
Chapter Five

Tolai

The Gazelle Peninsula, on the north-east corner of what is now known as the Province of East New Britain, is the home of the Tolai. The traders and the missionaries who arrived at the Gazelle Peninsula of the Bismarck Archipelago in the late nineteenth century found a relatively homogeneous people both culturally and linguistically.

Like many Melanesian societies of that time they were a warring and cannibalistic people (Brown 1910, p. 141; Danks 1910, p. 618; Bradley 1982, pp. 249-51; Parkinson 1907, p. 122).

The Gazelle district was divided into subdistricts or parishes called 'gunan' which consisted of several hamlets (iklik na gunan). Matrilineal in descent, the Tolai were organised into several matrilineal clans (vunatarai) which collectively consisted of two exogamous moieties (Parkinson 1907, p. 72). Marriage within a moiety was considered to be the same as incest and therefore taboo. This allowed broader links to be made through marriage and permitted affable relations between two previously antagonistic settlements (Epstein 1969, p. 14). The normal practice was the settlement of a district by one clan and this practice still prevails today (Sack 1974, p. 70).

Although residence was avunculocal, the wife's clan continued to have ties with her, and obligations toward her and to her descendants through the matrilineal descent system. Thus, in family disputes, a woman could return to her clan with her children and expect their support (Parkinson 1907, p. 67; Sack 1974, p. 72). Land ownership was bound to the wife's clan and hence a son had to vacate his father's land upon the death of his father. The son was also obliged to move to his matrilineal uncle's 'gunan' once he married. Control over land was exercised through the matrilineal group.

Leadership

The clans were divided into lineages each led by a senior elder or 'lualua'. Although writers of the period often spoke of a 'chief' it is not clear

whether they were referring to the 'lualua' or other important leaders in the community. Despite their references, recent literature concludes that there were no chiefs amongst the Tolai (Bradley 1982, p. 31; Sack 1974, pp. 72-4). Political power was not achieved simply on the basis of seniority nor was it based on territory. Sack (1974, p. 73) explains:

There was neither an institutionalised hierarchy of leaders, nor was the kinship organisation at any level formally linked to the territorial or residential organisation so as to extend kinship-based leadership to cover the entire area of a territorial or residential unit. Even if one lineage dominated a ward, its lualua was not the lualua of this ward but the lualua of the members of his lineage, including those resident in other wards but excluding the members of other lineages resident in this ward.

The lualua's influence depended on his control over the scattered landholdings of his group both within and outside the district he lived in (Sack 1974, p. 73). He also needed to have control over his groups' shell money ('tambu' or 'diwara') despite the instability of this source of influence since shell money was viewed as personal property instead of group assets. Much depended on individuals and their competitive, entrepreneurial personalities since the 'lualua's' position as controller of the group's money and of the business of war did not go unchallenged. His competitors included warriors who had won distinction and thus had become 'luluai' or war leaders and 'uviana' who were wealthy men that managed their own 'tambu' and the 'tambu' of others. 'Uviana' and 'luluai' did not have the same land-based power support as did the 'lualua'. Neither did they have any 'institutionalised' obligations toward their followers (Sack 1974, p. 74). In contrast the 'lualua' had such responsibilities and obligations toward the group. The 'uviana', 'luluai' and the 'lualua' all competed with one another to achieve the status of bigmen ('ngala'). One had to become a 'lualua' before achieving the status of 'ngala'. A 'ngala' required personal followers and the sponsorship of a 'corporate group' and ideally he was both a 'luluai' and a 'uviana' and an owner of a tubuan of the secret dukduk society as well as being a sorcerer in the secret 'Iniat' Society (Sack 1974, p. 74; Parkinson 1907, p. 63).

The Tolai had few external trade ties with other indigenous foreign groups (Sack 1974, p. 75). Nevertheless their preoccupation with the accumulation of wealth necessitated trade links with the Nakanai (located on the north-west coast of New Britain, one hundred miles south of the Gazelle) to obtain the precious shells for the manufacture of 'tambu'. However, these trips were kept to a minimal level and later became even less frequent after contact as the Tolai insisted on being paid for their goods in 'tambu' creating the need for the European traders to locate and import supplies of 'tambu' (Epstein 1969, p. 21).

Internal trade was well developed and was divided into two types with participation dictated by gender; the women attending to the exchange of

basic requirements and the men looking after the exchange of specialties (Sack 1974, p. 76). The male dominated trade in specialties was relatively insignificant compared to the female trade in basics between the coastal and inland groups. The significance of this type of trade to the Tolai stemmed from their desire to obtain 'tambu' and therefore their willingness to produce excess goods for the purpose of trade. This unique characteristic amongst Melanesians of the time (who mainly developed trade links between sea and land groups out of economic necessity) was an important factor in the more rapid development of the Tolai society after contact (Epstein 1969, pp. 20-1).

The Tolai had a rather sophisticated system of accumulating 'tambu'. Their appetite for profit led them to develop a system of borrowing and lending with interest and it therefore had elements which were surprisingly similar to Western economic systems (Sack 1974, pp. 76-7). The difference between the two systems was that the social traditional activities encompassing all customs from birth until death, included the exchange of 'tambu'. Money, profit and business were ubiquitous elements in Tolai activities and the success of the activity was judged according to the profit acquired (Sack 1974, p. 77; Parkinson 1907, pp. 90-1). The ultimate goal of the Tolai was to accumulate enough 'tambu' to enhance 'social prestige and political power by entering into a widening of reciprocal obligations with an increasing number of people' (Sack 1974, p. 77). This would enable an individual to fulfil his social responsibilities, the success of which was symbolised at death by the amount of 'tambu' left for distribution at his mortuary ceremony. Since the accumulation of 'tambu' was such an important motivator in Tolai society it also featured prominently in the settlement of disputes.

Social Control and Dispute Settlement

General

In *Melanesians and Polynesians*, Brown (1910) discusses the Tolai view of morality. He contended that morality was associated with conduct and not with abstract principles. Conduct was judged according to the social standard which was affected and monitored by public opinion and shame.

The Tolai believed that no one could die from natural causes. The cause was attributed to war, witchcraft or magic, and reprisal upon the individual deemed to be the culprit or his group was considered necessary (Brown 1910, p. 176; Mouton in Deane 1933, p. 109).

The attitude inherent in Tolai justice was that 'an injury done in response to a wrong was justified and did not itself constitute a wrong' and that this wrong necessitated a response which often included injury (Sack 1972a, p. 256). For the Tolai, the notion of retaliation was utilised extensively as a response to actions considered injurious. Vengeance or

'payback' as it is called, was considered (and often still is) the only true form of justice.

Brown observed that the prevalent offences in Tolai society were homicide and adultery (1910, p. 254). People viewed such acts as though they were wrongful acts committed against individuals and not against the state (or the corporate group). Brown (1910, p. 252) also remarked that a murder committed without cause was considered morally wrong but, 'if a man killed a man as a reprisal, that would be considered meritorious'. Once killed, the enemy's body was often cut up and distributed for consumption. He noted that cannibalism was 'practised to discharge an obligation to the spirits of the dead' (1910, p. 141).

Many disputes could be settled through the exchange of 'tambu' although in some cases honour dictated that 'payback' be 'in kind' (eye for an eye or life for a life) (Brown 1910, p. 254; Mouton in Biskup 1974, pp. 104, 107-8; Parkinson 1907, p. 90). Such cases often involved extra-group disputes. In inter-tribal feuds where one man was killed by the opposing tribe the conflict would last until the death was avenged (Parkinson 1907, p. 65). If the other tribe responded with further reprisals then the war would continue at great length until the two sides were prepared to make peace. When peace was sought each side would compensate the other for the number of men killed, concluding the negotiations by exchanging betel nut.

Kamara

The practice of 'kamara' could arise when an appeal for compensation in 'tambu' had failed and the matter took on more violent overtones until either the desired amount of 'tambu' was received or the offender (or his relatives) had been physically harmed, sometimes fatally. As Sack explains (1972a, p. 254):

This applied in particular to the shell-money conscious Tolai whom compensation could replace the punishment of most wrongs, for whom it was the non-payment of compensation rather than the original offence which disturbed the peace and where the non-repayment of a loan was as much a crime as a theft.

'Kamara' was the custom of using third parties to obtain assistance in avenging a wrong. The third party was often the 'lualua' of the group. One form of kamara involved taking an amount of 'tambu' to the 'lualua' and explaining the wrong which had taken place. The 'lualua' would then give the victim a much larger amount of 'tambu' and he would subsequently take up the matter ensuring that the offender repaid the amount paid to the victim plus added interest. If the offender was not known or had escaped, the injured party would often cause damage to some uninterested and innocent party's property and explain his reason. The third party would not feel any anger toward the victim of the original injury but either went

about avenging the deed or involving yet another uninterested party. Eventually the culprit was found and was then made responsible for the accumulation of damage done on the way to finding him, plus interest.

Brown felt that the people welcomed the institution of 'kamara' due to its profit-making possibilities (1908, pp. 183-4). If the culprit was able but unwilling to pay the demanded compensation for the accumulated damage, his life was in jeopardy. The original injured party and his helpers would slay him or perhaps they would refer the matter to the Dukduk for the administration of justice (Sack 1974, pp. 78-9). If it was well known that the culprit did not have the ability to pay the debt, he would be permitted to pay it in kind or work the debt off either for the chief or for the victim.

'Kamara' was often used by individuals who were poor and who could not easily gain the support of their group. A Tolai could never count on unquestioning group solidarity in times of conflict as could other Melanesian societies (Sack 1974, p. 78). They often had to resort to individual self-help remedies to settle conflicts. Kamara applied when the offender refused to pay compensation and the members of his group refused to support him. Schmeille, the first Imperial German Judge claimed that this happened frequently when the injurer was a powerful man (1888 in Sack 1972a, p. 250).

There were generally two ways in which a victim could involve a third party in the act of redressing the wrongdoer; he could either injure the third party or his property or sell him his stake in the demand for compensation.

Sometimes the method of 'kamara' used in avenging an offence was the destruction of a neighbour's house by fire. The culprit was then required to pay for the original loss of property plus the added damage to the neighbour's house. The offender or his relatives were encouraged to pay the compensation quickly since the longer they waited the more substantial would be the fine.

Brown (1898, p. 785) describes a case where kamara was used to settle a situation of adultery:

A. commits adultery with B.'s wife. This is a very serious matter, and B. and his friends at once fight with more or less success. But B. has another remedy, and he takes, say 10 fathoms (of shell-money) to Tepang (the local bigman), who at once gives him 100 fathoms in return—that is, 10 fathoms for each fathom given him—and then he demands from A. 120 or 150 fathoms in return, which A. must at once give or be prepared to fight the combined forces of Tepang and the aggrieved B. and his family.

Sometimes the method of identifying the intended victim of 'kamara' was through the use of symbolism. Burger (1913 in Sack 1972a, p. 253) noted that a man whose wife had committed adultery would set fire to

another's house and place a clue outside so that others would realise whose wife was at fault.

The practice of kamara was so commonplace as a form of social control that the first European settlers used it to their advantage. Brown (1908, p. 184) used kamara to recover a stolen hatchet from the mission station and the first plantation owner, Parkinson (1907, p. 66) used it often to procure compensation for stolen goods.

The DukDuk

The existence of the Dukduk was seen by early settlers and missionaries as the Tolai's method of law enforcement. The leader of the Dukduk Society is the 'Tubuan' which is owned by the 'lualua' or 'ngala'. The 'Tubuan' is a female mask representing one ancestress. At various times a 'Tubuan' gave birth to a number of male masks called 'Dukduk' and this marked the beginning of a festive season where new members were initiated into the society and the administrative legal functions of the dukduk were carried out on the groups and individuals concerned (Sack 1974, p. 74). At the end of the festive season the male masks ('Dukduk') died leaving the female mask, the 'Tubuan' to give birth to new 'Dukduk' next season.

The identity of 'Dukduks' was kept secret and was only known by members of the Society. Their identities were hidden under conical masks covering most of their bodies. Brown (1898, p. 780) described the Dukduk the following way:

The Dukduk is represented to the outside public by a figure dressed in a full leaf girdle, composed of rings of leaves strung together extending from the breast to below the knees. These when shaken as the figure dances increases the awe with which the Dukduk is regarded. The upper part of the body is covered by a high conical mask gaily ornamented, made of wicker work, and covered also with leaves or cloth . . . He often carries a spear or stick, and sometimes also a human skull in his hands as he goes whooping and dancing along the paths.

Most young men were initiated into the Society after paying the initiation fees. Women and the uninitiated were forbidden to walk on the sacred grounds of the 'Dukduk', called 'taraiu', and were usually punished with death if they were to do so. They were also forbidden to look directly at a Dukduk or speak to one.

After feasting on the sacred grounds the Dukduk would run through the forest paths and through the villages shrieking loudly to warn those who were forbidden the secrets that he was coming.

The main function of the Dukduk Society appears to have been enforcing justice in cases of wrongdoing particularly in cases of nonpayment of fines or compensation (Australia. Governor-General 1922-23, p. 14). Brown (1898, p. 780) maintained that the Society was one

'whose principal object [was] to extort money from everyone else who [was] not a member, and to terrify women and those who [were] not initiated'. Parkinson agreed that while addressing the judicial concerns of the community, the Dukduk 'often look[ed] primarily after their own well-being' (1907, p. 571).

Brown (1910, pp. 69-70) described Dukduk activities in terms of minor cases and more serious cases. In the first instance, the 'tubuan' or his representative, the 'Dukduk', would go to the guilty party's home and sit there until an acceptable amount of 'tambu' was paid.

In serious cases, a number of 'Dukduk' would go to the offender's home or to his more affluent relatives' homes at night to collect the compensation. The offender was usually aware of the upcoming visit in advance and the party was met with the amount of compensation required. If the offender was not home when the 'Dukduk' party led by the Tubuan arrived, then his house was burned down.

Powell (1884, p. 63) described the 'Dukduk' as both a 'curse and a blessing' since it functioned to maintain order and deter crime but 'at the same time it encourage[d] cannibalism and terrorism'. According to the 1923 Australian Report to the Council of the League of Nations, the Dukduk 'dispensed justice' in matters including, robbery, debt collection, and adultery. In the case of the latter, the Report claimed that the society, 'could seize any woman guilty of adultery and take her to the DukDuk house, where she became the property of the initiated' (1922-23, p. 8).

Some disagreement exists in the early literature as to the type of punishments the Dukduk could exact upon offenders (Sack 1972b, p. 99). Rickard wrote only of fines that the Dukduk imposed upon offenders, implying that it was only when there was failure to comply with the punishment of shell-money that the offender's life was in danger. Yet Parkinson indicated that the Dukduk could inflict the death penalty in cases of incest and adultery.

'Iniat' Society

Much less is known about the more powerful 'Iniat' Society. Reverend Danks (in Deane 1933, p. 283) remarked that its origins were obscure and the practices diverse. The Society was based on the secrets of sorcery and was lead by the 'Tena Kikiuwana' who as a rule was also the 'Tena papait' or wizard. Sack (1974, p. 75) described the Society as 'an order of individual sorcerers and their apprentices'. The literature reveals little about the principal objectives of this Society. However, the secret knowledge of the sorcerers included that which could (Parkinson 1907, p. 479): '... [bring] good luck to the house, prosperity to the family, protection from illness or from evil spirits, or of evoking sickness, death or other mischief in one's fellows'.

The 'Tena Kikiuwana' had special powers which allowed him to transform himself into images of birds, animals and fish. Once

transformed, he could cause harm or even death to an enemy and was often approached by those wishing injury or death to an enemy (Brown 1910, p. 72). For a price the wizard would exercise his powers on the targeted person.

One of the methods involved the wizard placing an animal shaped stone on top of a covered hole where some 'leavings' of the intended victim such as hair, excrement, spittle, or left over food, had been buried together with some spear-heads and poisonous plants. He would recite certain incantations over the stone. According to Brown (1910, p. 72):

The belief was that so long as that stone remained the victim would grow weaker and weaker and would finally die; but if on hearing that this magic was being exercised against him he paid sufficient diwara to have it removed, then the stone would be taken away, and the article belonging to him would be returned as a proof that the spell was removed, and he would make a rapid recovery.

Parkinson noted that the immense fear with which the people regarded sorcery caused them to meticulously sweep and clean their hamlets each day so as to remove all traces of matter which could be used to work magic against them (1907, p. 45). The knowledge possessed by the wizard was usually passed on to his nephew. Strangers could also buy the knowledge from the wizard for a price.

Initiations and meetings were held on the secret meeting ground called 'maravot'. Again women and the uninitiated were forbidden from entering the forbidden area. Punishment for those who did not respect the secrecy was certain death. Women were strictly excluded from the 'Iniat' Society for it was believed that its power was far too great for them. Parkinson (1907, p. 489) recounted just how perilous the power of the Society could be for women:

Widows and women who have no relatives to protect them must be at hand in the vicinity of the place where the iniat hold their practices, and the members use them without the least shame.

After discovering that several murders of Europeans were planned during the secret meetings of the 'Iniat', the German Government prohibited 'Iniat' meetings. This led to the eventual decline of the Society.

Position of Women

The matrilineal system of descent prescribes the system of land inheritance amongst the Tolai. It does not give women more power in terms of decision-making or relative importance in status. Since women grew up on their father's land and residence after marriage was avunculocal they were isolated from their matrilineal land most of their

lives. Control over land was by the male resident on that land and his matri-lineage (Bradley 1982, p. 282). Instead of answering primarily to her husband's group as is the case with patrilineal descent, she was answerable to her brothers and maternal uncles who continued to exercise control over her and over her dependents. When a Tolai woman married, the bridewealth her husband paid to her lineage entitled him to her labour on his land (Bradley 1982, p. 63). In substance, he purchased her labour through the payment of bridewealth. (Bridewealth or brideprice as it is also called is the transfer of 'goods or valuables . . . by the groom's kin to recompense the bride's relatives for her absence' (Harris 1975, p. 660)).

Women were required to adhere to avoidance and deference practices which restricted their relationships with the men who had authority over them. Sisters were forbidden to touch their brother's persons and their personal, especially intimate, belongings. Nor were they to speak directly to them. Custom demanded that they give their complete obedience and subservience to brothers and husbands. Husbands had complete authority over their wives' activities which mostly involved working in their husband's fields, food preparation and child care. Powell (1884, p. 85) illustrates just how completely a wife became the property of her husband with the following anecdote:

. . . a chief, who lives on the shore of Blanche Bay, had purchased a young wife, who cried and wished to go back to her friends and would do no work. Upon this her husband became angry, telling her that as she was no use as a wife he would make use of her in another way, which he did, by immediately killing her and cooking her body for a feast.

Marriage was exogamous between two moieties. Intermarriage or sexual relations within one moiety was considered to be the same as incest (*pulu*) and was punishable by death even if the two involved were not members of the same lineage or group. This severe punishment was reflective of the Tolai view that *pulu* threatened the moral code and the social order of their society (Sack 1974, p. 82).

Punishment for *pulu* was sometimes ceremonial in nature. Mouton, one of the first to establish plantations in New Britain, describes the response to incest in his memoirs. The relatives of a man who had committed incest adorned him with flowers and paint as though he were being prepared for marriage. They paraded him in front of many onlookers prior to clubbing him to death. The offender was then buried in the woods without benefit of the mortuary ceremony. The woman was also killed and usually distributed to be eaten (Mouton in Biskup 1974, p. 103). The uncles and brothers of the offending woman held the right to administer the death penalty and not the husband who was usually paid an amount of 'tambu' as compensation (Parkinson 1907, p. 67).

Polygyny was practised by 'lualua' and 'ngala' or by those who could afford to bear the costs of purchasing more than one wife (Brown 1910,

p. 119). This custom was not practised by the majority of the people since the costs were considerable. However, for those who could afford several wives, this original investment was offset by the increased income obtained from the collective earnings of their labour.

Polygyny had its troublesome side for the husband since there was usually one wife who was more favoured than the rest and this created jealousies and conflict between the wives. Corporal punishment was often used to discipline wives not only by their husbands, but also by their relatives if they were not adequately fulfilling their responsibilities and therefore bringing shame on the line. (Danks in Deane, 1933, p. 171) describes an incident where a wife was punished for having argued with a co-wife by having her back lacerated with a fragment of volcanic glass.) A wife who wished to divorce her husband for mistreatment was often not encouraged to do so since her relatives did not wish to return the bridewealth (and were often unable to since they had already distributed portions of it in mortuary ceremonies). If she still insisted on leaving her husband or was accused of having committed adultery her relatives would beat her into submission or, particularly in the case of adultery, they would kill her themselves (Kleintitschen 1907, p. 198 in Sack 1974, pp. 89-90; Brown 1910, p. 253).

A woman could cause shame to her relations if she was unchaste, if she was the victim of a rape or even if she was the subject of gossip. Brown (1910, p. 254) wrote that, 'In the case of rape the friends of the woman could beat her, and also the man and his friends. They would beat the woman because they were ashamed'. Rooney (1886 quoted in Sack 1974, p. 83) observed incidents where women who were gossiped about would be speared by their closest male relatives (in the example Rooney cited it was the woman's own son who led the group which killed her) for causing them 'wawirawira' which meant 'ashamed to have their female relatives talked about'. In the Duke of York Islands it was sufficient to wound the woman but in New Britain the custom demanded that the woman be killed. Rooney also noted that the gossip did not have a basis in fact since the real offence appeared to be that the woman was the subject of gossip at all. He believed that most often the gossip was 'the work of some mischief maker' (Rooney 1886 quoted in Sack 1974, p. 83).

Husbands were often jealous of their wives and Brown (1908, p. 188) describes an incident where he intervened in order to save a young 'favourite' wife's life after her husband (who was 'ngala') saw her talking to a young man. Failing to even wound the young man, he managed to spear his wife before the women of the village brought Brown to rescue the young woman and take her to the mission for treatment and safety. Meanwhile, the 'ngala' sent spears fastened with a little 'tambu' to warriors around the area to solicit their assistance in punishing the young man and his people. However, the warriors found that the young man's group, anticipating retaliation, had disappeared from their settlement. The 'ngala'

was now in the position of having to pay the promised 'tambu' to the hired warriors. Brown describes him as an avaricious man who did not part with his hoarded 'tambu' easily. His solution to his dilemma was to demand the return of his young wife whom he planned to kill and divide her body up amongst the warriors as payment for their services. Brown was finally able to purchase the wife's life for an American steel axe. She returned to her husband's house that night in safety and resumed her position as favourite wife.

Adultery was considered to be a very serious offence and was punished accordingly although there appears to have been a wide range of traditional responses to this misdeed. Sack (1974, p. 89) outlines the possible reactions to adultery:

1. The adulterer could be killed on the spot;
2. The deceived husband could fight the adulterer (and his group) with the support of his own group, hired warriors, or forced allies;
3. He could activate the custom of kamara by injuring an innocent person who would then take up the task of avenging the wrong for him;
4. He could demand compensation;
5. He and his group could destroy property belonging to the adulterer (or his group) to force a compensation payment;
6. He could force public opinion into supporting his compensation claim by damaging the property of innocent parties;
7. He could pay a chief to buy his compensation claim, who would then collect it, plus a substantial interest;
8. If he was a member of the Dukduk Society he could also turn to the tubuan.

The recurring theme throughout the Tolai responses to adultery is unquestioning belief in the accused person's guilt followed by retaliation against him or her. Mouton (in Biskup 1974, p. 104) notes in his very unpolished English:

When a husband find his wife committing that offence, (adultery) he ask no question, he simply arm himself and the first unfortunate person he meet he simply let him have it, either it is a kill or a wound, if the victim is of an important family God help the culprit, the relations of the victim take it out of the relations of the culprit in blood and diwara, fortunately diwara, as it seems more important than human being, this may end in a fight or it is settled by paying a price if it turn out to a fight and the woman has no support from her side she generally was killed and send to the next neighbour to be eaten, for this the neighbour pay ten or twenty diwara, if she is from a strong family she is safe because her people will save her.

This emotional response derives from the Tolai moral code which appears to have treated adultery as though it were a special form of theft and a source of shame to the woman's line (Sack 1974, p. 90). The husband's property was regarded as having been tampered with and great shame had been caused to the woman's relatives (Brown 1910, p. 253).

Her involvement in such an act showed that she was an inferior wife giving the husband grounds for demanding reimbursement of at least some of the bridewealth.

Superstition and 'tabu' also surrounded the issue of adultery. A woman was not permitted to touch or sit in a new canoe since the belief was that if she did so, no shark would ever be caught from that canoe. As Brown (1910, p. 241) relates, on the Duke of York Islands, if a man was unable to catch a shark from his canoe he 'believe[d] that some one [had] committed adultery with his wife'.

Administration Influence

First European sighting of the Bismarck Archipelago occurred in 1699 by the English explorer, William Dampier. European contact with the people of the area did not occur until 1872 when Simpson sailed into Blanche Bay.

Traders became interested in the Melanesian islands of the Bismarck Archipelago when world demand for copra increased. Ships of traders and 'blackbirders' looking for indentured labourers to work the plantations established in the South Pacific began to arrive with increasing frequency between the years 1870 and 1875.

The first settlement was begun by a Methodist missionary, Dr. George Brown, in 1875 on the Duke of York Islands situated between New Britain and the island of New Ireland. Traders such as Emma Coe (Queen Emma), Thomas Farrell, and Richard Parkinson were some of the first to establish coconut plantations in the Gazelle Peninsula (Salisbury 1970, p. 25).

Much of the interaction between the Administration and the indigenous people reflected the three objectives laid down by the German Administration. These were (Valentine 1958, p. 118):

... the pacification and minimal external control of native society, including the elimination of customs most repugnant to European standards of the times; the absorption of many natives into the commercial economy, chiefly in order to provide a labor force but also with some idea of encouraging European-style industriousness generally; and the prohibition of the worst abuses formerly practised by Europeans against natives.

The establishment of the luluai and tultul system and the laws which forced the local people to enter the cash economy as workers were the most notable effects of the German period of administration. The methods by which land was acquired from the Tolai greatly influenced later events during the colonial period (Bradley 1982, p. 33). The use of the luluai system was 'one of the principal means of bringing a village under government supervision and control' (Reed 1948, p. 141).

Judge Hahl (later Governor Hahl) introduced the indigenous police force in 1896. The force was used in punitive expeditions (reprisals for attacks on traders and missionaries) and accompanied any government patrol into remote areas (Reed 1948, p. 142).

Pacification of the Tolai, weakening the influence of the traditional leaders, was achieved by the turn of the century. Pacification was probably the most significant change to traditional life since it effectively interfered with the established method of settling inter-group disputes (Valentine 1958, p. 142). Warfare, as a method of social control, was replaced by European arbitration of disputes. Pacification 'probably (caused) a general decline of the power of traditional leaders with the rise of appointed village officials' (Valentine 1958, p. 142).

The Germans outlawed the secret 'Iniat Society' after the discovery that the secret meeting grounds had been used to plan the murders of several Europeans. This caused its eventual decline (Australia. Governor-General 1922-23, p. 20; Brown 1910, p. 78).

The Europeans provided the profit-motivated Tolai with a new market for their trade goods. The Tolai were initially unyielding in response to the German attempts to encourage them to work the plantations necessitating the passing of several laws forcing them to work. As cash became more important amongst the indigenes and the enforcement of labour laws was diligently applied, recruiters gained more workers. Until the 1930s the Gazelle was the largest source of plantation labour (Reed 1948, p. 147). Tolai labourers were also sent to other centres (such as Queensland and the Morobe goldfields on the New Guinea mainland) and were significant 'agents of change' within the village upon their return. They questioned the authority of traditional leaders and 'were sometimes officially encouraged by being appointed as tultuls or medical tultuls' (Valentine 1958, p. 144).

The Australian military occupied the Gazelle from 1914 to 1921. During this period very little changed administratively. From 1921 to 1939 the Australians did little to change conditions in New Guinea since world copra demand was low and the Administration did not wish to encourage local activity which might compete economically with Australian enterprises (Bradley 1982, p. 34).

From the 1950s there was a flurry of activity to speed up development. The Tolai were quick to respond to these changes. The Village Councils Ordinance was passed in 1950 and local Councils were given taxation powers and generally became more involved in the administration and organisation of their local affairs (Salisbury 1970, p. 57).

The Tolai possessed a high degree of political awareness of issues 'both at home and abroad' (Patrol Report Rabaul No. 6/1964-65). This was attributed to the high level of education, the sophisticated network of communications and to the road system. The seed of women's political

activities was germinated in the formation of women's clubs, set up in the Gazelle (and across Papua and New Guinea) by the Administration, between 1949 and 1951. These groups were initially set up by female expatriate education officers in the villages. Group objectives included the development of 'educational and recreational activities and to work for the improvement of standards of living in the villages' (Australia. Department of External Affairs 1951-52, p. 80). However, within Tolai culture, women's political participation was not encouraged. Patrol Report (Rabaul No. 2/1966-67) stated: 'It was pointed out in all villages that women could nominate, (for the upcoming council election), but aside from causing some amusement, the people were not inclined to take this seriously'.

Nevertheless, Tolai women eventually became more political within parameters considered to be the concern of women. Bradley (1982, p. 277) notes that leadership was traditionally considered to be primarily the concern of men and 'power was derived from control of land and shell money, the possession of entrepreneurial, oratorical and magical expertise and prowess in warfare'. Due to the sexual division of labour women had little access to positions of leadership or to power. The traditional perception that women should be concerned solely with matters related to the home and family was also perpetuated in women's clubs whose activities concerned mainly domestic issues. The Tolai women's association 'Nilai ra Warden' (Voice of the Women) held a protest march in Rabaul to demonstrate against early Papua New Guinea Independence from Australia and were vocal critics of the liquor-licensing laws (Bradley 1982, p. 38).

Women exercised more choice in the selection of marriage partners despite their families wishes. A Patrol Officer reported one case, which involved a 'young girl, who had recently been married to a young man chosen for her. She refused to live with him and ran away . . . where the man of her choice was waiting for her' (Patrol Report Rabaul No. 3/1952-53).

One notable change which was discovered during census-taking was the fact that a number of single women and widows were staying in the town of Rabaul with or without work (Patrol Reports Rabaul No. 1/1952-53; No. 3/1955-56; No. 6/1964-65). This was at first disturbing to village officials and elders who complained to the Patrol Officers. However, within two years a Patrol Officer recorded that village elders had apparently accepted this situation and had in fact become 'nonchalant' about the issue (Patrol Report No. 3/1955-56).

No doubt the concern of the elders was the possible increase in promiscuity of the young women living away from the guidance and control of their families. Judging from the 1964-65 census there was an increase in the number of illegitimate births recorded. These women consequently faced the further social stigma of failing to find men who were willing to marry them.

In 1964-65 the percentage of women in the Rabaul work force was recorded as 11.1 per cent while in 1968-69 the figure recorded for female employment was only 6 per cent (Patrol Reports Rabaul No. 6/1964-65; No. 8/1968-69). Working women were mostly employed in education, health, domestic and clerical positions. In 1964 the disparity between the social advancement of women and men was wide. Patrol Officer, M.A. Pryke commented that it was most notable amongst the 30-45 age group (Patrol Report Rabaul No. 6/1964-65):

... ranging from the well educated Administration employee with a high standard 'European' material house, a well educated wife, and possibly business interest earning him a supplementary income, to the illiterate village native living in a sub-standard native material dwelling. This diversity too, is common within the family group. The father possibly pidgin speaking and semi-literate, the mother illiterate and not able to speak pidgin, and all the children at school, with possibly some at high school.

The Administration attempted to influence the Tolai system of matrilineal descent. Bradley (1982, p. 198) observed that: 'Patrol Officers reports from the Rabaul District from the 1920s onwards make reference to the officers' attempts to encourage the Tolai to emphasise the nuclear family rather than the wider ones of matrilineal kinship'. Participation in the cash economy appears to have assisted the Patrol Officers in their attempt to place more emphasis on the nuclear family. Patrol Report (Rabaul No. 3/1955-56) recorded:

... the clash between supporters of matrilineal and patrilineal forms of inheritance is becoming more important as the richer natives realise that according to local custom their children cannot inherit the possessions of their father. So also with widows who usually have to return to their birth place and rely upon relatives for support until such time as they can marry again. Efforts have been made to adopt the patrilineal system but the Tolai seem to be equally divided on the question. Some of the richer men are not taking any chances regarding the care of their wives should the man die. Natives ... are building a second house in their wives' village so that they can be independent [the wives] in the event of bereavement.

Mission Influence

The Methodist and Catholic missionaries aimed to eliminate several important institutions within Tolai society such as 'the cult of the dead, the men's societies, magic, brideprice, polygyny, warfare and cannibalism' (Valentine 1958, p. 129). The loss of some of these customs, particularly warfare, was later welcomed by the Tolai. However, the loss of others was resisted and some (sorcery and custom relating to adultery) secretly survived (Valentine 1958, p. 130). Polygyny was still in practice in the 1950s in the Rabaul District. Patrol Officer, E.S. Sharp (Patrol Report Rabaul No. 2/1953-54) recorded that there were 'approximately five polygamous marriages in the area' noting that this was 'outstanding in a sophisticated area such as this'.

The missionaries attempted to eliminate the Dukduk Society by using their knowledge of its inner workings. Reverend Danks threatened to breach the secrecy rules of the Society by disclosing the identity of one Dukduk to a group of uninitiated boys from whom the Dukduk was attempting to demand their wages (in Deane 1933, p. 282):

The young fellows instead of yielding as they would have done a little while before, came back to the house and told me their trouble. I went down to the beach and told the [Dukduk] to go away and let the boys alone. A dead silence ensued. I then went quite close to him and whispered that I knew him and would call out his name if he did not go away and let the boys alone. In frightened tones he whispered back: 'Don't do that, don't do that'. I persisted, however, and he hurriedly left. None of my young people were ever molested again in this way.

The missionaries were not completely successful in destroying the Dukduk Society as it still exists today, although in a less potent form. With mission assistance, the German Government was more successful in its bid to wipe out the 'Iniat' Society. Patrol Officer, M.A. Pryke noted that the 'Iniat' Society was still operating secretly in the mid-1960s amongst the older men (Patrol Report Rabaul No. 9/1965-66). The Tolai people whisper of its existence still, although there is little concrete evidence that this is so (Bradley 1982, p. 260).

After the second World War the incidence of divorce increased dramatically amongst the Tolai and in 'many cases, [marriage] last[ed] only a few months' (Patrol Report Rabaul No. 1/1952-53). This was attributed to the influence of both the Catholic and Methodist missions who had pressured the Tolai to 'fix' the amount of brideprice to be exchanged at lower levels. In the early years of contact Reverend Danks and his wife purchased unmarried Tolai girls and brought them to their boarding school. They, therefore, 'purchased from the friends of all the girls boarding with [them] the right to decide all questions relating to their marriage. [They] found that the recognition of their rights in ever so small

a degree was acceptable to the relatives. The price [they] paid for this was infinitesimal compared with the real purchase price of a woman' (in Deane 1933, p. 167). Thus, the missionaries condemned the practice of the exchange of brideprice viewing it as the 'selling of women'. In their bid to eradicate this custom they interfered with arranged marriages and protected the girls from angry relatives who would have killed the disobedient girl if missionaries such as Danks had not intervened. The missionaries were unsuccessful in completely eliminating brideprice but they did have some success in restricting the amounts to be paid. In 1952 the maximum amount of brideprice to be paid was six pounds. By 1964 the maximum amount to be paid for Catholic women was fifty fathoms (worth ten pounds) and for Methodist women, 100 fathoms (worth twenty pounds) (Patrol Reports Rabaul No. 1/1952-53; No. 6/1964-65).

By 1955 the high incidence of divorce had eased (Patrol Report Rabaul No. 3/1955-56). However, the incidence of adultery increased causing many disputes. Patrol Report (Rabaul No. 3/1955-56) states, '... adultery is common throughout the area patrolled and most cases are settled by the local committee. When these disputes are being settled feeling runs high and often blows are struck before the matter is finally settled'.

Missionaries also influenced some Tolai to ignore their customary rule that marriage or sexual relations were not permitted within the moiety as it was considered to be the same as incest (Parkinson 1907, pp. 66-7). However, these couples were so shunned by the rest of the community that they had to move onto mission property for their own protection (Bradley 1982, p. 163).

From the beginning of contact both the Catholics and the Methodists set up large numbers of schools, mainly in the villages. German Annual Reports (1910-11 in Valentine 1958, p. 131) show that the Methodists registered over 5,000 students that year and the Catholics taught over 4,000 students in 100 schools. The Methodists used the Tolai language in their schools and the Catholics used the pidgin language (Valentine 1958, p. 131). The extensive education system (as well as other factors such as early contact, and the rapid pace of political, social and economic development) eventually led the Tolai to view themselves as the 'elite' of Papua New Guinea (Bradley 1982, p. 38).

Village Courts

The Village Court system was established in East New Britain Province in December 1976. There are forty-three Village Courts and 427 Village Court Officials (*Annual Report Village Court Secretariat* 1988).

The elders and counsellors first attempt to settle disputes informally in the village forums (called Warkurai). The elders act as mediators while the

dispute is 'talked out'. These disputes are usually settled by the payment of tambu as compensation. If the parties are not satisfied with the settlement made in the village forum they will go to the Village Court.

In 1988 there were 118 applications for review of Village Court decisions (Melky Tokinala Provincial Village Court Officer, Rabaul). Of the 118 applications, fifty-seven were by females, forty-one of whom were Tolai women. Subsequently, thirty cases were sent as formal appeals to the Provincial Supervising Magistrate. Seven of the thirty cases were dismissed because the Magistrates found no grounds for an appeal, ten were sent back to the Village Court for a re-hearing and thirteen (43.3 per cent) cases were upheld.

The breakdown by offence of the thirty cases appealed by Tolai women is: ten cases of assault; ten cases of spreading false rumours and of using abusive language; eight cases of wilful damage to property and two cases of stealing. In the assault cases the reasons given for the appeals were usually related to an accusation that the other women involved provoked the assault by associating with their husbands or by committing adultery with them. Mr. Tokinala noted that generally the Village Court Magistrates do not consider the reasons why the appellant was motivated to assault the complainant.

In the spreading false rumours and abusive language cases the grounds of the appeals were that the Village Court had not investigated whether or not the women had actually gossiped or were merely stating what they believed were facts. The convicted women complained that they had been provoked and, in one instance, that the woman was only joking.

One of the wilful damage cases involved an intoxicated husband who returned home and became verbally abusive and physically violent toward his wife. After he fell asleep the woman took her revenge by tearing up his clothes, burning them and by causing much destruction to the household property. Afterwards she and the children went to stay with her own relatives. When the husband woke up to discover that his wife and children had left him and saw the damage to his property he took out a summons in the Village Court for wilful damage to property. This was an attempt to get his wife and children back. The Village Court supported the husband but the wife successfully appealed against the decision.

In the two stealing cases the women requested permission to take items belonging to their father. The elderly father's nephews were attempting to take over their uncle's property in accordance with the matrilineal system of descent. Before the Village Court they accused the women of stealing property. However, they were not entitled to their uncle's property until after his death. The Magistrate incorrectly applied custom by supporting the father's male relatives as it was the fathers' right to give his daughter permission to take possession of the items. Therefore, no offence had actually been committed.

Noah Tade, Senior Probation Officer for the Islands Region and a Tolai, noted that (1990, pers. comm., 10 January) Tolai women are strong-willed and aggressive and will fight to defend their reputation through whatever means are available. It is important to them to clear their name publicly if they feel that they have been wrongly accused. Sometimes they attempt to clear their name through fighting. Although many women do not appeal Village Court decisions because they are afraid, those that do appeal, do so because they feel that the Village Court Magistrate has favoured the other side in the dispute due to his relationship ties.

Bradley (1982, p. 234) noted that Tolai women who appear before the Village Court are placed at a disadvantage because of the cultural necessity to practise avoidance and respect behaviours when in the company of men. She stated that:

When men are around, women must be unobtrusive, keep their heads and eyes modestly lowered, and not speak unless spoken to even in greeting. They are expected to give precedence to men at all times. This puts women at a disadvantage, for example, at the Village Court, where many women feel unable to properly defend their own interests and simultaneously show proper respect and modesty toward male opponents, especially since women are in any case much less fluent and confident speakers than are men.

Bradley has done extensive work in the area of domestic violence in Papua New Guinea. She notes that one of the motivations for the use of violence in the Tolai marital relationship is control over wives and that this purpose receives 'a considerable degree of social approval' (in Toft 1985, p. 39). The most serious cases of domestic violence are taken to the Village Court, although the reason for the summons might be stated as something different (wife-assault frequently develops from the occurrence of other marital problems such as adultery). In her study of the Tolai village of Pila Pila, Bradley found (in Toft 1985, p. 41) that out of seventy-five marriages studied, wife-assault was involved in sixty-five (87 per cent) of them.

Bradley found in her earlier studies in Pila Pila Village that women were reluctant to take their husbands to Village Court for marital violence because they felt that Village Court Magistrates would treat their complaints unsympathetically due to their own attitudes towards disciplining wives (1982, p. 252). She noted the example of a Supervising Magistrate for Village Courts in East New Britain (also a Tolai), who informed her that (1982, p. 253):

... if a woman leaves her husband because he beats her, the Village Court should order the woman to pay between ten and twenty fathoms [of shell money] compensation to her husband. Since it is a man's right [and duty] to discipline [sic] his wife, she is in the wrong if she complains about it.

Probation Service

The Rabaul Probation Office was opened in October 1986. There are four Probation Officers serving the Province of East New Britain. In 1988 there were 129 persons placed under probation supervision by the Courts, 110 men and nineteen women. Two women and thirteen men were charged with breach in 1988.

Between October 1986 and January 1990, twenty-three Tolai women were placed on probation by the Courts. Of the twenty-three cases, twelve were of assault, two of damaging property, three of using insulting language, five of adultery and one of several charges including theft, forgery, false pretence and utterance. With the exception of the last case for theft, forgery and false pretence all cases involved relationship or marital problems although even that particular case was attributable to pressure from the husband and an expensive lifestyle. Eight of the women were ordered to pay compensation and one was ordered to pay restitution as well as to perform six months community work. Of the twenty-three Tolai women placed on probation only two were breached, one for failing to pay her compensation and the second for failing to pay her restitution. Only two of these women were placed under the supervision of a Voluntary Probation Officer.

Generally, educated women take their disputes to the District and Local Courts (Senat Pukai 1990, pers. comm., 10 January, Probation Officer, Rabaul). They bring adultery cases or apply to get custody of children or maintenance from their husbands.

Paul Vilamur, a Tolai who worked as a social worker with the Public Service between 1985 and 1989 and is now a Probation Officer, stated that (1989, pers. comm., 29 November) most disputes involving Tolai women are related to money and marital responsibilities. The typical urban dispute case involves accusations made by the wife that the husband is not providing the family with enough money but instead is drinking with his friends or that the husband has been unfaithful. He also noted that educational gaps between husband and wife are responsible for marital discord especially in the urban areas. In the villages, Mr. Vilamur noted that the marriages were more stable and that there was less fighting and quarrelling, although he acknowledged that most marriages in either urban or rural areas involved some form of domestic violence. He believed that he could be more effective in dealing with family problems as a Probation Officer than as a social worker. This he attributed to the implied threat of being taken back to Court during the period of probation to the availability of individual and family counselling by probation staff. He felt that probation was especially helpful to female probationers because of the counselling they could receive which aimed to strengthen the marriage and promote better communication between the couple.

Mr. Tade suggested that probation was helpful to female offenders not only because it provided family counselling but also because the counselling was given individually or with other concerned members of the family. By comparison, he noted that the Village Court usually did not provide women with counselling assistance. If they offered advice to the woman at all it took place in the public forum of the Village Court which women found very embarrassing and shaming. He observed that women wanted assistance with their problems but preferred the individual and family counselling services provided by the Probation Service because it was more private.

According to Deborah Clifton, Probation Service Adviser and member of the East New Britain Law and Order Committee, the Probation Service has tremendous potential for impact in the area of domestic violence. She noted that even the male Probation Officers (affected by typical male attitudes toward women) believe that a probation sentence is very appropriate for wife-abusers.

Post-Independence governments have introduced measures designed to raise the status of women such as sexual equality guaranteed by the Constitution and equal pay for equal work in the Public Service. Theoretically this has helped to raise the status of women; however, in reality many attitudinal and educational barriers remain. A significant example of the attitudinal barriers facing women who wish to make changes is the male reaction to the changing dressing habits and standards of women.

In a letter to the editor in the national newspaper the *Post Courier*, 23 October 1989, entitled, 'Take off those Clothes', a man, Yarax Nera, addressed this issue. He stated:

I'm really concerned about women putting on men's clothes. If you are this kind of woman please try to turn around and look at your back. Ask yourself one question: Were my ancestors like this? Or am I changing into a new being? . . . Because of your dressing, you are changing the way some of our gentle men think about you: They may want to attack you and that's why we hear so much about rape—because of women like this. Some men are good but some aren't: you must understand this. You must dress in the right way . . . You men should know that your wife's body is yours and yours is hers. What would your friends think if they saw your wife, sister or daughter dressed in that way? They'd think, 'Eh see his wife/daughter/sister: she's like this and that'. [sic] Finally, I think the government should look into this to try to reduce the number of rapes.

This letter was responded to in the same newspaper on 20 November 1989 by a woman who called herself 'Modern Girl'. She stated:

. . . There are 'unisex' clothes made for men and women. What you've seen women wearing are women's clothes and not men's jeans/trousers/shorts/shirts/tops: Of course these would look funny on men. Did you ever ask

yourself if your ancestors were like this before you wrote your letter? I wonder what you're wearing now when you're roaming the streets of Boroko: I'm sure you're not wearing your ancestral costume. PNG is a developing country; we're adapting the Western style of dressing; if Westerners can dress that way, of course we can, too. You shouldn't call rapists gentlemen, because they are no gentlemen—they're the lowest kind of animals. To reduce the number of rapes in this developing country, it should start with you and your friends. Stop having bad minds about women.

It is relatively easy for the officer to follow-up wife-bashing cases to find out if the man is still acting violently toward the woman. Yet, Ms. Clifton found that officers were still reluctant to check even after the wives had come to them to ask for help. She attributed this to the relative newness of the domestic violence campaign (by the Women and Law Committee) in changing traditional attitudes toward marital violence. She suggested that in Rabaul at least, people are as yet unprepared to confront other Papua New Guineans about domestic violence.