannot do what most *pepeito* do, which is to transmit the *nisunono* to their own sister's sons. Hagali is also a staunch ally of Rokou and of the former Welfare elite; this in spite of a long career away from the village within the PNGDF. Hagali's MZD, Sabata, however, is the public face - though not always the instigator - of the claim that Hagali and not Rokou should be *tsunono* (until, that is, one of her sons can succeed Hagali). There are two levels of intensity to this criticism. At lower temperatures, the order of birth of *a* and *b* is challenged, but not their status as true siblings. The difficulty with this argument is that there are no witnesses either way, but there are witnesses to the fact the descendants of *a* were *tsunono*. At somewhat higher temperatures, the *a* and *b* are related, but only in some vague way; they are effectively exposed as accreted kin. Note that *a* and *b* have no known mother - basal siblings are a common feature of Halia genealogies. Privately, the criticism can be delivered in full: Rokou has inserted himself into this family tree and his mother's mother- or her mother- are fact from Solos. Rokou's relatives living in Solos then become a living testimonial to an alleged separate migration history. Viewed from these perspectives, Hagali has given away what was not his to give as *pepeito*.

Sabata is an implacable but usually discrete critic of Rokou. She regards his rise within Nahirei as attributable solely to his position in the Welfare. As in many other cases, there is an element of truth to this: Rokou's political alliances do in fact lead into the milieu of the former Welfare leadership. But in virtually every other hamlet in Halia analogous problems arise, with business, church, government position, the BRA or more straightforward but rarely more transparent (or genealogically orthodox) kin networks taking on the role played by the Welfare clique in Rokou's case. However, the Welfare connections can have certain implications in the atmosphere of revivalist Christianity found in present-day Buka. The young men of Nahirei, above all those in the much more numerous *peits* sublineage, are recently converted members of an evangelical protestant church. They placed their chapel directly in front of Rokou's house, and have persistently attempted to convert him and his relatives; Rokou for his part attends the services half-heartedly if at all. The evangelical attitude towards Rokou's own Welfare-derived Hehela Church is that it is a false church, cargo cult, perhaps Satanism. Rokou's pre-eminence in the ritual dimension of the Welfare and his astounding command of Halia ritual and myth thus become liabilities. The 'youths' in Nahirei have a powerful desire for material advancement and share the deep sense of frustration which appears to be a permanent feature of the Buka social landscape. They harbour dreams of business success, of being a 'biksot', owning trucks,
generators and permanent houses; the dreams, in fact, that had motivated many, including Rokou, to join the Welfare. Material means available to them are limited. For some, Rokou is the face of this limitation.

The conflict in Nahirei has led to the political division of the hamlet — though not the geographical segregation of the groups. In fig 6.2, we see the groups that address each other as 'a toa ngorere' - a 'single umbilicus'. In principle, the entire matrilineage can be considered a toa ngorere — so long as sisters a and b are accepted as having a single mother — but in practice, the groups a' and a'' are socially distinct, and there is open hostility between b' and b''. Group o, which resides in Solos, is not considered part of the tsunono.

![Diagram of ngorere divisions in the Nahirei matrilineage](image)

For the most part, these groups work together in superficial harmony. The younger women of a'' and b work together in gardens — but they frequently argue over the use of fruit trees and coconuts, and even small transgressions of this sort are taken to the Village Court. When Sabata's daughter Carol died, all the women in Nahirei pulled together to mourn her as if she were gohus — the funeral cycle included a habur vigil in the tsunono, and they all struck the tui and sung, including Rokou and his wife. This is significant, because this form of mourning has the explicit meaning that the dead was of the tsunono lineage, and there was much gossip amongst Rokou's allies in Tutugi and elsewhere that the mourning was inappropriate. A few days after the funeral, Rokou's sister's son's son died, adding to the ferment. According to the Tutugi and other groups that 'look over' Nahirei and 'witness it', this was punishment for the unsettled situation in Nahirei, and Rokou's actions in allowing the earlier funeral to go ahead. Why did he allow — indeed encourage — the elevation of Carol's funeral? Rokou himself aims to be, in the fullest sense, tsunono. This involves accommodating others and ensuring peace amongst the bunkatun, placing oneself in the position of authority consenting to the funeral (which was simply not under his control — the rites were handled by the extremely forthright women of Nahirei), and conducting rituals according to kastom, or at least with the maximal appearance of kastom.
Prior to 2002, the Nahirei tsuhana had been built four times within historical memory. The last tsuhana was erected to 'show' Kiohin's mother when she was still unmarried, suggesting that the house was built in the early 1930s. The matrilineage had few members in generation IV, and was subsequently unable to build its own tsuhana. Instead, they contributed to the construction of Bill Girana's tsuhana at Talinga, the dominant assemblage in this area until recently. As Nahirei's population grew explosively and Rokou's ambitions matured, they could 'stand outside' and built their own tsuhana independently of Talinga. As the previous Nahirei tsuhana was not witnessed by any surviving person, the fact the group was sheltered within Talinga is seized on by rivals as evidence that they have no tsuhana of their own. A mark of the extraordinary extent of the delay in construction is that the korkoriana - 'dirty things' - of Pinou, the tsumono who died in 1956, were not disposed until after the construction of 2001: only then was his funeral cycle truly complete. Though the capacity to bury one's dead in one's land is the sign of de facto hamlet independence, carrying a funeral cycle to completion within a tsuhana is the only true means of establishing de jure independence.

The construction of the tsuhana was anything but a maverick decision; it was an exemplary case of the hostile cooperation characteristic of the relationship between tsumono. The impetus for the construction of the present house was the memorial patu constructed in 2000 to mark Teosin's death almost ten years before. This patu, a traditional arched-roof construction, housed a massive feast - said to have involved the killing of over a hundred pigs brought by former Welfare allies from the whole of Bougainville. Teosin's grave was cemented, tiled, and capped with a custom-made headstone: it is without doubt the most elaborate grave in Buka. At the climax of the ceremonies, the patu was burnt down: the investment of nitsunono on Teosin thence returned to the tsuhana that had elevated him. The patu became 'as the seed of the mango', once the flesh is taken out. This was an occasion for extensive discussion focused on reactivating the community's strength after the trauma of the preceding twelve years of civil war. The initiative for Nakaboen Holdings Limited stems from these discussions, and a renewal of the tsuhana building cycle was explicitly understood as part of this economic development project. The Nahirei tsuhana was the first to be built by this renewed force. As an expression of collaborative spirit, the 26 corrugated roof panels of the tsuhana were each presented by an allied, or in many cases rival, tsuhana. The construction cycle began later in 2000, when the soapili, signalling the intent to build a full tsuhana was erected in Nahirei on the occasion of a funeral ceremony for Koraha, the successor of Pinou, who had died in 1988.

The Nahirei tsuhana is not an ordinary clan house, but a 'house of carvings,' lumankusa\(^\text{109}\). Only a few lineages may build such houses: many fewer than might be presumed from M. Rimoldi's claim that the house belongs to the lineage with priority of settlement. The construction of a lumankusa is a

\(^{108}\) The great length of time between cycles of tsuhana construction in post-war Buka is consonant with the observation by Wagner for the Usen Barok tawm, an institution with certain isomorphisms with the tsuhana: a tawm destroyed by the Japanese in WWII was only rebuilt in 1979 (Wagner 1986:148).

\(^{109}\) Note, however, that by Rokou's own claim it is more exactly referred to as lumangoum, a house for scarification - his lineage's specialization. When other members of his clan-network began to build a similar house in Hagogohe, he deferred to their claims to possess the lumankusa, but architecturally the houses are very similar. The equation of this with the building pattern of the lumankusa is very much contested, with some informants asserting that the lumangoum ought to resemble only a bakorn-style tsuhana.
serious enterprise even by the rigorous standards imposed on the construction of any tshubana. The Nahirei house ultimately consumed a claimed 214 pigs, an extremely large number in Buka, and the largest number for any tshubana I recorded. It is not clear how accurate that claim is. The side of the tshubana has a display of 130 pig jaws, but these represent the pigs killed for the house, not all the pigs killed during construction. This represents a massive investment of time and energy by the bunkatun, and an extensive, delicate mobilization of a network of political alliances. Rokou’s Ismankeesa is the culmination of a lifetime of ambition, by Rokou, Nahirei and Hahalis; but an adroit tsunono cannot be seen to be calling for his house. It must rise because the time is right for it to rise; the pigs must arrive because Nahirei’s allies and relatives want to send them. Even Nahirei’s rivals must contribute – in fact, they especially – without cajoling. They must recognise that the house is right, matskuna. Even the decision to send a pig isn’t the outcome of negotiations – at least not public negotiations. Rokou saw who would bring a pig when, early in the construction cycle during the ritual of patiiki kalekale (‘pluck one at a time’) his supporting tsunono took turns to pluck one or more betelnuts, each indicating a pig, from a branch Rokou offered; a discreet but immensely significant moment.

The construction of carved posts is ritually more difficult than ordinary posts – which are already subject to very serious taboos and require careful handling. The sinebe attract especially powerful spirits. These will remain during the long feasting period; for the entire period of kuma – sipi, the erection of the house to rubunaluma, when the first pig is cooked within it, and again onto korkoriana and tasa, a period of many months may pass during which the villagers must live in a state of exception. Events in the hamlet take on an unusual degree of salience and significance, and there is an atmos bearing the hard work of feeding guests and navigating protocol in midst of spirits. These are finally chased out of the hamlet by the bunkatun, who, the day after the climactic end of kinalala sweep the hamlet and hold the feast of lasinono – the first feast in the long cycle that is held for the builders by the builders. As in the case of other tshubana, if anything is askew, if any protocol is not followed correctly and above all if the ‘wrong man’ is in the tshubana, the spirits will not leave, they will continue to feast. “The house still eats”, only now it claims the lives of the bunkatun.

6.3. Challenges

As it happens, the Ismankeesa has been plagued by serious difficulties. The construction of the sipi, the physical house, in November 2001 was only one step in a complex of feasts. There followed a season of nightly dancing during which delegations of singers arrived from other hamlets and villages. Every night, the tui were struck and the dancers fed, sometimes until daybreak. During such a period, the bunkatun must be harmonious so that the tsunono is able to welcome these guests. Following sipi, Rokou’s efforts guided his new tshubana to rubunaluma, ‘the smoking of the house’, a large feast which today typically represents the end of a major phase of feasting, to be resumed much later once resources are available. Rokou, however, pushed ahead with the cycle towards the climactic feast of kinalala. In 2002, two months into the new cycle of nightly dancing, Kiohin’s mother, the titahol Pulete Maru died. She was well over eighty years old and frail. Under ordinary circumstances, her death would have aroused few if any suspicions. But the kinalala cycle is a period of heightened
sensitivity. Illness and death are potential signs that something is not right. Rokou interrupted the feasting, through the agency of Illagali—who as paiti is the only individual who may interrupt kinalala. A full mourning cycle had to be conducted. This took the construction of the lumankaesa from difficult territory into terra incognita: nobody knows for sure what the proper course of action in such a situation would be, many tsunono regard such an eventuality as a sign that the tsinbana should never have been built in the first place. Months later, the singing resumed, and eventually a successful kinalala feast was held in January 2003, but the conflict which lay in seed since before the first post was carved now had fertile ground to grow on.

The fact that lumankaesa are so rarely built contributes to a climate of scepticism and malicious gossip. Several informants expressed doubt about whether or not Rokou’s house was, in fact, a lumankaesa. One problem is that although such a house had not been built in Halia for several decades, analogous houses are regularly built in Solos and mainland Bougainville. Even very senior tsinbana such as the patu of Saharia or Koroats, built in the 1930s, are said not to have had such elaborately carved posts, a fact which for Rokou’s detractors shows his tsinbana is something new and not a mark of high rank. The specific carvings on the posts of the tsinbana are said to resemble nothing from Halia, but rather the posts of a tsinbana built in Solos by a Halia warrior belonging to a different lineage. This accusation—that the sinede have been misappropriated—is so severe it only circulates as a malicious rumour and is never aired in public. Partly, the problem is that the history of Rokou’s house ought not to be shared in public—and especially not with those people most likely to spread malicious gossip. According to Rokou, the Nahirei house is related to another three houses, one nearby in Gogohe and two at opposite ends of the island—Lontis and Ieta. These houses in turn are built from the posts of an ancestral tsinbana once built in Solos: its posts were sent with settlers as they founded new hamlets. Hence, when in 2007 the Gogohe node of this clan network begun constructing its own lumankaesa, Rokou was heavily involved—and for him and his supporters this was a natural thing to do. But for others, this was a sign of further lack of clarity as to the details of the tsinbana.

In these ‘external affairs’, the Nahirei factions are united—up to a point. The critique of some of the groups sceptical of Rokou’s lumankaesa is not that Hagali ought to be its tsunono—but that the house is completely inappropriate. This is an existential threat to whoever would lead Nahirei: it would undermine claims of land ownership. But even some of Rokou’s supporters were awestruck by the beauty and enormity of the tsinbana he built: his closest supporter, Anton Hatobu, is said to have been overcome by jealousy the day the house was first erected, feeling slighted by the group that used to be under his own Isu1hono’s protection. Not long after this, he constructed his own tsinbana, a beautiful but austere structure. Hatobu’s pride is easily wounded; but others including the Nakaripa of Tutugi have expressed doubts. This combination of jealousy and ill-timed if legitimate questioning further encourages factionalization within Nahirei’s bunkattn. After all, it is these outsiders, especially the rivals, who must witness the tsinbana and accept it as a legitimate entity.
6.4. The conflict escalates

Not long after the *tsunana's* troubled feasting cycle had been completed, a major fight broke out in Nahiiri between the two factions, centred on cross-accusations of sorcery. Hagali had fallen ill with tuberculosis. The fact that the disease persisted was interpreted as evidence that Hagali was not 'the right man.' He was being punished for going along with Rokou's scheme; Hagali's supporters suspected he might have been the victim of sorcery. When a family is struck with serious illness in the context of a chronic dispute such as this, it is scant comfort to be presented with a choice between illegitimacy and being the victim of sorcererization. In either case, the harm is intractable and liable to attack others in the same ngorere. There is an atmosphere of fear – that one might have upset one's living neighbours, or worse, that one may have upset the ground and the spirits of the dead. Hagali himself maintained that he was sick with an ordinary disease; but eventually rumours begun to circulate that even his doctors had deemed it 'a ninate tara ban' (Tok Pisin: *sik blong peles, 'village illness'). This is the standard interpretation placed on doctors' assertions that there is no further avenue for treatment. Then, as his illness waned momentarily, his mother's sister's daughter's son – Hagali's only plausible rival in the *peits* lineage – died suddenly. There was open violence and one of Rokou and Hagali's allies was attacked with an axe, fleeing into exile at a nearby hamlet. Hagali fled to his wife's hamlet. Malo, the dead man's younger brother would now be the genealogical successor to the *peits*: but Malo is quick to anger, which makes even his close kin sceptical of his capacity to manage a large fractious hamlet. As the conflict climaxed, a group of younger men took an axe and cut down the *keeso* statue representing the *peits*.

Assaulting a *tsunana* is an almost unimaginably serious transgression. It is said to be equivalent to assaulting the physical person of the *tsunono*, though in practice it seems that attacking a *tsunana* is less common and more seriously regarded than an personal assault. During fieldwork, there were numerous fights involving *tsunono*, which rarely led to collective action by the *tsunono*; the two attacks on the *tsubana* I observed were taken far more seriously. Most *tsunono* state that in the past, anybody who cut the statue of the *peits* would be killed by a secret pact of *tsunono*, or *karunpakó*.

6.5. Reconciliation

This was the situation when I arrived in Hahalis in August 2006; the conflict had escalated for three years and climaxed some months earlier. The problem had been brought to Hahalis Patu Assembly, the village council of chiefs, and the decision had been made to set up a reconciliation effort. The focus of this was on the organization of a ceremony in which the three feuding parties – *Kiohin*, Rokou and Sabata – would shake hands and promise to end their fighting. The main sponsors of this were the Nakaripa of Tutugi. Their attitude was that the settlement arranged for during the construction of the *humankesa* – that Rokou would be *tsunana*, and Sabata's daughters and sons would be *peits* – should be enforced. That is to say: they would have to reconcile themselves to their position. Rokou naturally supported this view. Sabata herself accepted this ‘compromise’, at least publicly. The rationale here was that the house had been built on these promises, and if they were
Fig. 6.3. Paiou of Naboen and Nakaripa tsuhana hang from the ancestral teitahol.
broken now, the results would be even worse. In this view, the deaths in Nahirei are a combination of sorcery born of jealousy, and a direct result of disharmony amongst the bunkatun: hence, harmony itself would solve the problem.

The reconciliation ceremony was conducted according to impeccable protocol, in a sombre mood that radically distinguishes this feast from all other feasts I attended, including funerals feasts. The ceremony begun with tsunono, teitahol and other high-ranked figures representing Nahirei, Munatsil, Munlus, Hasuno and Munelokeleke 'bringing out' their paiou ceremonial currency. Paiou is made from dolphin and flying fox teeth. It is a variety of physical nitsunono — it is extremely 'valuable', though its specific kind of value is distinct from pigs or money. It is a polluting object, which has to be treated with great care; producing and dealing with paiou requires control of the hikbante that are associated with each strand. Pregnant women and children are not allowed near it: it will cause stillbirths, and a child that sees it will not find a spouse (a curse, rather than an enforced sanction.) There are several different kinds of paiou, and the specific kind used for reconciliation ceremonies is called hamūnu. This especially long paiou is not exchanged in marriages or in any other occasion: it symbolises ngorev. According to one custom, a tooth is removed from the hamūnu for every death in the lineage; when all the teeth are gone, the remaining husk is its paiou, 'the seed of the mango', which remains after all the flesh is taken. In the reconciliation ceremony, the paiou of the feuding lineages, together with that of witnesses is hung together — ideally, as in the Nahirei case, from the rafter of the tsunana. The four meter long 'strands' are then arranged so that they flow into a palm husk basket, which is explicitly understood as a womb (Fig 6.3). They are displayed, and once the ceremony is complete, they are taken back by each lineage.

After the paiou was hung and all the witnesses arrived, a sacrificial fire, much larger than normal, was lit in front of the tsunana. The entire hamlet surrounded it; the tsunono and teitahol of the various lineages formed the innermost circle around the fire. As the embers begun to smoulder, these men and women spoke, first in soft tones and then in a rising crescendo, all at once. They begged forgiveness from their deceased relatives, addressing the tsunono and teitahol who founded the settlement, Pulete Maru and others thought to be the victim of their wrongdoing. They expressed great shame at their fighting; men and women broke down in tears. The fire flickered into life, signalling that the hikbane accepted the reconciliation pact and were ready to eat with the living. A basket filled with a piglet that had been gutted and singed earlier, together with taro and rice was brought out. The tsunono of the Munlus group passed the basket around so that it touched the head of the tsunono and teitahol in the innermost circle, those further out touched the basket with their hands. He then raised the basket over his head and placed it on the fire. This sacrifice, of a pig from the head of the assembled tsunono and teitahol is the most powerful sacrifice possible under ordinary circumstances.

The group moved back to the tsunana. Food was brought to the back shelf, but remained there whilst Rokou, Kiohin and Sabata held hands in a three-way handshake besides the paiou. Rapuna, John Teosin's brother then spoke as a representative of the Nakaripa. An elderly man, Rapuna rarely leaves his homestead, delegating most work to his younger brother Pomis. The presence of the Nakaripa as a cross-pinapoca enforcer would already have been powerful enough, but the presence of this man
elevated the occasion into one of the most powerful reconciliation ceremonies anybody had witnessed for a decade. Addressing the feuding parties in stern terms (Fig 6.4), Rapuna said: "your fight is the worst kind, because you fight yourself – you are one man fighting himself, you are one ngorrere. You have already promised, on the head of the tsunono. When you fight, you insult everyone. This is why you must kill pigs today. If anyone fights again over this, they will have to cook twenty pigs."

After Rapuna completed his speech, the three feuding leaders and their closest kin shook hands with everyone present, crying as they did so. Three pigs were brought out, together with taro and sweet potato. Only the guests and witnesses ate: "ara ema tate nouemoutsraren u korkubiana itavaa." – "we may not eat back our own filth." Whereas in other ceremonies this rule is often broken – it is theoretically in place during bong malolo and kinalala – here it was rigidly enforced. The sacrificial fire was also respected, despite containing a rather large piglet: in other circumstances, it is typical for someone to steal the pork, though this is considered very poor form.
6.6. Sublimation and Repressive Desublimation of the Conflict

The ceremony stilled the turbulence in Nahirei, but not for long. Hagali was still unable to move back, and beginning a week later, Rokou was threatened several times in the context of drunken arguments. Direct confrontation on the issue of succession did not re-emerge for the better part of a year, but Nahirei was plagued by a number of apparently minor, but pregnant disputes. A notable example centres on Malo, a member of Sabata's branch of the ngorerr, and a man seen by Rokou's antagonists as the true tsunono, though even his supporters hesitate to press the issue given his short temper and lack of political judgement.

One afternoon, Malo approached Tsita for cigarettes, asking for dinau – credit. Tsita, who operates a tiny home-based trade store, refused, asserting she had no cigarettes. Doubting this, Malo went home and found a twenty Kina note. He then sent one of his nephews to Tsita to buy as many cigarettes as he could (thus demonstrating he is not a man blong dinau, but a real biksot.) Now there were cigarettes, but too few – the note was too high a denomination, and Tsita could not provide enough change. Tsita refused, so as to not place herself in dinau. Malo was incensed: he had been lied to, and Tsita's refusal to grant or receive credit doubly insulted him. He begun to drink, and late at night confronted Tsita, a widow still residing in her deceased husband's hamlet with her daughter (who 'married back' into Nahirei.) He threatened to burn her house down, insulted her ('you will eat your affine's penis', an insult both shocking and threatening), and – this is the critical moment in the affair – threatened to remove her and her family from Nahirei. There was an altercation, some plates were broken but no one was hurt.

At Rokou and Hagali's instigation, the tsunono held a Wanbel10 court in Nahirei to try to mediate the issue. A large number of tsunono were present: this was an indication of the seriousness of the affair, since such arguments are very common. Wanbel Courts, or as they are commonly known, 'chief's courts', are mediation sessions presided by a magistrate with the attendance of several chiefs. The hard work of bringing the parties to face the issue usually falls on the chiefs, who have both the knowledge and seniority to tease out what meaningful issue might lurk in the small change, as it were. Whenever possible, the Wanbel Court sits at a tsuhaba, but it always comes to the distressed hamlet rather than force the parties to travel. Almost the entire community, therefore, is usually present. At Nahirei, the chiefs and the sole magistrate – also a tsunono – sat in the middle of the tsuhaba, while Malo' stood in front of the house, Tsita at the back (the women's end) each with their cluster of supporters and witnesses.

The discussion, for more than 45 minutes, concerned the details of change and the degree of Malo' drunkenness, the quantity of cigarettes, the order of events, the precise wording of the discussion leading to the altercation. But something else was unmistakeably at play. When Malo and Tsita remained locked in the minor disagreement and contrasting claims to reasonable business practice ("Why would she not give me credit? I am not a nobody [man nating], I have money!" – "Me too! I also want to see money!"), the tsunono forced the issue. How could Malo threaten to remove this.

10 Tok Pisin 'wanbel' can mean 'agreement', 'harmony' or 'peace'; from English 'one belly'.

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person? "We, the tsunami recognise [hoksera long] you, Malo: According to my understanding, you are gopas man [first man]here." But recognition and respect also mean that it is these formidable men who are truly insulted by Malo' self-degrading outbursts. "You must hold this place, it must have peace [wanbel], you must act as a leader." Here there is ambiguity – for the tsunami present support opposite factions: Gopas man means 'leader', but for the Halia it has often a more narrow sense of the person who goes first, scouting ahead of the tsunami, following his orders – that is to say, the peits. In Tok Pisin, there is a possibility of (constructive or accidental) ambiguity that is not present in Halia; it is interesting that this is one of the few Wanbel or Chief's courts which I witnessed that remained for the most part in Tok Pisin, until tempers heated sufficiently.

Raising the question of responsibility, the chiefs touched on the substance of the matter. It is simply not up to Malo to remove anybody on his own initiative. First, an adept tsunami, a man who maintains a babana i ban, is a man who welcomes, not a man who excludes; the truly masterful tsunami excludes by welcoming. He had jeopardized the situation for himself and his faction, but could only see to further raise the stakes. For a moment, the debate ruminated on the same points: the order of events, drunkenness, the details of curses and if they implied sorcery. Then suddenly, one of Tsita sons took an axe, ran to his mother's house and began to tear it down. The chiefs, seated within the tsunami lamented that this is not how chief's court is supposed to run. Calling Malo's bluff, Tsita and her sons had decided to leave for their motherland in southern Solos; the situation became extremely tense, with the possibility of real violence as men and women reached for bushknives. But for the while the young men's axes struck only wood and corrugated iron, while Malo watched from afar, despondently contemplating the actualization of his fantasy of omnipotence. The effect of this was to win Tsita the overwhelming sympathy of everyone in the hamlet save Malo. Tsita was already a highly esteemed person; Malo a hothead. "We don't want her to go: she is a very good lambu, when everyone else in the hamlet IS lazy, she helps with the feasts." She was eventually persuaded to stay. Some days later, Malo demolished his own house in a drunken haze, and rebuilt it into a precarious two-storey tower – now surrounded by an improvised fence.

At one level, this type of dispute is entirely characteristic of a repressed, passive-aggressive political organization common to many aspects of Halia life. The skills and resources applied to political organization at the level of the Council of Elders and Village Council of Chiefs have been honed in the bunkatun and nggeret, through precisely this kind of conflict. Malo's and Tsita's conflagration was by no means the only one in Nahirei in the months after the reconciliation ceremony. The stakes were obviously not limited to cigarettes, change and drunken insults, or even to threats and minor physical assault. The basic issue at stake in the unexpectedly explosive chiefs' court hearing were Malo's wish to be perceived as a leader, within the hamlet and in business: he would like to be a biksol, and is involved in all manner of fast money schemes and doubtful business ventures. If these paid off, he later said to me, he would show who is who in Nahirei. But to be a biksol and to be a tsunami are two very different things; being a tsunami is no guarantee of being a biksol. The mobilization of genealogical claims to effect a politics of exclusion is partly the outcome of the translation of the domain of political and capitalist power into the hearth, partly it is the intensification of a powerful tendency which for all claims to the contrary runs deep through the course of Halia history. Without adept manoeuvring, Malo was doomed. Yet the tsunami cannot control the would-be biksol: the
Wanbel was in vain, within weeks more fights had broken out, and with more deaths from illness in the hamlet the cycle of sorcery accusations escalated again.

Fig 6.5. Malo looks on as Tsita's house is destroyed.

Regarded back over the year of unresolved conflict that followed it, the earlier recourse to a reconciliation ceremony had been less about mediating a compromise than issuing a powerful, ritually-sanctioned promise that the status quo would be abided by. The result was repression, not resolution. From the tsunono's point of view, there were powerful sanctions against anyone who would break the promise: the power of the ground to take its toll on the living is credited, and the Nakaripa's threat to enforce a large pig-kill is regarded as serious, and shameful because the Nakaripa are, from the Naboen point of view, the lesser pinaposa that nevertheless can enforce such agreements. But the threat of the ground is only a threat to liars, not to people confident in their own truth; the Nakaripa are outsiders, and the threat to cook pigs is not only hollow but a greater threat to Rokou than anyone else, since he relies on his bunkatun to provide pigs for the culmination of his tsuhana, yet to be concluded. The repression effected only a sublimation of the conflict. But at the moment tensions burst through, desublimation was rapid and paradoxically far more effective at reinstating the status quo and repressing debate on the real issues of succession and nisunono than the earlier overt effort.

The organization of a ngore is a function of tsuhana organization, but the tsuhana organization is not what it once was. The Nahirei house is in part a deliberate effort at revivalism: it is an assertion of kastom as kastom, a demonstration of what a true tsuhana is which would be hardly meaningful if tsuhana were a taken for granted part of social organization. Tsubana are not ever taken for granted:
they are the core of Halia identity, self-consciously so. By the same token, they are not detached from the reality that the forms of leadership and interdependence characteristic of the *tsuwano* are now inflected through a logic of acquisition, protection and exclusion. In this way, the houses remain focal to the organization of lineages: both the integration and analysis of the potentially separable Na hirei sub-lineages is inflected through the house, yet social control is no longer clearly articulated in the same way. Men such as Malo have different sources of status and wealth, not only in their own self-regard but as a concrete possibility of escape. Indeed, after the cycle of sorcery accusations climaxed again a month after the houses were destroyed, he fled to his distant kin and business partners in north Bougainville.
7. Marriage and the Sacrificial Economy

7.1. Overview

In the preceding chapters, we have seen that although descent ideology and ngore are the iconic forms of contemporary Halia political kinship, Halia social groups are not formed by the application of principles of affiliation and descent. A world organized around the umbilicus is a utopia, a pole of a social imaginary with a clear relation to the organization of land and political power. The projection into reality of this utopia leads to serious conflicts. Halia concepts of marriage put this fundamentally modern attitude in context: for it is a view of the social landscape that is grounded both in actual historical developments and a certain perspective on the meaning of history. Halia concepts of marriage are historicist in character: they posit an arc of cultural development, as different strategies of marriage are pursued within evolving and devolving historical conjunctures, finally leading to a calamitous present state of social disintegration and anarchical marriage. In this course, the moment at which the social configuration most clearly defines matrilineal unity—indeed, a moment of quasincestuous endogamy—has come to have an entirely nightmarish character, yet in the context of historical mythology, this pole can also represent a type of utopia. The beginning becomes both the Fall and Paradise, the current conjuncture becomes marked by both freedom and disorientation.

The organization of marriages also provides a window into broader questions of social organization. In practical terms, it might seem natural to hope that since descent ideology gives only a sketchy clue as to the formation of actual social groups, perhaps marriage practices would help define these. The notion that group boundaries can be cashed in terms of the boundaries of perceived incest and near-incest has an intuitive appeal to anthropologists, and is consonant with Halia views. However, while at first approximation it is indeed the case that exogamy is believed to define groups, in practice, and within certain less frequently visited aspects of the ideology, the issue is far more complex. The critical source of complexity is ultimately the concept of incest taboo itself: at the foundations of Halia political kinship there is a complex cultural articulation of incest phobia and incest passion, and anthropology is ill-advised to theorise the former without due attention to the latter (Mimica 1991, 2006; Patterson 2005).

The fundamental basis of Halia marriage practices is not a rule, but an evaluative structure containing two poles: an endogamous, analytical and ultimately incestuous pole, in which the matrilineage is perfectly self-reproducing, and an exogamous, synthetic pole in which exogamy ties together social groups within tshana alliances and exchange. Whilst the former renders men independent and powerful but wild and anti-social, the later renders them dependent, depletes their resources for the sake of other matrilineages, but also makes them pro-social, makes them ideal fathers.

The full spectrum of ideological and practical concretizations of this structure cannot be achieved at present. In practice this is partly because of the profoundly transformed character of Halia society, ideologically, free expression of the positive evaluation of near-incest is judged as sin and crime.
Political-cosmological organization of marriage has waned just as the *tsuron*, who would wish for continued control of this sphere, turn their practical attention to control of land and the insertion of the ‘traditional’ system of authority into the state-focused systems of contemporary Bougainville. This represents one of the most important ways in which the affirmation of ‘tradition’ serves as a vehicle for social transformation. The correlates of this transformation are personal freedom in choice of marriage partners, and a perception of disorder. Yet this transformation is by no means complete, and the transformation is inflected on the basis of the structure that is transformed: what is observed is an encroachment of a specially patterned type of chaos, not complete anarchy. That is to say, whilst there is a contemporary narrative of the ruin of marriage, this is a ruin that can only be understood within the horizon of concepts marriage that are decried as abandoned.

7.2. *Pinaposa*, exogamy and endogamy

To begin with, the possibility that *pinaposa* represent marriage classes should be considered. Previous studies of North Bougainvillcan Austronesian societies have come to very different conclusions in this respect. At the turn of the 20th century, Richard Parkinson wrote that “relations between two people of the same sign are regarded as incest.” (Parkinson 2000:287). Beatrice Blackwood asserted that “if questioned, any native will say that a man should marry a woman of a clan other than his own” (Blackwood 1935:41). By ‘clan’ Blackwood was referring to the *pinaposa* categories. But significantly, she states that “while clan exogamy is the recognised rule, it appears never to have been inviolable” (ibid), with cases in genealogical memory “as far back as my information extends, i.e. at least two generations ago” (ibid). This placed endogamous marriages into the middle third of the 19th century, hence for her the prevalence of endogamy “cannot be the result of a breakdown of the native system.” (Blackwood 1935:42). This is an observation with considerable significance as today villagers often assert that the practice of marriage ‘within the *pinaposa*’ is a symptom of social decay, some going so far as to say that in the past such marriages would have been punished by death or exile. There is today a general perception that the past was an era of carefully regulated exogamy, whereas the present is an era of chaotic marriages – *marit long rot* (married on the road), marriages stemming from drunken encounters at road-side dances. These marriages ‘do not last’, and men and women think nothing of adultery. This narrative of moral decay should not survive the briefest familiarity with Both Sides of Buka Passage’s numerous accounts of trysts and love magic, still common features of contemporary oral histories. In common with the past, then, present-day Buka assert an exogamous rule which they do not live by – but the present Buka suffer this as a symptom of social crisis in a manner which finds no parallel in Blackwood’s ethnography.

Subsequent research has confused the issue somewhat. Max Rimoldi initially reported not being able to find the “any native” that Blackwood had referred to (1973:52-53). Presumably, this means that no one voiced a preference for *pinaposa* exogamy. This is implausible. Today, if questioned, a significant majority of informants (including some of Rimoldi’s own informants) do indeed express the view

111 Blackwood 1935:114ff; writing of 1935, the Catholic missionaries Montauban and O’Reilly asserted “la promiscuité est total” (1951:33).

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Blackwood reported. In fact, a number of people expressed it to me unprompted, lest I misunderstand what they took to be a critical aspect of their society. The denial of exogamy is largely retained in Max and Eleanor Rimoldi’s joint publication, *Habalis and the Labour of Love*. There, we read:

The idea that in other cultures moieties are very often exogamous made no sense to people on small Buka. Hagus people for instance, would assert categorically that a man would be stupid to seek a wife in the territory of the other moiety, for she would act as an agent for the sorcery of her kin. (1992:29).

[We]...maintain that the two birds are indeed moieties and that they are not exogamous.(1992:29).

The local group of linked matrilineages...tends to be exogamous. It is said that marriage between known matrilineal kin is more strongly proscribed. However, the only marriage preference that is voiced is between persons spoken of and treated as distant matrincip. (1992:177).

It is worth noting that whilst some Hagus villagers still comment on there being only Nakaripa nearby, in practice there are several Naboien *tsabana* at Kiopan and Ileilina, less than ten minutes’ walk away. It is also clear that long-distance intermarriage amongst Buka villages has long been common – this is indeed blamed for land disputes today. Moreover, this idea is much more entrenched elsewhere in Buka, for Hanahan Halia has an unusually large majority of Nakaripa as compared to other areas. Yet nowhere in *Habalis and the Labour of Love* is there an acknowledgement of the fact that a large number of Halia believe exogamy at the level of *pinaposa* should be practiced. This is surprising, since they had earlier written:

It is common for whole groups to stand in cooperative and protective relationships with one another. For example a Naboien matrilineal can protect, hide and nourish a Nakaripa matrilineage and this relationship can sometimes be expressed in particular (but not necessarily recurring) marriages arranged between the two groups. (Rimoldi and Rimoldi 1991:334).

Here, the anthropological fascination with prescription and rules – or their absence – has led to neglect of the fact that these marriages are especially significant and ultimately fundamental to the constitution of *pinaposa* category. (The Rimoldis, a page after denying exogamy, emphasize that the prototype case of *halsunono*, the elevation of a *tsuno11o* is the elevation of Naboien by Nakaripa, and vice versa.)

Whilst marriage to classificatory cross-cousins does not entail *pinaposa* exogamy, and this and the *tsabana* sponsorship relationship can obtain between groups of the same *pinaposa*, the ideological elaboration of *pinaposa* exogamy in such contexts is substantial. At the highest levels of political rank cross-pinaposa articulation becomes compulsory. The construction of coalition *tsabana* involving both *pinaposa* is not isolated from the network of marriages between the cooperating *tsabana*: it is their expression. It is unlikely that these doctrines, which were often held resolutely against my sceptical inquiries, and were once evidently common enough for Blackwood to arrive at her conclusions, should have been absent from the island for the duration of the Rimoldis’ fieldwork112. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that Alexis Sarei – later to become the first Premier of Bougainville – reported that

112 Note that Romeo Tohiana’s 1982 Honours dissertation supports Blackwood’s view.
the Solos groups "did not practice totem exogamy", and indeed "marriage between these totem groups was strictly prohibited" (Sarei 1974:302). He too qualified this by observing that hereditary chiefs would organize strategic exogamous marriages, an important point he unfortunately neglected to pursue. Whilst Sarei is himself a Solos man, this strict prohibition of non-chiefly exogamy found no support amongst the Solos I interviewed. A possible explanation for this discrepancy is that Sarei attempted a reconstruction of traditional Solos society mediated by the mythohistorical complexes we shall treat in the next section.

In quantitative terms, Max Rimoldi asserted that one in three marriages by Hahalis Naboen are to Nakaripa (Rimoldi 1973:53); note that Hahalis (a village named after an important stone 'of the affines', bali) is overwhelmingly a Naboen village. In 1999, Bill Sagir attempted to settle the question for the Haku at Lontis and comprehensively surveyed marriages there. Although his study is valuable and he draws a number of conclusions, the pattern of marriage between Nakas, Nakaripa, Naboen and Natasi 'clans' apparent in his data is almost certainly consistent with a random choice of partner. This does not preclude the possibility that some people systematically practice deliberate exogamy, or strategically pursued endogamy.

7.3. Marriage strategies

The foregoing should dispel the suggestion that the pinapena represent marriage classes in any straightforward sense. It should also signal the need to account for the possibility that certain forms of marriage are especially significant. The ethnographic picture is in this respect extraordinarily complex. The only true marriage rules in Buka are the prohibition of incest, defined in consanguineal terms but more rigidly enforced matrilaterally, and the prohibition of marriage amongst actual first born cross-cousins. Yet even these two prohibited marriages are in fact attractive, since they

113 Sagir (2003:92) argues that in the Haku area, the Nakas were to marry with the Natasi, and not with the high-status Nakaripa or Naboen. He notes that this "does not correspond to actual practice in numerous instances". He is apparently unaware of the degree to which this is true. His data yield the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Nakaripa</th>
<th>Nakas</th>
<th>Naboen</th>
<th>Natasi</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nakaripa</td>
<td>60 (61.4)</td>
<td>94(100.6)</td>
<td>37 (28.9)</td>
<td>7 (7.9)</td>
<td>12 (11.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nakas</td>
<td>94 (100.6)</td>
<td>156 (164.8)</td>
<td>57 (47.4)</td>
<td>15 (12.9)</td>
<td>22 (18.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naboen</td>
<td>37 (28.9)</td>
<td>57 (47.4)</td>
<td>2 (13.6)</td>
<td>1 (3.7)</td>
<td>2 (5.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natasi</td>
<td>7 (7.9)</td>
<td>15 (12.9)</td>
<td>1 (3.7)</td>
<td>2 (1)</td>
<td>2 (1.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>12 (9)</td>
<td>22 (14.8)</td>
<td>2 (4.2)</td>
<td>2 (1.1)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The figures in brackets are the expected number of marriages if marriage choice is random and (a) marriages are endogamous within Lontis or (b) the wider population structure resembles Lontis. From this we can observe that there are slightly fewer Nakaripa, Nakas and Natasi endogamous marriages and somewhat more Naboen endogamous marriages than expected. Ironically, Sagir makes an exception for the Nakas: "there is...a tendency among the Nakas toward clan endogamy" (p93). He speculates that this would be a strategy to boost numbers for political ends. In fact, none of these results is significant. The hypothesis of random distribution of Nakas marriages has $\chi^2 = 0.152$, $p<0.005$ for df=4; the Nakaripa $\chi^2=0.434$, $p<0.05$. 149
represent tempting resolutions to basic tensions in Halia social organization. Fundamentally, lineage endogamy and cross-cousin marriage represents means by which a lineage or a pair of lineages may cut itself off from exchange, and make paternal and maternal transfers of resources coincide. Halia historical mythology emphasizes that this leads to a situation of radical hostility between self-reproducing groups. Exogamy is the condition of possibility for wide-scale sociality, endogamy provokes powerful jealousies.

In this respect, the most substantial contribution of Rimoldi and Rimoldi lies in their analysis of *brideprice as a transformation of human sacrifice*. In this section, I shall rehearse the Rimoldis’ arguments. Whilst there are problems with their exposition, this is the correct starting point for an analysis of Halia marriage. There are three shortcomings to their analysis which I will seek to correct. The first is an overly literal interpretation of the injunction against cross-cousin marriage. Rimoldi and Rimoldi note that “marriage between cross-cousins is forbidden and is extremely rare even amongst irregular unions” (1993: 71): this is true, but it appears to have blinded them to the fact that marriage between classificatory cross-cousins is in fact preferred, and very much common. The reason classificatory cross-cousins should marry, but actual cross cousins must not, stems from the different role of paternal care in each case. When this omission is corrected, it can be shown that the original insight regarding sacrificial relations is all the more acute. The second issue that requires reconsideration is the over-reliance on mythohistorical accounts in Rimoldi and Rimoldi’s presentation. One reason this poses problems is that there are many different mythohistorical accounts; it is also clear that the narratives are in a state of flux. Another is that the relationship of these mythohistorical cycles to actual social practices remains somewhat obscure. Finally, the detachment of these considerations from the question of *pinaposa* exogamy is unwarranted, because although there is no general prescription or preference for marriage at that level, exogamous practice here maximally articulates Halia political ontology, and is especially important at the apex of the political hierarchy.

7.3.1. Historical mythologies

The Halia are profoundly invested in what can be termed historical mythology. This tendency reaches a climax with the accounts of the genesis and meaning of marriage institutions. Here one finds periodizations of cultural and social history which hinge on the transformation of marriage paradigms, and these are developed with impressive depth. The basic message of these narratives is that in the past, Halia society practiced endogamy within the *bunkatun* or even the matrilineage, which is overcome by prosocial exogamy. It is worth noting that the first recorded mention of this narrative occurs in Blackwood, where it is reported as historic fact:

At Lemanmanu...I was told that in the olden days the Manu ['eagle', ie. Naboen] people lived at Lemanmanu and the Kekeleo ['fowl', ie. Nakaripa] people at the neighbouring village of Lemankoa, a short distance along the coast. There was great enmity between the two villages, so that people from the one could not go inside the barricade of the other. Intermarriage never took place between them in those days, but now that there is no more fighting they intermarry and live in either the husband’s village or the wife’s village as they please. (Blackwood 1935: 44-45).
Whilst her account does not explicitly state so, it seems Blackwood understood the 'olden days' to refer to the precolonial past, and that the cessation of fighting was a recent phenomenon associated with colonial pacification. Yet this is not beyond doubt. The significance of this is that in 1929, when Blackwood collected this information, a colonial-era cessation of fighting and the precolonial social order would still be in living memory and this brief account would corroborate later historical mythologies. However it is also possible that Blackwood was already encountering the mythohistorical structure we shall concern ourselves with here. It is questionable whether the relationship between Lemanmanu and Lemankoa was always one of total hostility and mutual exclusion. Lineages in Haku are intermarried as far back as genealogical memory extends.

It is therefore more likely that the 'event' reported to Blackwood was rather the structure of a type of event which occurred repeatedly. This is apparently the view of Rimoldi and Rimoldi. The critical issue is that endogamy was not imposed by considerations of warfare, but rather positively valued. (There are more profound structural reasons for it than barricades. Indeed, as we shall see below, the Halia perspective is rather that one must build barricades because of endogamy, not the reverse.) The benefit of such marriage practices according to Rimoldi and Rimoldi, is that it cuts through the 'matrilineal puzzle':

One [mytho-historical] account of the changes in marriage custom emphasised the advantage of the tendency to marry within the local group of linked matrilineages because then the father could *batsunono* (make *tsuono*) his own son. He could pass on his paternal status to increase his son's status as inherited from the child's mother without being put in the position of losing this paternal status to an outside, unrelated lineage. (Rimoldi and Rimoldi 1992:186).

In contemporary Halia society, *batsunono* is typically the responsibility of *tsubana* that have the relationship of cross-cousin to each other. In this organization, one can only become *tsuono* – and since the *tsubana* is the basic edifice of social ontology, only *become* at all – with aid of people who are not of one's own lineage. The cross-cousin relationship is especially significant in the case of the *tsuono* and *teitaholo*: it is in this case, above all, that the relationship of *habinas* (cross-cousinship) is marked as significant. Between a *tsuono* and his MBD, and between the *teitaholo* and her MBS, there are several taboos: they must not eat in each other's presence, should not touch each other, and must behave modestly. These are some of the few taboos that are still strictly enforced in the present, on par with the avoidance of affines' personal names. There is also, as the Rimoldi's note, a perceived potential for hostility between affines. Local endogamy would overcome this. In such a situation, the individual *tsubana* or matrilineages are entirely self-reproducing: maternal and paternal interests harmonize completely. In the ultimate radicalization of this thought, the father is the mother's brother. The attraction of this possibility stems from principles that are prototypically found in the *tsubana* organization, but which are in fact general factors that still dominate much of Halia life. A father-

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114 Note that Rimoldi and Rimoldi imply that the relationship of *habinas* is used exclusively in the case of the *teitaholo* and *tsuono* (1991:334). There is no question that this is the paradigmatic case, and that men and women who are not *tsuono* or *teitaholo* do not appear concerned with protecting and cultivating their relationships of *habinas*. However, there is an expansion of this term to people who do not have such status, though this is confused by the fact that claims to *tsuono* and *teitaholo* status have multiplied; *habinas* is accurately summarized as the relationship between the first-born of lineages, acquiring a decisive function and full articulation in the case of the *tsuono* and *teitaholo*.
uncle would plants his own coconuts and establishes his own tsuhana in land his children have *de jure* access to, solving the great dilemma facing virtually every married man in Buka. By marrying within one's own, *paiow* would be 'locked' within the lineage. And it is not only the *ntsunomo* of ceremonial currency that would be 'locked': the effort of raising children, building *tsuhana*, or for that matter paying school fees and founding businesses would not leak out. There are hence a number of important reasons why endogamy might be tempting, and indeed, why 'incestuous' relationships might come to resemble a type of 'singularity', where the rules of exchange and reproduction break down and a group becomes entirely self-making – and therefore extremely powerful – but also entirely cut-off from its no longer beloved enemy.

Rimoldi and Rimoldi present essentially two instances in which this singularity condition was approached. First, under exceptional circumstances a *tsunono* that is *langokots*, that is to say, lacking a sister or sister's daughter could father his own successor by a custom called *tsinahu*:

...*tsinahu* – can take place in rare circumstances and permits a classificatory sister to bear a *tsunono's* child in order to perpetuate his status. Such intercourse would ordinarily be forbidden, and *tsinahu* thus underlines the importance of that relationship in perpetuating the chiefly line. It is used only when a *pinapata* is in danger of dying out and a man who already has some claim to chiefly status is chosen to be a new *tsunono*. The relationship between the brother and classificatory sister in this case is not considered a marriage, but merely a means of gaining an heir. If the child born of this union is female, the matrilineal line is assured, but if it is a male he too must have a child by his classificatory sister.


Secondly, they suggest that certain funeral rites allowed for just this possibility, a type of ghost paternity that was at once also incestuous which would also serve to preserve *ntsunomo* in cases of *langokots*. We shall examine this somewhat more doubtful contention below. These practices are the most dramatic demonstrations of the "original procreative power of the brother and the sister" (ibid), given full expression in some origin narratives. But even without these radicalizations, classificatory kinship and the fact that *tsuhana* alliances and *sungutu* are not always incest-defining permits the creation of effective 'father/mother's-brothers'. The logic of exogamy can be properly appreciated only from the perspective of the powerful force of endogamy, which must be forgone for permanent sacrificial relations such that one's own lineage cannot become without the paternal input of another.

Like Blackwood, Rimoldi and Rimoldi note that in such accounts, the phase of endogamy is constructed as one in which groups were isolated, in permanent tension with groups around them. Initially, Eleanor Rimoldi reported a narrative in which exogamy was established at the time of pacification, similar to Blackwood (see below), but in the ultimate development of their position, the Rimoldis present a gradual process of alliance-building in the context of mutual hostility. It is in this context that brideprice emerges:

With increasingly distant marriages choices, both the tension and the co-operation became more intense and more dangerous. Larger groups were enabled to enter into mutually supportive and regenerative relationships, but these new formulations still contain within them the contradiction
inherent in the conflict relationships between groups which have been potential antagonists in warfare and the capture of women, and sealed their pacts in human sacrifice. (Rimoldi and Rimoldi 1992:186).

As expressed in their linear history, this original impulse which then produced brideprice provided the means for transforming death and capture into a new set of co-operative mergers, and it is brideprice which disguises and inhibits the violence. Brideprice is a transformation of human sacrifice. (Rimoldi and Rimoldi 1992:187).

These statements do capture something profound about Buka society. However, it is unclear here what is Buka 'linear history' and what is the anthropologists' own reconstructive effort. The picture of gradual extension of the scope of alliances forged on the sublimation of hostility into marriage owes more to anthropology than to the Halia on at least one point: Halia 'linear histories' have sharply demarcated phases. The demarcation is necessarily sharp from the Halia perspective, because the transformation is mediated by sacrifice, and sacrifices are awesome, terrible events that seek to, and for better or worse always succeed in fundamentally reconfiguring the social fabric. This aspect of the account is less credible as an actual reconstruction. We may then provisionally assign the theory above to Rimoldi and Rimoldi, noting that it is far from implausible: indeed, it is a clear ethnographic datum that the formation of alliances is founded upon sacrifices amongst hostile groups, and that these alliances convert these sacrifices into marriages. This conclusion can be arrived at from the examination of notable cases in the present period, independently of the analysis of Halia historical mythology. Nevertheless, it is well worth revisiting the narrative cycle in question, which are extraordinary in a number of ways. They shed light on the values motivating these alliances, and allow us to further develop the picture of historical mythology that is so important for the legitimation of social power in contemporary Halia.

7.3.2. Tripela matmat

According to one commonly encountered narrative, Buka's history is broken into three phases corresponding to three cemeteries, 'tripela matmat'. The first cemetery was man's belly. This was a 'time of senseless fighting' and cannibalism, during which the Nakaripa and Naboen married their own. For this reason they could wage war for the annihilation of the enemy; and for this reason too they could eat the enemy in an expression of rage and contempt. This epoch of fighting ended with peace, after which the Halia came to dispose of their dead at specified areas out from the reef known as hahamku, a practice that is acknowledged in contemporary funerary rites when the coffin is 'rowed' to the grave.

Peace was established through bibats ('mutual fires'), a ceremonial oath sealed by sacrifice, stil. To establish the rules for all time a ritual fight was enacted in front of the tsembana, where two warriors fought to the death; the survivor was killed. This killing established what in Tok Pisin is usually called gasman blong peles. This basic framework for peace is emphatically stated as pinaposa exogamy. Nakaripa was to marry Naboen, and vice-versa. This, informants state, made fighting impossible. It is not only the presence of one's gobus amongst the enemy that prevents attack, as if these people were held as
'hostages' — although that is one way the Halia explain the system. Exogamy entails that reproduction must involve what could be termed the 'beloved enemy', one can only become with their involvement. The father rises, in this arrangement, to the role of both guarantor and instigator of the child's socialization. Conversely the enemy is one's own korkorana, 'dirty things': men cannot kill pigs they raised, let alone children.

Finally, with the arrival of the mission — and in this narrative, the mission always arrives after peace — the dead came to be buried in the third cemetery, land graves. And though it is not explicitly part of the narrative, this is the phase of government, chaotic marriage relations, marriages 'on the road' and of course — though here we have truly left the text for its context — of efforts to reconstruct and overcome the deficiencies of the present order. There is a political horizon to this historical imagination, but it is neither a fatalistic teleology of failure and disintegration, or of the unambiguous overcoming of savagery and sinfulness. It is a complex story, which elevates an indigenous pact as the central sociogenic event — Halia civilization (a word used by educated informants) comes from within, at fearsome cost: nobody takes sacrifices lightly. Killing in sacrifice is a much graver deed than a personal murder. Those killed over feuds in the 19th century are long forgotten and their deaths are stripped of meaning, the deaths of those killed by social compacts remain, permanently sedimented in the social imaginary.

There can be no suggestion of this narrative structure being a straightforward factual recollection of events. House burials were practiced in Buka since pre-contact times, and these have been entirely omitted. A likely reason for this is that house burials are most common with children, whose deaths do not have the political-cosmological significance necessary for a sociogenetic narrative. Conversely, in actual practice it appears sea burials were obligatory only for tsuwo (Blackwood 1935:493), and there was never a regime of generalized cannibalism. Rather, the forms of burial seized on by the narrative epitomize the dominant form of social organization, a perceived 'total social fact' for each period. They do this clearly, and with striking depth. In the original state, which can be conceived of as the projection into the past of destructive tensions felt in the present, the critical issue is the hostile relationship between groups. Endogamy generates fierceness and power; people of this phase are so to speak, 'wild' (a bie), dangerous but also vigorous. In the second phase, this destructive vitality is sublimated into a self-generated Halia social order, relating to customs of reconciliation and orderly exogamous marriage which are now a byword for an imagined lost era. Some informants state explicitly that it is bie that establishes the possibility of substituting pigs for men in tsuwo sacrifices. Here, the critical governing principle is the tsuwo, the body is returned not to the body, 'selfishly', but to the sea — which is strongly associated with the sky and chiefly authority in what is fundamentally a classically Austronesian political ontology (compare Sahlins 1978:44; 1985:99ff; Kaplan 1995:26). A critical feature of haruko is that individual lineages within a tsuwo cluster all

115 Note the resonance here with the ambivalent attitude towards bie — the demiurgic concept at work in the Origin of Coconut: thought/lightning, which is at once evil and destructive, but also creative and the icon of the power of the tsuwo. Recovering the power of those who were a bie, without its destructive preconditions, is bie — 'thinking' that leads to power — bersy, from the perspective of the Church.

116 One example of this is that the Nakaripa is associated with the fowl, 'work' and ground whilst the Naboen is associated with the eagle, sky and 'ruling'. Apart from this there are also symbols such as solhanga (water-spout
disposed of their bodies at a single sea-cemetery, assigned (perhaps retrospectively) to the highest ranked *tsuana*. Finally, the mission arrives and bodies come to be buried in the land. With this is inaugurated the phase in which the location of burial is the decisive issue for the organization of land: land burials are not supposed to be performed by each individual lineage in its own backyard, but this is exactly what they seek to do. It is an explicit strategy for the assertion of land claims, and finds its ultimate expression in the cementing of graves, now a common feature of mortuary rituals. With this period of atomization comes anarchic marriage. Implicit in this narrative, then, is an understanding of the history of Halia political economy. We shall resume this issue below.

### 7.3.3 The Golden Age

An earlier variation of the mythohistorical narrative of *hibats* is provided by Eleanor Rimoldi. In this version, the chronology shifts and exogamy becomes permissible at the time of pacification, rather than being a self-generated peace. Rimoldi and Rimoldi subsequently offered another interpretation of this same material that is more consonant with the *Tripela Matmat* narrative (Rimoldi and Rimoldi 1992:186-7). However, this passage is particularly significant in that it expands in some detail the nature of the endogamous world, and outlines an Eden-like original state:

The version that I present here is my understanding of the various versions (all very similar) given to me by Teosin, his wife Elizabeth, and various other headmen and headwomen. This account of marriage custom was presented as a sequence. The original state of affairs on Buka was described as the most peaceful and benign. At that time the power of the *tsuono* was directly passed on to his heir in the custom of *gum*. In this ancient past, there was no marriage as we know it today. People chose their own mates, children of unions would be brought up by matrikin – it really did not matter who the father of the children was, and there was no jealousy. The power of the *tsuono* was directly passed on to his heir in the custom of *gum*. When a *tsuono* died, his *titaibol* lived in a house with any or all of the members of that matriline. Under these conditions the *titaibol* would eventually bear a child, who would be considered the new *golu*, heir to the *tsuono*’s power and status. This system depended on the absence of jealousy, and is expressed by the Welfare Society as being like their own ideal – “The ground was one, the fruit of the ground was one, the women were one, the fruit of the women were one.” But, one day a young man who had not entered into the *gum*, saw his woman there and he became jealous and with some other young men became angry. They broke down the house and killed the occupants. From then on jealousy began and with it came brideprice. If anyone committed adultery they would be killed because the woman belonged to her husband, the tellers stress. At this point, there was still no suggestion that men found their wives anywhere but within the same matriline, or linked matrilineages. There also was still warfare (or sometimes people say that is when warfare began) and cannibalism. The only way women could be obtained other than within your own group was by capture, for which no payment was made. It seems that it was at the time of contact, when the fighting and cannibalism came to an end, that all the headmen met, and a big feast took place, pigs were killed, spears, bows, and arrows were broken on the heads of the *tsuono* – a promise or tornado) which are symbols (*sinebe*) of *tsuono*, frequently depicted in slit-gongs; as well as *bakats* in the sense of lightning and power.

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was made to end the fighting. Then it became permissible to marry 'outside' and brideprice must be paid. (E. Rimoldi 1982:180-181).

In this account there are two phases of endogamy: a primordial situation of generalized reproduction without marriage within an effectively permanent *gum*—which, it is worth stressing, takes place within the *tsuhana* or a house with the equivalent status. This utopian plenitude collapses because of jealousy, leading to first phase of the *Tripela Matmat* chronology. This particular narrative is especially intriguing since the original state was one *without marriage*: this is a possible coordinate for utopia within the structural span of Halia conceptions of marriage.

7.3.4. *Eating one's food hot*

So far, we have examined aspects of a mythohistorical cycle that underscore the sociogenic role of exogamous marriage, whilst endogamy appears as a possibility of a self-directed accumulation of power, unlimited by the sublimated violence of affinal prestations. However one decides on the relation of narrative to fact, it remains the case that this tension projected into the mythohistorical past is generated in the present. Its correlate is the parallel elaboration of strategic endogamous marriage reported by the Rimoldis, alongside exogamous alliances modelled on *bihani*.

In this type of marriage, the couple is drawn from 'distantly related matrilineal kin'—a ‘vague’ preference if assessed from the point of view of aggregate marriages, but not at all ‘vague’ for the particular individuals who realize their kinship potential through these means. The specific kin involved, we shall see, are rarely *actual* matrilineal kin by the standards elaborated in the doctrinal concept of *ngurrre*: typically, they are *sungut* or groups associated by alliances and migration. ‘Marrying back’ or ‘marrying oneself’ can also relate to marrying particular types patrilateral kin, effectively classificatory cross-cousins.

The justification the Halia give for these forms of marriage is that *'Alu e go nāmn a ti kohele a hiski'*: 'you must eat hot food [baskets].’ In the first instance, this is a reference to the idea that if one settles amongst one's own people, one will be treated well. In particular, it is believed that a child will be better looked after by relatives who are of its own lineage under conditions of virilocal settlement. Conflict between patrilocally settled groups and 'land owners' is utterly endemic in present-day Halia, but its sources lie deep in the structures of hierarchical integration that allow their long-term stabilization in such positions, and is unlikely to be *solely* a consequence of land disputes. By 'marrying back' into one's own people in endogamous marriages one's father and mother will form one set of relatives (under some definition). Land will in this way be concentrated, and informants typically state that the resort to endogamy is a strategy for consolidating land holding. In the limiting case, in which a man marries within his own *tsuhana's bokkatun*, his interest as father harmonizes with his interests as mother's brother. This is, of course, rubbing perilously close to incest. But that is explicitly understood as another meaning of the expression 'hot baskets'. As I skirted around the conversation

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117 Sagir (2003:92) reports that the Nakas in Lomis were believed to practice endogamy so as to increase their numbers. While it seems doubtful that the Nakas practiced any general strategy (see fn. 114 above), the belief only makes sense on the grounds that endogamy leads to better social and physical reproduction.
trying to figure out a way to ask politely about the prima facie sexual undertone of the expression (equivalence of food and sex is pervasive Halia culture), the senior chief I was interviewing bluntly explained that men seek to marry where they will eat hot food "because they want to sleep with their sisters."

Of course, the Halia find the concept of incest shocking, and incest between brother and sister is especially shocking: I heard of only one case approximating this, a rape where the accused was generally accepted to have been insane. But as the Rimoldis note, the sibling relationship is extremely important in Buka, it is not characterised by sexual shame and it factors explicitly into origin mythology (1992:174). The brother-sister relationship is utterly critical for the tsunono, which cannot exist without 'three people' – the tsunono, peis and teitab yol (or the tsunono, gobus and teitabol, depending on the formulation). Whilst every origin mythology that begins with a couple operates with some modification of sibling incest, the elaboration of this in Halia myth and social practice is extensive. Whilst for some societies in Melanesia it has been said that to commit incest is a failure of mutual recognition of relatedness (McDougall 2004:96), in the Halia ontology of kinship it is possible to recognise an intensification and indeed ultimately a simultaneous elimination and totalisation of just such relationships through forms of quasi-incest: Recognising relatedness with someone is, ipso facto, recognising difference from others; in a certain Halia utopian formation, it is possible to simultaneously abolish and intensify both.

7.3.5. Genesis of the hinas taboo

7.1. Primordial Endogamy

Both the Golden Age and Hikatts narratives contain substantially the same structure. In the situation of primordial endogamy (Fig 7.1), the father is his son's classificatory mother's brother: the matrilineal puzzle is cut through, as he passes his nitsunono on to his son. In the radicalized utopia of the Golden Age, this represents a collapse of unity in which there was no need to isolate and increase nitsunono, as there was no hostility or jealousy: this can also be a future golden age, and is the outline of the 'millennium' particular to this political assemblage. (Nitsunono is an intrinsically differential and hierarchical substance/concept; in the zeroeth degree of kinship of the Golden Age, it becomes infinite.) Primordial endogamy is not exactly this utopia. Implicit in Fig 7.1, is the presence of others who reproduce likewise and in competition. In the 'Golden Age' narrative above, this arrangement of separate self-reproducing lineages is associated with brideprice, the specific type of brideprice involved is the transfer of right ad genetricum – the purchase outright of the woman, conceived within the
paradigm of marriage by capture (E. Rimoldi 1982:181; M. Rimoldi 1971:59). This form of brideprice is notably absent from contemporary Buka, and to the extent that it is a feature of kin histories, it is a major point of contention – as, for that matter, is the related issue of adoption. (Both are often considered evidence of common, prior matrilineal descent; it is the whole history that is adopted, or coopted. In a matrilineal system, adoption is not so difficult if it can be retroactive.) In the contemporarily relevant sense, there can be no brideprice in Fig 7.1: paion and land is ‘locked’. Equally, put into actual practice Fig 7.1 would be incest, and marriages back to maternal relatives such that this structure would in fact retain paion and nitsunono is extremely rare.

From this perspective, marriage to a cross cousin can be understood as a kind of second degree endogamy, hence the statement that in such arrangements one eats hot food. In an arrangement as depicted by Fig. 7.2, one’s lineage becomes ‘father’ to another, which then reciprocates. Marriage to actual binas is in theory utterly taboo, and in practice the relationship between cross-cousins is far more restrained and governed by avoidance than the relationship between siblings. However, it must be noted first that this kind of marriage is a feature of some genealogies, especially of high-ranking figures who are considered powerful but fierce¹¹⁸. Second, whilst marriage to the actual binas is extremely problematic, marriage to classificatory cross-cousins other than the binas is common, and many informants state that this is a preferred marriage.

Why this is so can be understood in the third abstracted case (Fig 7.3), which represents a more accurate, though still idealized model of typical tsunana marriages. The lineage on the left is first ‘father’ to the lineage on the right, reproducing it physically and socially; when the tsunono of the right-hand lineage dies, it is the left-hand lineage that will act as pepeito (‘guardian’ or ‘overseer’) for the gobus as the gobus and his sister build their tsunana. The second generation of the right-hand lineage will call the left-hand lineage ‘father’, and even in subsequent generations it will be common to hear the ‘fathers’ assert that the so-and-so’s ‘are our children’. The contribution of pepeito to tsunana construction does require the commitment of pigs, and it exposes the guardians to the dangers and rewards of tsunana construction. The marriage at the bottom is an especially natural one, since it reverses the fatherly reproductive effort and permits the alignment of tsunana, brideprice and hispepe

¹¹⁸ Pinari, the formidable tsunono of Blackwood’s work, is one such man (Blackwood 1935:69, 112); note the severe sanctions against matrilateral marriages amongst lesser men (ibid, p. 76). Contemporary Halia typically agree with Blackwood’s statement (1935:68) that the penalty for binaus marriage in the past was death or exile.
exchanges. But above all, the *pepeito* are the most trusted and significant allies of the *tinono*: this, more than the niceties of exchange, must be regarded as the motivating factor.

Why is the third case acceptable, but not the second? Partly, it is the distance of blood, but the critical difference is that in the third case, the man at the youngest generation who marries his MFZDD is *not raised by her lineage*. He is not their *korkoriana*, the investment of paternal nurture comes from somewhere else, as it must if the taboo against *binas* marriage is observed. Men will not kill their own pigs; when the time for mass sacrifice at a *tunbana* comes, they will exchange pigs. The son is an investment of self much greater than a pig. Here we see the precise articulation of the principle that one may not eat one’s own *korkoriana* – in the context where capturing *korkoriana* would be the strategy of maximal self-direction of power.

Why should the transition between phases characterised by these schema be so difficult that mythohistorical accounts state they must be established with human sacrifice? In the case of primordial endogamy, the kin unit is self-contained: reproduction is autonomous. In actual exogamous cross-cousin marriage, social reproduction requires another kin group – one cannot ‘make oneself’ – yet the linked matrilineages form an eddy isolated from the broader social flow. But in the third case, kin structure fuses together more than two lineages. In fig. 7.3, the reciprocation of fatherhood from the right-hand lineage to the left-hand lineage does not bring back the *nitsumono* given by (1) to his son (2); that *nitsumono* and paternal nurture comes from another lineage (5). Finally, the brideprice (1) presented is not fully reciprocated when his ZDD marries his DS: the source of the brideprice paid by his DS (5) is *both* his own father and mother’s brother. Classificatory and corporate forms of cross-cousin marriage analogous to this necessarily implicate a broader social network, they are sociogenic. But forming alliances between these groups is immensely difficult: it must, as the Rimoldis noted, be understood within the horizon of potential or actual warfare, and moreover it is a sacrifice even when no one is killed: what is sacrificed in every such case is autochthony, autonomy, power, the capacity to reproduce oneself entirely from oneself.
7.4 Exogamy and political articulation: three cases

7.4.1. Hahalis Patu

Until the emergence of the Hahalis Welfare Society in 1960s, the most clearly articulated political assemblage in Hahalis was a patu coalition of tshubana integrating five independent tshubana between Hasuno and Topin. Further south, Nahiru and Talinga formed a distinct group, whilst the tshubana settled between Hatakono and Salasa provided the patu’s fighting force. All these groups, and their Hanahan neighbours were interlinked by marriages, alliances and rivalries which formed a complex network of superimposed claims. The patu itself emerged through the articulation of certain alliances and the exclusion of others, with the result that there are today overlapping claims about precedence and title, both amongst the descendants of the groups that constituted the coalition and amongst groups that assert the coalition had a narrower scope than claimed by its descendents. A notable example of this is the land dispute at Hakaleo, which effectively presents a task of translating tshubana relationships into land claims. In this section, we will examine how this coalition was assembled, specifically how exogamous pinaposa marriage serves as the vehicle for group reproduction.

There are three critical core groups within the patu. Munkelekele (composed of three subgroups M1, M2, and M3), Munatsil (A) and Kuru (K1 and K2). Munkelekele has historically been preeminent amongst these: when the patu was last erected (in the 1920s), Koroats, the tsunono of M1 was munibil. Although a full patu has not been built since, Koroats’ younger brother and then sister’s son, Putas, have taken on powerful nitsunono. But in the present period, his lineage has ‘rested’, leaving M2 to take its place: the rationale for this, as is so often the case, is that high rank means exposure to sorcery and therefore depleted numbers. The pre-eminence of Munkelekele is partly associated with especially lethal sorcery that was kept at its tshubana: so much so that when in 2007 a concerted effort was again undertaken to eliminate all sorcery, its leadership had to disavow any knowledge of the old practices – a delicate matter, since too strong a disavowal would undermine their historical claims. When the patu was built in 1920s, an especially important role was reserved for Takis, the tsunono of the Munatsil group: this man was a famous sorcerer and took on the role of tson kuahu (‘ash man’, master of sacrifices) within the tshubana. Sangin, his sister’s son and Putas’ contemporary was also a capable leader and several factions within Hahalis assert that in fact, it is this lineage that ‘had’ the munibil, and could therefore hatunono Koroats. A supporting aspect of this claim is that lineage Munatsil A has been settled in Hahalis for longer than Munkelekele. M1 is closely related to the leadership of Sorom, in the northern Selau – a site where concentrated power accumulated much as it had in central Hanahan. The Sorom group had a reputation as fearsome warriors:115 this means their nitsunono is very strong, but it also provides the rationale for their being ‘called over’ to Hahalis. In turn the Kuru (or Iapipi) group has its own claim to high status, but although Repese – Putas’ contemporary – had been a competent leader, this group is severely depleted and today struggles to assert itself. Kuru is intermarried with the tsunono lineage of Hanhakalana and, notably, John Teosin’s

115 A reputation, incidentally, reactivated in the Crisis years – the Me’ekamui military commander for Buka, Willie Aga, rose to pre-eminence in the BRA and in 2007 was in the process of attempting to mobilize genealogical claims as well as former BRA alliances to build a patu.
lineage including John Teosin himself. These Nakaripa groups are *pepeito* to the Kuru, witnessing for them in court cases and guiding them through *tsubana* construction; their mutual *hatsunono* was critical both in the *patu* and in subsequent articulation of the Hahalis Welfare Society.

Kuru is indeed the paradigmatic case for the sacrificial foundations of brideprice, which prompted Eleanor Rimoldi to develop her analysis. During her fieldwork, she attended a wedding involving this group and observed that instead of the jovial, slightly provocative sexual teasing of affines that is characteristic of Buka marriages, some women were weeping. She photographed the scene and turned to one of her key informants:

I showed them [the photographs] to her, she had not been to the wedding...When she saw the pictures of the women weeping, she said, "The reason they are all crying is because someone will die, someone must die when we make someone *tsunono* or *teitabol*." She said it in such a way that death seemed certain, inevitable. (E. Rimoldi 1982: 179)

Some thirty years later, I interviewed the *teitabol* of the Kuru group. I collected a genealogy and then asked why their *tsubana* had paused at the *ahasa* stage for several years, apparently without plans for carrying its feasting through to *kinalala*. She told me that "It is too great a thing for us to make *tsunono*; if we make *tsunono*, someone must die."

The north Hahalis *patu*, like most other *patu* for which solid information is available, was built after the establishment of firm colonial government – which can be dated to the entrenchment of the mission in the 1920s. The men who built it were all initiated within the *ruko* cult, but they were also converts to Christianity and ascribed roles in the colonial government. It is notable that a separate and to some extent competing claim to *patu* centres on the figures of Kukono, and Rōho. Kukono was a famous warrior, a man with a powerful *tsunono* feasted in the fiercest way possible: though his service as warrior and assassin was originally sought by the groups forming the *patu*, he was later handed over to the German police. There are different accounts of the extent to which Kukono's violence was endorsed by the *tsunono* who would ultimately betray him. Rōho in turn was a major cult leader in the 1930s and during World War II, eventually organizing a Ponzi scheme based 'bank' in Solos. According to the dominant lineages within the Hahalis *patu*, this group was granted land in Hahalis, hence have no autochthonous status. But this history can therefore be read in different ways: as the *translation* of traditional authority into the context of colonial government, with Kukono and Rōho as problematic individuals and then outlaws, and the *tsunono* exercising their traditional role of ‘settling the settlement’ (*babana i ban*) through new means; or it can be seen as the *usurpation* of a faction exploiting colonial connections to sideline those who retained *true kastom*. The matter is fundamentally undecidable – and the rationale for asking the questions finds its foundations in the contemporary conjunction.
In Fig. 7.4, I have represented some of the marriages by which the *patu* was articulated, focusing on the Naboen lineage of Munatsil and the Nakaripa lineage of Munasoa/Hakaleo (L). Generation VIII in the diagram are now in their late middle age. Munatsil, Munekelekele and Kuru are the core Naboen components of the Habalis *patu* of Kororats, whilst the Hakaleo Nakaripa provided the *petis*. The Nakaripa groups indicated here are also not entirely unrelated. In generation V, the *teitabol* of Munatsil was to marry Tetebe, a *tsuono* of Ōmahe (see below). His coalition, led by Sariaria, had significant contributions from Munasoa, the ancestral *tsuhana* of the Hakaleo in Hanahan. Traditionally, the relationship between Munatsil and Ōmahe was close, and linked to the sacrificial economy: when a body was taken to the *sizing* at Ōmahe to be butchered, the head would be sent for the Munatsil *tsuono* to eat. In this case, the insertion of the Nakaripa into the *patu* coalition produces a long-term sequence of marriages, which stabilize and internally settled Nakaripa ally as well as external relations of marriage in a horizon of fundamental exchange.

7.4.2. Ōmahe

The foundation of marriages on sacrificial relations is set out relatively clearly in the case of Ōmahe, the hamlet cluster between Ielelina and Hanahan villages which was the residence of the Habalis ‘paramount’ chief, the *munisil* (above, Section 5.5.6). Rimoldi and Rimoldi discuss this case, placing it in the relatively distant past:

...this [human sacrifice] occurred at a time when Ielelina was occupied by two main groups, Naboen and Nakaripa. The first chief, Saka, on this way with a group of matrikin from a distant coast travelled from Banis on the west of Buka to Ielelina, where they were seized by the Naboen *tsuono*. Saka was singled out to occupy a position as intermediary between the antagonistic Naboen and Nakaripa
factions in the district, and to ensure his impartiality his close kin were killed, with the exception of his sister who was declared 
ti tabol. In return, the ti tabol of the Naboen Ielelina was sacrificed as an act of expiation on behalf of all Naboen. (Rimoldi and Rimoldi 1992:193)

The first chief or munibil, Saka, is said to have migrated with a group of matrikin from N.E. Bougainville... travelling from Banis on the west coast of Buka to join their Nakarib clansmen at Ielelina they were seized by the Nabouin tsunono. Saka was singled out to occupy a position as intermediary between the antagonistic Nabouin and Nakarib factions in the district. To ensure his impartiality his close kin were killed with the exception of his sister who was declared tunabo. I.e. mother of heirs to his office. In turn, the ti tabol of the Nabouin of Ielelina was sacrificed as an act of expiation on behalf of all Nabouin. (M. Rimoldi 1971: 42-43; vide Rimoldi and Rimoldi 1992:107)

This explanation is somewhat misleading in that the reader is left with the impression that the motivation for the sacrifices was a calculation to assure Saka's impartiality by eliminating his kin. The sacrifice by Naboen is likewise a matter of settling scores and assuaging his anger. One reason this may not be entirely plausible to contemporary interviewees in Hanahan is that Saka's is believed to be related to the Hanahan Nakaripa, and this was the motivation for his migration; these more distant relatives were not killed. However, this particular interpretation of genealogical connection is likely to be a revision in line with the general tendency in contemporary Halia kinship to revisit broad classificatory categories such as pinaposa and reanalyse them as descent. But there are more substantial reasons the instrumentalism and functional character of the explanation fall short. Whilst it seems entirely plausible that such calculations factored into the sacrifices, what is not plausible is that this would have been the full extent of deliberations. Sacrifices are not expediens. They are difficult, traumatizing, but emphatically not negative quantities: they are not tolerated, they are positive, indeed sociogenic events that are actively pursued. The necessity of sacrifice in the construction of patu and in the batsunono of high-ranking gobus is a core result established in the Rimoldi's respective ethnographies (M. Rimoldi 1972; E. Rimoldi 1982) which is diluted and to some extent obfuscated in their published work. It is a readily encountered ethnographic datum at the present: sacrifices at the patu were necessary, not to placate jealousies, but to generate the most formidable nitsunono possible.

The example of Omahe is especially significant in that it is structurally similar to subsequent sacrifices in Hahalis. While the later are contentious and occasionally described as Welfare innovations, the account of Omahe is regarded as canonical: it is accepted as part of the history of Halja by a large plurality of tsunono. Indeed, it is the paradigmatic case of batsunono (making tsunono) of a munibil. This is not to say that there is no controversy on the subject. But the controversial aspects of human sacrifice at the elevation of Saharia centre primarily on the identity of those killed and their descendants. These lineages would stand to retrieve the nitsunono their ancestors would have vested upon Saharia once Saharia's lineage terminated, as has in fact happened relatively recently. The historical factuality of the sacrifices is denied by those groups who would stand to lose most from such a reversal. This is a major point of conflict for groups in northern Hanahan and Ielelina villages.

Another controversial issue is the question as to whether a single set of sacrifices was sufficient to elevate Saka Saharia's lineage in perpetuity. Rimoldi's account intimates that this was the case. One informant asserted that "if only pigs had been killed, Saharia would be munibil only so long as he lived,
but because men were killed, he is munibil forever”. This view certainly makes sense from a comparative point of view, as we shall see presently. But this is not a straightforward matter. For one thing, other informants made exactly the reverse point: because a person rather than pigs were killed, only the person of Saharia was made munibil, not his descendants. After the installation of Saka Saharia, Ōmahe became (or remained) the centre of the sacrificial economy of Halia – it was there that captured enemies were butchered, and from there they were distributed “like pigs in binoa baskets” to the other tsuhana (notably, that of Munatsil). Though not straightforwardly equivalent to sacrifices of one’s own kindred, these sacrifices of others remain within the same continuum of fundamental exchange. More explicitly, several informants assert that this initial set of sacrifices is only one of a series of sacrifices, repeated for Saka’s descendants. But even if the initial rank of munibil was established forever with the initial killing, there is clear evidence of multiple sacrificial events in this area, establishing different alliances.

These sacrificial relations establish sequences of politically significant marriages. Fig. 7.5. shows one example in schematic form.

In generation I the sacrificial victim is killed to batsunono Saka (or his successor, it is not clear). The context for this particular sacrifice is a hibats which established peace between Haku and Halia, ostensibly in the years immediately preceding the arrival of the mission. The victim had previously a position within Saka’s tsuhana, as the ‘butcher’ in charge of cutting pigs and humans for distribution at tsuhana feasts. He was an old man when he was killed, and presented in binoa baskets to the patu’s allies. As Goena told me this story, he cried: the murder has not receded into the past: “they ate my grandfather; killed him like a pig.” This initial sacrifice reinforces a close alliance between the two groups. In the eldest living present generation (IV), Goena married Helung’s daughter. Helung was the last representative of Saka’s ngorev; though he was older than Saharia, he was not an effective speaker and allowed his brother to take charge. While Helung’s daughter belongs to a different lineage (in fact, her maternal lineage holds the tsuhana of Talinga, in Hahalis), the couple have remained settled on her father’s land. Helung’s nissunono is asserted to have been passed to his daughter: Helung was langokots, lacking sisters, and is said to have made an oath to this effect. The admissibility of this is emphatically rejected by a large number of tsunonono, who state that with the
death of Helung, the *nitsunono* of Saharia returns to the sacrificing lineages and those who had placed their *tsuhana* within the *patu*. The *patu* becomes, ‘as the stone of the mango’ (also called *patu*), when all the flesh has been removed and only the stone remains, ready to be planted anew. But for the purposes of these closely allied groups, this controversy is moot: Helung’s daughter carries the *nitsunono* of her father, including that established by the sacrifice at generation I. In this respect, this example combines the articulation of an alliance through sacrifice, with subsequent marriage exchanges, with the concept of ‘eating hot baskets’ expressed in an especially radical fashion. It is critical to note that the only ways Saharia’s daughter could be made the continuation of her father’s lineage as observed by Rimoldi and Rimoldi have been through human sacrifice, *tsinalbu* classificatory brother-sister reproduction, or a *gum* birth; but none of this was done, and her position is widely discredited.

7.4.3 The Hahalis Welfare Society

7.4.3.1 The Welfare Marriages

One of the more surprising aspects of M. Rimoldi’s denial of *pinaposa* exogamy within Halia is that the Hahalis Welfare Society provides an especially well-developed example of the processes involved. It must be acknowledged that M. Rimoldi is fundamentally correct in one respect: it is the political inflection between *pinaposa* that guides marriages, not the reverse. I do not wish to give the impression that there is an abstract rule, or even a general normative preference, that ‘constructs’ this pattern of marriages. But it cannot be stressed enough that exogamy in *pinaposa* contexts is regarded as especially significant, and allows for the full articulation of Halia political ontology.

Figure 7.6 depicts five marriages between several of the lineages at the heart of the Hahalis Welfare Society. The Naboen lineages on the left are themselves tightly connected and allied: Tsigoto is Rokou’s cross-cousin and his lineage is ‘father’ to Nahirei, and therefore he assists them in building the *tsuhana*. In turn, Harobu’s MMZS – Geriana, the former *tsunono* of Taktakata – is Tsigoto’s father,
so Tsigoto is also Hatobu’s cross-cousin. He is tsun bambamal for Taktakata, entrusted with the unenviable task of enforcing Hatobu’s utsunono in the all too frequent case he is insulted or behaves in a manner unbecoming of a tsunono. But these lineages are alsoembroiled in several conflicts. On the Nakaripa side, Remas, the present-day tsunono of Bitoga is Teosin’s MBS, and the Basbi lineage often refers to their Bitoga cousins as ‘our children’ – a normal mode of reference in this relational context, but here invested with a significant degree of condescension. Bitoga and Basbi are engaged in a notorious dispute over the leadership of the entire Tutugi area. A similar situation obtains in the Naboenside. Taktakata and Nahirei, positioned on either side of Munlus, have struck a tight alliance neutralizing the land claims of Tsigoto’s group and their allies, the Turia group (See below, Chapter. 10.) This fractured landscape is important for the complexity it adds to alliances which could otherwise be straightforwardly attributed to the elevation of Teosin to the leadership of the Welfare, which is nevertheless the critical axis around which this highly symmetrical arrangement developed.

7.4.3.2. The Welfare Sacrifices

The five marriages in generation III have their genesis in the alliance between Naboens and Nakaripa tsanbana within the Hahalis Welfare Society. John Teosin was never genealogically a tsunono: Rapuna, his elder brother has always been recognised as the head of this lineage, and he has outlived Teosin. However, the Welfare was understood to be a new kind of organization, which required the elevation of a man to a status whereby he would be leader of all people within the movement (and, because the aims of the Welfare were maximalist, all Buka). Critically, such a man would have to preside over both Nakaripa and the Naboens groups. Such elevation was not unprecedented: it was patterned after the district munibil, Saka Saharia. The details of the actual killings performed within the Welfare are somewhat difficult to reconstruct. Eleanor Rimoldi provides some information:

Not only is fertility a matter that comes under the control of the tsunono, but the children themselves are sometimes marked by the tsunono not only as future marriage partners but also to effect alliances, or most extremely to perish as human sacrifices to seal promises or part of a ceremony to affirm the status of a tsunono. The Hahalis Welfare Society tsunono marked two women in the Society as those who must provide a child each for the purpose of establishing unity between the two major moieties... The Nakarib woman bore a child and this child was given to the Naboens to raise as their own, and the Naboen woman bore a child which is being raised by the Nakaribs as their own. I was told this was a traditional means of creating unity between the Naboens and Nakaribs and in the one case mentioned here. [...] This decision was apparently made while John [Teosin] was still a teacher at Hanahan mission schools. [...] However, one of these children was killed as a ‘sacrifice’ by a headman. This act was not considered a ‘sacrifice’ by anyone but the headman who killed the child – the act was decided and carried out without consultation of Teosin or anyone else. (E. Rimoldi 1982: 223)

The identification of the nexus between sacrifice and marriage here is perceptive, but the issue is muddled by the fact that whilst this killing was not enfranchised by the tsunono, there was another, at the same time which was:
Although the practice of human sacrifice is said to have ended after contact, there have been cases in recent years of human sacrifice to seal a promise. The case explicitly referred to by the Welfare Society is the death of a small girl in 1969. The sacrifice of this child was meant to seal the promises made on the basis of the Welfare Society Laws – most particularly the rule against killing. (E. Rimoldi 120-121)

According to my informants, two children were killed: a young girl from one of the central Hahalis Naboen lineages was sacrificed, along with a Nakaripa boy. It is not clear if this boy is the same as one of the sacrifices mentioned by E. Rimoldi, since my informants (a) considered these sacrifices to have been enfranchised by the Welfare tsunono and successful and (b) considered them secret even after I revealed that the story of the murder was published and widely known. In the case of the girl's killing, the sacrifice was considered pro-social, and as indicated by E. Rimoldi and my informants, formed a continuum with long-standing practices of hactsunono between Nakaripa and Naboen in Hahalis. The sacrifice of the boy mentioned by E. Rimoldi, on the other hand, is deemed anti-social, because it was conducted by a man acting without the enfranchisement of the tsunono, and moreover, because in that case the killing of a Nakaripa child was performed by a Naboen man against Nakaripa desires. In other words, despite the killing, the sacrifice failed.

According to the account in Hahalis and the Labor of Love, that boy, Toakits – the daughter's son of Teosin's close confidante, the enigmatic Balialu (Kiau) – was sacrificed by Tsikula, who intended it to be a ritual to complement the Naboen girl's sacrifice some days before (Rimoldi and Rimoldi 1992:273). Clearly, this is the girl mentioned by E. Rimoldi, suggesting that the plan had never been for the children to be raised. If Toakits is not the same boy the sacrifice of whom my informants regard as legitimate, then it would seem that Tsikula was indeed not only acting without license by the Welfare tsunono, but in ignorance of their designs. If, on the other hand, the boys are one and the same, what we see here is that a single sacrifice has radically different interpretations. In either case, the decisive differences are the lack of tsunono backing, and the fact that the girl was killed in autosacrifice (i.e. at least with Naboen consent) whilst the boy was not.

Tsikula's act would lead, in 1976, to his own death at the hands of the tsunono, who would kill him for his failed sacrifice of Toakits, and his son Matthias for Balialu's disappearance. These deaths, enfranchised by the tsunono, were also conducted to reinstate the oath for the Welfare laws, and increased Teosin's nitsunono: or would have, except that since the killings were carried out in public, in a context where law and order had long since been monopolized by the police. By 1976, the tsunono's inability to command over life and death stemmed less from their unwillingness to issue death orders, or from the unwillingness of their followers to obey them, but from the sheer alienation of community from the systems of authority that had once made such orders legitimate, and indeed essential parts of social life. Indeed, the broader Buka community was utterly shocked and the state intervened to arrest most of the men involved. Apart from this failure these public killings to restore the tsunono's power over life, a very muddled situation emerged in its aftermath. These killings did not represent autosacrifices, but rather punitive killings, enfranchised – it is now alleged – by kompakō, a secret death pact between the tsunono. The man who administered the blow to Tsikula was the father of the gebus of the Hakaleo lineage, and Tsikula was the head of a lineage with overlapping land claims.
in Hakaleo: the result is that the 1976 killings came to be positioned within a horizon of land conflict and sorcery accusations, and have remained there for the past thirty five years.

Another killing, in 1970 is less ambiguous. The person responsible for this killing, a Haku tsunono called Maloana, was subsequently convicted of murder and deemed insane by the colonial Administration's chief psychiatrist Burton-Bradley (Rimoldi and Rimoldi 1992:223; Burton-Bradley 1973). It is worth reproducing Maloana's testimony from Hahalis and the Labor of Love:

I am not crazy. What I did was done with my own clear thinking. I killed him with a [bush] knife. I did this not for myself or just my own name but in the name of the Welfare. I did this thing to make John Teosin god of the Welfare and of the headmen of Buka. This means we have made strong laws for the Welfare. If a man were to break the laws of the Welfare he would go the way of Sava. I did this to Sava to show the road the Welfare must witness and the Council too. When I did this thing we were all at the copra drier. They were asleep and I was tending the fire. I woke Sava and took him outside the house and as he stood I hit him on the neck with the knife. I did this just before dawn. Then I went to wake up my two brothers and they took his body and laid it out in the new house. I told everybody to look at it – Welfare people and Council people. (Rimoldi and Rimoldi 1992:224).

To some extent, present-day Hahalis tsunono accept his diagnosis as insane – above all, the Naboen groups of Talinga who had, until Maloana's intervention, been the source of Teosin's nitisunono. The diagnosis is rejected by Maloana's own sister's son amongst many others, who emphasize that Maloana was acting under direction of the Welfare tsunono. Rimoldi and Rimoldi's sarcasm suggests that they also disagree with the view that Maloana was a "cargo cultist with other pathological syndromes" (1992:224). Indeed, they report that although Teosin himself had not instigated the sacrifices and distanced himself from Maloana, he undoubtedly benefited from them, since these killings constituted an oath by nibats to establish the law of the Hahalis Welfare Society.

7.4.3.3. Closing the loop

The marriages between the Nakaripa and Naboen groups in fig. 7.6 were conceived 'to bring the groups closer', 'to make them friendly', a reflection of the 'love' between them. What is perhaps most interesting about this case is that even those who dissented from Teosin's elevation abide by the structure established within the Welfare. The initial plan conceived by the Welfare tsunono was for Teosin's sister's eldest son Stephen (not shown) to marry the gobus of Taktakata, Tania. As late as 1978, Stephen was being groomed to be Teosin's successor (E. Rimoldi 1982:124), and this marriage would have reproduced his nitisunono within the traditional tsunana organization is less contestable terms, since Stephen, unlike Teosin, is an actual gobus. However, Remas interdicted this marriage, claiming Stephen was too young; this was part of an effort by Remas to reassert his lineage's claims over Tutugi. During the apogee of the Teosin faction, Remas' lineage had to ask Teosin for land: a humiliation now recycled as proof of their status as latecomers. In fact, though the relative settlement priority between the two lineages is hard to determine with any confidence, at the early stages of the

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120 Maloana was a distant matrilateral relative of the Talinga.
Welfare it was Remas’ lineage that sheltered Teosin’s. Because Teosin and his siblings lost their mother early in life, it was Remas’ mother and mother’s brother who then facilitated their participation in rituals. Aiding Remas’ designs was the fact Stephen had become disillusioned with the Welfare; he would eventually marry in New Ireland and visit the village only rarely.

The ‘proper’ Welfare marriage was then the marriage of Tsigoto’s sister’s son Aquila to Talmits, the gohus testabol of Teosin’s lineage. This marriage was enacted with a complete ritual cycle, one of the few instances in the last thirty years in Halia. This leaves an imperfect symmetry, notably because Aquila is a member of a lineage with a slightly ambiguous position: not necessarily an automatic supporter of the Taktakata group. Stephen’s younger brother Salin married Tania’s younger sister, and the most tenacious partisans of the Welfare assert that since Stephen has removed himself from the picture, Salin is gohus and so is Talmits. This type of argument is rejected even by Salin, who resides uxorilocally fifty meters across the Taktakata tsuhana’s dancing ground from Remas.

7.5 Comparative Perspective on Sacrifice: New Ireland

The Buka sacrificial complex is not by any means isolated regionally. It represents the radicalisation and transformation of sacrificial practices found to the north of Buka in New Ireland and Tabar Island. The best studied of these practices was the New Ireland Barok procedure known as seiolep (Jessep 1977:203), which permitted the transfer of land between matrilineages by means of a child sacrifice. Kara and Tabar Island sacrifices appear to be quite similar to this (Billings 1971:132-5; Groves 1934:352-3). The paradigmatic case of seiolep is illustrated in fig 7.7: here, on the occasion of the death of a man (1) belonging to the landholding matrilineage, his wife’s matrikin killed his daughter (2), who was buried in his grave, on his maternal lands. This established a permanent right for the daughter’s lineage to that land. By contrast, prestations of pigs might have won the wife’s lineage temporary rights, or rights of usufruct. Note the direct parallel to the informant who commented on the difference between killing pigs and killing people in the tsuhana. This type of sacrificial land claim was abandoned in the late 19th century, but during Jessep’s fieldwork details of the practice were critical for determining land claims and he collected a number of cases.

![Fig. 7.7. Barok Land Sacrifice](image-url)
In *seiolep*, the sacrificing lineage had to kill one of its *own* members. Jessep provides a case in which this was not so, and in that case the sacrifice was regarded as moot. This was a paradoxical point for him and also for his contemporary informants, who knew of the actuality of the deed and its significance but could not penetrate the meaning of such a 'non-exchange'.

What is the justification for *seiolep*? Jessep reproduces and expands on the observations by the indigenous New Ireland pastor Osea Ligeremaluaga, who published the first book by a New Guinean man, an autobiography (Linge 1932). There, Ligeremaluaga recalls that for his ancestors, sacrifices were carried out "as a return for the father's care" and "as an expression of a continuing, reciprocal relationship between two intermarrying groups" (Jessep 1977:206). Whilst Ligeremaluaga's account made no mention of the transfer of land, numerous observations in neighbouring New Ireland groups from the late 19th century onwards make it unlikely that the Barak were reinterpreting these sacrifices as land exchanges *post facto* (see Derlon 2005). Jessep concludes that the motivation for sacrifice was shortage of land.

In what sense, precisely, is the killing of a daughter repayment for care invested in her by her father? For Jessep, this is a barren question: there is no 'satisfactory answer' to the question of what 'tangible benefits' the father's lineage derives from the sacrifice (Jessep 1977:211). Instead, the sacrifice ought to be seen as a part of a cycle of funeral feasts for the father, and the pattern of exchanges between the lineages: it isn't clear, however, whether that explains the problem or just repeats it. Finally, Jessep speculates,

> It might be conjectured that the killing of a child, followed by the public burial of father and child in one grave, was a dramatic way of symbolizing the children's indebtedness (at the same time contributing to the prestige of the deceased and his lineage.) (Jessep 1977:211).

Brigitte Derlon reinterpreted Jessep's material in light of an analogy of burial and gestation which Roy Wagner reports for the Usen Barak and which Derlon as sees operative amongst the neighbouring Mandak. For Wagner, the *tavan* men's house is at once a cemetery and a womb-like enclosure (1986:152-3); "The metaphorical gestation of corpses in the group's land thus echoes the representation of the clan as a 'maternal container' for its members" (Derlon 2005:117). In view of this, burying the child in her father's grave effects a "post-mortem change of social affiliation." (ibid). Whether this interpretation suits Derlon's own sensibilities or reflects indigenous themes is an open question. Jessep himself wrote that the custom was especially puzzling because of "the absence of any pertinent beliefs about the fate of the spirit, or the nature of the after-life", observing that by the mid 1970s his informants whose lineages had participated in such an arrangement could not understand it either and had demanded additional compensation for their land (Jessep 1977:211).

Derlon's own answer to the question as to what the father's lineage receives by way of the co-burial, is that this reversed the donation of blood imparted by the father to the child in conception (Derlon 2005:118). This is a slightly more elaborate version of Jessep’s own answer. For Derlon, the doctrines of conception in these groups created a debt for the mother’s lineage to the father's lineage which could be repaid – in successive exchanges – by pigs, or completely cancelled under certain
circumstances by killing a person. But not only does this require that beliefs about the conception have a rigorous structuring role; it also does not explain how the sacrifice brings the sacrificing group above parity, to gain land.

In Buka, sacrifices must also be made within the ngorere, the lineage. Indeed, the sacrifices mentioned above provide a minimal contrasting pair in this respect: the sacrifice of the Nakaripa child by the Nakaripa was 'good', as were the complementary Naboen sacrifices, but the killing of a Nakaripa boy given to the Naboen to care for, which was conducted in the same cycle, came to be regarded as murder rather than sacrifice. This was the justification for the executions at Hahalis in 1978 (Rimoldi and Rimoldi, Ch. 7). The Halia state that sacrifices must be carried within the lineage. Even if they conducted are for another lineage, so that the nitsunono is bestowed upon the recipient, the actual killer must belong to the same lineage as the victim. The usual rationale for this is that if someone else commits the deed, a blood feud would be established. But another way of seeing this is that autosacrifice is the basic organizing principle of both Halia marriage and the tsunono: forfeiture of endogamy for sociogenic exogamy and 'self-directed' violence form a continuum with mundane aspects of tsunono ethos, above all the omnipresent erasure of self-aggrandizing agency and the avoidance of the charge of kuru.

There is a fundamental structural analogy between New Ireland and Buka sacrificial complexes. The two critical transformations are that (a) in the Barok case, land is transferred, permanently, whereas in Buka nitsunono is transferred, creating a quasi-permanent position of ultimate authority. The munibil's coalition tsuhana will ultimately be undone, and its fleshy parts returned to the tsuhana that contributed them in the first place, leaving patu 'stone of the mango' ready to be planted anew. The munibil transmits his office to the next generation, but further sacrifices are necessary. Notably, as soon as human sacrifices were suppressed in Buka the axis of ultimate authority shifted towards the state, which became the ultimate guarantor of the Paramount's power; but this had to be matched by sacrifices in the tsuhana register. And (b), in the Barok case, the sacrifice takes place after marriage, whereas in Buka the sacrifice establishes conditions upon which there can be marriage. An important question that may be raised in this comparative context is to what extent the tsunono is a kind of father: Sunahan, God, the great

7.6. Utopia and Disarticulation

Finally, we may turn to the twin conditions stalking the periphery of the historical imagination of marriage. On the one hand, there is the possibility of a type of utopia in which the conflict between self-directed but antisocial accumulations of power and other-directed, but autosacrificial articulation is transcended. That is to say, both jealousy and exchange are overcome. Here, we take up the issue of the Golden Age and the ultimate radicalisation of the tendency towards endogamy noted above. On the other hand, there is the construction of the current historical juncture as a dystopia of unregulated, chaotic marriages without transcendence of either exchange or jealousy, but rather their rampant multiplication.
7.7. Uterine Totalisation

According to E. Rimoldi's account, in the Golden age there was, as it were a permanent *gum*. Today, *gum* are conducted infrequently. Seclusion rarely lasts more than five days. But in the past the *gum* could remain in train for many months, and according to some explanations it would have lasted until a child was born. Sexual relations within the *gum* are subject to a strict rule that there can be no gossiping or jealousy, although informants today shy away from asserting that the participants have license for free sexual relations.

A child born in the *gum* is deemed the *gobus*. In E. Rimoldi’s thesis it is speculated that this reflects a concept of ghost paternity, and by the time of *Habalis and the Labor of Love*, the cautious presentation of this inference is abandoned (Rimoldi and Rimoldi 1992:186). It is certainly conceivable that this form of ghost paternity (in fact spirit incest) could be an authentically Haila idea, but I could not corroborate it. But what is perhaps even more remarkable than any intimation of ghost paternity is the suggestion that there is no father, or more precisely that under such circumstances paternity simply does not matter. This must be deemed the primary ethnographic datum in the historical *gum* and the mytheme of original plenitude: the child is generated from within the *tsuhana*, in the context of the mourning cycle of its uncle. Beyond this, the extent to which spirit agencies are believed to be involved is speculative; but this basic datum is more than enough. In this manner, not only is the funeral and life-cycle axes of social reproduction literally conjoined within the *tsuhana*, but a *totalized uterine world* is created. The matriline is perfectly self-producing, whilst the father is erased. The child issues from the *tsuhana*, where in mourning, women themselves strike the slit gongs – an action explicitly analogous to coitus that is usually reserved for the men. Note that the *tsuhana* house has an ambiguous gender classification: it is closely associated with the *tsunono’s* body (an assault against it is an assault ‘on the *tsunono*’s head’), but *tsuhana* – especially the *hunkeesa* that is epitomized as the ‘true *tsuhana*’ – is the *tieiabol’s* house, and the *tsunono* is ‘jealous’ of it. In the genesis of a child ‘in the *tsuhana*’, we cannot speak of ‘ghost paternity’ as an abstracted male agent, as if the *tsuhana* could be seen as the collective projection of male power.

How total is this totalized uterine social world? It is important to note that the state of plenitude has a slightly ambiguous formulation. For instance, it is not clear if the ‘power of the *tsunono*’ that is passed on to the next generation in the primordial *gum* is the same as the power of a specific *tsuhana* – *nitsunono* being almost always the *nitsunono* of a specific person or group. There have to be *tsunono* for there to be *nitsunono*, and for there to be *tsunono* there have to be men who are not. The absence of jealousy in the primordial plenitude would intimate another interpretation: it may rather be a question of generalised magical, spiritual power, which would be consonant with the characterisation of the ‘First Generation’ of men as having mastery over the physical world, as ‘*ol lain prophet’ – ‘prophets’. A related issue is the identity of the young man who spies on the *gum*: this too could be taken to imply the presence of other groups. The specific construction here – that the young man teams up with other young men presumably also excluded from the *gum* – is finely tuned to the political project of the Welfare, particularly in terms of the doctrinal justification for practices such as the historic Baby
Garden, which were understood as solving the practical problem of sexual frustration amongst young men. But this consonance is suspiciously exact. In effect, the articulation of a utopia of generalised endogamy is incomplete, and traces of the in-group/out-group distinction remain. The Oedipal fantasy is stalked by the Fates — or their Halia actualization, the jealous gaze of others.

7.7.1. Talinga

In contemporary Hahalis and Buka, the Golden Age is typically omitted from the overall narrative concerning the shift from endogamy to exogamy. That aspect of the narrative it is known as a local history of one particular Naboen tsunana, Talinga — which not by accident was the core sponsor who raised John Teosin to the status of ‘tsunana’ of the Welfare.

The narrative is common knowledge in Hahalis and nearby villages in the past (how far past is the critical open question), Talinga was the land of opposites. “We were not like the others: we stood by ourselves.” Their day was night, and night was day: during the day they rested, and lit palm-brush torches (for this reason, they now light kerosene lamps during daytime feasts). At night they ‘worked’, but their work was ‘of a different kind’. They had no tsunana. Unlike all other groups in Halia (and to the best of my knowledge, anywhere in the Austronesian area of North Bougainville), the Talinga do not trace their descent elsewhere, although they subsequently acquired a tsunana by accommodating migrants — another ‘reversed’ aspect of their constitution. During kinalala their baskets would be brought to the road, rather than to a stake near the feasting tsunana. But they would not eat the pigs. They would pass the pork by their noses, smell it and discard it on heap near the cliff. Pork, they said, is pipio — rubbish or excrement. Instead of pork, they ate ‘food of another kind’: they possessed a table which spontaneously generated food — in one account, white man’s food.

The narrative states that one day, a man called Bialik walked past the foot of the cliff, heading south to his own hamlet. He stumbled on the discarded pork, and began to eat it. The Talinga are said to have caught him: “Look! A man is eating out shit.” They showed him into the hamlet, and allowed him to feast with them: he was told that he may return again, on the condition that he kept the secret. But after some time, his wife became suspicious of his waning appetite, and forced the truth out of him. With this, the power of Talinga was dispelled. This version of affairs was the first one narrated to me, at Talinga itself.

Halia narratives almost invariably contain layers of meaning, ‘opposites’, batalinga and this is nowhere truer than in the case of the history of the hamlet of Talinga itself. In one notable interpretation/rearticulation of the narrative, it is not ‘pork’ that Bialik found, but free sexual

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121 To the extent that it was used by Talinga in a successful land court dispute with their southern rivals. The rivals charged that this was not ‘history’ but rather ‘cargo cult’, but the court accepted it as local myth and lore. This decision, in which ‘cargo cultism’ was converted through its use as legal evidence into custom, remains profoundly contentious.

122 The allusion is to sexual intercourse or to magic, but most likely both.
relations. He was drawn into the permanent *gum* of Talinga, which is the source of the powers that permitted the hamlet to rest during the day and eat food from the ever-providing table. It is strongly intimated that the practice of free, effectively incestuous sexual relations *is* the ever-lasting food. Bialik’s waning sexual interest alerted his wife, and the reaction to the discovery of effectively incestuous practices caused fighting and the active disruption of Talinga’s order – a detail elided in the literalist ‘food’ version. This version I was first told by Talinga’s nearby rivals then, much later, by their allies. Today, this ‘sex’ version of the story is buried under deep layers of suspicion, recrimination and accusations of ‘cargo cult.’ However, the parallelism between this ‘sex’ version of the narrative and Rimoldi’s account of the Golden Age is unlikely to be coincidence, and suggests that once the interpretation lay closer to the surface.

The Talinga mythohistory is especially important for parsing the theological aspects of the Hahalis Welfare Society, and it represents *in part* a local explanation of the motivations of the fertility-centred ritual complexes of the movements preceding the Hahalis Welfare. The nexus of free – or more precisely, *socially modulated* – reproduction and radical social transformation – ‘development’ – is a clear theme within the Welfare itself. But in the present context, the significance of the Talinga example lies in the association of ‘eating within’ and internalised, endogamous reproduction with social plenitude and omnipotence, the expansion of knowledge-capacity (*save, nicate*) to degrees equalling or surpassing those of the white man. Here, the mytheme of the endogamous Eden is recombined into a local history – but it is plausible that it is the Rimoldis’ account that is the actual recombination. But it rarely matters. The Halia mythological corpus consists of a constellation of such icons, and the lines drawn between them change with each retelling. The underlying message, however, remains the same.

7.7.2. *Baby Garden*

If these themes were developed only in mythology, they would be remarkable enough: they grasp the essence of the social forces at play in Halia society and sketch out a possible transformation of them. But in the first instance, the Golden Age and in particular the Talinga mythology is regarded as fact, *u masaka manou*, not fables, *u habata*. And it is true that these narratives reflect certain recurring themes in Buka social history. The linkage between ‘promiscuity’ and ‘cargoist’ beliefs was already apparent in the late 1930s. Its full articulation, however, was the practice within the Hahalis Welfare Society of systematic reform and manipulation of marriage taboos. There were a number of efforts in this direction, and the ‘Baby Garden’ for which the movement became infamous is only one late institutionalization of practices that appear to have clear precedents in the previous fertility-linked cultism. The matter has been treated at length by the Rimoldis and Tohiana (1983); here it suffices to note some basic factors.

From 1964 onwards, the Hahalis Welfare Society established hamlet areas in which women were housed, and men were allowed to have casual sexual relations with them. According to surviving movement spokesmen, the women were never forced to have sexual relations and were there of their
own free will. This is largely the line represented by Rimoldi and Rimoldi. Women I spoke with held a range of views of their participation, from nostalgia to regret. There are serious allegations of exploitation and coercion, but there are others who hold fond memories for the Baby Garden. Men’s recollections tend to be positive, but there are notable differences. The rationale for the practice is sometimes said to be ‘development’, because as a brothel or ‘Kings Cross’, the Baby Garden represented a welcome progressive change bringing Buka society in line with what is known of Australian society. Fees were collected from the men for the upkeep of the Baby Garden, at least in the later years of its existence. The private attitude of the movement leaders is hinted at by reports collected by Australian intelligence after Francis Hagai, Teosin’s second in command, attended a cooperative college in Sydney; upon returning he is said to have been impressed with Australia’s very large ‘Baby Garden’ (TIC 1967). The more ideologically astute members of the movement, and the Rimoldis, represent this as a perversion of the actual motivations behind the Baby Garden – and in a sense, they are right to do so, insofar as the motivations were certainly complex, and the monetization of sex in this case was modulated by factors very much unlike those in prostitution in other Buka contexts, let alone King’s Cross.

This is especially clear if the Baby Garden is seen in context of other reforms carried out by the movement. Preceding, and continuing alongside the Baby Garden, the Welfare Society implemented a systematic effort to ‘test’ men by exposing them to the opposite sex. Men and women would take on each other wives and husbands, whom they were meant to spend time with without having sexual relations. This was a systematic effort to overcome sexual jealousy. (If it is difficult to believe the ‘tests’ were not designed to be failed, that, in a sense, was the greater test.) This manipulation in turn had a justification in the traditional duty of the 
tsunono to provide an escort for visiting 
tsunono.

Throughout these practices sexual jealousy would be overcome and something echoing the Golden Age or Talinga would be instituted. This would trigger development: negatively, by suppressing jealousy, the critical factor believed to split groups and stir sorcerers to action, would be neutralized and cooperation would be possible. More fundamentally, the formation of alliances through marriage would be at once radicalised, overcome and eliminated. All would be bound to all, nobody would know who is whose child, and fatherly inputs of labour and love would have to be dedicated to all children through the vehicle of the Welfare.

It is in light of this that the openness of the Baby Garden to outsiders can be understood. Internally, the community and the Welfare would be a generalized father, but to the outside the Welfare frequently represented itself as a 

female partner for development, whereas the colonial government would be the man (see below, Section 8.6). At least potentially, the Baby Garden placed everybody in the position of father to the Welfare children (see E. Rimoldi 1982:249).

If any of this was within the reach of the government and church’s comprehension, all of it was far beyond their patience and such overtures were rebuffed in harsh terms; the Baby Garden was the central reason the Catholic Church excommunicated the leadership of the movement.) Viewed from the perspective of the present, the articulation of these themes in the 1960s seems astonishing and even exotic to contemporary Buka, but in other respects, the basic attitudes underpinning them are
commonplace. Outsiders, especially white men, are often initially enthusiastically welcomed as affines, since they would provide powerful social, substantial and capital nourishment for their Buka children; later such attitudes can sour considerably as the children of such unions often gravitate entirely out of the Buka social world. The view of the village sector as fertile and in need of activation by government through a type of 'marriage' was often expressed to me by local politicians: there was much local potential, unrealised. We shall see in the next chapter just how deep these ideas run.

7.8. Marit long rot

The present period, according to virtually all local narratives of local history, is a period in which marriage practices have collapsed. The primary representation of this is the tension between brideprice and road. Marriages 'on the road' are the outcome of drunken trysts at dances. These are criticised from a number of different angles: they are said to be weak and likely to break down, the couple does not behave as they should – women frequently complain that men in such relationships do not live up to their responsibilities. Whether this is true or not is disputable, but it seems unlikely. What is undoubtedly true in such cases, however, is the absence or at least delay in brideprice. Church weddings, if conducted outside brideprice negotiations, are considered only a notch above cohabitation: I attended one service in which six young couples were unenthusiastically and efficiently married by a pair consisting of a pastor who defended monogamous virtue, and a tsunono who maintains two households with separate wives. If these are ever regularized by brideprice transactions, this occurs long after the couple has settled down. Usually, the exchange is then pressed onto the man's family by his affines, especially if the couple resides uxorilocally. Conflicts will often find the absence of brideprice payment and 'irregular' marriage as a vehicle, though it seems necessary for there to be some ulterior motive for this type of escalation. But potential demands for unpaid brideprice still make for compelling threats, and are a means for the tsunono to discipline uxorilocally settled affines. It is also significant that when brideprice is forced on a marriage 'of the road', it is often disorganized, lacking a ritual elaboration, and is focused on the exchange of cash.

The present is thought of as a dystopian combination of chaotic freedom, selfish pursuit of sex and self-directed accumulation in which matrilineal organization returns as an excuse for bad fatherhood. This anxiety and anomie finds expression in a complex of concerns: sorcery, once governed by the tsunono, returns as a means through which to ensnare women or destroy the moral being and reproductive capacities of rivals; without the ability to compel marriages, conflict becomes irresolvable (it is indeed for this reason that the story of hibats is so often repeated). Cut off from its role structuring relationships between tsbana, brideprice comes to be seen as a purposeless drain on resources better spent on development. Ultimately, torn from its moorings in the organization of marriages and reproduction (and therefore, relationships of hatsu mono), the pinaposa structure and ultimately the tsbana itself become a matter of law. Thus tsunono becomes chiefs but without the ability to compel obedience, they must seek to parlay their traditional status into special enfranchisement by the state. The correlate of anarchic marriage is authoritarian political inflection: the idea that the tsunono derives power from God, from tradition, from kastom read as charter.
8. Mother’s Land, Father’s Work

8.1 The affine/father/cross-cousin axis

When a tsunono is to be constructed, the lineages in the settled group that will feast and erect the house convene a meeting to iron out basic aspects of protocol and rank. In this meeting, the bayum tere pinaposa (meeting of the pinaposa), the closest members of the ngerere involved will be present, but despite its title it is common for a group related to the tsunono’s lineage as ‘father’ or ‘cross-cousin’ to attend the meeting. Their involvement will become critical after this. They act as sponsors, who will watch over (pepi, a different usage to the guardianship of the immature goby by a stand-in from his own lineage) the construction of the tsunono. The involvement of this group is indispensable, and typically welcomed.

The ‘fathers’ may include the tsunono’s actual father and cross-cousins, but often the group constitutes classificatory relatives in this position. Because marriage to classificatory cross-cousins has strategic value and recurs over several generations, the ‘fathers’ will often be ‘cross-cousins’. Here again, the superposition of the person of the tsunono, his lineage, and his house – including other locally settled ngerere – is critical. Seen from the perspective of the tsunono (A) in Fig. 8.1 the individuals in his father’s lineage have specific relationships to him: father, father’s sister, cross-cousins. From the perspective of his mother’s brother, these same people are affines; they may yet become his own affines if there is a marriage ‘back’ to the father’s group.

Figs. 8.1 and 8.2. The cross-cousin/father/affine axis

However, when the issue is not the individual relationships but those between these groups of people, the relationship is father-like, even as cross-cousins. This classificatory fatherhood persists after a generation: the situation would be substantially the same (fig 8.2) provided that the roles remain socially

123 M. Rimoldi writes that “a notable feature of the habinasuna [binao] relationship seems to be the fact that it can apply to intergroup relations. A matrilineal group of one settlement may be habinasuna to the group occupying another settlement” (1971:74-5; see also Rimoldi and Rimoldi 1991:334). E. Rimoldi reports that John Teosin referred to his wife’s lineage as ‘papa belong mipela’.

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relevant, most notably, in the sponsorship of tshbana (and secondarily, in financing brideprice). This may be termed the tshbana-mediated corporatization of fatherhood, and in specific examples it can be effectively permanent. The sponsorship of Bitoga by Hasuno, for instance, is justified on the grounds of marriages seven generations in the past, recurring more recently. The most notable distinction between the two cases would be that marriage between the 'cross cousins' would be acceptable, indeed sometimes encouraged in the second case. The construction of a tshbana requires that these father/cross-cousin/affines be involved: here, the construction of synthetic social power (labour and reproductive potential; the accumulation of pien tshbana), the affective dimension of fatherhood and the basic sexual dyad are thrown together into this single exercise.

In contemporary contexts, the father/cross-cousin/affines are called upon to perform roles that are essentially analogous to papeito for the tshbana. Just as they must supervise construction protocol and affirm the authenticity of sinehe, they will also testify in land cases and aid in Village Court issues. They are natural business partners, although they remain rivals – ultimately, an outcome of the sublimated violence of the marriage system. In the organization of tshbana, a groups’ matrilineal relatives upstream within a migration network will often demand that they be consulted before construction begin, and these matrilineal relatives will be important sources of knowledge and material aid during construction: but conflict with them is possible, because the matrilineal tie allows them to construe the tshbana that is being built as an offshoot of their own, ostensibly older tshbana. Just this sort of conflict takes place between both Nakaripa factions in Tutugi and the Nakaripa tshbana of Hanhakalana. To secure their own claims against their northern neighbour’s claims, these factions build networks of allies amongst the Naboen of Hahalisa to the south, allies who are at the same time rivals. This translates directly to claims over land ownership. A tshbana that asserts influence over another that has ‘split’ from it, establishes by virtue of this fact an interest in the junior tshbana’s land. For this reason, the testimony of father/cross-cousin groups is considered especially significant. They lack a direct interest in the land. More significantly, the power of their testimony derives from the fact they will have ‘witnessed’ the nature of the hamlet’s order in an especially direct fashion: as fathers and husbands, they have multiplied their ranks and shaped them physically and socially, as cross-cousins, they are the key sponsors of the tshbana. It is up to them to intervene should their ‘sons’ stray from acceptable practices. Their testimony therefore carries special weight. ‘Lain papa i securiy’: our fathers are our security. Here, we shall see that these are translations of socially effective and mythologically elaborate fatherly roles to the sphere of tshbana.

8.2 The role of the father

The primary role of the father is to nurture and form his children. The position of the father in traditional Buka society involved an ongoing, long term commitment. In the case of virilocal residence, a father could in the past provide his son with a partition of his tshbana, and though practice appears to have been abandoned, notionally, a father will allow a locally settled son to participate in exchanges, either in his own name or as a member of the father’s tshbana. According to M. Rimoldi, , tsunono could raise the nitsunono of their sons – so long as his son was also gabs – by
providing him with a rafter (halbah), wall-peg (koriki) or post (tul) allowing him to expand his tsuhana (Rimoldi 1971:73). Uxorilocal residence was and remains common even amongst tsuono, despite the fact it can lead to serious political difficulties. This is justified in terms of developing for children resources and social bonds where they have land title. A man is expected to provide education, paying for formal education and guiding the child socially. He should establish and enforce rules, but this is understood to be an expression of his love and care for his sons and daughters. These roles are taken very seriously by most men. Halia fathers are very affectionate towards their children and as young men will look after toddlers whilst their wives work; as older men, they are often found babysitting their daughters' children. A man's dedication towards children is conceived in classic matrilineal ideological form: as a selfless and noble, as an expression of love. Whilst the cult of Saint Mary has strong backing from the Catholic Church, and fits seamlessly with the local idea of that the tetabol is giagone, historically St. Joseph has been at least as significant a figure in the Halia absorption of Christianity. He is the perfect father, selflessly looking after a child that is indeed understood not to be his own. The Welfare made him into the icon of batoatong – love freely given, without expectation of return (Rimoldi and Rimoldi 1992:169).

These concepts of fatherhood are especially important in relation to land tenure and the organization of economic activity. While land “follows the mother”, “land by itself does nothing”: this evaluation is encountered repeatedly by the Village Court when it turns its attention to the ever-present disputes over the use of coconut groves. It is the input of fatherly work into land that makes it bear fruit. While this principle is also implicit in the organization of gardens, it is in relation to cash crop plantations that 'father's work' is most comprehensively articulated. A man is expected to plant coconuts on his wife's land, for the benefit of his children; if he plants them in his own matriline's land, this is understood to be done for his children. The children have a legally sanctioned right to access these plantations. While the legal sanction was established as such in the 1950s partly on the initiative of District Officers who regarded matrilineal kinship as abnormal, the widespread adoption of this principle is not due to enforcement by the colonial state. Neither is it entirely a new principle adopted by acculturated men seeking to contain wealth within their nuclear families. These are certainly factors in the entrenchment of father's work as a basic structuring principle in contemporary Halia society. But the most important reason this reform worked, whilst other attempted reforms manifestly fail to stick (for instance, land sales), is that plantations, cash crops and commodities linked to the cash economy circulate in the Halia political economy according to paradigms set for fatherly duties. The transmission of the fruits of a man's work to his sons is a feature of tsuhana construction; the association of nurturance and work with fatherhood, substance and reproduction with motherhood runs deep in Halia cosmology.

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124 Rimoldi uses the word tul (posts generally) rather than marul (the important side-posts of the tsuhana); it may be that the idea side-posts are a matrilineal inheritance is new, and that when tsuhana were built to race other tsuhana to ten posts, it was not so significant. If so, that is a development coherent with other changes emphasizing the matrilineality.
8.3 *Hispepe*

*Hispepe*, an exchange that complements brideprice in certain contexts, illustrates the ideology of the good father and husband. The Rimolds present excellent accounts of *sinahana* (brideprice payment) and *popolasa* (bride delivery) rituals (E. Rimoldi 1982; Rimoldi and Rimoldi 1991); I have chosen to focus on *hispepe* for the clearer articulation of the transformation of husband to father. The ideal Halia husband contributes extensively to his wife's matrilineal's ceremonial exchanges and cash economy activities, and above all raises many healthy and well-socialised children. When a man approaches this ideal, his wife's clan may elect to conduct the feast of *hispepe*. A *hispepe* is a type of backpack used to carry small infants around. This is a messy job. The wife's matrilateral relatives will say that the feast is 'for cleaning our excrement from the back of the man.' The feast is only carried out after a couple has been married for a number of years, and it is only held for the couple which includes a woman of the immediate lineage of the *teitabol*: either the eldest daughter of the *teitabol* or one of her sisters, in case the eldest daughter's husband has failed to produce heirs, or if the clan has for some reason been unable to organize the feast for them at the appropriate time. Usually the feast is conducted before the couple's children have established themselves in independent households, but because there is a high threshold before the husband has demonstrated his value, *hispepe* is sometimes conducted as a part of the man's funeral cycle in a coda to the feast of *bong maloto*.

In a *hispepe* exchange, the husband's relatives – primarily his matrilineage, but also his patriline – give the wife's matrilineage a large quantity of *gogohala* taro which, like that given in marital exchanges, still has its stem attached. The stem may be removed for planting and the tuber consumed. This type of taro is valuable because of the scarcity of taro in some areas, and it is also loaded with symbolism relating to the unbroken continuation of a lineage. Strikingly, whilst taro is a traded commodity, planting taro of this kind seems to always be acquired from relatives as nonmonetized gifts exchanges. The man's relatives also present the wife's matrilineage with a pig, which must be alive. The taro and pig are taken to the wife's maternal hamlet by a delegation, where they are received with a feast. The pig must not be used for any other purpose. It should not be presented in another exchange or sacrificed. It is immediately killed and distributed.

Unlike most Halia feasts, the quantity of taro is considered important in *hispepe* and it is carefully counted (fig 8.3). The planting taro is prepared by the women, who work for one or two days before the date at the gardens. The taro is collected into bundles of six, which are referred to as *pi/its*, an expression which forms part of distinct number system within the Halia language. Ten bundles complete one *teil*, a woman's bark backpack in which she carries food and firewood. Ten *teil* in turn complete a *kosono*, which informants jokingly refer to as 'one thousand'. At least one *kosono* should be presented. If two *kosono*, i.e. 1200 taro are presented, the term used is *wunus*, but this is not known to many people and has a somewhat indeterminate meaning.

A large *hispepe* was held in October 2006 for the daughter of Rapuna, the *tsunono* of Basbi. In this case, the daughter and her husband reside at his maternal hamlet about eight kilometres south of Basbi, in the neighbouring Hagogohe Council of Elders area. The husband is sungut to Rapuna's sister's daughter's husband, Aquila, belonging to the same *bunkatun* as Aquila's father. The harvesting,
collection and counting of the taro was organized by Cilia, Rapuna’s wife and his sister’s daughter Grace, while the pig was procured by Rapuna, his brother Pomis and Rapuna’s son Rokou. All the residents of Basbi allied with Rapuna and Pomis participated, an instance which shows the operation of the *tsabana* as a house in Lévi-Strauss’ sense (1987): everyone involved asserted that they worked towards the goal of bringing Somar and Basbi closer together. Rapuna’s brother’s son’s wife, Talmits, worked especially hard, despite being an affine twice removed by two patrilateral links from the woman on whose behalf her taro would be prepared. Significantly, the feuding group at Bitoga, which most accounts place within the same *tsabana* as Rapuna did not participate.

![Image of Grace counting taro for hispepe.](image)

*Fig. 8.3. Grace counting taro for hispepe.*

Later, Aquila and Grace discussed how many taro she had delivered: Grace said only thirty, and that half the *tei* had to be made up of sweet potato – acceptable, but not desirable. Aquila was not happy with this, but Grace countered “and where were you yesterday to help in the gardens?” When Aquila
replied that he had to go to town to settle some business, Grace snapped back "Me too, I had business – business in the gardens! And now look, only thirty taros!" Husbands take an active interests in the affairs of their wives' tuhuna, even how it represents itself to other affines; if he is a good husband, he will help. While Aquila is twice involved in the exchange, he was the coordinator and organizer of his affines, rather than on the side of his cognatic relatives: and he should have done a better job, according to Grace.

The bound, distinctly uncomfortable pig, together with approximately fifty bundles of taro and sweet potato were delivered by truck to Somar. There, a feast had been laid out on tables beneath a large fig tree at the centre of the hamlet. Grace sat down and upon being offered some betelnut, promptly covered her head with a laplap: the taboo against eating in front of one's buis (affine) is usually observed discreetly, by removing oneself; here, it made an important statement. While the delegation from Basbi sat down and feasted on coconut and possum soup, several different kinds of fish, ceremonial taro, sweet potato, rice and noodles, the host women unloaded the põti, arranging them into heaps. The pig was led to the back where it was speared, singed and butchered. The cuts of pork were added to the põti, and after the tumono of Somar and Basbi had made short speeches affirming their friendship, the women of the host hamlet who had prepared the feast were called out to collect their pork, taro and sweet potato. Each woman, representing her household, took a heap away to a cart. Whilst no great care appears to have been taken as to the distribution of the pork, the matrilineage of the husband controlled the process, and took the best, least fatty cuts.

Hispepe can be seen from two perspectives, corresponding to the pig and to taro. The exchange centres on a live pig and propagating taro that is given by the wife's family to the husband's family. The taro reverses the transmission of nurturance from husband to wife's children; the husband gave the wife's lineage children, the wife's lineage gives the 'children' of taro back. The pig, however, cannot be bred and remains bound within hispepe. It too serves as nourishment for the husband's kin, but it also represents a kill that adds to the status of the husband's lineage's tuhuna, who host the feast. The exchange illustrates the equivalence of pigs and human life, and ought to be understood in the same horizon as the sacrificial relations underpinning brideprice and other affinal exchanges. The moderately large feast provided for the guests is not the complementing term of the exchange, and is considered only in terms of the responsibility to host, though it also reverses the direction of nurturance.

8.4. Conception

To understand the nature of the father's social contribution, it is helpful to examine beliefs about conception. Beatrice Blackwood records that the southern Selau group she studied understood that coitus was necessary for reproduction. However, she infers that the nature of the male contribution to conception was understood as mechanical action only.
The child is thought to be formed out of the woman’s blood. This idea may possibly have been suggested by the cessation of the menses during pregnancy since this causal relationship is recognized by them. On the part of the man, penetration is thought to be the essential factor. The seminal fluid is looked upon as water, and there is complete ignorance as to the function of the testicles. (Blackwood 1935:132).

The evidence marshalled for this conclusion is superficially attractive, and certainly entertaining. An impotent man disowned his wife’s child, understood to be another man’s; another man lost his penis to a sore and purportedly made a replacement from wood: his wife bore him children, which the villagers attributed to him (Blackwood 1935:132). Blackwood also cites a case of a man who castrated an expensive European pig, firm in the belief that this would not prevent it from breeding; sows kept with castrated pigs, after all, regularly produced litters (1935:133). Finally, the myth of *Boró*—which she reports to have been believed as literal fact in 1929—has a woman impregnating herself with a banana (Blackwood 1935:38-39). These suggestions are important, but they are far from convincing. How strict is the analogy between human and animal reproduction held to be by the Halia or Siara? The narrative of *Boró* is still held to be literal truth by some people: they deny that this would be possible today, and as Blackwood herself notes, bananas had an especially important role in female initiation. They are not the same as just any phallus-shaped object. As for the man who produced a wooden phallus, the story was reported to Blackwood second hand—and at best what it shows is that people in 1929 thought it was possible to make a phallus from wood, it does not tell us much about how they thought the phallus operated; or for that matter how exactly the man operated his wooden phallus, whether his injury prevented him from ejaculating or only from having intercourse, etc... I raise these sceptical notes not in the interest of contradicting Blackwood entirely—the emphasis on penetration and mechanical action is certainly central to present-day Halia beliefs—but to allow for the possibility that male ‘water’ was not quite as simple as she was led to believe.

As reported to me by several Halia and Haku informants, conception involves the mixing of male and female ‘waters’. The male water is semen and the female water is vaginal fluid, which is said to be most plentiful during a specific time of the month. It seems plausible that this last point is an interpretation of medical and Church advice about ovulation, and the presence of this fact within these accounts aids their historical contextualisation. In one elaboration, the first water to reach the ‘Gate of Heaven’, the core of a woman’s reproductive system, determines the gender. The notion of water and the relative equality of male and female waters are clearly indigenous. Concepts of retention of blood within the woman are not involved in the theories of conception that were conveyed to me. Instead, the emphasis is on the mutual action of the sexual fluids and on the mechanical action of coitus. It is not enough for the waters to be added passively to one another, they must be vigorously and enjoyably agitated. A single act of intercourse is sufficient for fertilization, but insufficient to bring about the development of a healthy baby. For this reason, the *tsunono*, at least in the past, advised the young to have repeated intercourse. As reported by Blackwood, there is no taboo on sexual relations during pregnancy (1935:156). However, some informants today state that in the past, when the pregnancy was suspected, the man would leave his wife’s company, lest the child become

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125 Note the report by Blackwood that a man who had too vigorous intercourse with his wife during pregnancy caused her to have twins (1935:164). My informants found this idea very funny.
pinolasa – a weakling, though the main threat of enfeeblement would have been a breach of the prohibition on sexual intercourse after birth. After birth, the couple would not resume sexual relations until the child was old enough to hold a small bow, if a boy, or carry a small tei (backpack) if a girl.

A second, significant aspect of the doctrine of conception is its position within the reproductive order of tiubhano. The tsunono had 'rights' to have sexual intercourse with some women married into the bumkatun during the prohibition on sexual intercourse after birth, for high ranking tsunono. Under certain circumstances he would take the bride first after she was delivered in marriage, before she joined his sister's son: the son would be considered to belong to the sister's son (E. Rimoldi 1982:216). According to my informants, these rights were exclusive to the tsunono, part of the justification for them was that the tsunono represented the entire settled group, and his involvement in the reproduction of the gobut was expected.

The critical aspect of the theory of conception insofar as it applies to land tenure is that while male and female waters are considered roughly equivalent, mechanical action is associated with male effort. This reflects directly in the refrain heard during litigation over coconut groves: the land follows the mother, but without the man's effort it will not yield. Indeed, the social role of the father is to 'raise' the child bodily and socially. But it is important to note that Halia ideas about fatherhood do not entirely segregate his contribution from that of the mother. In the contemporary accounts presented to me, the waters are similar. In the past, the father would practice couvade for at least five days after birth, refraining from any sort of work or exertion: the explanation of this given to Blackwood was that 'as the father had 'made the child come up,' he was responsible, as well as the mother, for its well-being during birth and for the first few days of its life' (1935:160). But note that he would initially not stay with his wife (ibid, 159). Contemporary Halia assert that it was common for fathers to absent themselves so that the child's development is not overly influenced by him. The production of fathers as social shapers is not a given, it needs work, the correlate of which is the focalization of motherhood on reproduction.

8.5. The Conception of the World

These notions, however, are not only applied in the context of individual fathers and mothers, husbands and wives; they are expanded in several mythological accounts to account for the very nature of the world. Indeed, ideas about conception are elaborated within a particular narrative of creation that is associated with the Hahalis Welfare Society. The extent to which it has been reformulated and innovated upon is uncertain. Remaining Welfare leaders claim to be only the story's custodians, but their rivals elsewhere in Buka disclaim knowledge of the myth either in whole or in

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126 Note, however that Blackwood states people used to believe it impossible to break this taboo: "if a woman became pregnant again during the prohibited period it was said that she had taken a banana and 'made the child come up' with it" (1935:157).

127 According to Blackwood, the practical standard was that sexual relations would resume when the child contracted yaws (1935:156).
part. Whatever its status, it represents a genuine and profound effort to think through basic Halia categories. It is somewhat misleading to call it a 'narrative': the narration of this creation always takes place over the display of certain illustrated figures. Nowadays these are drawings on paper or plastic sheeting, but in the past these were said to have been carved boards kept at tsuhana. The origin of these boards is unclear: some state that they were brought from Solos to Hahalis before the Second World War, while others say that similar designs were kept in ancient tsuhana.

The drawings relating to creation are amongst the most taboo objects in Halia. They are never shown in public and have not been seen even by senior tsunono close to the Welfare; the meaning of the drawing is never fully explained. The men who were instructed to draw the pictures on which I have based my version (Fig 8.4) did not come to know their full meaning, although they had spent years teasing the story from the elder tsunono. After months of lobbying leaders of both pinaposa, I was guided through the drawings, which are kept by one of Teosin's closest female assistants. I was also shown plates by a tsunono of Hagus. The plates show a number of figures, which serve as vehicles for multiple narratives, so that there are many layers of meaning that reverse upon each other through the manipulation of 'opposites.' There are indeed several 'creations': the creation of the first generation of men is another creation, as is the creation of the twins explained by Rimoldi and Rimoldi (1992:173). These form a cycle, or rather, a network of narratives and figures that is not completely known by any single individual – though most people speculate that Teosin may have known all of it. Indeed, the creation narrative related in Rimoldi and Rimoldi was revealed to them by Teosin himself in the late 1970s, yet today the men at Hahalis were unfamiliar with that version, suggesting that the interpretation of these drawings are in a state of flux. The plates reproduced here were composed in the late 1980s. My informants often referred to them as strakisa (structure).

"The Church tells us about God the Creator, but we Buka know of the creation of the Creator." The first indication of the identity of this figure is to be found in Blackwood ethnography, where she notes that a design in a Haku mona was described as "Morokohehon", glossed as 'father of all.' (1935:435). She was able to elicit no further information on what was evidently a subject of secrecy. Mourkuohon is the word used by Catholics in Haku to address the Christian god, but in Hakó, the expression corresponds to the design called loloho by the Halia, which is the mark (sinehe, 'reminder') of Sunahan. This, in turn, is usually considered a compound word – 'iw-', 'to shove downwards' or 'to plant' by shoving, as one would do with taro stems, and 'ban' 'village.' Even if this folk etymology is deemed doubtful, nothing could capture the world of horticultural power that the Halia inhabit more than this figure of Sunahan placing the tsunono as gobus of taro upon the ground. And though planting taro in this fashion is an activity shared between the genders, this action upon the fertile ground to bring out the gobus reflects a basic gendered logic of male work upon female productive power. Sunahan is father of all.

128 But note a crucial ambiguity that stems from the parallelism of creation and conception reported by Eleanor Rimoldi: "With relation to the conception of a child, John [Teosin] said that once the child is produced, it is Sunahan ("Boss") – a summation of the two parents." (1982:112, emphasis added). Unfortunately, the text is not clear on whether Teosin was referring only to Bariosa (the Halia ancestor identified with Jesus), or to conception in general (so that all children are analogous to Sunahan), or whether the 'summation' means simply that the child is the outcome of a combination of male and female, or retains both male and female aspects. I believe this last
The creation of this creator is represented in fig 8.4. The world, in its initial state, contained only waters. There were both male salt water and female fresh waters. These waters contained two likhane spirits, the womb-like jellyfish and the bone-like coral. The salty, masculine substance can be produced from saltwater when it boils, and it accumulates on the skin as one bathes in sea under the hot sun. Men who paddle their canoe out for arduous fishing trips come back coated with this, a sign of success, hard work and virility. It is this substance that becomes shells, and hence lime which, besides its main use in the consumption of betelnut, is also used for body decoration and is a key ingredient of many preparations, including sorcery. The lower half of fig 8.4 shows the two waters acting one upon the other, motivated by the spirits in them. Mirroring the action of conception, mutual movement yields a seed, which deposits into a third spirit, the Tridacna giant clam, or kapu. The open Tridacna's physical appearance bears a strong resemblance to female genitalia. Inside this clam the seed gestates into the creator Sunahan; some informants state that it grows thanks to the heating action of the sun – understood as a male generative principle, associated with the Naboen moiety, whilst the maternal shell is associated with Nakaripa. The remarkable mandala-like design of the upper half of plate shows the moment of genesis, that of the creation of the creator.

Sunahan is here depicted within a complete perere and loloho assemblage. These two symbols are the most important cosmological representations in Halia, who share them with all north Bougainvillean Austronesian societies. The diamond-shaped loloho (fig 8.5) is the maximal representation of the tsunono's power – the design was scarified onto the backs of only the most high-ranked tetabol and tsunono. It represents a vagina, or sometimes more specifically the vulva. It has a number of extremely interesting properties as understood from the Halia point of view, especially insofar as it outlines the four-way asymmetrical relation between the four pinapos. The design is cut into the striking-face of the tui slit-gongs – and the expression for carving such a design is gosum, also scarification. Indeed, the tui is in a way the focal point of the tsahan, and the loloho is the focal point of the tui. When the tui is to be sounded, the men take the kinapits striker – which is made of bundles of cane tightly bound together around a central core – and strike the loloho. This is expressly understood as intercourse, with the kinapits as a penis (indeed, a penis assembled as a kits.) In this manner, a powerful sexualised political ontology is reproduced whenever the hamlet is called to order – a primary function of the tui – and above all, when women take over from men in striking the tui during the funeral cycle.
Fig 8.4 Habalis Genesis: Sunaban emerges from the loloho.
The depiction of the Sunahan genesis, places another symbol, the *perere* within the *lolobo*. The *perere* (fig. 8.6) is understood as the vaginal passage, but its meaning is somewhat more elaborate. *Perere* disks made of shells were used as necklaces by the most powerful chiefs (Rimoldi and Rimoldi 1992:34); it is a movable sign of power, complementing the *lolobo* literally carved into their flesh. Implicitly, the *perere* is ‘male’, it is associated with the ‘male’ Naboen moiety class – it is, amongst other things, a solar disk. But in the Hahalis Welfare Society elaboration, the core of the *perere* is said to be the ‘Gate of Heaven’, the threshold of conception. This particular expression (in English) is rejected by anti-Welfare men – the placement of heaven within the female reproductive system is, to say the least, uncomfortable for orthodox Catholics – but clearly captures something very important about the logic of this particular symbol. The concentric array around it represents both the physical shape of the vagina, but also a topology of escalating arousal:

This central design – only this is the Gate of Heaven. This is where you and I come from/to. All these other things... are decorations for it. These make us men highly aroused, it increases our arousal. We come to this outside part and our arousal increases, and when we come to this central part – that’s the time!

Explaining this to me, the septuagenarian Rokou smiled with great excitement as he poked the Gate of Heaven in one of the *perere* carved into his *tsuhana*. Explicitly, the *perere* is a representation of sexual union and conception – at least within the Hahalis elaboration of general Buka themes. Understanding this, we can grasp something of the meaning of the placement of Sunahan at the core of the cosmic *perere*. He stands at the Gate of Heaven. Indeed, he is a sort of demiurge. Again, according to Rokou:

*Yumi no save wanem samting i stop bapsi. Yumi save tasol long dispela gate, na wanem wok yumi mas mekim na bai samting i kamanat long en.*

We do not know what is on the other side. We only know the gate and the work needed to make something come through it.
This understanding of genesis requires that the fundamental ontology of the physical and social worlds be irreducibly sexual. All that is, remains permanently ensconced between sexual polarities and a dynamic of attraction, excitation and jealousy. The act of sexual union thus has a giagono, sacred character. Rokou and other Welfare leaders are explicit that sexual reproduction is a 'miracle', a manifestation of Sunahan in the world, much like the cycle of seasons and blooming of flowers, or the generation of food in the gardens. Accordingly, one must understand the work of fatherhood not purely in terms of 'father love', unless this includes the father's love for mother; and this love is neither prurient nor holy, but both.

8.6. Other origin narratives

The Sunahan Genesis is only the first act, or aspect of creation. The clam then emerged from the water and became the land. A second genesis gives origin to people, and it is worth considering since it furnishes some additional details about biosocial reproduction. In this episode, dew forms on a tree called papapu, which is notable for allegedly always having two large leaves and a sprout (gobus, just as a tsuhana must always have a tsumono, peits and gobus). The dew drops from the papapu into the clam, generating the first woman and man. The two creation narratives are superimposed, however, as a manipulation of opposites. The second genesis is especially significant in the theology of the Hehela Church, the last remaining organized institution traceable to the Hahalis Welfare Society, since it gives rise to the generation of 'prophets' who live in perfect harmony, without sexual jealousy and perfect command over nature. Unlike Sunahan himself, who is 'father of all', present-day humans are descendants of these men and women, to whom they may pray and light sacrificial fires. For the Hehela ideology, one should not petition directly to Sunahan but rather to the ancestors, who can speak to him — osem yumi i no inap toktok wantaim Prime Minister, yumi mas toktok wantaim olo memba blo yumi pastaim: "just as you and I cannot talk [directly] to the prime minister, we must speak to our members [of parliament] first".

Strikingly, in the second genesis, the masculine element of saltwater-lime-coral is replaced by the extremely pure water of dew. The ambiguous associations of this can be expanded. Children, especially boys, are encouraged to run around in grass in the morning, so that they become wet with dew. The term for dew, karekul is a common euphemism for semen, and has this specific meaning in an important origin myth to which we shall turn presently. It is also an euphemism for vaginal secretion. Literal karekul is considered potent: it will make the children become stronger, their bodies beautiful. Women collect the dew with spoons and feed it to their children as medicine. Men collect dew and use it to top up car batteries — explanations for this range from the fact this water is chemically pure to the idea that there is something powerful about dew. In other contexts, karekul is associated with danger: a travelling tsumono, according to custom, ought to be preceded by a man called the ngolongolokarekul, whose job it is to get soaked in dew, which entails that it is he who will step on any sorcerous 'landmines' that might have been planted in the tsumono's path. A plant used for
abortions can be identified because it is said to be always covered in dew even in the dry season. And though *karekai* is also associated with female sexual secretions, those are also ambiguous substances: on the one hand, Halia men are nowhere near as frightened by these as has been suggested for other Melanesian societies (for instance, they practice cunnilingus), but on the other, it is a dangerous substance that will pollute a warrior (and cunnilingus is believed to cause baldness, a belief which is the foil of many jokes).

The location of this mythological assemblage *in the world* is facilitated by the fact that there are a number of geological phenomena around Buka which readily reference the elements of the narrative. For instance, the suggestion that Buka was once underwater (which is believed by many people who do not know of the history of origin) is supported by the fact that it is not uncommon to find large pieces of fossil coral or even giant clams when digging gardens. The reason for this is that eastern Buka is indeed an uplifted lagoon and was once under water. The production of clams from the interaction of waters is easily visible in the *kukwai*, freshwater springs that flow out from the base of the cliff at the beach, where the channels carved out by the tide and freshwater in the reef are rich in shells. The water that drips from the cliff is so saturated with calcium carbonate that the rocks grow visibly over a period of a few years: for the Halia, it is an mere observed fact that stones grow. These phenomena are called 'miracles' by the *tsunono*. The idea here is explicitly that miracles were not confined to the ancient past, much less to the ancient past of the white man, but could be witnessed in the cycle of the seasons, the return of fish, the blooming of flowers, the phases of the moon, in phenomena such as rainbows, water-spouts and, of course, reproduction. Even before contact with whites, the *tsunono* are said to have spent long hours contemplating and debating the nature of their natural environment, and these meanings are woven into the superposed interpretations of the origin narratives.

### 8.7. The transformation of fatherly roles

The foregoing ought to dispel any suggestion that the modalities involved in the organization of land are *simply* the result of the impact of cash cropping; additionally, there is nothing simple about that impact. Undoubtedly, the Sunahan Genesis is influenced by Christian ideas, and the very theory of conception shows signs of influence by Church doctrine, an impressive irony. The formulation of this mythology appears historically recent (or, to see it from the Halia point of view, its *disclosure* or alternatively *falsification* is recent.) However, it would be a serious mistake to regard limited paternal inheritance as an outcome of cash cropping. Still less can we give credence to the notion that the cultural change at work in Buka represents the collapse of a matrilineal organization. Practices such as the partial monetization of *hitepepe* and the sons' giving of 'suitcases' to fathers are indeed needed because the basic structural dynamic of fatherhood has been transposed into new contexts rather than
fundamentally transformed. In fact, what is observed in Buka is an intensification of the matrilineal aspect of social organization. A legal system can be made to live with almost anything, except indecision; forcing a decision in Buka, the social block fractures along pre-existing faults.

The facts presented above should also dispel any illusion that there could be a straightforward codification of Halia concepts of land tenure and political organization: at the very least, there are profoundly rich, secret discourses around which claims and counterclaims accrete. Are the origin narratives Halia? Or are they ‘cargo cult’? Are they Teosin’s inventions? Or are they reconfigurations representative of ‘authentic’ Halia concepts and histories? These issues matter a lot to the Halia; for the purpose of the argument in this thesis, it is not their solution that is important, but the fact they are asked. These ‘histories’ and ‘straksa’, as the origin narratives are called, are obviously made by the Halia, with Halia concepts and concepts intercepted and repurposed by the Halia. They resonate, though they also differ, with accounts presented by Blackwood and Rimoldi and to the extent that we may recognise transformations, we can also recognise isomorphisms and continuities. Yet it is extremely significant that it would be essentially impossible to have an open debate about these matters in Buka: the origin narratives are ammunition in a type of ideological warfare, the object of which is to confirm authenticity, priority, autochthony and continuity with the past.

8.8. The State as Father.

One of the most remarkable episodes in the Hahalis Welfare Society occurred in 1968, during Maxwell Rimoldi’s fieldwork. The movement, which had been essentially contained by the colonial Administration – though it still claimed 7000 members, almost half the island’s population (Hagai 1966; Oliver 1973:153), its leaders where uncomfortable with the status quo. Despite the history of conflict, they had long desired to “establish relations of mutual respect and assistance” with the administration (May 1982:8). The new initiative would take the form of a Parent’s Association. This was not, or at least not primarily, intended to be an association of individual parents:

The term ‘parent’s association’ derives from the interpretation – not presented without some misgivings – of the two organizations as a married couple: the Council = male, being concerned with regulations and systems of authority; the Welfare = female, concerned with productivity and (economic) fertility. (Rimoldi and Rimoldi 1992:228).

It should be added that whilst the ‘father’ is responsible for establishing and enforcing rules, he is also the instigator of work, provider of love and selfless raiser of the nitsumono of his son – or, in the new context of state and capitalist activity, the source of development initiative and funds. The Parent’s Association had a short life; the Hahalis Welfare Society was at this period undergoing dramatic changes: John Teosin and Francis Hagai had registered it as a private corporation in 1966, yet the ritual complex of the organization was intensifying – which would lead to the sacrifices discussed in
the previous chapter. The Parent’s Association would not last: the initiative flamed out after the government, suspecting a Hahalis Welfare Society scam, intervened to stop the collection of cash in its name. However, it serves as a useful vignette to illustrate a basic idea about how the Halia conceive of their relationship to the state. This perspective remains in effect today: the village is full of potential, it has vast resources, fertility, a large population, but it needs something to ‘kick-start’ development, it needs initiative and of course, funds. If the state provides law but not nurturance, it is a bad father: and this is one of the fundaments of Halia moral critique of the state.

The sequel to the Parent’s Association came about with the registration of a formal company, issuing shares to raise capital for development projects. This company, the Tuki ni Buka took as its emblem the *bulobo* (Fitzpatrick 1975, 2000; Rimoldi and Rimoldi 1992:230ff). Unlike the Parent’s Association, the Tuki received a warm response from the government. Whilst it would pursue economic goals like other corporations, the Tuki had a unique constitution, being modelled on indigenous Buka concepts: or at least, referencing indigenous concepts. Its board of directors was referred to as *u gam tura tsun tou* (‘meeting of the steersmen’), after the man who in the past would have steered the *mona sown-plank* canoe. Shares would be sold to *tsubana* and hence to *tsunono*, the shareholder’s meeting would hence be *u gam tura tsunono*. A *tsun kabe* or ‘guard’ could be appointed by the shareholders to act as a type of ombudsman (Fitzpatrick 2009:166-170). The corporation raised $100,000 dollars through shares, of which the Hahalis Welfare Society contributed some $40,000 (Rimoldi and Rimoldi 1992:231). Its main initiative was to attempt to establish commercial fishing in Buka, a long-held Administration ambition that remains seducing today, despite the woeful history of littoral fishing initiatives in Papua New Guinea. The Tuki soon fell into the orbit of national political interests (ibid, 232) and disintegrated. Despite its symbolic complexity and formal elaboration of Buka concepts into a constitution, the Tuki proved incapable of mobilizing effective political and economic force, or to contain the rivalries between *tsubana* and channel them to useful ends. This too, I believe, should be seen at least in part within the horizon of the state as a bad father: the recurring effort to produce laws and rules from Buka kin-political processes casts the Buka themselves into the role of unwise fathers, making up for bickering children by resorting to authoritarianism and its cultural projection, hollow symbolism.

A full analysis of the subsequent development of the concept of constitution in Halia is beyond the scope of this thesis. Here, I present a case study which I believe illustrates the truly formidable power of Halia thought on these subjects, at the same time that it shows the profound difficulty the Halia – or anyone else – has in analysing social forms they find themselves embedded in.
Thomas Tohiana's house is a large permanent construction, built on unusually high stilts with a thick cement foundation. There is a complete system of drains that feed into two medium sized tanks, supplying pressurised water to the kitchen – an arrangement seen in only two or three houses in Halia. The area beneath the house is partitioned haphazardly into rooms and spaces in various stages of construction. Lengths of building timber project out from the incomplete front wall while cables entered from a generator shack outside. Tools litter the area. Inside, the place has a lived-in feel. There is a couch placed diagonally in a central 'room', or what would be a room if the walls were completed and next to this, a trampoline, some children's toys, tools, more wiring and chairs. Another room has a study desk half-buried under papers, while books are crammed into the framework of a half-built wall – individual volumes of different encyclopaedias, the Guinness Book of Records, schoolbooks. These items attest to a long period of simultaneous construction and habitation. By the entrance, next to the baus kuk and water tanks, there is a bedroom walled on three sides while a blackboard facing outwards serves as a divider. On it are sketched the numbers of three Bible verses: Tohiana, a devout Catholic who is rarely absent from Sunday mass at Hanahan, teaches the hamlet's children here. On each stilt of the house there are rosaries hanging from nails, and on the wall behind the high dining table at which we sit there is a calendar with the an image of Jesus, a framed picture of St. Mary and next to these, a large newspaper cut-out of Osama bin Laden. "I wanted to know more about him; he is one of us, a rebel," explains Tohiana, who is also a leader of the Me'ekamui faction in Buka. It was for this reason I had come to interview him.

Tohiana graduated from the University of Technology at Lae in the first class of civil engineers after the old technical college was upgraded, in 1967. Already before graduating, he had joined Bougainville Copper Limited for work experience – at this time the mine was being surveyed, and there was a great deal of tension with the landowners, which Tohiana observed.

Tohiana was a close ally of Francis Ona, whom he met at BCL. Tohiana believes that the clan systems of central Bougainville and the Austronesian north are related: his political alliance and friendship with Ona translates into a plane of rarefied kinship. To prove the relationship between central and north Bougainville, Tohiana argued that several words are present both in Solos and central Bougainvillean languages; like other Halia, Tohiana believes the Solos to be more ancient. Kieta and panguna would be examples of this, the later supposedly a Solos word for a piece of pork. I volunteered lolobo, which happens to be the name of the copper concentrate processing area across the harbour from Arawa. His eyes lit up, and asked me how much I knew about the symbol. I said that it represented the relationship between the pinaposia. He said this was true, but there was much more to it. He rummaged around the papers at the study and pulled out two A4 sheets of millimetre graph paper which he had carefully cut and glued together. The paper had a worn quality, its edges were grey and frayed as if it had been frequently handled.

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129 As is common throughout Melanesia, the inland Solos are regarded by the coastal Halia and Haku as keepers of powerful sorcery and as traditionalists, but also as more primitive, as bukanaka, as 'nomads' with precarious housing.
On the face of the graph paper was a carefully constructed diamond, the *lolobo* (Fig. 8.7). It had been divided by geometric lines that split it into two large triangles and each triangle into four smaller triangles, and these again into roughly four more triangles. Tohiana remarked that this could be continued further, with ever-smaller sets of four triangles (similar to Sierpinski's fractal triangle.) Some lines were emphasized, so that a second diamond shape inside the whole *lolobo* stood out, as did the four largest triangles within the upper half. These four main triangles were also labelled with the names of the four 'true' *tsunono* of Ketskets. A third diamond was more arbitrarily drawn into the middle of the picture, in the sense that it did not appear to be a result of the geometric construction that yielded the other two. According to Tohiana, the diagram represents one man, and also the whole of society — which is also *a toa katun*, one man, though also one woman. At the centre of the diagram and at the top there were clearly marked dots. The top dot represents the *tsunono* and man while the middle dot represents the *teitabol*, woman — but also God, as Santu Maria, the *teitabol* of God.
He used the diagram to show a number of relationships. The triangle split into four triangles represented the *tsuhana* of Hagus arranged as a *patu*. Here, the *munihil* is raised to the top by the other three *tsuhana*: this is represented in fig. 8.8 – in this case, the arrows indicate Tohiana’s gesticulation and explanation. Tohiana stated that the diagram permitted him to understand this relationship clearly: it captured the manner in which the *tsunono* depend on each other, and that the *munihil* is first amongst equals. Hence, when there has to be a handover of the *munihil* to another lineage a rotation takes place, establishing the next leader (fig. 8.9). In a fortuitous coincidence – not all *patu* are composed of four lineages – the middle triangle never takes the lead because they are the workers’ lineage, the *tsukotsokokala*. They are bound by the *tsunono*. In this sense, the diagram shows the organization of the whole of society.

![Diagram](image)

**Fig. 8.9.** Loloho rotations representing the sequence of tsunono leadership

Furthermore, the fact this triangle is composed of further triangles indicates that each *tsuhana* is itself organized in the same manner as the *patu* – and so Tohiana further projected this organization into the lineages that compose each *tsuhana*, into the families that compose the lineages, and eventually into the individual, creating an iterative picture (fig. 8.10).

![Diagram](image)

**Fig. 8.10** Iteration of tsuhana roles within lineage and family

The most profound meaning of the diagram, however, lay in the dots at the centre and the top of the main *loloho*. The central point represents the *teitahol* and God – and the vaginal passage, the ‘origin of life’ (but also the intent of desire: the *lolobo* is at once a maternal vagina and an object of desire). The entire structure comes from this central point, as everything originates in the vagina and in God. (Much like Sunahan in Tcosin’s epithet above, Sunahan is the ambiguous combination of male and female.) Thus, Tohiana projected the entire structure back into its origin point so that the *lolobo* is situated
within itself. Hence the whole loloho is a picture of God, which is represented within it as part. And conversely, a new loloho can be projected from within itself: from the point where its female and male points meet at the very centre of the existing loloho (fig. 8.11). And from the new loloho, there will be another, within another origin point, then yet another, in a perpetual reproduction of person, tsuhana and society: an intimate infinity of sexual unions that re-establish and reorganize order. And in this expansion, it is always the female point that is original, and the male point drifts further away from it. The geometrical precision of the diagram was intended to make just this point: it is at once society and the individual, the fertile couple and fertile God. It is, in sum, a representation of the sexualised cosmogenetic thinking characteristic of Halja culture.

Fig. 8.11 Transformation of the loloho

8.9 Anticlimax

Tohihana's transformational loloho can only be described as a masterpiece of sociological and cosmological reasoning. But it is also impractical to the point of futility. A month after he showed me the picture, Tohihana joined a meeting of the Halja Council of Elders Constitutional Committee then deliberating on the composition of the local government council. The session was considering how to organize the local government council in terms consonant with Halja notions of gaumu blong peles, that is to say, the order of tsuhana. It should be clear from the foregoing chapters that operationalizing the organization of tsuhana to the point it could be reflected in the petty bureaucracy of a local council would be, to speak optimistically, extremely difficult. The debate at the Constitutional Committee thus oscillated between high-minded rhetoric about the sacrosanct and profound character of tsuhana and democracy - deep issues far removed from practicalities of government - and mundane, apparently trivial details. A very great deal of time was consumed by deliberating on the names of various branches of government, and which icons of Halja kastom to select for officers: for me as an observer familiar with the history of the Tuki, this did not bode well. On the day Tohihana took the floor, the major question was that naming the head of the council as ‘tsunano’ is offensive in case the
man appointed to this position does not have the status of *tsunono* – but if he does have this status, he is immune from criticism, on pain of *hamal*. How could a government function in this way? Tohiana attempted to intervene by explaining the organization of the *tsunahana* in terms of the transformations of the *loloho*. He was blankly ignored. Perhaps, some *tsunono* privately speculated, he was not a well man. Tohiana cut a sorry figure sketching the diagram on a blackboard to an apparently uncomprehending audience. Where, exactly, would the theological, cosmological and sociological insight of the *loloho* transformation fit in a bureaucratic device enabling local government? And if it did not fit there, where would it be used? It is hard to contemplate this question without facing the disquieting analogy between Tohiana and the position of the social sciences in industrialised societies. Social science is often superbly useless. (What would happen if someone attempted to outline a Lacanian interpretation of the Australian Constitution before the Parliament?)

It is unlikely that the case study I now narrate will have greater utility than the theory developed by the subject of that case study. It is difficult to speculate on Tohiana’s intent in producing the *loloho* transformation. One motivation – which he recognised explicitly – was to identify the depth of complexity of Buka culture, so as to validate it intellectually and politically: “if the priests had studied our system, like you anthropologists do, they would have preserved some of what they wanted to remove.” The *loloho* transformation is partly an effort at ideological vindication. But it is also obscure and pregnant with meaning for roughly the same reasons social ‘theory’ is often obscure and pregnant with meaning. Too clear a picture of the *tsunahana* may not be entirely flattering – the actual organization of *tsunahana* depends on compromises and manipulation that are considered in a very negative light by the *tsunono*. It would also not be *productive*, in the sense that a theorization that leaves everything wrapped up too neatly does not allow for a certain type of mythologising exegesis: the role of *mystery* as a motivation in theory and self-interpretation should not be underestimated, here or in Buka.

Are our own ‘theories’ any better than Tohiana’s? They are often a lot worse. Tohiana has articulated fundamental aspects of his culture’s view of society and the universe into a scheme that fits on two bits of paper. In order to be exposed to the force of this theory, Halia socialisation is not enough; for a person to see the depth the *loloho*, they must understand the *loloho* lore and the idealisation of the *patu*, but they must also be open to the magical force of geometry. The position from which Tohiana theorises, in other words, is not that of kin-political categories alone. To appreciate it, we need to be aware of the problem of unity in Halia thought, which is not formulated in terms of abstract entities or citizens born to law, but in terms of kin and *tsunahana*. Without a grasp of the profound reverence the Halia have for reproduction, without knowing that cosmogenesis in Halia is always sexual, Tohiana’s inscription of his social order inside a vagina is unintelligible and eccentric. These matters are only known to a few people in Halia, and they know it not with a neutral attitude: they know it with the force of knowing a secret, a fundamental aspect of society that others do not know, and for this knowledge they have legitimacy. But while the *loloho* and its transformations capture processes that the Halia – or at least Halia leaders – are familiar with, and while it is an authentic and even naive involution of their cultural world, it is also intellectually very distant from that world. Tohiana’s work is a kind of geometrical poetry, it expresses something profound but useless; yet it is clearly not intended to be useless. In this way, his thought approximates the position of the social sciences in the
west. Around Tohiana, there is a small coterie of followers; Tohiana is a kind of ideologue – a quintessentially Halia ideologue who does not sing out his own name – but the fact that he has a powerful intellect that has pierced the mysteries of the *lolobo* draws others to acknowledge him.

The geometric poetry of the *lolobo* serves to make a final point. It would be a serious mistake to see Tohiana’s diagram as a cold, rigid calculation of society. He intends rigour, he wishes to see the social relations that he is embedded in, and ultimately he wished to do this to set laws: to sublimate into a diagram the powerful somatic forces that constitute *tsubana*. But transformed into a scheme – or for that matter, into a set of names, or epithets about *kastom*, or local government constitution – Halia life would be disseminated. Yet despite this intent, the *lolobo* diagram is embedded in that life. This is not geometry taking place within an abstract space of coordinates, translations and reproductions; it is rather bodily, social, affective reproduction finding force and expression through the constitution of particular kind of geometric field. Midway through his explanation of the *lolobo*, Tohiana and I entered a digression about his mother. His father’s death, he told me, was not of great consequence, but his mother’s death was a great trauma to him – on that he had not recovered from. In a pauseless segue, Tohiana proceeded to the topic of the *lolobo* as a vagina.
9. Mourning and Building

9.1. The occasion of death

When a person dies, the news spreads rapidly through the village. Sometimes the slit-gong is sounded, to be heard across Hanahan bay on a still night or in the gardens and plantations where most people spend their day. More commonly, it is the ambulance's siren that alerts the villagers that a corpse is being ferried from the Buka township hospital. Even without these signals, word diffuses rapidly. There is a general alertness to death and its omens that pervades everyday life: perhaps the sun shines through rain, or a pig escapes from the bush draped in vines. One unwelcome consequence of this alertness and gossip is that there are often rumours of death that turn out to be false, much to the frustration of relatives of seriously ill persons. At the same time, news of actual death flash across the community.

Once a death is confirmed, the immediate family of the deceased – siblings, mother, father, maternal uncles and aunts – begin preparation for the vigils which constitute the first step in the funeral cycle. Added to grief, they will have a lot in their mind: those who will come to sing the wordless babur mourning songs must be fed a pig, they ought to have rice, biscuits, tinned meat, tinned fish and tea, they must be presented with betelnut. These small but sudden expenses make for a powerful shock in the cashless atmosphere of the village. There isn’t much time to organize. The family and the leaders of the hamlet are placed under severe pressure. There are also political considerations. The body is often taken to spend a night at the hamlet of those relatives who will not be burying it. This isn’t necessary but desirable: the last thing a family needs when it is about to commit large resources to a funeral cycle is to alienate relatives, and the Halia feel it is essential to remain close to the body for at least one night before it is buried. In the case where burial takes place in the deceased person’s matrilineage’s hamlet, the body may be taken to the father’s house, and vice-versa; less frequently, the body of an exogamously married person may remain at the hamlet the couple was settled at, so that it will be nearer his or her children. All this must be handled very carefully, for a lot rides on it, and a lot can go wrong.

Disputes often arise over the location of burial. These typically pit the deceased person’s maternal and paternal relatives and are articulated in terms of affect. The father wants the deceased daughter who married away to return near to him, because he misses her and wants her spirit close by; the maternal relatives want their clansman buried in his mother-land, so he will remain close to his own relatives and their spirits. In one particularly powerful example, the daughter of a widowed tsumono married ‘back’ to a distinct lineage within her father’s bunkatun. The husband was abusive, and the woman committed suicide. The father had already buried another daughter in his hamlet, as is understood to be his right. But to bury this second daughter was considered an outrage by the woman’s matrikin, the tsumono’s affines. There was a heated argument. A compromise arrangement was struck for her body to first lie in state at the father’s house but then to be buried in her mother-land, some four kilometres away. The father, seized with grief refused to let the body go. “What can
we do, he is a powerful chief,” lamented her kinsfolk, who were eventually forced to take her for a brief stay in her own land before returning her to her father. When the time for burial came, four graves had to be dug – three times the diggers encountered large stones, a sign that “the ground does not want her buried here.” The father persevered, pushing against the limits of tolerance. “Look, the betelnut palm has a broken leaf-shoot”, one tsunono speculated, “something is wrong with this death.” The fact it had been a suicide was revealed to her matrikin by way of rumour. Some of the woman’s classificatory brothers boycotted the funeral, and subsequently, matrikin and patrikin organized parallel mourning cycles at their respective hamlets.

The full range of issues at stake in burial is rarely simply affect – or we should rather say: affect in Buka runs into the ground and through the blood that serves as a proxy and image for social hierarchy and order. Cemeteries are critically important in land disputes; the best operational definition of a political hamlet is a settlement with a separate cemetery. In the case above, Topin – the matrikin’s hamlet – is in a weak position against the two tshhana that border it, Munatsil and Nahirei. Nahirei and Topin dispute a cemetery that is built exactly on the border between the two hamlets; to any casual observer, there is only one cemetery with the graves of both groups laying interspersed in a small tract of land. The Nahirei, who built their imposing tshhana immediately next to the cemetery, claim it for themselves whilst ‘allowing’ the Topin to bury their dead there. Of course, this is not how Topin see it: they claim that the burial of Nahirei bodies in this area is recent, and that the tshhana has ruined their cemetery. From their point of view, Nahirei pursues a strategy of unwelcome ‘welcoming’, that is, of manipulating oneself into the position of host by ‘allowing’ their dead to be buried in what they regard as their own cemetery. Nahirei, as we have seen, has had no shortage of dead to stake its claim to the cemetery; the tsunono’s daughter was the first death of a high ranked person in Topin for a number of years.

The Halia themselves regard disputing over the location of burial as shameful and wrong. A previous case at another hamlet, in which the tsunono’s brother assaulted the leader of a competing lineage to prevent him from burying his sister is brought up in hushed tones, years after the event, as evidence of the dire state of dispute between the two lineages. Nobody regards it as normal or acceptable practice. No one admits to instigating such conflict, and perhaps this is the sort of conflict that arises spontaneously out of a situation of tension without anyone deliberately setting it in motion. This would be a charitable interpretation and it would be viable in some cases. But it would fail to account for the outright plotting that takes place before an expected death. A death, above all the death of a teitolol or tsunono is experienced as a loss and tragedy, yet it is the critical moment for asserting claims to leadership. The moment may not return. (In the next chapter, we shall examine just such a case where a funeral became a springboard for a brazen, nearly successful coup.) All this weighs heavily on the men and women as the news of a death is still filtering through the village.

9.2. Habur and vigil

The body must always lie in state for at least one night. In the past, full vigils were held only for tsunono and teitolol. The body would be placed on a specially constructed platform within the tshhana. Women would be allowed to enter the tshhana and strike the tin, something which under ordinary
circumstances they are strictly forbidden from doing. This has a powerful sexualised symbolism. As the women strike the slit-gong, the mourners sing the *babur*: a style of wordless singing that blends naturally into wailing and crying. Today, vigils are held for all persons and the *babur*, though a waning custom is sung even for those who do not have titles. Women, far more than men, are responsible for the continued practice of *babur* song, and it is also they who intervene to alter funeral protocol and spontaneously begin to sing for their sisters and brothers. These breaches of protocol divide opinions between those who see it as a dangerous and inauspicious, and those who see the love for the dead as expressed especially poignantly by those who risk their personal safety to mourn. (Of ten funerals I attended, only two lacked *babur* — one for a child less than five years old, another for a twenty year old who had spent several years paralysed.)

![Fig 9.1. Women dance the bóhu, from Montauban and O'Reilly (1955:71).](image)

In the past, the vigil could go for days, ‘until the body’s fluids flowed’ according to one formula. To conform to Papua New Guinean law, the vigils are short: the body is kept for at most two nights, and then only in exceptional cases\(^\text{130}\). Older informants stated that this was wrong, and deprived the family of the chance to properly mourn with the dead.

For the vigil, the body is laid within a house that becomes known as the *bou* karai (Tok Pisin = 'crying house'). This is typically the house of the deceased or the largest house in the hamlet; the body

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\(^{130}\) A high-level public servant who died in Port Moresby in 2006 was embalmed and placed in a sealed coffin with a viewing window, and in this condition performed a long tour between maternal, paternal and affinal hamlets over three days before burial. The Administrator of Bougainville, who died in 2007 was to be taken on an extended tour of the main island between different allied and related villages, but owing to the exorbitant cost and lack of helicopters (the company responsible had been expelled from Bougainville a month earlier under charges of espionage), was instead taken directly to his maternal village aboard the largest freighter in the province, the *MV Nukumanu*. Though these examples are sketchy and few, there appears to be little doubt that those who can will attempt to stretch out the mourning period for as long as possible.
is not brought to a *tsubana* before the day of the burial. It is notable that under ordinary circumstances, people very rarely enter each other’s houses. *Paio1* are hung near the deceased person’s head. The *paio1* include the *haminu* of the *tsubana* of the deceased – special, long *paio1* representing the *ngore`* of the house – together with any *paio1* that mourners may bring. When the administrator of Bougainville, Peter Tsiamallili was to be buried in Amun, some hundred kilometres to the south of Buka area, his distant relatives in Hahalis and Hanahan travelled with *paio1* to display there, and were matched by mourners from the rest of Bougainville. *Paio1* is a powerful object, which children and pregnant women should not approach under ordinary circumstances, but when it is hung in the *haus karai*, these taboos are not observed.

As mourners arrive, men and women separate. The men find their relatives and friends, hold and console each other, often sobbing before settling down for conversation. They sit at a house some distance away from the *haus karai*, or at the *tsubana* if there is one. The women usually head directly into the *haus karai* and throw themselves over the body, crying loudly. Some faint. The women nearest to the deceased remain within the *haus karai*, the mourners embrace them and cry; few words are exchanged. This powerful expression of grief takes place no matter who dies or who mourns.

When my partner received news of her grandmother’s death, the women from the hamlet appeared, crying and holding her; later a small sacrifice was held. When I arrived back at Hahalis to find that a friend had been buried months earlier, the women of the hamlet rushed to me and held me, crying as if the man had died yesterday. For someone brought up in a society with a private attitude towards grief, it was impossible not to be overwhelmed by this public form of affect. At first, it seemed overly patterned: some of the women who came to cry with my partner knew her by sight only. But after too many funerals, it became clear to me that the feelings were genuine; I became somewhat ashamed of my earlier cynicism. Nobody must grieve alone, grief – *haromana* (‘sorrow’, ‘sympathy’; formed by *romana* ‘now, here’ and the causative/possessive prefix *ho-*) – is a condition of the hamlet, of the village. A particularly powerful type of shame thus exists where a hamlet is in a state of formal feuding, *pal*, and there is a death: the feuding lineages cannot approach each other’s houses to mourn. When Grace Talmits’ son died, Barbara approached as far as the road, crying, and in a powerful gesture, Talmits invited her over to the house to cry on her shoulder. The feud between their groups is very serious, sometimes violent and continually before the courts; but in the context of a death, the underlying synthetic force that once bound these lineages together resurfaces as affect. Not, it should be noted, affect divorced from social reality, for the fact that Grace welcomed Barbara was widely regarded, though obviously not by Barbara’s relatives, as a telling sign of Grace’s status as future *teتابول*.

As a rule, the first mourners not directly related to the deceased begin to arrive towards the end of the afternoon. Once the last rays of dusk rise over the coconuts, the mourners will have begun to sing the *babur*. The song waxes as more people arrive. Once it has grown into a powerful chorus, the women take colourful leaves and dance a simple and repetitive dance called *bōhn*. They continue until weariness overcomes the singers, then they sit again, drink sweet tea and biscuits and talk discreetly. Late into the night conversation has been all but exhausted, and the mourners rest in a daze before one of them take the *kinapits* to the slit-gong and restarts the cycle. The overnight *babur* breaks at
Fig 9.2: Mourners in the house karai\textsuperscript{131}; Fig 9.3 Vigil.

\textsuperscript{131} Photograph credit John Pomis Tsurumits.
dawn with the exhausted participants returning to their homes. They come back within hours for the funeral, and the singing usually resumes by mid-morning.

*Hahur* is a custom with an ageing base. In the past, men and women would sing – today, women of all ages sing, but mostly old men participate. *Hahur* is not easily learned. There are many different *hahur* melodies, all of which make use of similar pentatonic motifs. Much like the *tui* calls, they have a superficially improvised character, but are in fact structured, memorized songs. Whilst they are always sung without words, some of the songs have words that are only known to some elderly informants. Young men say that if they knew the words, they would be able to sing – but the *tsunono* guard the words. They sing them only to themselves.

**9.3. Banbaanama**

For all the powerful emotion expressed during vigils, the conversation amongst the men can become relatively light-hearted and spiced with a touch of gallows humour, so long as it is discreet. But for a man to amuse himself while others mourn is considered a very serious offence. Drinking, dancing or worse yet, flirtatious behaviour or actual intercourse ought not to take place within the sphere of awareness of those in vigils. This, it must be stated emphatically, does not mean that funerals take place in an entirely desexualised context – they are *sacred* (*giangono*), but there is no straightforward opposition between sacredness and sexuality in Buka. Or at least – since there is a vehement Catholic element – there is a powerful layer of the culture where this opposition must not operate. At one level, this takes the form of self-debasement: women, for instance, will sometimes remove their clothes in grief. If husbands married into the lineage of the deceased are present, women from that lineage may sit on them, or even pick the men up and throw them on the ground, mount them and mime suggestively. This would under normal circumstances be intensely humiliating, in fact a major offense; at funerals the men seem to weather the events stoically. But not all such actions are so clearly self-abasing. The striking of the *tui* by the women is in no sense humiliating for the *tsunono* or anybody else. The striking is often done by women and men taking turns or together, and it is done with a powerful sense of occasion, even a kind of bitter joy. It is an act with an explicitly sexual meaning, and it is difficult to resist the interpretation of this as the moment social regeneration begins, announced, as in the major origin and regeneration mythologies, by the self-action of female sexuality. Indeed there are other indications of this dimension, which are no easier for the Catholic Buka to articulate. Certain modification of mourning rituals can involve sexually explicit dancing, although this is the subject of intense controversy. This sexual nexus makes sense especially seen from the coordination of the lifecycle and funeral feasts with *tsuhana* construction and the elevation of the *gebus* as new *tsunono* and *teitalo*, a political process that is steeped in dynamics of reproductive powers.

Someone who celebrates while others mourn is called *banbaanama*, and is invariably considered a strong candidate for the unhappy position of sorcerer responsible. Just how seriously this is taken – or perhaps, just how easily exploitable the sentiments are – was revealed in the aftermath of Peter
Tsiamalili's funeral at Amun. John Watawi, the then Vice-President of Bougainville, a Selau man, attended and depending on the witness, drunk beer or was present whilst others drank beer near the *bana karai*. He was accused of *banbaanama* and Tsiamalili's relatives demanded two dozen pigs and several thousand Kina compensation; some accused the government of killing Tsiamalili. Now, this would not occur without a considerable degree of political excitation, in this case a latent rift between the administration of Bougainville headed by Tsiamalili – considered by his opponents to have been Port Moresby's creature – and the mostly ex-BRA Government of Bougainville. But never during the two-week long saga of the 'Amun Drunken Burial' was the complaint presented in those terms: the core issue remained the alleged *banbaanama*. The matter escalated to the point that a contingent of several hundred ex-combatants, mostly anti-BRA Resistance forces from West Bougainville, marched onto Buka Town demanding justice. Some were armed. Tsiamalili's sister's son armed himself with a machete and headed a party into his deceased uncle's offices and destroyed it, demanding "transparency in government"; allegations of corruption and sorcery became fused. Other issues had by now been added to the list of complaints: ironically, the neglect of West Bougainville's roads and public services, which had been partly Tsiamalili's responsibility. The Vice-President resigned.

Many Halia, not the least the Vice-President's relatives in Hahalis, complained that the entire affair was a politically motivated frame-up. Even the normally credulous *Post Courier* expressed scepticism when Tsiamalili's relatives presented an esky still containing a few cans of beer as evidence. Several witnesses said nothing had happened at the funeral, and the alleged beer drinkers reportedly included Tsiamalili's own relatives. Despite what they saw as transparent political opportunism, some Halia regarded this is a sign of just how inflexibly the West Coast people retain custom, and suggested such histrionics could not take place in Halia – note that this is not unqualified self-praise, it reflects a perception of lost cultural intensity. However, a fortnight after the Amun Drunken Burial, a teacher was severely castigated at meeting of the Parents and Citizens' Committee for having missed an entire week of classes without notice by attending a funeral in the mainland. She claimed that the parents were *banbaanama*; a threat that was evidently serious enough, since it shut down the debate.

### 9.4. Burial

Whilst every burial follows slightly different protocols, there are some features which recur in all of them. A specific example here captures the general themes better than a generalization could. In the following funeral, Carol, the woman who died, was a respected, valued member of the Nahirei hamlet and well liked by the three feuding factions there. She was placed in a platform within the *lsunono* during *babur*, an action which although approved by the *tsunono* Rokou, led to a great deal of chatter, since it intimated her rank was *teitabol*, and this was certainly not supported by Rokou's allies. We pick up the narrative in the morning after *babur*.

With dawn, some of the mourners left the hamlet to rest, whilst others sat half-dazed still mumuring the *babur*. The women, most of whom had not slept, set about preparing refreshments and food to serve to the mourners who would shortly return. Presently, the *tui* was struck again in the *tsunono* and
the men and women slowly reassembled the *buhur*. At first they performed the same style as in the night – the *buhu* – but soon they added another dance, in which they mimed rowing a canoe, using bundles of bright leaves as oars. This dance represents taking the body to its marine graveyard, or *buhuruko*. The women were led in this by their elder aunts and mothers, who know the subtle beats of the *tui*.

_Washing the body, Collecting Hair_

More people arrived through the morning, and by about midday there were 120 present, and as many children. Every so often a woman from Nahirei would come around and give the men a *karomap* containing rice cooked with coconut oil. Around 13:20 several women came over and hung sheets around the dead woman, and then crowded tightly so that nobody could look inside. They proceeded to wash her with aromatic herbs and then change her clothes. Small pieces of gauze were inserted into the nasal openings. After the washing, the sheets were removed. Two women continued to attend to the body, arranging the clothes neatly, treating the deceased with baby powder, brushing the hair and applying scented coconut oil to the skin.

The woman who combed the hair collected the strands left over in the comb, rolled these into a little ball and tucked it away. The woman’s sister explained to me: They do this because the hair can be collected and placed in a house to ward off spirits, it can be collected also to retain something of the dead person, but the most significant reason for keeping the deceased’s hair is that it is *korkoriana* – ‘dirty things’ – which would ultimately be disposed of at the feast of *hakulipu*, which requires the construction of a new *tsuhana*. Anything associated with the head of a person of rank is especially significant as *korkoriana*, as the head is the seat of *nitsunono*; but other prized items are also kept to be later disposed of.

_The Coffin_

Once the deceased was washed and prepared, the coffin which had been prepared at the opposite end of the hamlet was brought over. It was a box hammered from uneven planks of wood, covered with a purple *laplap*; the lid, braced to hold together, was covered with the same colour *laplap* and another, red *laplap* emblazoned with pictures of Jesus Christ and the slogan “The Lord of the World”. It was only just big enough to fit Carol, who had been a small woman. The women who were attending to her poured some baby powder around the coffin, then the younger men came and moved her into the coffin. The *liu* was placed over the box and some nails were nailed halfway in.

_Tour_

The coffin was taken by four men and walked out of the *tsuhana* at a surprisingly brisk pace. It was first taken to Carol’s husband’s hamlet, then her father’s hamlet. There, the coffin was opened and people were allowed to cry. After about forty-five minutes, the procession returned to Nahirei, now with many others following on, including her husband and father. A sizeable crowd had assembled. The coffin was taken to the woman’s house and opened; her relatives sobbed loudly for maybe twenty minutes. After this, the coffin was brought back into the *tsuhana* and opened again. The people who followed the procession did not enter the *tsuhana*. Only the pall bearers came in to place the coffin not in the raised platform, but on the *tsuhana’s* bed – low enough for children to look into it. A young man came in and stood on the bed next the coffin. He was the preacher.
The preacher called out to members of the local protestant Women's Fellowship group. A younger man came in with a guitar and stood on the ground below. Earlier, these people could be seen and heard at the nearby elementary school, practicing their singing. Emotions had by now overwhelmed several people, who wailed uncontrollably, including one of the women from the Fellowship. Her comrades tried to console her, but the preacher had to start over her cries. After a short sermon, there was praise singing. As soon as this started, emotions erupted and people enjoined the hymns. Many people started crying now and did not stop until the coffin was removed from the *tsabana*.

**Final Handshake**

As the praise singing continued, a line was assembled into the *tsabana*. At its head were small children, behind them adults. A man held Carol's hand up, and each person shook it. The children had a diversity of reactions to this – some were crying, others had a bemused look about them, giggling nervously. There was an atmosphere of barely suppressed chaos, as the praise singing continued and relatives wailed as the entire hamlet passed by to shake the deceased's hand.

Towards the end of the handshake, the husband, sons and daughters came in and cried uncontrollably. After fifteen minutes, some men started attempting to close the box. Carol's children refused to let go of her, they hugged her and sobbed. The husband was utterly overcome. He howled in grief, tore out his hair and buried his face in his shirt: he could not stand, drunk with mourning. (Of all the aspects of fieldwork, nothing compared to presencing this world of wailing, improvised coffin and song.)

**Burial**

After some time, the close kin were led, or dragged away from the coffin. The lid was placed over it and the nails hammered with a dry, percussive sound of finality. It was only now that I realised that the crying had subsided considerably and the husband was the last to still his grief. The coffin was presently led out and a great mass of people followed to the grave site, only about ten meters behind the *tsabana*. It was lowered into the grave, and the relatives tossed flowers over it. Once the young men with spades begun covering it, the crowd almost mysteriously dissipated.

There are numerous possible variations on this procedure. Catholics either take the coffin for a full requiem at the mission, or to a *Liklik Kristen Komuniti* chapel in the village, where the priest presides over an abridged service. The body is then typically handed over to the family, and they are left to organize traditional customs. In the case above, the body remained in the *tsabana* which altered the mood considerably: the men did not carry out as much light conversation as is normal in funerals (but I was still quizzed on how to travel to Brazil, etc...). In other funerals, it is not uncommon for the mood in the *tsabana* to be more like a wake than a funeral, with the notable exception that it is utterly unacceptable to drink at a burial. The last handshake is a consistent feature of funerals. In the case of a man in a sealed coffin, the *tsunono* called the entire hamlet over to queue and place their hand on the glass viewing port.
This funeral, however, was regarded as controversial. Laying Carol’s body on a raised platform within the tsuhana signalled her status as tsetabol. But she belongs to a different branch of the Nahirei community than Rokou, the tsumono. Though a senior woman and the eldest sister of her sublineage at her death, Carol was not the most senior member of the broader ngorere feuding with Rokou. Hence, under no plausible interpretation, could she be considered tsetabol. This was considered outrageous by Rokou’s supporters: why did he allow the women to do this? As we shall see in the next chapter, funerals are often the setting for i

9.5. Hatisinliabana

Hatisinliabana (hats = burnt sacrifice, liabana = personal spirits) is a small feast that tends to involve only close relatives, but it is also widely regarded as the most significant of all the ‘fire’ or ‘night’ (bong) feasts. It is the first fire to which the recently deceased spirit will come and feast, after which he or she may join the other spirits.

The focus of hatinliabana is the lighting of a sacrificial fire, hats (less commonly tonla ‘fire’). The fire consists of a bed of embers placed over a piece of corrugated iron, to permit it being moved out of the way once the sacrifice is complete. Over the embers, pieces of firewood are arranged in a square configuration of three layers. This is placed within the tsuhana, or if there is no tsuhana, then in the open near the centre of the hamlet. The leadership of the bunksann, together with their allies and witnesses sit around the fire in a circle. There is no clear restriction on who may build the fire, but it is often left to the tsan hambamal – the man who may carry out hambal for the lineage mourning.Traditionally, however, there was a specific title of tsan kuahu – ‘dust’ or ‘ash’ man – whose job it was to manage these figures, but only for especially significant sacrifices.

Ideally, the fire must not smoulder before the group of men and women sitting around it begin to speak. The mourners call to the spirits of the tsuhana: not only those of the ngorere of the deceased, but also those of the tsumono’s lineage, and above all the first tsumono who is recalled. They are asked to come and to partake in the feast, they are reassured that the hamlet is united in mourning, and that burial has taken place according to protocol. Sometimes these reassurances are self-conscious deceptions, but whilst extremely powerful, personal and bush spirits are not omniscient and can be easily fooled, at least in the short run. The spirits are asked to welcome the deceased. If they assent, the fire will alight. Ideally, the flame will leap fully formed into the air dispelling the smoke; in the worst case, the wood will blacken into coal without combusting. The precise interpretation of fires, and of the manipulation required to light it can become fodder in quarrels.

132 Upon being taken to an especially significant waterhole for the first time, I was instructed to break a leaf and say: “Tsibongwong, la e lapontotsehong x hata rhumana, ala e atesikemula, a kiara liamula!” “Good morning, I have returned to bathe here today, you know me, your brother.” Fooling spirits at funerals, however, is not trivial.
9.6. Bong Lima

After five nights (a lima a bong), another fire must be lit and a feast held. Typically, this feast is larger than the hatsinhabana and involves a broader pool of guests. Bong lima marks the end of the period of most taboos when the deceased person had no rank: the trees that were felled to block the roads to the gardens are now removed and the taboo is lifted from access to the beach. In the much reduced gwn that is practiced today, the exclusion of the women within the tsunono's house often terminates at bong Lima. It is unusual for a pig to be killed at bong lima even in the case of high-ranking tsunono. In the past this may have been done, but the subsequent feast of bong malolo has inflated at the expense of bong lima.

9.7. Bong Malolo

After the tenth night a large feast and distribution of pork takes place. Except in the case of serious conflicts over burial, bong malolo, like all bong feasts, are held in the hamlet of burial. While hatsinhabana is the critical feast for the matrilinages and families directly involved to secure the smooth transition of the spirit to world of the hapahi, bong malolo is the critical feast from the perspective of organizing the living. For most funeral cycles, it marks the end of the formal period of grieving for everyone except the mother, wife and children, who may let their hair grow unchecked for a long period of time – perhaps a year – before ceremonially cutting it and disposing of the cuttings together with the deceased's persons' korkoriana. In some areas – Hahalis, Elutupan and Hagus - these extensions and others are normally followed for high ranked persons, but rarely for others. In other areas, these customs have lapsed. To the extent that other feasts have reduced importance and the taboo enforcement relating to the death appears to have waned, the centrality of bong malolo has increased and its character as an exchange has become entirely entrenched. Indeed, there is a lively discourse attributing the failure of development in the village to the wastage of resources on bong malolo. Blackwood accounts suggest death involved intensive feasting and the killing of all of the deceased man's pigs (1935:493-502); she also notes that tin meat was used to replace pigs at bong feast at Petats (ibid, 490), though it cannot be known if this was an attempt to mark status or a sign of the low priority assigned to the feast. Informants report that in the past, bong maloto involving ten pigs were very uncommon, though they are very much common now. Despite frequent assertions that the feast ought not to have any competitive element, and that indeed the pigs killed are there only to 'end the grieving', the fact remains that the pigs killed for bong malolo add to a tsuhana or lineage's nitsunono and no one returns from a large bong malolo unimpressed.

The core invitees of bong malolo are the women who participated in the habur at the time of death. The feast was traditionally reserved for them, and marked the day in which they would be allowed to break the taboo on eating foods associated with the deceased, which they would have obeyed since the funeral. These women remain central to the feast, and most organizers will maintain a list of 'guests' who they will be expecting, and for whom especial exchange arrangements are provisioned. However, a large number of relatives and friends now attend bong malolo without having been present
for the **babur** before the funeral. This is generally acceptable if they arrive with a group presenting a pig for the feast, and careful planners will poll the contributors of pigs to anticipate the numbers.

The core of **bong maloto** is a distribution of pork to these women. Unlike distributions at **tsubana** completion feasts, that is **kinalala**, **bong maloto** distributions go to small individual baskets for the women – known as **kobele** – rather than large **binau** baskets for allied **tsubana**. **Kobele** are filled with cooked sweet potatoes and taro and brought to the feast by the women, who carry them in traditional pandanus or palm husk backpacks. These tubers are not be eaten at the feast. Instead, they are laid out in front of the **tsubana** where, after the men have feasted inside, cooked pig is added to them. Once this distribution is complete, the women take a basket back. They avoid taking their own basket back, but there are often hundreds of virtually identical baskets so it is unlikely that this would happen, or be detected if it did happen. The basket is now taken back to the woman’s home, where she will distribute it to her children and close kin. A woman will comment after a good feast that her children ate a lot of pork, or complain that they had only bitter fat to chew on. The core women are given especially selected cuts of pork and attention is paid so that their baskets are filled; additional gifts such as cloth and tinned meat and sometimes money are added to their baskets.

In most **bong maloto**, five to ten pigs are killed; the largest such feast I observed involved 14. The pigs are provided first of all by the matrilineages represented in the hamlet and **tsubana** of the deceased, then their affines, and finally allies who have in the past received pigs from the mourning **tsubana**. If a man has received a pig from the mourners, he can take this opportunity to return the pig and perhaps add another, which initiates a reciprocal obligation. Pigs contributed by matrilineal kin are brought to the hamlet where the feast is to be held and are killed there the day before, cooked in the stone-oven (**raku**, Tok Pisin *mumu*) overnight. These pigs will be eaten on the day and some of their meat will be offered for the sacrificial fire. Other pigs will be slaughtered and cooked in the hamlets of the contributors, and brought over to the feasting hamlet in the morning in large baskets. These, and any additional pigs provided by the local group are distributed.

For instance, in Nahirei when Karangi’s son died, his mother’s sister’s son Boatsia* compiled a list of 51 women and 9 men who had attended the funeral: more men had been present, but Boatsia only included distinguished men – **tsunono** and ‘elders’. Another 3 younger men, who had caught fish served at the funeral vigil and **batasinliabana**, were accounted for separately, but their wives would also have baskets. A total of 63 people were to receive baskets. Boatsia took the lead in planning this because he resides in Nahirei, where the body had been buried whilst Karangi lives uxorilocally. (The burial of the boy in Nahirei relates partly to the general effort by Rokou and Boatsia to draw in as many funeral cycles into their **tsubana** as possible, partly to the circumstances of his death, which came after protracted illness and a long period of paralysis, which the patrilateral relatives considered suspicious.) On the day of **bong maloto**, one pig was killed for the feast. This was served to the **tsunono** together with some fish and cuscuses, tubers, rice and tinned meat. The men ate first, as is customary, while some wrapped morsels of pork in banana leaves and slipped them to their wives and sisters.
Once they had feasted, larger baskets containing the pork of two pigs were brought out for the distribution. This proved to be short, and the 51 women had their baskets insufficiently filled. When

the pork was brought out for distribution, the process is usually overseen by a man – in principle, the peits of the tsukan, who receives all the food that passes through the house. But the actual cutting and distribution is virtually always handled by women. On this occasion, the local women appropriated a large share of the pork and the mourners from the boy’s matriline went home unsatisfied: Boatsia blamed the women, but clearly insufficient pigs had been sourced. The major reason for this is that three days before the boy’s bong maloto, another woman died in Nahirei and the hamlet’s resources were now being stretched thin.

Fig. 9.4. Distributing Pork at Bong Maloto

9.8. Last Contact with the Spirit; Divination of the Cause of Death

9.8.1. Name

Whilst there are many variations to the exact schedule of funerals, the body is almost invariably buried around 3pm. There are two closely related reasons for this. Mid-afternoon is the time the spirits of the hapalit133 return to their resting places. If a body is buried when these spirits are around,

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133 This term is used exclusively for the spirits of deceased human beings, and may be translated freely as ‘the transcended’ or ‘the transformed’ (ho- causative pal – side; ‘those who have passed over to the other side’). Like many Halia words, it functions as a verb or noun (eg. o kiara, ali e hapalishakamula ‘brother, you have passed to the other side’, a typical address to the sacrificial fire.) The general term for spirits – including both human,
the spirit of the newly deceased will be shocked and unhappy, tormented by spirits who have not as yet welcomed him. Such a spirit might go and not come back. This is very bad for the spirit and for the living, who are dependent on the spirit’s aid and vulnerable to its wrath. For similar reasons, it is considered preferable that a person be buried with his or her maternal kin; it is especially important that the body of those fallen in battle be returned, a belief that has a great deal of contemporary significance due to the Crisis. The ground is suffused with spirits, not all of which are benevolent. If a body is buried at a fresh cemetery, the spirits of the ground are brushed off the top of the lowered casket before the grave is filled with earth. This is done even when the new grave is within the lineage’s own land: not all spirits of their own ground are kin or friendly. If they remain in the grave, they will sit on top of the newly interred body, and prevent the spirit from leaving the grave. Avoiding this is especially important on the first night.

Burrying the body at mid-afternoon allows for enough time so that the mourners may leave the hamlet by sunset. Lights are then turned off and the bunkatun must remain quietly at their homes. In the twilight, the closest family of the deceased will come to the new grave bearing a branch of the riri, a red-leafed plant that has a number of ritual uses, and which is always planted at cemeteries. One person amongst this small procession will stretch the branch out over the grave and call the dead persons’ name. If all is well the spirit will jump on the riri, which becomes heavy. The procession then takes the spirit back to his or her former house, or occasionally the house of a close relative. This custom is called nammamte. Persons carrying the riri are said to be moved on by an enormous force outside themselves. “When I held the riri, my feet did not touch the ground. Nobody could keep up with my pace. If I had fallen off a cliff, I would be unharmed.” The spirit should go home for a final night, otherwise ‘he will disrupt the cemetery’, for he has yet to be welcomed amongst the other spirits – this must wait for batinlhaba, which takes place the following day. The period between burial and batinlhaba is a key transitory phase, in which the dead and the living are especially close.

Hakete, a ritual that can be seen as complementing namename is usually performed after nine days, on the eve of the feast of bong maloto. In this phase, a delegation consisting largely or exclusively of women departs for a place strongly associated with the deceased. Typically, this is a garden plot, or today the Buka town hospital in cases of protracted illness. The delegation will sometimes sing the habur or specific hakete songs, cutting all garden plants in its path to the deceased woman’s plot. They will remain there, destroying the plot completely.

Blackwood provides a description of a variation of this ceremony134. In this variation, the procession of the women was accompanied by men, and would take place immediately after their ritual seclusion,
which in the past begun with the funeral and continued until the day before *bong malato*. The women would go to the garden of the deceased and rather than destroy it, one woman would plant a stalk of taro then take it out, hand it to the next woman, who would do the same until all the women of the village had done so (Blackwood 1935:498). A fire was then lit, and the women and men would then clear the garden and replant it. This ritual has to be considered especially beautiful expression of the Halia horticultural cosmos, capturing the communal renewal after death by means of the replanting of the *gobus*. It indirectly supports the reading of the funeral cycle as basically reproductive and regenerative in character.

In the rather more anxious contemporary Halia version, one woman will stay as a lookout, because this is considered a dangerous event that may attract unwelcome attention from the *hilhane*. After the garden is wrecked, one person – generally a young woman from one of the lineages that have this specific capacity (*niatei*, Tok Pisin *sare*) – will be possessed by the spirit of the dead person. She is sometimes said to be a *bokis* (Tok Pisin, ‘box’) for the *lomlono*, or ‘wind’ of the spirit. Again, the young woman becomes moved by a power outside herself and is said to be very strong and fast. The procession returns home with the spirit, which spends a final night with the family. There are significantly different accounts of how such spirits comport themselves. Almost always, there is an oracular function: the spirit reveals the cause of death, and if that is sorcery, it will reveal a clue as to the identity of the sorcerer. But this can take on an obscure, metaphorical character, a manipulation of ‘opposites’. (Note that informants claim that spirits speak ordinary Halia or Tok Pisin at this stage, but use confounding expressions; by contrast, long-dead spirits contacted through oracles such as the *poku* (see below) speak a cryptic language called *harirana*.) Some spirits reveal important information and *sare*, well beyond their own deaths. This has had a crucial role in religious movements in Buka, but it also has a more prosaic, almost institutionalised function of providing strength for the surviving clan to complete the funeral feast cycle. In the case study below, we will see how an especially powerful spirit was channelled in this way. Other spirits comfort the living and verify the account of the afterlife found in the Christian gospel. The spirit remains in the house for one last night. Whilst in *namename* the spirit has to be taken out of the cemetery because it is not yet welcome there, in *bakete* the spirit has to be brought back to the village, where the dead remain (at least in one version of the afterlife).

When, in *namename*, the spirit is brought home atop the *rir*, it remains as an invisible presence. Communication can still be achieved in a number of ways. Typically, sand is spread on the floor of the spirit’s house and covered, traditionally with a *tohib* (pandanus hood) but now generally with a cloth. Overnight, the spirit will draw on the sand, leaving signs that can be interpreted to deduce the cause of death. In most cases, the marks appear to be caused by the application of the pandanus hood or the cloth rather than deliberate manipulation of the sand, and are consequently vague and open to multiple interpretations – but there are exceptions to this. For instance, one family in Solos left a

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135 I did not observe a person speaking this language; a girl who developed prophetic capacities in the context of a sorcery-elimination campaign was possessed – allegedly by the spirit of John Teosin – but spoke Halia. *Harirana* is sometimes identified with Latin.

136 In Blackwood’s account, the return of the spirit to the house is similarly met with silence, but signalled the beginning of the prohibition on cutting one’s hair and washing (1935:499).
piece of paper and crayons under cloth, and designs appeared overnight; another received a written note.

Nahirei provides an example of the use of spirit sand-drawings. Boatsia died of polio in May 2008. This was a major disaster for hamlet, as he had been a student of John Teosin and so amongst the few men entrusted with knowledge of the inner workings of the HWS. He was very highly regarded for his organizational skills and fairness – as ‘Tsimes’ younger brother he was not gohus, but he was considered to be Rokou’s true successor. His death after a long illness was not unexpected – adults rarely survive polio in Buka. All the same, it demanded explanation, especially because the ongoing dispute in Nahirei intensifies any death, and that of the de facto gohus more so than others. To Rokou’s rivals, this was further confirmation that he was not ‘the right man’ at Nahirei: the ground had exacted its toll.

Rokou placed sand at Boatsia’s house, and the impressions left behind told a complex story. Rokou would not reveal all of it: there would be time for that, and he feared that telling too much too soon would cause even greater rifts amongst his troubled bunkatun. He revealed two glyphs: a house, and a loloho diamond. That naturally suggested the tsuhana as the cause of death – but Rokou’s interpretation was more subtle. The house had attracted sorcery, and so he sent Tsimes to search the caves beneath Nahirei to see if something had been placed there. Tsimes returned with a stone marked with a loloho, which had been buried under some stones, immobilizing it. They then ‘re-buried it’ by throwing it at sea. (The attitude of Tsimes and Rokou to the stone was ambiguous. It was immobilized, and seemed to represent Boatsia; but it was also disgusting, as tona. It was discarded unceremoniously, but in the same way bodies of tsunono would be disposed of in the past.) The fraction of the bunkatun allied to Rokou wanted immediate revenge, or at least that those responsible be taken to court, but Rokou stilled the waters by appealing to the remaining glyphs, which he has yet to interpret publicly.

9.6.2. Kets

The custom of leaving sand in houses is related to kets, which are glyphs said to be left by the spirits of the recently deceased at special places in the cliff-face, locations that are also called kets. These glyphs are typically 15-20cm long and unlike the sand-drawings, they are very obviously the product of intentional action. They are understood to have obscure but identifiable meanings: the tsunono are believed to understand them, whilst the younger men and women do not. Some kets simply indicate that the deceased has passed over to the hapalis. In Fig. 5.N, the cruciform marks indicate pinaposa – they represent the feet of the fowl or eagle, respectively. Other glyphs, such as the large shape at centre-frame, conveys the cause of death – in this case a shark, but this too can have multiple meanings since the shark is associated with certain lineages. According to one tsunono, the star-like shapes are perere, which are a sign of nitsunono: such a soul might have died because of a dispute over rank. The kets are sometimes said to ‘sing’ and call out the living, and can be dangerous to outsiders.

The kets in Hahalis is relatively safe, because its location high on the cliff obscures the glyphs from passers-by below, but the ancestral kets at Bei is dangerous since it lies exposed to the Gagan River. Men paddling canoes there would in the past hide under tohib (as one would from affines) to avoid being taken by the dead. Most customs related to the kets have been abandoned, and the villagers say
that the dead only rarely leave a mark now. But it was clearly a major institution for a protracted period. The walls on which the *kets* are still visible appear to have been painted with several layers of *kets* that wore out over the years.

It is significant that the *kets* are usually located in conspicuously inaccessible places. It is unlikely that they were made by a person acting alone. Those in Hahalis are located beneath an overhang with a ceiling 8-10m high, seventy meters up the cliff-face. Some of the drawings are placed directly above, a procedure that must have involved ropes, ladders or extremely careful control of bamboo poles. Informants sceptical of the supernatural provenance of the *kets* pointed out that to make the drawings, the *tsunono* would forbid everyone from entering the cliff area during the period of mourning. To create, police and break this taboo would require a degree of collusion between *tsunono*.

9.6.3. Poku

There are a number of additional procedures relating to the spirits of the recently deceased which have been largely abandoned, but which must be mentioned because of their significance in the context of contemporary anti-sorcery movements and the Hahalis Welfare Society ritual complex. The most significant one is the *poku*. In this case, the spirit would be brought back to a house where it would remain as a disembodied voice for a protracted period of time. The spirit would talk and address persons, but its voice would be a just barely comprehensible whine according to some of the non-Welfare men who witnessed it. The speech would consist of unclear metaphors. Sometimes a special house was built for such a spirit, and for the *poku* to manifest it was important for all lights in the hamlet to be dimmed. Witnesses describe the spirit chewing betelnut and smoking cigarettes that hovered in mid-air. According to Beatrice Blackwood a similar custom was still remembered, but had been abandoned in Petats around 1930 - a length of bamboo would be placed in the dead person's house, and the spirits would speak through it (1935:491).

The importance of the *poku* is the historical transformation of this ritual, which appears clearly related to the overnight presence of the spirit, into a systematic oracle. This appears to have happened in the 1930s, with the construction of a house dedicated to the *poku* in Suhiana, later to be the scene of the second police riot against the Welfare. In one version of the foundational myth of the Welfare, a sceptical Teosin entered the *poku* house with a burning coconut frond and swung to light it so as to expose the *poku*: there was nobody, only a disembodied voice that finally convinces him to join his cooperative society to the ritual ensemble. The Welfare itself did not, at least for the most part, have a *poku*: its own ritual system was focused on the spirit possession of the young women settled around Teosin.

We may thus observe a partial historical movement form the public forms of communication with the spirits, those requiring coordination and organization to produce, and open to several witnesses – the *kets* and the original form of the *poku* – to a much more secretive practice of divination of sand-imprints, and the highly private communication with spirits inside the family home. This parallels the movement of sorcery from a public, institutionalised and generally pro-social part of the *ruko* and *tsubana* policing systems, to its present position as the unregulated, secretive and anti-social function.
of jealousy. Interpretation of the kets was in all likelihood always political, but it was partly public – interpretation of the signs received under the laplap, hidden in the house and seen only by the closest circle is a private matter, arousing suspicion amongst those who know of the glyphs, but not their interpretation. But this overall historical movement has not been complete. The divination complexes within various Buka social movements, including the HWS are a powerful countervailing tendency, although one which has had to be pursued in extreme secrecy on account of colonial and religious intolerance.
Fig. 9.5. Kets at Haknia, southern Habals.
10. Building by Force

10.1. Turia

Turia is a small hamlet sandwiched between Iapipi (Kuru), another small but genealogically senior group, and Hakaleo, which is the setting for the most serious land dispute in Hahalis. In gross summary, that land dispute involves two former allies of the Munekeleleke tsuvana located further north, the tsuvono of which was ultimately responsible for the land north of Iapipi. The land disputes hinges on how to translate the rights these former allies had within a system focused on a coalition tsuvana into a relationship to the land mediated by a system of territorial land tenure and courts. The dispute has been unfolding in court for some thirty years, and relates to political conflicts in the village organization at least as far back as the 1920s. The tsuvono of Turia, Mataaga ("Weeping Eye"), backed the losing side in the latest round of litigation, which exhausted all avenues of appeal within the PNG legal system. After the collapse of their case, youths from Mataaga’s allies’ lineages – undoubtly with help and encouragement from their elders – attacked and destroyed the Hakaleo hamlet, exiling its occupants. This has led to a severe backlash against the aggressors’ lineages.

These events have left Mataaga in a precarious position, since testifying in favour of an adjoining group that loses a land case undermines one’s own claims. Worse, Mataaga struck a deal with the losing side to testify to a land border advantageous to them in return for support for his own claims: they lost, but now he will find it hard to backtrack on his definition of the neighbouring territory. Mataaga resorted to this strategy because his position is tenuous. The senior lineage at Iapipi claims Mataaga’s group as their own pien tuhana, a judgement which finds wide support amongst other tsuvono. The situation of the lineage is quite marginal. In Hahalis, they are recognised as landholders in Kiopan (and the Hahalis tsuvono aggressively support their claims there), but in Kiopan they are recognised as landholders in Hahalis by their own kin. This has propelled them into increasingly desperate efforts to attain security of tenure. Mataaga’s brother lost a land case in which he had claimed land tenure within Talinga, a kilometre further south while at Basbi, Mataaga supports the territorial claims of his kin, who settled there from Kiopan following a different route. That claim too is a losing proposition since the land is already divided between three powerful Nakaripa conglomerates, and Mataaga’s pinapose is the marginalised Natasi. Mataaga faces the prospect of a man pushed into searching for land, a doomed search given the way the Halia think about land ownership.

Offsetting this somewhat is a series of fortuitous marriages. Mataaga’s connection as pien tuhana to the high-ranked Iapipi group is important, and the difficulties he experienced attempting to assert his own claims apart from Iapipi illustrates perfectly the rift exclusionary land rights cause within alliances. The Iapipi claim that were he to back down his position would be secure under their aegis, but no one is foolish enough to accept this bargain when it involves renouncing permanent rights. Even more importantly, Mataaga’s sister, Lega, married John Teosin’s mother’s sister’s son, who, besides being a classificatory brother to the most powerful man in Hahalis’ history, was also
considered humble and well-liked even by Teosin’s opponents. As teitalol, Lega’s children would be gobus and would see in Teosin’s group their cross-cousins, who would support their tsuhana feasts. Her group contributed extensively to Basbi, providing pigs and political support. Tehoei and Pomis, the most powerful siblings in Hahalis, considered her a sister, quite apart from their misgivings about Mataaga’s activities, which were significant. Since they were in the position of being in charge of batsumono for Mataaga, he faced a formidable challenge in manipulating two of the most powerful people in Hahalis – even discounting the problem that Mataaga had aligned himself against the Teosin groups’ allies in the Hakelelo land dispute.

10.2. Lega’s Death

Lega passed away in June 2007. She had been convalescent for some time and her death was expected. This was a rare case in which sorcery was not suspected. Soon, relatives had convened at Turia; Tehoei and her brother Pomis brought a 20kg bag of rice, others brought biscuits, tea and sugar. Mataaga scrambled to organise all, to find a generator and fuel to light the hamlet and arrange for a pig. Turia at this stage had not erected a tsuhana, so a slit-gong for bahur was brought from Iapipi, to Mataaga’s house, at the centre of the hamlet. This is significant given the dynamics of the conflict between Iapipi and Turia. From the Iapipi point of view, it was fitting that their slit-gong be used, since they see Turia as a part of their own hamlet and bunkatu; from Mataaga’s point of view, however, the slit-gong loan was recognition of his status. This basic difference of outlook remained latent for the vigil, and would only bloom into overt conflict once Mataaga’s plans became clear, at bong malato more than two weeks later.

The vigil drew relatives from as far as Selau and Haku. The hamlet was lit with pressure-lanterns and a few fluorescent tubes wired to the hastily sourced generator, whilst the bahur gradually built up. As the night unfolded, the mourners were served pork, biscuits, syrupy sweet tea and rice served with tin fish in banana leaf wrappings. They discussed how to proceed. Rokou and the old guard of tsunono wished to see a full scale mourning cycle, with a secluded gum. The overt rationale for this was that Lega was the teitalol of Turia, and the previous tsunono mourning cycle had not yet been carried through to iuakopo. With her death, Mataaga’s clan now had too much korkonalla, and it had to be disposed of. That is to say, he should build a tsuhana. Though the majority of tsunono in fact doubt Mataaga’s tsuhana, this did not translate into efforts to shut him down, but rather into a kind of somewhat barbed encouragement. Mataaga politely declined, citing the difficulty of arranging gum and the extreme spiritual danger associated with the practice (to say nothing of its sexual dimension). This was ever subtly a sign of haste, and in stands out in retrospect as the first perceptible sign of the conflict that was to come.

The Hahur for Lega was amongst the most powerful I witnessed. Just before dawn, the normally circumspect steps of bahur escalated into a qualitatively different dance. Women formed a line around Lega’s house, thrusting their hips in a suggestive manner. There was a distinct sense that with this a threshold had been arrived at and crossed, and there was some nervous laughter. At first, the tsunono
did not object. Several joined in. Mataaga, a Seventh Day Adventist supported it as a true display of customary funeral rites, and a reflection of his sister’s status. But as the laughing started, others took great exception to it. “This kind of dancing is for habalung, for a time of joy, not for a time of grief”, explained Pomis, referring to the feast held for a young gobus after he first travels. Mataaga’s lineage would have rushed to perform this dance to show the status of the deceased, but it was the wrong occasion. The point was raised again at a meeting of the I lahahs Patu Assembly a few days later, where those who spoke expressed a general view that this was not acceptable; Mataaga was not present. The issue was discussed in the same agenda item as the drunks at the nearby dance, a clear violation of the funeral’s peace. It appears that it was the laughter and casual attitude, rather than the dance itself that caused consternation.

10.3. Burial and batsiniabana

The funeral took place on the afternoon after the vigil. Digging began in the late morning; around three o’clock the sound of hammered nails and wailing issued from Mataaga’s house. A large crowd escorted the lap-lap covered coffin down and into the grave. It was buried quickly, in an atmosphere of constricting sadness: every person around me seemed unable to speak. After the coffin had been lowered into the grave, a man married into the Iapipi bunkatu took a large branch of the toloihana (Cordyline sp.) plant and removed any spirits that may have been blocking the deceased. The grave was filled, and the crowd dispersed. I was later told that at night, Mataaga, his brother and classificatory sister went to the grave and called out the spirit. They did not bring her home with them, but spoke with her for confirmation that the burial had been acceptable.

They had reason to seek assurances. The ancestral cemetery of Turia is located at the southern end of hamlet, near a patch of secondary regrowth that divides it from Iapipi. Mataaga directed the grave to be dug at a new site, at the centre of the hamlet near Lega’s house. This too prompted discrete complaints. What were Mataaga’s motivations, burying his sister there? Some insinuated that the woman had been sent to the wrong grave.

The next day, forty mourners had returned for batsiniabana. Since early morning, indeed since the moment the death was announced and probably since before that, Mataaga and his kin had been planning the ceremonial cycle. The ceremonial fire was lit in the late afternoon, and the older men and women assembled around it. As the embers smouldered into life, they spoke in a low voice, directing themselves personally to the flames. As usual, they addressed the oldest generations, the founders of the settlement including Mataaga’s ancestors and other buried in this land. Tehoei, Lega husband’s classificatory sister and the senior teiabol of Basbi passed a basket containing fish, taro, sweet potato and rice around so that every person in the immediate vicinity of the fire touched it. Her brother Pomis completed the sacrifice, taking his hat off, touching the basket on his head and depositing it on the fire. This is typically the end of the sacrifice, and usually the group disperses shortly after the basket catches alight. In this case, however, several people remained around. Mataaga continued to speak to the flames, and remained there for 15 minutes, eventually by himself.
Explaining his (rather abridged) plans to the fire, he said repeatedly: “ahu e lilibane bakapam, ahu e go ma taguhenen a tokuitara” – “you are now spirit, help us (inclusive) with our work.” Others addressed the founding men and women of Turia, and informed them of the arrangements for the subsequent feasts – this was important because the typical timetable of feasts on the 5th and 10th days had to be delayed because of the difficulty in obtaining funds and pigs, and to allow for relatives to return to the village from the provinces of PNG. The feast would thus be a bong batanoge, held ‘twenty’ days after the funeral; small family feasts would be held for bong lima and bong maloto, to acknowledge these days but without distributions of food. The events of the funeral were also narrated. Nobody apologised, or sought assurances about the controversial dancing in the morning of the funeral, and the fire lit abruptly and brightly, a sign interpreted as showing the spirits’ pleasure.

I asked Mataaga what he had meant when he asked his sister’s spirit for help. He said that the work before him was too great for him, he would need help. At this stage, only he and his closest confidantes knew what that work would be. As far as I could make it out, he did not tell this even to the spirits. Mataaga would attempt to build a tsuhana against the consensus of tsnono of Hahalis. A large majority of tsnono in Hahalis – including even Tehoei and her brother Pomis, who had hitherto participated intimately in the mourning of their ‘sister’ – reject Mataaga’s claim to have tsuhana in Turia.

10.4. Breaking the house, building the iabasa

Contrary to expectation, bong lima turned into a large feast. A pig was killed, which is unusual; for one thing, it cannot be consumed by those still obeying food taboos, which include all the women present during the habur preceding burial. Every man and woman from Turia and Iapipi was present, together with a large contingent of tsnono. As I sat engaged in light conversation with the men, a loud crack issued from the Lega’s house: it was being demolished. Tehoei had pulled the first piece from it, and now the young men were in charge of systematically and carefully disassembling it, with gusto. The tsnono were unperturbed, it was the most natural thing in the world. Demolishing the house in this way is part of the same ritual that leads to the destruction of gardens on the eve of bong maloto: on the fifth day, the spirit of the dead must be made to leave the house. Given the expense of building new houses, that is rarely done, but in this case the operation was critically important. One tsnono allied to Mataaga explained that the house was in fact classified as a kind of tsuhana, not a true tsuhana but an iabasa. Typically, iabasa are erected as placeholder tsuhana, built to house feasts whilst the preparation

137 Whilst further fires are lit after bong maloto, it is uncommon for these to be expressed as feasts. Bong batanoge takes place after 20 days and bong tulahun after 30 days. In practice, however, feasts are rarely held on these days unless planning problems intervene with the organization of bong maloto. Interestingly, when when Te Atairangikaahu, the Maori queen, died in 2006, many of my informants told me that the protracted schedule of the Maori funeral cycle was ‘like our own’; comments of this type are typical of Halia who visit New Zealand and see similarities between the tsuhana and Maori wharenui. Comparisons to the Polynesian outliers of Nukuumanu (Mortlocks Islands) are less forthcoming, perhaps because whilst this group is in frequent contact with the Halia, their relation is soured by the Halia extermination of the Carteret Islanders original population, who were close relatives of the Nukuumanu.
is underway for the construction of the true house. Again, this classification of the sleeping house as a crypto-
tsuhana was a sign of haste.

The materials salvaged from the house were stored at Turia. They would be used to build a haus win,
Mataaga said, using the Tok Pisin expression for any building intended for public meetings and
hosting guests, but which also usually refers to tabasa and small three-post tsuhana. Mataaga departed
the circle for a moment, and I took the opportunity to ask what kind of house, exactly, would this
haus win be. Would it be a soapili – the provisional hut built at snekepo to indicate the intention to build
a tsuhana? They rejected this out of hand. Mataaga, they said, intended to erect the house on bung
batanoge, not snekepo. The house, the tsunono agreed, would not be part of a tsuhana construction cycle,
but rather 'just a place for people to sit down and eat in.'

This was very clearly not Mataaga's intention. Two days before bong maloto the house was erected: it
has a similar layout as the lapipi tsuhana, only it is slightly smaller and made from cruder materials,
most of which were recycled from Lega's house. As such, it was literally a transformation of the
tetabol's sleeping-house. During construction Nohö, who Mataaga has taken on as his peits climbed on
top to fit the ridge-cap to the house – or rather, appointed his sister's son to do this as he is not very
nimble. This act, the other ts1mono observed, unambiguously set out the intent that the structure
IS a tsuhana or tabasa. Publicly, Mataaga placated the tsunono – who by now had become quite concerned
about his actions – with the claim that the tsuhana was only being built in Turia for the funeral, so its
pigs could be feasted there. The pigs' jaws and the house would then be transported to its true home,
in Kiopan. Few of the other tsunono believed this, and privately Mataaga and his supporters intended
for the house to remain in Turia.

10.5. Kotopouts and Bong maloto

Early in the morning of the tenth day, the core of women who had mourned at the vigil and observed
food taboos sat in the new house while another sacrificial fire was prepared. Nohö as peits took the
basket containing pork and tubers raised it over his head, then leaned forward and circled the basket
around the fire once. As he deposited it, another man handed him a cup of tea, which he poured
around the fire. A younger woman then brought a plate with biscuits, taro, noodles and rice. She gave
each of the seated women a bite from the plate. Each in turn chewed the food, and spat it onto a
banana leaf. At the end, the banana leaf was placed in the fire, and tea, from a cup the women had
also drunk from, was poured around the fire. This ceremony, kotopouts ('to eat back', or 'to eat again')
is rarely carried out today, and is a reflection of Lega's perceived high rank, and of the meticulousness
with which Mataaga organized this aspect of the mourning cycle. After the chewed food had been
sacrificed, the women left the small house and the men feasted on ceremonial taro, served with its
skin, and one pig, which had been killed and cooked overnight.

Two hours after the men had eaten the pig for kotopouts, all the 'guests' had assembled for bong maloto.
Notably absent were Pomis and Tehoei. Women had arrived with their baskets, which contain sweet
potato and taro, which they had arranged before the house. Two pigs, one killed by Mataaga's relatives outside Turia and another killed by one of his affinal allies were distributed to the baskets. The women carried out the actual distribution, under the observation of Mataaga's brother. At this point, sometimes women will swap their baskets, but usually, as in the present case, the baskets are simply arranged on the banana leaf tarp and given back randomly to the women. This satisfies the desire that one should not eat back one's own food. While the distribution was being carried out, the tsunono remained within the house, where the subtly unusual turns of events was discussed.

A degree of ambiguity on the status of the house had been apparent since early in the morning: at first the women sat within it, which is not acceptable for a tsunana (but then again, the taboo is rarely rigidly enforced), then they left for the feast component of kotopons and the subsequent bong malato (but then again, it is typical for men to eat apart from women even when there is no tsunana in the hamlet.) The baskets had been arranged in the yard before the house, as it would before a tsunana. So, what was Mataaga up to? Kuletu, the tsunono of Iapipi was the first to ask. His question was simple: what was this house? At this juncture, Mataaga stated that the house was only a haus win, a place for visitors to sit down and rest (kisim win). Later, Kuletu would say that Mataaga had told him that the house was in fact to be demolished after the completion of mourning, so that Mataaga could focus on building his clan's true house - presumably elsewhere. But even these statements can be seen in different ways. In the run of village life, a haus win is effectively a type of tsunana - it is typically only built by those who can build a tsunana. The haus win or iabasa 'stands for' the tsunana. The specific difference is whether or not Mataaga's iabasa stood for a tsunana in Turia, or in another place. But how would one see that? Kuletu, who had up to this stage cooperated with Mataaga in the course of mourning, now became very suspicious. Amongst other things, he demanded that the illu he had loaned to Mataaga be returned with a pig - other tsunono recognised this as de rigueur practice, but the insistence at this juncture showed a breakdown in trust.

Another question raised by the tsunono was: what kind of feast was Mataaga planning? Earlier, he had justified the scheduling of a bong hutanoge by saying that they did not have enough time to get all the pigs necessary; there had been a spate of deaths in southern Halia. Now that pigs had been killed for bong malato, for the rarely performed kotopons, as well as the unusual step of killing a pig for bong lima, that explanation risked sounding hollow. A string of pig jaws had begun to accumulate on the side of the 'haus win', as it would by a tsunana. Mataaga now revealed more of his hand: he explained that they would not, after all, be holding the feast after twenty days (the definition of bong hutanoge), but rather, they would schedule it for over a month, and it would be suakopo. This aroused further suspicions, since while it was generally considered appropriate that suakopo should be held under the circumstances - Lega's brother was yet unmourned at suakopo - this feast is invariably the launching pad of a new tsunana, it represents a decisive moment. Even Mataaga's affines, who had looked favourably on his project so far expressed concern about this. But these suspicions were not voiced explicitly. Indeed, I sat in the de facto tsunana oblivious to this unfolding drama. Instead, the tsunono debated the length of the ceremonial puddings to be served at the feast. At the time, I was puzzled, and I must confess rather bored. It seemed pedantic. Later, I found out that this is a discrete way of approaching a sensitive topic. Two long ceremonial puddings (known as kikiono) are served when a tsunono intends
to launch a new tsuhana. Small kikiono are served at ordinary bong feasts. At this stage, Mataaga and his supporters went along with the tmnono's suggestion that small kikiono would be served.

After this small but significant bong maloto, Mataaga and his supporters begun to produce copra, so as to afford the large number of pigs and store goods that would be necessary for the culmination of the funeral cycle. It took them a full two months to be ready for suakopo, an inordinately long time; meanwhile national elections and the sorcery clean-up campaign had drawn in the villager's energies.

10.6. Cementing the grave and suakopo

One week before suakopo, a small feast was held involving only tmnono and teitahol, in which Lega's grave was cemented. Tobasi - Mataaga's younger classificatory brother - had fallen ill: hence, when the sacrifice was to be presented to the fire, the peites circled the basket around his torso and under his arms before offering it to the fire from his own head. Magata, the tmnono of Hasuno, spoke to the fire promising to the fire for Tobasi's spirit to return to him. The fact this was done at this feast had nothing to do with economizing the number of sacrifices: it was because Tobasi's illness was generally presumed to be due to dissent amongst spirits and living men. Something was not 'straight'. Mataaga then gave a short speech: there had been a long delay in preparing the feast, so now the feast would become suakopo. Perhaps in reiterating this point, he was attempting to bring onboard the tmnono who remained sceptical. Pomis and Tchoei were absent, and clearly annoyed when they arrived at the Hahalis Primary School for reasons of their own, only to find a feast taking place next door. Mataaga emphasized that cementing the grave as a component of suakopo. There is no consensus about this: cementing graves is a relatively new ritual, and it is integrated into the mourning cycle at different points.

Finally, the day of suakopo arrived. For the feast, a total of 26 pigs were prepared: a very large number. Bong maloto feasts typically have between three and seven pigs, the higher figure being considered taxing and inappropriate except in the case of the most respected tmnono. Suakopo feasts often have 10 to 15 pigs. The feast opening the tsuhana at Bitoga - a complete, five-post tsuhana with its own slit-gongs and a far greater degree of legitimacy - involved the sacrifice of 28 pigs. Although the arrangements and circumstances involved make each of those pigs more significant than those of suakopo, Mataaga's pigs were a triumph of organization. The 26 pigs killed for his suakopo broke down into 13 pigs provided by Mataaga's pinaposa and bunkatun, and another 13 brought by various allies and affines. These included pigs from Nahirei, Munatsil, Kunetani and Basbi - groups that had expressed serious misgivings about Mataaga's activities. Mataaga succeeded in boosting the number of pigs at the feast by partially integrating the funeral cycle of another man who had died the previous week at Munatsil; one reason he was able to do this was the solidarity between the two groups as Natasi marginal land claimants. But a significant reason for the large number of pigs stems from the mesh of obligations between him and his affines/cross-cousins. 25 of the pigs were to be consumed at the feast; one, provided by Turia, fed the men and women who came to the vigil held on the night before suakopo. Those of Turia were kept in pens at the tsuhana and then killed the afternoon before
the feast. Those pledged by affines and allies were killed at their respective hamlets, and then brought to Turia in large baskets.

Most of the pigs were paid for (or obtained in *dinau* arrangements, i.e. credit), or taken from pig pens operated with a view towards making a profit. Each pig had a value between K200 and K1,000, with a mode of approximately K500. The total value of the pigs then, was in the order of K13,000. Even allowing for the notional, unenforceable character of some pig *dinau*, this is a very large sum of money by local standards: it represents some 15 tons, or 200 bags of copra, or the yearly wage of a junior civil servant. There are two remarkable aspects to this rapid mobilization of resources. First, it happens regularly: at smaller scales perhaps once a month per village – and second, it involves no
'corruption', even if some 'dinau' pigs tend to end up as court cases. Money for bong malolo pigs is rarely misspent: qualitatively different organizational practices are involved here.

At the feast, there were 118 'invited' guests – the 13 women who stayed with the body during the funeral vigil, plus another 7 who ought to have been present but could not make it back in time, and another 89 men and women who had come to the bong feasts or who had made contributions of food and pork to the suakopo. Many more people came along with the invited guests: perhaps 250 people attended. This places this feast amongst the largest I witnessed.

At the feast, they were fed taro, sweet potato and pork prepared in an earth oven at Turia. The female 'invited guests' all brought at least one basket of sweet potato and taro, which are not consumed on the day. These were placed together with the large baskets containing pork on top of a platform term salolo, which is characteristic of suakopo. Only the pigs may go on top of the salolo to distribute the food from there. Before the distribution can take place, the tsunami sitting inside the bans win – now operating exactly as a contemporary iahuta would under the circumstances – eat. Once they have eaten, food is given to the women and 'young men' (i.e. virtually every man under 45 years of age). When this has taken place, then the exchange takes place.

In front of Mataaga's bans win, an extensive tarp of banana leaves (bolasa) was laid out, upon which, at the time for exchange, the baskets from the salolo were placed there. This large mat was divided into regions: one section was for Basbi, another for Nahirei, another for Kiopan, and so on. A total of 486 baskets were distributed from the salolo. As in bong malolo, once the baskets are laid out, the women, working under the supervision of some men, distribute the pork to each basket, aiming for an equal share. However, yet more baskets – 'plates' containing the tubers cooked at Turia – were in circulation to feed the guests, who take the pork served on the day and keep some in the basket to take home as 'leftovers'. The total number of baskets was probably in the order of 650. This food is taken back to the hamlets, where it is distributed to the children, who eat last.

These baskets are termed kohele, and they are given to the women individually. The exchange is largely their own work, but they are discreetly supervised. The men will yell and occasionally chase a woman away if she is seen giving a preferential share to someone: but the women themselves are the harshest enforcers of a fair division, arguing about the equivalence between a large but fatty piece of pork and a lean but small piece. Pork fat is looked down upon and is not considered a 'chiefly' food; it is most prized as an ingredient for frying chopped up taro leaves (pes, a real delicacy.) The situation is radically different in the feasts of the tsunbana cycle, where the baskets are terms bina and are given to tsunbana, not to individuals. In this respect, the suakopo is the last part of the funeral cycle; but in the erection of the soapili, or in this case, in the construction of a de facto iahuta and cementing the graves, it is the first feast of the tsunbana cycle.
10.7. Tacit elevation of the *iabasa*

The feast, massive by local standards, struck me as a roaring success. Everyone I spoke with walked away saying they had eaten pork: this is the absolute *sine qua non* of a successful feast, and is an exacting standard rarely met. The crowd of people, including most of the *tsunono* of Halalis – even those who had expressed great concern about Mataaga’s efforts – created a very distinctive atmosphere. The vigil overnight had been full, and the singing especially beautiful.

The other *tsunono* had a very different view from mine. In fact, they saw the feast as something of a fiasco. The cassava puddings (*kikiono*) served for the chiefs had been long; Mataaga, as they saw it, had surreptitiously escalated his *snakopo* into the launching of a *tsuhana*. The house was now generally referred to as *iabasa* by Mataaga’s clan and most villagers. Mataaga had strung the laws of the pigs killed at Turia at the side of the house, an unambiguous sign that he thought this was a *tsuhana*. The *tsunono* had had no say in the matter.

The Halia place heavy emphasis on sacrificing pigs as an index of legitimacy. The strongest opponents of the Teosin clan, for instance, concede that their position in Bashi is secure because of the huge number of pigs killed for them there. But a *sacrifice* isn’t the same as simply killing a pig. A sacrifice is something performed by a group of people, perhaps a transient and ad hoc group, but an organized group whose members place the similar interpretations on the killings. There can be no private sacrifice in this system; striking it alone, or worse, springing a surprise on the *tsunono* is virtually certain to fail to win legitimacy. From this perspective, the large number of pigs killed in Turia counted for less than the failure to make puddings according to protocol. The great majority of *tsunono* – even those who had been advising Mataaga up to this point – henceforth referred to the house as a *tsuhana ‘built by force’, ‘not a true *tsuhana’.* But note, and this is critical, that they thus also saw it as *tsuhana*. Ambiguity was not eliminated, but transformed; Mataaga did not definitely win or lose, but his problems changed in character.

10.8. *Katokato*

The superimposed legitimacy and illegitimacy of the house was dramatically illustrated when some days after *snakopo*, Mataaga had a fistfight with his sister’s son. The reasons for the fight are obscure, and seem to have been fuelled by alcohol. The next morning, the *tsunono* of nearby hamlets – prominent amongst them the traditionalists Rokou and Kiohin, and Kuletu, the *tsunono* of Iapipi – all brightly decorated and flanked by several women from their hamlets, appeared at Turia. They cried out and made a racket, until everyone came to see what was going on. They went to the front of the *buis win* and pretended to fight, an uproariously amusing spectacle for everyone except Mataaga. This practice is called *katokato* (*‘miming’; *kato* = ‘doing’), and it is one means by which the *tsunono* enforce respect for their fellow *tsunono* (Rimoldi 1971:47). Mataaga’s *nitsunono* had been ‘lowered’ (not ‘decreased’, but brought low) by the fight. The *tsunono* pretend to strike each other to demand restoration of the *nitsunono*: Mataaga’s sisters’ son would have to kill a pig for the *tsunono* to eat. While
this reinforces Mataaga’s status, katokato and similar forms of hamal (expiation) are almost always unwelcomed by the party ‘for whom’ it is enforced. The reason, which is particularly obvious in this case, is that producing a pig, and hosting the ceremony through which it must be sacrificed is a serious commitment of resources and time. It is the responsibility of Mataaga’s sister’s son’s father to contribute to the assault compensation, in other words: the Teosin group, who by this stage were on terrible terms with Mataaga. Moreover, until such a feast was carried out the tsuhana would be interdicted. For the intervening time, the kinapits (slit-gong striker) of Mataaga’s house was fastened by the tsunono to its rafter: all ceremonies there would have to pause, until the tsunono ate the pig.\textsuperscript{138}

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure10.2.jpg}
\caption{Kuletu’s Kinapits fastened to the rafter at Turia. Note string of pig jaws on the lower right.}
\end{figure}

Not only did this action by the tsunono seem to recognise Mataaga’s status, it clearly implied that the house was effectively a tsuhana. But worse, the kinapits striker and its slit-gong belonged to Iapipi; Kuletu who helped fasten it to the rafter at Turia, still wanted the slit-gong back, with payment of a pig. Yet this was no joy to Mataaga, whose plans were scuttled for several months. He would eventually fail to hold a feast for the tsunono, and his position became ever more fragile in the village as he continued to pursue land claims in disjointed localities (non-contiguous land claims being regarded as generally implausible.) When more of his relatives died in the subsequent year, the deaths were attributed to his actions.

\textsuperscript{138} Tsunono appear to find it especially difficult to raise pigs for such feasts. This may be because the feasts are not considered so significant, but it also has to do with the fact that if the pig is sacrificed, it largely just brings the tsunono back to where he started from. Its jaw cannot be displayed with the other in the tsuhana, and Mataaga would not be able to eat it. Mataaga’s allies would also be reluctant to cede a pig to such an exercise.
10.9. Analysis

In principle, the construction of a tsunono must follow a strict protocol. A tsunono built by force, such as Mataaga’s — or even one with more secure claims such as Bitoga — is never fully accepted by its rivals, and without that acceptance — with the withdrawal of the initially supportive Pomis and Tehoei — the project was doomed to illegitimacy. But the channels through which the Halia leaders can express their disapproval of the building are narrow: they cannot harm the tsunono who ‘forces’ a tsunono, they can only drain his project of legitimacy. Until the situation escalates completely out of control, they will come to feasts, and if they seek to punish Mataaga, they simultaneously and perversely strengthen his role. The decision of complex cases such as these is radically unlike the decision involved in a court case. There are layers upon layers of compromises, each interpreted in a different way by their parties. Short of extreme cases, which would involve violence, there is no clear decision at all, but rather a deferred stalemate. Nobody thinks this is acceptable. One of the reasons the project of inserting the tsunono into the state structure is so popular is the perception that the state would then be able to force resolution of these cases. But how would one explain Mataaga’s actions before a court? What laws would there be for explaining a just settlement here? Who would decide the length of the kikiono?

It is possible that tsunono such as Mataaga’s, or that erected by Mataaga’s kin in the Tsintsin hamlet near Basbi, are new phenomena and that in the past nobody would be able to build a tsunono against the will of a majority. It is important to note that these are not complete tsunono, but only ‘haus win’, or tabasa — which do not require the organization of kinalala, and are therefore relatively trivial to build: one only needs to kill 26 pigs and manage the distribution of hundreds of kohete individual baskets, rather than kill perhaps 200 pigs and manage the exchange and distribution of binoa to established tsunono. (Binoa baskets represent an acknowledgedment that the recipient has tsunono, and their presentation is more difficult to organize than the kohete presented to individuals and families.) From Lega’s death to suakopo three months passed; a kinalala cycle can take years. Yet the story told about Mataaga’s haus win by his opponents is very much like the story told about Rokou’s lumankma by his: kinalala and a qualitatively greater nitsunono does not entail that the superimposed evaluations collapse into a consensus. For the supporters, the house is a tsunono. For the opponents, it is not. How will this be remembered, in forty years’ time? Perhaps much like the mutually incompatible accounts of tsunono built in the in 1930s and 1950s.

The Turia case shows exactly what the tsunono have in mind when they complain that ‘all men are not one’, that ‘each is doing things according to his own whim’, that the village is being consumed by bikeskess. Yet we should be careful about what conclusions we draw here. From one angle, the ambiguous house at Turia is a monument to the dysfunctional state of village political society. But from another angle, it is because essential aspects of Halia political culture are still meaningful realities that this kind of stalemate could emerge at all. The entire affair is unintelligible without the horizon of kin political organization.
Why did the *tsu nunca* not act against Mataaga in some forceful manner? Why did Mataaga attempt this at all? To answer the first question, it was not because they remained unmoved. One ought not to underestimate the depth of resentment stimulated by his activity: some of the *tsu nunca* struggled to maintain composure, and seemingly pedantic complaints such as the length of the *kikilolo* are actually powerful barbs. A wrong move in the construction of a *tsu nunca*, after all, is potentially lethal. Neither was it because of the small, marginal territory occupied by Turia. Turia is a keystone of the most serious land dispute case in Hahalis. Were the *tsu nunca* out of options? What could they do? The most important reason that the *tsu nunca* did not react with greater force is also the answer to the second question: Mataaga has nowhere else to go. His lineage is embroiled in even worse land disputes in Kiopan, and the *tsu nunca* must above all be a good host. Kuletu did not want Mataaga expelled: he wanted the man—who is his friend—to reside close by, but under the proper understanding. Hahalis is a ‘labour of love’. Indeed, Kuletu went along with Mataaga’s plans originally, loaning his *kungkung* and contributing to the debates on organizing the feasts; his goal had at first been that Mataaga should be able to exercise some autonomy. Kuletu went as far as allowing Mataaga to build a *house* in his own name. His generosity in this respect was chastised by the other *tsu nunca*: his own *tsu nunca* has not been carried through to *kinalala*, and most *tsu nunca* thought it should be completed before any other house were built. But to accept any of these arrangements was, from Mataaga’s perspective, to forfeit claims to autochthonous land tenure.

10.10 Coda

A year later, Petrus, the *tsu nunca* of a lineage closely allied to Mataaga’s died in Tsintsin, a small tract of land in the north of Basi. Matthew Pomis and Peter Remas, who themselves fight for control of that entire territory, wished that he would be buried in Kiopan, his maternal land. But Petrus was buried in Tsintsin, establishing a grave that was promptly cemented, following exactly the same pattern as Turia: in fact, Mataaga advised that *bunkatun*, an astonishingly daring move considering the events a year a later. Pomis was left extremely angry: as if the earlier manipulation had not been enough, now Mataaga interfered against his interests in what he saw as his own land. Yet neither Pomis nor Remas wished to remove their ‘guests’. The Halia will do everything possible to avoid a physical confrontation and decision to exclude: in such decisions those who win, lose.
11. Conclusion

I will tell you the truth:

When I arrived in Hahalis I was disappointed. The first village I visited in Papua New Guinea, Boga Boga – the Cape Vogel village famous from Jacques Cousteau’s documentary – was a model of everything I had imagined from reading Melanesian ethnographies: all traditional building materials, carefully spaced houses all of the same basic type, organized in clear clan sections, chiefs to the land side, workers to the sea. The smell of coconut, fish and smoke hung in the air, with not a road in sight. Hahalis is a jumble of diverse houses, huts and shacks, cut through by a dirt highway littered with broken cars. At first glance, it resembled a cross between a coconut plantation and one of Port Moresby’s outer settlements. Instead of a thatched roof, I had scaldingly hot galvanized iron; instead of a raised slatted floor, I had a slab of humid cement. Next to my hut, there was a large, broken satellite dish, a sort of icon of acculturation so deep its debris were now ruins. It was not until another six months, when after spending a day in the bush carving a gigantic slit-gong, I returned guided by my friend Gimots and his ancestral firefly, that I had a sense of living in an enchanted world. I am now somewhat embarrassed about both these attitudes. The cemented-floor hut I was given was one of the best in the village, provided to me with amazing generosity. When tsunono from Bashi to Talinga one day arrived to weave me a sago frond roof – a task reserved for the senior men – I was left in speechless awe. I grew to love Hahalis for what it is, and the more I explored the manner in which it failed to be what people – myself included – wished it to be, the greater my wonder became.

Halia society has undergone dramatic change over the past century. No aspect of social organization has been left untouched. The processes involved are not always clear. To understand the point from which the current state of affairs has developed we would face a task more complex than a physicist calculating the nature of a high-energy collision from the trajectory of its debris. There are no firm rules guiding Halia history, the concepts and social processes involved are deep, complex and the Halia are at odds with each other about many key aspects of their society. But, for the most part what we see in Halia is not the fragmentation or decomposition of social forms, but their transformation. The very perception that there is fragmentation, moral decay and dissolution of tradition is a factor at play in the sedimentation of ‘tradition’: it is the vehicle for the rearticulation and improvisation of cultural forms. That is not to say that all is well; far from it, all is not well and Halia anxieties are more often than not well founded.

The sacrificial economy that underpinned the tsunono’s power in the past did not disappear immediately: in the Hahalis Welfare Society, it remained and was ultimately reasserted. But the reactivation of the tsunono’s power over life and death in 1976, as narrated by Rimoldi and Rimoldi (1992:Ch 7) proved to be the moment of over-reach. In the past, the tsunono could command a man to die, and that man would have no option but certain death locally, or probable death in exile; the tsunono could fear no repercussion but the entrenchment of their own power. By 1976, the tsunono had
not been the unqualified masters of their domains for more than sixty years, and the social foundations on which their mobilization of violence had been couched were no longer there. People fled, the killers were jailed and the movement dissolved over the next few years. Returning to Buka after two decades, Eleanor Rimoldi observed:

The power of *tsunono* is threatened with alienation from the sort of primary relationships [sacrificial relations] discussed above as their authority is mediated by extensions of national government, advisers of all hue, and locals jockeying for power. Such may ultimately undermine the matrilineal basis of Buka life and the biological and co-operative character of traditional power, as political and economic decisions move further and further from the domestic sphere and village relations. The transformative power of sacrifice — of humans or of pigs — becomes the prerogative of the state for the state. (E. Rimoldi 2005:106; emphasis in the original).

From this perspective, the social change in Buka has led to the verge of a precipice. The very fabric of society will be torn by the pressures of cash cropping and the workings of the state system. Yet in this thesis, I hope to have demonstrated that though the current state of affairs is perceived as profoundly problematic by the Halia themselves, and they decry the waning of their customs, the apparent decomposition of ritual and cultural complexes in fact proceeds on the basis of structural principles still within the horizon of a self-generated Halia ontology. First, matrilineal kinship has not been undermined by cash cropping: rather, it is cognatic and synthetic features of kinship that become more marginal and problematic. Matrilineal kinship continues to be the basis of Buka life, and if anything the ideology has renewed vigour in the guide of maternalism and landownership ideologies. But precisely in this revitalization, a subtle change takes place, the analysis of cognatic, cryptic and fictitious kin into unilineal descent groups. Secondly, however, this analysis was always a pole within Halia political kinship: it is not the case that in the 1960s or 1930s, the *tsunono* openly accepted that their lineages were manufactured or invented. The synthesis of kin units was always a serious enough matter to be underwritten, in the most important cases, by the sacrifice of one’s own kin. Thirdly, and most significantly, Eleanor Rimoldi’s assertion that the transformative power of sacrifice has become the prerogative of the state would be true and likely to clash with the interest of the *tsunono* only if we accept two propositions: (a) that the Papua New Guinean state system is capable of and invested in a process of monopolizing transformative violence, and (b), that the state is radically disjoint from the *tsunono* and their social field.

As I have argued, the Papua New Guinean state is strong relative to local communities, but uninterested in them; the broader state system, however, extends deep and far by leveraging disorganization and patronage. It is local communities such as Buka — close to the doors of influence, but not yet through them — that have a profound interest in inviting and participating, hopefully in their own terms, in the state and its distributive networks. This is not an abject supplication, or at least, not necessarily so: the *tsunono* who aspire to participate in the state system are by turns invested in dreams of omnipotence and impotence, but for the most part, they are at work, practically, attempting to run viable Village Courts, obtain funds for water tanks, lobbying to fix the road, mobilizing their *bunkatan* to clean school grounds and build toilets. They seek to obtain the power to regulate marriages, land and minor conflicts in their own, 'traditional' way — but they do this by
attempting to articulate themselves into the state system. This mundane world of the *tsunono*, where they really do face the true burdens of their office, has an astonishing potential for mobilization, and also violence: this much is clear from the experience of the crisis, when by the misfortune of Bougainville, an experiment was carried out in removing the state from the equation virtually overnight. The result was that the villages were able to maintain themselves in autonomy, but at immense cost. That potential is still there, latent, whilst political energies are diverted into the state system.

The Papua New Guinean state is an entity that has to be understood in its own terms. The violence of the Crisis may lead some with deep affection for Bougainvilleans to see it as a decisionistic hegemon that establishes sovereignty at the point of bayonettes, seizing for itself the Schmittian power to decide on the exception, to establish the ultimate limits of law by crossing them (Schmitt 1986). This is a mirage; in fact the truth is that the rebellion was disassembled, paradoxically, both by the power and weakness of the central government. The social system of the state was able to penetrate villages that in the decade after independence had been integrated into networks of patronage which have since become only more effective. The compromises that allowed for the eventual peace agreement relied on cutting ‘traditional leaders’ into the deal, a fact entrenched into the Bougainvillean constitution. This happened, not against the *tsunono*, but largely because of their concentrated efforts. It is the terms, not the fact of integration with the state that present problems for the *tsunono*, problems to be dealt with considerately and practically. Rather than seeing the situation in Bougainville as a loss of power by the *tsunono*, let alone their usurpation by the state, what we see rather is the transformation of the *tsunono* through their deliberate and wilful insertion into the state system.

The iconic element of change in Halia society is the partial eclipsing of synthetic aspects of kinship and alliance formation and the entrenchment of an ideology of descent, and a corresponding attempt, frequently inducing conflict and violence, to analyse society into discrete lineages. The crystallization or ‘outing’ of the Nakas and Natasi as *pinaposa*; the shift in the character of the *tsunono*’s power from hierarchical hosting to landownership; the privatization of sorcery; the shift from public, collective communication with the dead to private rituals and ultimately, silent prayer; the shift from arranged to anarchic marriage; the evolution of the funeral cycle into a demonstration of local political independence and land tenure: all these changes feed into, and are modulated by changes in the most intimate relationships that obtain between people. Here is a social field of affect, rivalries, joy and personal tragedies that at no point fully escapes into a ‘personal’ or ‘traditional’ domain separate from the horizon of modern Halia kin-political organization. The very attempt to understand and ‘preserve’ tradition is the vehicle for some of its most profound changes. When men and women sit down to compile, after the example of previous anthropologists, a genealogy; when they conduct ethnographic research projects with a view towards establishing interlinking networks of witnesses in conflicts over land and *nisunono*; when men set about compiling tracts on *kasom* on which to base

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139 E. Rimoldi writes that since pacification had suppressed sacrifices, it was a “deadly irony” that “Australian and Papua New Guineans established their authority by sacrificing humans instead of pigs.” (2005:101). But this is only partially true, and moreover the sad fact is that during the crisis much killing was conducted by Bukas fighting other Bukas.
local governance – at such times, the will to bureaucratization, formalization and linearization operates not within an abstract field of laws, but through family ties, friendship, marriage, death. Amongst the many implications of this is the fact that forces of social organization, desire and fears that cannot be accepted by the Halia as central aspects of their society – the striking of compromises, improvisation of ritual, manufacture of genealogical links – remain operative even in the project of purging them.

The aspiration to analytical kinship cannot escape the fact that the foundations of Halia society remain the combination of groups within tsuhana and tsuhaba analogues; the attempt to codify tsuhana, to monitor sinebe and ritual protocol for deviations is aimed at clarifying who is the ‘right man’ and who is refug, hisungsite pukan, tsekosekoka, but it mobilizes the forces by which fictitious kinship is articulated. To the extent that the focus on historical veracity is intensified – by fear of lying against the ground, or of being found dispossessed by the courts – to that extent the synthetic forces of Halia political organization return, covertly, sometimes beneath the threshold of consciousness. With less emphasis on private property than the Ranongans of Debrah McDougall’s excellent study, the Halia “would like to translate the usually tacit power of chiefs into rights of private property and to make social hierarchy visible and permanent” (McDougall 2004:486): they face similar problems, in that good neighbourliness and truth make for awkward companions. The tsuuno face the added dilemma that as much as power over land might have supplanted power of people, it is still people who make them tsuuno in the first place. They owe their existence to what they themselves perceive as an impasse.

When Halia thinkers turn to the question of how to capture the essence of their social organization, the result is an ideological articulation of certain aspirations, not a sociological analysis of the actual means by which the work of social organization is performed. The result, as we see in the Thomas Tohiana’s analysis of the holobo, can be extremely profound, beautiful, captivating; but they manifestly fail to seize onto structural processes that are present to these thinkers principally as negative quantities, as disorder, as failure, as incapacity to reassert order. It is important to understand this limitation amongst these indigenous exercises in social philosophy, just as it is necessary to understand them with great respect. The will to assimilate tsuhana to government as gavman bong peles is the counterpart of the maternalistic cult of St. Mary as a teitabo or shorn of sexual force: tsuhaba as government is fatherly authority and rule-setting without love. Yet these repressive and authoritarian desires do not exist within the field of their own ideation: they are expressed by men who love their sons, who must search for order amongst the anarchy of marriage that is the outcome of their other desires, no more consistent amongst the Halia anymore than in any other society.

In the European imaginary of bureaucracy, there is a type of dream-nightmare that links Plato and Weber, Lenin and Taylor: the government-machine, a set of Laws or institutions that once properly installed frees the people from their own ignorance and incapacity or alternatively condemns them to the worst form of servitude, the servitude to justified masters. This utopianism of government without people, and its correlate dystopia of government without need or care for people is very distant from gavman bong peles, either its ideological statement or actual practice. The coordinates of
authoritarian Halia ideologies, even when they seek to codify, establish the facts and expel the *refugi*, are still within the horizon of kinship concepts described above.

Ultimately, the notion that *tsunono* could become *chiefs* and the *tsubahana* a bureaucratic structure provides more grist for the mill of socially effective lack of consensus: more details of protocol, laws, bylaws, subsections, procedures, agreements, contracts, compromises and histories that can be remembered in the right occasion, disclosed selectively, for the purpose of establishing, rejecting and remodulating alliances. The observations made of the funeral cycles above can just as well be made of the attempts to establish local councils by developing locally sensitive constitutions. In such contexts, we see one of the most profound aspects of the *tsunono*, the simultaneous improvisation and disavowal of innovation in ritual, the insistence on following *a markato a matikuna*, 'the straight road' even as it is cut through virgin forest. The *tsunono* are made from these disavowed improvisations, they source their power and express authority from the ability of deciding on this, singularly but more often collectively: as when before the fire sacrifice, a new amendment to the composition of a *tsubahana* is ratified — ostensibly by spirits, but in truth by the murmuring conclave of living men and women. Synthetic kinship in a context of matrilineal ideology yields, in the Halia case, a continuous process of historical revision, of finding new 'truths' — a process that is not new, but already clear during M. Rimoldi's fieldwork; since synthetic kinship is the foundation of the *tsunono*, there cannot be a precise specification of who is and who is not *tsunono* beyond the description of a process that by its very nature, cannot be accepted by the Halia. (It can be projected into the past: so that *tsunono* were made, alliances forged when there was still warfare, or when there were still sacrifices; but these too become yet more elements in the negotiation of historical claims in the present.) In other words, there cannot, therefore, be a true codification of the *tsubahana*; in truth, there cannot be a true ethnography of Halia so long as there are still-living *tsunono*. In this vein, when I once asked Boatsia — Rokou's sister's son — if the myth of the coconut was true, he replied: "The *tsunono* cannot tell us the whole story," he said. "If the story ended, so would they."
Glossary

Note: Tok Pisin terms are underlined.

barn  Sword-club made from blackpalm (bil).

binoa Large baskets distributed to tsanbana at kinalala; contrast to kobele, small baskets given to individual women at bong maloto.

bilip  Faith.

bikot A ‘big shot’

bong lima ‘Five nights’, a minor funeral feast

bong maloto ‘Ten nights’, the major funeral feast for most deaths.

buso Womb, a factually matrilineal group.

galip Canarium sp. nuts.

gumon Government, often personified; ...blong peles: the village’s own form of government, the tsanbana, sorcery, the ruko.

gobus ‘The new shoot’, the firstborn son and daughter of the teitabol, who will succeed her and the tsunono.

giagono ‘Sacred’ and ‘forbidden’.

gogolati Ritual washing of the feet upon return of tsunono, gobus or teitabol.

gogo Clean.

gum ‘Seat’; a phase in the funeral cycle of a high-ranked tsunono in which mourners are secluded within the deceased’s tsanbana for an extended period of time.

babatat A story, the truth value of which is not a primary concern.

bakoru A basic tsanbana.

bausalang Feast performed for the young gobus after his first trip abroad.

bamal Expiation demanded by tsunono for insults against one of their rank.

bouma First fruits of a garden, first born child.

ban A settled locality with a cemetery and a name.

bakulopa The terminal funeral feast, in which korkoriana are disposed of. Also known as korkoriana.

balbal Rafter.

bamal Compensation payment incurred by disrespecting or assaulting the tsunono. Literally, ‘to cause bitterness’.

bapalis Euphemism for a deceased person. Literally, ‘passed over to another side’ or ‘transformed.’
Mourning, grief, pitiful.

Sacrifice.

'Sacrifice for the personal spirits', the first fire lit for a deceased person, the day after burial.

To make (ba-) tsunono. (a) The specific ritual of raising a tsunono to the title of munihil. (b) the protracted exchanges, sacrifices and sponsorships that raise a gohus to the status of tsunono.

Mutually demeaning competition

Reciprocal sacrifices.

'Each one at a time'; individualism.

Cross-cousin.

The Canarium season; one year.

Jealousy.

Exchange acknowledging paternal nurturance.

In a relation of sungut, bisungutsipuleu—explicitly fictional matrikin.

A teenage boy.

(1) Banana leafs used as a tarpaulin. (2) A man whose function in the tsunaha was to hold the young gohus whilst he or she was scarified, so that the latter's blood did not fall directly onto the ground.

A small tsunaha-like building, build before the erection of a full tsunaha.

wooden carved statue

The cycle of feasts for building and inaugurating a tsunaha.

(1) Knot, binding. (2) Sago leaf-rib broom.

Coconut frond basket.

(1) Dirty, filth. Items associated with deceased persons, with connotations of both pollution and affect. (2) The feast in the kinalala cycle where such items are burnt or buried. Also bakulipu.

A feast in which the tsunono decide how many pigs to contribute to a new tsunaha. Piglets' tails are subsequently cut (kot).

'To eat back'. Ritual in the morning of bong maluto where women's eating taboos are lifted.

Ten teil, or approximately six hundred taros.

A teenage girl
kukuei Freshwater spring at the base of the cliff.
kuma Song, especially
koriki Wall-peg.
kurupakö Secret pact by the tsunono to order a death.
kuru Onomatopoeic term for ‘owl’, an animal which ‘cries its own name’ – and hence an insult against boastful men.
lata Bush.
lahana Personal spirits.
lahane Spirits in general, including both personal and bush spirits
lelolo A diamond-shaped insignia signifying the power of the tsunono, also the vagina (more specifically, the vulva)
luma Any house, especially a sleeping-house.
lumanka ‘House of carvings’, a special, high-ranked tsuhana
lumanlangs A shrine for rain-magic; also kikeits
lumabusul ‘House of bows’, a garrison and tsuhana specialised in war organization.
lumangom ‘house of scarification’, a house in which gomu may be performed.
martul Main tsuhana posts, counted in pairs.
masakou History, a narrative asserted as true (masakou mana) or thought to be false (masakou gomu)
matsuna Lethal sorcery
menaka Pudding made from pounded taro, canarium and coconut oil. A ‘chief’s food’.
menmenaka A feast featuring plentiful menaka taro and Canarium nut pudding. Especially, the return of the gobus after gogolalasi.
mena Stitched-plank single hull canoe
munibil ‘stem of the black palm’, the title of the highest rank of tsunono.
Naboom One of the maximal pinapos, the people of the sea eagle.
Nakaripa One of the maximal pinapos, the people of the fowl.
Nakas One of the second iteration pinapos, the people of the dog.
Natasi One of the second iteration pinapos, the totem of which is unclear.
niatei Knowledge, know-how capacity. Viz. save
ngal Canarium almonds.
ngorere Umbilicus, matrilineage.
otoho  Roofing for a tsuhana

pniou  Strands of porpoise teeth (or less frequently, flying-fox teeth) used in ceremonial exchanges.

pal kapan  'Great ones', honorific address for tsunono, saueman, elders and preeminent figures in general.

patu  (1) a coalition tsuhana built by a combination of groups of both pinaposa, (2) a type of homicide payment, (3) the seed of the mango.

pal singin  Taboo side and side-yard of the tsuhana; can only be entered by the peits.

peits  A hereditary office within the tsuhana. The peits must ensure the safety of the tsunono by eating his food before him, he must enforce respect for the tsuhana's taboo yard and decorum during feasts. The peits is the tsunono's 'mouth' to the clan, carrying (and perhaps distorting) his orders

pepeito  (1) Guardianship of a gohus by a near matrilateral relative (2) 'overwatch,' 'guiding' and 'caring' of one tsuhana by its sponsor father/cross-cousin/affine group.

perere  A circular insignia representing the highest rank of tsunono.

piliis  Six taros.

pinaposa  The four totemic classes to which all persons in Buka are assigned.

poku  Disembodied speaking spirit.

punhuma  A lot where houses may be built; typically named. Modern usage typically entails that a group with rights to punhuma does not also have rights to land: i.e. it refers to the fact punhuma has been granted to them.

raku  Stone oven.

refu  Refugee, unwelcome guest.

rubunahuma  'Smoking of the house'. A large feast performed after the erection of a new tsuhana.

rukoko  Figures representing spirits at the centre of the initiation cycle, abandoned by the early 1950s.

save  Knowledge and/or capacity.

saueman  (1) A person with advanced education, (2) a person with unusually great abilities and/or knowledge.

sinehe  'Signs' or 'icons', especially the insignias and distinctive ritual protocols that signal a tsuhana's identity.

sipi  (1) The physical material of a tsuhana. (2) the feast at which the tsuhana is erected

soapili  A small humpy that marks the tsunono's intent or capacity to build a tsuhana.

suakapo  Large funeral feast typically signalling the intent, or right, to build tsuhana.
sungatu  Matrilineal relatives, including classificatory and cryptic kin.
tasa  The climactic feast of the *kinalala* cycle. Also known as *kinalala*.
tasi  Sea.
teil  Woman’s palm husk backpack. Ten *piliis*, or approximately sixty taros.
titabol  The sister and mother of the *tsunono*, a woman chief.
toluhabana  *Cordyline* sp.
tobu  Pandanus hood, traditionally worn by women.
tsinibi  Dugout canoe with outrigger.
titsiki  Land, earth, dirt.
tsom  beloved person, friend, pitiable person.
tora  sorcery
	tsunono  Hereditary chief.
tsunono mai  ‘Bitter *tsunono*, a higher rank of *tsunono*.
tsunono pan  ‘Great *tsunono*, in the present context, an honorific address for a temporarily ascendant *tsunono*.
tubana  A clan house.
tui  A slit-gong, *garamu*. ‘Heart’.
tul  Ordinary house post.
twartok  Friend, member of a common ethnic group, especially in the context of favours.
unu  Two *kosono*, or over a thousand taros. In practice, indeterminate but large number.
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