

“THE GOAL OF THE GOOD HOUSE”:
SEASONAL WORK AND SEEKING A
GOOD LIFE IN LAMEN AND LAMEN
BAY, EPI, VANUATU

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ABSTRACT

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“The Goal of the Good House: Seasonal Work and Seeking a Good Life in Lamén and Lamén Bay, Epi, Vanuatu.”

This thesis is an ethnographic study of a rural community in central Vanuatu, many of whom have been engaged as seasonal workers in New Zealand and Australia’s horticultural industries since 2008. Based on sixteen months’ ethnographic fieldwork divided between Lamén Island and Lamén Bay, Epi, I examine why people choose to leave their home to engage in often-difficult work and seasonal absences, in order to build a ‘good house’ and ‘good life’ at home. I suggest that ‘the good house’ is an icon of the Li-Lamenu vision for improved moral and material ‘standards of living’.

I reveal how seasonal work engagements emerge in the context of mutually dependent and moralised but often-ambivalent employer-employee relations. Time away is often experienced as the subordination of one’s life and work to the demands of a labour regime, but is submitted to as opening opportunities, or ‘roads’ for value conversions of time into money, and money into the future of the household, and community development. However, the quest for a good life in the shape of the good house raises tensions and contradictions that householders must negotiate in order to ‘live together well’ with kin and community.

The rise of the ‘good house’ is associated with a concomitant decline in ‘respect’ for kin and Chiefs, and the proliferation of ‘broken homes’, and land disputes. Throughout this thesis, I will suggest that the good house concretises the increasing direction of money, time and resources into household-oriented goals. This process of household nucleation is also evident in tensions over changes in ritual performance and expenditure and land tenure patterns. I conclude that these insights contribute to the anthropology of kinship and ritual, as well as wider understandings of temporary migration and development theory and policy.

DECLARATION

No portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

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INTRODUCTION:

The Good House, Living Together Well and Striving for a Better Future

A materialist examination of values must situate itself, not by idealist propositions, but in the face of culture's material abode: the people's way of life, and, above all, their productive and familial relationships

E.P. Thompson (1995:237)



Figure 1 A 'Good House' in Lamen Bay

The day after I arrived in Lamén Bay, Epi, in November 2011, my host mother, Mary, took me on a tour along the potholed dirt road that looped around the settlement. We wouldn't walk more than a minute or two, without stopping at yet another new house. Several of the houses were under construction, and many of the owners were busy mixing concrete, laying blocks, and plastering.

A proud and highly educated local woman, Mary supplemented her work as the Principal of the local High School with work as an administrative agent for the largest recruiter of seasonal workers from Epi in New Zealand's 'Recognised Seasonal Employer' (RSE) temporary migration programme. I first met Mary and her husband when they were staying in Port Vila, arranging visas, medical forms and other paperwork for over one hundred recruits, most of whom they knew personally. Mary told me later that she always urged the seasonal workers she recruited to build a 'good house', to prioritise their families, and to install solar power. After the house was complete, she would encourage them to start a business so they would no longer need to suffer the cold, or leave their families behind by returning to New Zealand.

This thesis is an ethnographic exploration of the rural Vanuatu communities of Lamén Island and Lamén Bay, in which a large number of people work overseas on short-term contracts through New Zealand and

Australia's Pacific seasonal worker programmes. Li-Lamenu¹ people's main stated goal for participation in the seasonal worker programmes was building a house of semi-permanent construction materials, purchased with their savings, of a style they refer to as a good house (gudfala haos)². The 'Good House' of the thesis title, is the appropriate vantage point for my exploration, both in material and moral terms.

At the intersection of spatiotemporal frameworks of kinship and reproduction, and imaginaries of a different future, the 'good house' represents Li-Lamenu people's determination to secure a home, and a good future for their household in the face of anxieties and uncertainties over the future. In practice, this intensifies tensions over householder's obligations to others, and the implications for these decisions and actions in terms of 'living together well'. In this introduction I situate the field-site, and its contemporary and historic context in terms of labour migration. I then outline the Domestic Moral Economy (DME) project to which this research contributes, and I summarise my research methods and framework. Finally, I will provide a detailed thesis outline.

¹ Just as the official demonym for indigenous people of Vanuatu is Ni-Vanuatu, so I refer to people identifying with Lamen Island as *Li-Lamenu*, which in their vernacular means '[People] of Lamen'.

² Words underlined are terms from Bislama, a variant of Melanesian pidgin and Vanuatu's lingua franca.

Unlike the islands in the original pilot, Ambrym, and Tanna (McKenzie, Garcia Martinez, and Winters 2008; Bailey 2009; 2014a; Hammond and Connell 2009; Cameron 2011), there has been little research there, both in terms of studies of the impacts of seasonal work engagements, and anthropological studies.

In Vanuatu's capital, Port Vila, I was lucky to meet a couple from Lamén Bay who had just sent out a group of thirty Epi seasonal workers to New Zealand, as mentioned above. The couple, whom I came to address as my host 'mother' (*awia*)³, Mary, and 'father', Joseph (*ata*), were involved in recruiting and administration of seasonal workers for the area's largest employer. Their position gave me an insight into these processes, and the relationships they have with the seasonal workers and employers respectively, as well as the pressures and expectations they are under from both.

I also spent two long periods of time with my 'mother's brother' (*apopa*), Adam, a seasonal migrant, and his young family on Lamén Island. *Apopa* (classificatory mother's brother, and father's sister's husband), and *Awia Simemi* (classificatory father's sister, and mother's brother's wife) have enormous cultural importance for Li-Lamenu people in guiding people through new life stages, and this was true for my fieldwork. *Apopa* Adam had a great enthusiasm for my work, and was of enormous help, not only

³ See Appendix 3. Kinship Terminology and Idioms

in giving me information on kinship relations, language, and ritual, but also in the interpretation of these.

Locating the Field

Lamen Bay is located in the northwest coast of Epi island, central Vanuatu, so-named after the small offshore Lamen Island, whose inhabitants use the Bay for cultivating gardens and there is frequent movement back and forth between abodes on the small island, and on the mainland. Since around the 1960s, increasing numbers of Li-Lamenu people have been moving across to Epi mainland more permanently. Unlike Epi mainland to the south and east, Lamen Island and Lamen Bay are densely populated⁴ and there are growing worries about future land shortages.

⁴ Lamen Island has an area of around 0.97 square km, perimeter 4.35 km, and sits around 3 km west (WNW) of Lamen Bay. People in Lamen Bay inhabit a 4.5 km stretch of shoreline facing the island, and their gardens stretch to 2-3 km inland, extending close to the hospital at Vaemali (although boundaries are disputed). I estimate the total land area of the mainland claimed by Li-Lamenu people is around 8.5 km square. The 2009 census gave a population of 440 for Lamen island giving a population density of 449/km². For Epi island the 2009 population was 5207, giving an average population density of just 11.7/ km² across its 444km² land area.



Figure 3 Map of North/Central Vanuatu, Lamen Bay/Epi marked
(Source: CartoGIS, College of Asia and the Pacific, The Australian National University)

There are three main villages on Lamen Island: Ngaloparua, Ngalovasoro, and Ngalokumal. The Vamol clan maintain a smaller settlement, or 'station', called Silowe, now seen as part of Ngaloparua village. Each clan is associated with at least one yard, or *rove*: a residential area in which households of that clan would nestle together. Together with their relatives in Lamen Bay, Lamen islanders share a language that I term Lamenu

Lewo⁵, cultural and ritual practices –which they term kastom, and dense and overlapping kinship ties.



Figure 4 Lamen Island and Lamen Bay (adapted from Google Earth)

0.2. Situating the Research: Contemporary and Historic Context

Historical Background

I was drawn to Epi as a field site was due to its long history of labour migration, which I describe at length in Appendix Two. Epi and Lamen have a tumultuous history, due to the extent of engagement in 19th century labour trade (Price and Baker 1976) and other phases of temporary

⁵ Lewo words are italicised. See Appendix One.

migration, dramatic depopulation (Young 1992:213), comprehensive missionisation by fervent Presbyterian missionaries, and extensive land alienation in the colonial period (Van Trease 1987:86–88; Bonnemaïson 1994:46–50, 91; Porter and Nixon 2010). The depopulation and disruption of that era has ramifications today, particularly in land disputes. Lamén and Epi have been at the centre of intermittent periods of labour migration, first to emerging urban centres, then to Noumea, during the colonial period that had profound effects on their practices. Since Vanuatu's Independence in 1980, however, there have been few opportunities for international labour migration, though a number of Li-Lamenu men had crewed on Taiwanese fishing boats. People have been moving to the urban centres of Port Vila and Luganville, Santo, in increasing numbers⁶.

Epi has often been written-off as a place marked by cultural rupture and loss (Speiser 1913; Capell 1938:64; Young 1995:71; Hoffmann 2007:63). However, for a researcher interested in exploring socio-economic change, this seemed like a fascinating location in which to explore issues of migration and mobility, and wider processes of socioeconomic change. My research offers the first comprehensive ethnography of the Li-Lamenu community, and Epi more widely, although Michael Young (1995; 1997) has published articles from research based on his time in Nikaura village in 1985-1986, and archival research (Young 1992). He also wrote a fascinating narrative based on a renowned Li-Lamenu kleva (healer, ritual specialist), magician and suspected sorcerer, Avio Koli (Young 1999).

⁶ For an account of historical phases of Li-Lamenu labour migration, see Appendix Two.

Together with an MA thesis on canoe building at Lamenu Island completed by Joel Van Allen (2012) during my fieldwork, these are the only ethnographic studies I have located of Li-Lamenu people.

Political Economic Context: Pacific Seasonal Work Programmes

New Zealand's Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) programme was launched in 2008, as a response to both seasonal labour shortages in the horticulture industry, and the desire of Pacific Island states to gain access to the labour market (Bailey 2009:29–30). It introduced measures allowing the entry of foreign nationals to work in New Zealand's horticulture and viticulture sector for a maximum of seven months each year. Vanuatu was one of the five 'kick-start states' initially chosen to participate in the RSE programme, alongside Kiribati, Samoa, Tonga and Tuvalu, and within the first two years had provided the most participants (Bailey 2009).

The RSE programme has been evaluated as a 'best practice' example of a temporary foreign worker programme aligned with development goals (Gibson and McKenzie 2010; 2013b). The programme has been espoused for bringing 'triple-win' benefits for employers, sending states and migrants themselves (Gibson and McKenzie 2013b). Indeed, the RSE was a model for a Pacific Seasonal Work programme first piloted by Australia in 2009, within which Vanuatu is the second main sending country (after Tonga). Officially launched in 2012, Australia's Seasonal Worker Program (SWP) is not deemed to have taken off as successfully as New Zealand's programme (Gibson and McKenzie 2013a; Howes 2015; Doyle and Howes 2013).

0.3. Approach: The Perspective of the House

Domestic Moral Economy: Methods and Approach

My methodology and approach is informed by the shared agenda of the research project of which I was part: “The Domestic Moral Economy: An ethnographic study of value in the Asia Pacific region”. I argue that the ‘good house’ and the household as a locus of migration and economic decisions is a privileged site to begin an exploration of the ‘domestic moral economy’ (DME) of Li-Lamenu people. As defined for the purposes of this project, the ‘domestic moral economy’ is not a ‘thing’ or a ‘unit’ but an ‘insider’s’ perspective, into how people negotiate different and often-contradictory obligations and desires as they are situated in relations with others.

The ‘**domestic**’ dimension of the DME is intended to foreground the kinship relations and values which inform people’s actions in everyday life, and on ritual occasions. I have taken the perspective of the House (Gregory 1997:8) as the starting point for my study, in order to bring to bear intimate understandings of kinship relations, obligations and sentiments as the primary motivation for human action. From the perspective of the house, whether it is occupied by a Melanesian big-man or a London City banker, processes of valuation are bound up with moral obligations and sentiments and as such are not measurable or necessarily commensurable (Narotzky and Besnier 2014:S9).

The Lamenu Lewo term for the household, *merasava*, which literally means ‘door’, emphasises their conception of the household not as a bounded

‘unit’ but a conduit for social relations. Likewise the word for clan, *pamerasava*, derives from the same root. Both these terms draw attention to how Li-Lamenu people foreground the passage of women between houses and clans, and a view of social reproduction as continually constituted through on-going alliances with other households and clans. Nevertheless, there are tensions between household, clan and community in terms of assertions of autonomy and identity that give rise to moral predicaments for people embedded in these relationships.

I understand the ‘**moral**’, in terms of how people’s reasoning or practical judgements about obligations and sentiments with respect to others, informs their decisions and actions (Sykes 2009; Lambek 2010; Das 2014). This raises dilemmas for people seeking to pursue desirable ends and worthy goals, whilst wishing to retain good relations, and be recognised by others as a good person. As Mauss (2007:156) wrote, “Morality is the art of living together, and it can be recognised by the presence of the notion of the good”, a definition that Gregory (2011:180; 2013:137) sums up as “living together well.” In the context of enduring relationships of interdependence, actions are reasoned and evaluated in terms of the past and the future of the relationships, which are always open to tension and contradiction (Sayer 2011:83). In drawing together ideas and themes such as morality, value, hope and the gift, I suggest my study can make a substantive contribution towards Robbins’ (2013) recent call for an “anthropology of the good” as it is negotiated in a concrete situation.

By delimiting research to the 'domestic' and 'moral', I seek to qualify the '**economic**' and re-embed the term in its origins in the 'oikos', which Booth (1994:207) defines as a "... household oriented towards the securing of the good life... [and its] core elements of the well-ordered community, the good life, and of the foreignness of economic activity to these ends...." Indeed, in elaborating on his 'moral economy' approach, Thompson (1993:271), says he may as well have called it, "an economy in its original meaning (oeconomy) as the due organisation of a household, in which each part is related to the whole and each member acknowledges her/his several duties and obligations."

Li-Lamenu householders regularly combine commoditised and non-commoditised processes of valuation in their market and non-market activities, subsistence production and also elaborate ritual and exchange activities (cf. Hooper 2005:3). As Narotzky and Besnier (2014:S6; cf. L'Estoile 2014:S71) have recommended, I seek to understand how Li-Lamenu people 'make a living' in the broadest sense. I explore how people sustain a livelihood, but also how they maintain social relations through monetary and non-monetary transactions, paid and other forms of work and care that take place in the domestic realm, and the negotiations that surround claims and access to money, land and resources. I have drawn on the rich regional anthropological literature (e.g. Malinowski 2002; Gregory 1982; Strathern 1988) that has sought to understand the values associated with everyday and ritual practices, and kin-oriented obligations and sentiments in Melanesia.

In my conclusion, I address the implications of my research for the three areas of concern outlined in the agenda for the DME project. First of these is for anthropological theories of kinship and exchange; secondly, for interdisciplinary approaches to the theory of moral economy; and finally, the implications of our claims about value for development policy.

Going Door-to-Door: Research Methods and Data Obtained

My sixteen months' fieldwork were roughly divided evenly across these two homes in Lamén Island and Lamén Bay, but like the residents, I was constantly moving back and forth for rituals, community events and other occasions. I conducted household surveys of all the households in Lamén Bay, and the three villages of Lamén Island (see schedule, Appendix 4.2). This proved an excellent way to introduce my work and meet members of each household, and learn how they are related to one another, and to the other households. I asked them questions about their economic activities, and migration and work histories. For those households containing a seasonal worker, I gained information as to where, how often and how their earnings were allocated. During my survey, I also gained responses to open-ended questions about their views on seasonal migration, processes of change and hopes for the future. Many of these statements appear in the introductions of chapters and sections, to illustrate the themes as pressing concerns for Li-Lamenu people.

My interviews and conversations with Ni-Vanuatu were conducted almost exclusively in Bislama. Quick to learn, and universally understood by Li-Lamenu people as well as those who married in or were temporarily resident and were not fluent in Lewo, Bislama was also the main language

used in church and public meetings. Whilst I gained an understanding of Lamenu Lewo over the course of my fieldwork, I regret not gaining a greater fluency in the local vernacular, and using it as a language of conversation with my interlocutors.

In addition to making notes of Li-Lamenu explanations of kinship and marriage terms and practices, I obtained genealogies of all the Li-Lamenu clans and families, via discussions with senior members of each clan. I then added to, and corrected this information with supplementary data from household surveys. In order to gain a sense of how kin relations are mediated on an everyday basis, I took account of forms of monetary and non-monetary transactions between kin, varying from fundraisings, to compensations, land transactions and gifts, as well as statements recording explanations and moral evaluations of people's behaviour.

I regard ritual as a crucial expression of kinship relations and values, and took detailed notes pertaining to normative explanations of how life-cycle rituals should be performed. I also made descriptions of the various rituals that took place during my fieldwork, which I followed up with interviews. Values are often most clearly expressed during times of conflict and crisis, and so I made notes on court cases related to land disputes, and 'civil cases' dealt with by local Chiefs relating to extramarital affairs and categorical 'incest', to minor theft and family disputes.

Although my research was based largely in and around people's home life, I also decided it was important to observe how people experience life and

work in the period they spend overseas. In March and April 2012, I visited two groups of seasonal workers from Epi at two major RSE employers: Appleseed, an apple producer near Nelson, in the South Island of New Zealand, where I spent a week and KiwiGold near Kerikeri, in the Bay of Islands in the far North Island, where I spent around two weeks (Figure 5). At Appleseed I lodged with women day shift workers, and at KiwiGold I was in a separate dormitory at the same backpackers' lodge as the Epi workers. I was able to spend a day or two at each of the employers working with the Epi women in their packhouses, and also observed different groups of men picking in the orchards. The end of my fieldwork in March 2013 coincided with the engagement of the first group of seasonal workers from Lamien and Lamien Bay in Australia, as part of Australia's newly launched Pacific Seasonal Worker programme, giving me the opportunity to visit the trial group of ten working on a berry farm in Yarra Valley, Victoria.

In 2014, I returned to New Zealand for follow-up visits to four of the employers of Epi islanders (two near Nelson, and two in Bay of Islands) where I interviewed those most directly involved in recruiting at Epi, and met other colleagues and friends of the seasonal workers. There are two other employers of Epi seasonal workers in the vineyards of the Blenheim area I have not yet had the opportunity to visit, and two other smaller employers of Epi workers in Bay of Islands whom I did not manage to interview. Those that I did not visit tend to recruit through Li-Lamenu workers who have been employed as local agents. Although my time in the work destinations was short, I conducted recorded interviews with

over thirty seasonal workers after they had returned home, gaining insights into their experiences and motivations.



Figure 5 Map of New Zealand, showing three main regions of Epi employment (Motueka and Blenheim in Nelson/Marlborough, and Kerikeri, Northland). Whilst the Motueka employers mainly grow apples, in Northland the work is mostly kiwi (and some citrus), whilst at Blenheim seasonal workers are mostly based at vineyards.

Source: http://www.massey.ac.nz/~grapson/Images/NZ_map.png

Ethical Considerations

In this section, I briefly address the ethical considerations of this research, which abide by the ethical clearance awarded to the DME research project

introduced above. First of these was ensuring informed consent amongst participants. Whilst it was agreed that obtaining signatures on informed consent forms is not always appropriate and can be counter-productive in inducing stress or confusion, I ensured that every participant knew of my role as a student researcher, and the purpose of my research. I obtained prior permission from the village Chiefs at Lamén Bay and Ngaloparua villages, where I resided. In Lamén Bay, where I spent my initial months I was formally introduced at a public Council Meeting during the week of my arrival. During my household surveys of all household in Lamén island and Lamén Bay in the early months of 2012, I gave each household representative an information sheet regarding my research (Appendix 4.1.), assured them they were under no obligation to participate and they could refuse to answer any of my questions. When interviewing participants I always informed my interviewee of the purpose of our conversation, and asked for additional permission to record.

The second main ethical consideration pertains to participants' rights to confidentiality. I have retained anonymity of my informants by using alias names, and extra care has been taken to disguise identities where the topics of discussion may be sensitive. Although there is little in the thesis I believe could adversely affect anyone involved, I have taken extra precaution, for instance, where Li-Lamenu informants made complaints about employers, because I do not wish to affect their chances of re-employment. I have also protected the anonymity of the overseas employers, and their domestic employees, and used false names for the companies involved.

Finally, in line with Vanuatu government's 'Cultural Research Policy'⁷ as of 2011-2013, I obtained formal approval for my research from the Director of Vanuatu's Cultural Centre (VKS), and have adhered to their guidelines for dissemination of research. Concerning my obligation to provide an outcome of community benefit, I collected customary stories from older Li-Lamenu residents in Bislama and vernacular, which were transcribed with the help of a Li-Lamenu informant. These stories were then given over to an Epi High School project to produce illustrated storybooks, with permission from the school Principal, and facilitation by a Peacecorps volunteer IT teacher, Lynn Overmeyer. Copies of the final version of this thesis, together with any published articles and the storybooks will be given to VKS for their archives. Portions of my fieldwork data, excluding sensitive information, such as survey and genealogy data will also be provided for VKS records.

0.3. Architecture of the Thesis

Whilst I understand the 'good house' as the materialisation of household-oriented aspirations, it is also a site for tensions and contradictions between kin and community members as to how to 'live together well'. In the first three chapters of this thesis, I focus on the relationships within the household, and the tensions and paradoxes that arise when the household is stretched through the seasonal absences of some of its members. In the

⁷http://www.wipo.int/export/sites/www/tk/en/databases/creative_heritage/docs/vanuatu_policy.pdf

central three chapters, I turn to the relationships beyond the 'door' of the household, and within the wider community. Whilst Li-Lamenu people welcome the material development, they often associate increased wage work and monetary incomes with a process of individuation or household nucleation that may contradict the respectful kin and community relations seen as crucial to 'living together well'. In the final third of this thesis, I look further into life cycle rituals and transactions between kin, and how these are changing in the context of monetisation, increasing land scarcity, and the increasing divorce of productive relations from the relations of social reproduction based on clan replacement. In my conclusion, I return to considering how the householder caught up in this tangled web of relations, seeks to 'make a living' and secure a good life.

In Chapter One, I begin my journey at the home of the seasonal workers to interrogate the moral as well as material 'standards of living' that motivate the construction of a 'good house'. Whilst the house is presented in terms of care for the family, the preoccupation with the 'good house', and the channelling of resources and money into its fabric, may suggest an increasing prioritisation of the household over wider networks of kin.

In Chapter Two, I travel with the seasonal workers to New Zealand. I examine the relations they maintain with employers in the 'hidden abode' of the workplace. I explore the conditions of daily life, the relationships seasonal workers seek to form and maintain with fellow seasonal workers, colleagues, employers, and 'friends' in this 'home from home'. Far from being treated simply as commoditised labour, I seek to reveal the often

personalised and moralised character of employer–employee relations, in which both parties are morally and materially invested and entangled.

In Chapter Three, I step inside the house, to look more closely at the on-going reconfiguration of household relations and divisions of labour in terms of gendered and generational roles and expectations. I describe how seasonal workers and their spouses alike often avoid spending money on everyday consumption, and undergo hardships and separation, in order to achieve better ‘standards of living’ and a secure future for the household, and generations to come.

In Chapter Four, I show how Li-Lamenu people’s pride in being labelled a ‘model community’ in terms of engagement in the seasonal work programme, sits in tension with a reflexive critique of the decline in ability to mobilise people for community work. Returned seasonal workers and younger people are thought to be demanding immediate money payment for goods and services. This leads to the displacement of values of mutual help and delayed reciprocity in favour of a broader emphasis on the value of circulation and reciprocal independence.

In Chapter Five, I discuss the continued presence of the Nakamal (*kumali*), which today acts as a court and town hall, and a metonym for the collectivity of Chiefs, and represents a structure of moral authority and icon of respect. I suggest the Nakamal represents a conscious effort to secure on-going social relations between kin and clans, in the face of anxieties over processes of household differentiation.

In Chapter Six, I discuss Li-Lamenu fears about a decline in respect.

Actions deemed selfish, wasteful or unproductive, associated with 'eating money', 'wasting time' and 'walking around' aimlessly are often described in negative moral terms, often used to critique the decisions of migrants and their spouses as well as youth, when they are said to be incompatible with ideas of 'living together well'.

In Chapter Seven, I examine how the separation of seasonal workers from their spouses and kin is also associated with a decline in respect and rise in extramarital relations. Migration is thus seen to threaten 'broken homes', undermine enduring exchange relationships and alliances, as well as "roads" for future marriage.

Whilst migration is allowing people to fund rituals and meet obligations to affines that otherwise are continuously deferred, in Chapter Eight I explain how the shifting social relations of production, and the flows of money from overseas migration are also associated with rising costs. The perceived escalation in the scale and cost of rituals is raising concerns about its impact on the possibilities of reciprocating exchanges in the future. The same critiques of 'eating money' and 'wasting time' that once propelled people to give in rituals, are now extending into ritual discourse, as people begin to wonder if the money could not be better spent on a different vision of the future.

The final chapter, Chapter Nine, addresses the questions of land, 'the supreme good' (Gregory 1997) and how dynamics of the value of land play out 'on the ground' in the land tenure and land disputes that unite, divide and reaffirm kinship relationships. I show how the Li-Lamenu determination to have a 'good house' may be exacerbating land scarcity and disputes, and escalating the monetisation and formalisation of land. However, customary land tenure is still highly valued by most Li-Lamenu people. I will conclude by discussing the kinds of development that Li-Lamenu people hope to realise, particularly through seasonal work engagements, as well as the often unintended or undesirable outcomes of these processes, and the implications for migration and development policy as well as the regional and theoretical literature.

CHAPTER ONE

The 'Good House': Changing Standards of Living

Soon after I took up residence on Lamén Island in early 2012, I was invited to a lavish house blessing held by a married New Zealand returnee, a father of two young children, celebrating the completion of a house he had built over three years. Around fifty guests arrived at dusk and sat expectantly in front of the new house, which had been decorated with flowers. Music blared from a stacked hi-fi system, which was placed outside on a table alongside a glowing flat screen, DVD player and laptop, all hooked up to a solar panel. A DVD was played as the guests tucked in to the plentiful buffet, with several dishes, prepared that day with help from clan members.

The Pastor of the Assemblies of God (AOG) church was the special guest, and he delivered a short talk about how the RSE scheme had given people the chance to have 'good houses', with solar panels and rain tanks. Thanks to God, he said, now people could come and take shelter in the house if there was a cyclone. He prayed for God to shine his light in the house before he cut the ribbon and switched on the electric lights. The Pastor asked the bashful young man if he had anything to say, perhaps about the cost of the house. The owner replied it had cost upward of 500,000 vatu (over £3000) and there was a round of applause. Then guests were invited to step inside the new home to admire its features. This applause at the

cost took me by surprise. Clearly, the builders of such houses are held in high esteem, but why would such a large sum of money⁸ spent on a private home be so socially and morally valued beyond the immediate household that occupies it?

In the first section, I show how the ‘good house’ and residence patterns both embody, and are evaluated in terms of changing moral and material ‘standards of living’. In the second section, I draw on Munn’s work to argue that the ‘good house’ can be seen as an icon, embodying a range of meanings, or ‘qualisigns’ that signify value conversions. In particular, the durability of the good house is appreciated as materialising a ‘good life’, envisioned as household prosperity and futurity. In the final section, I discuss how transformations in housing indicate a shift in priorities towards household-oriented concerns, over claims from wider kin.

1.1 Standards of Living

There have been big changes – ‘good houses’, solar lights – we no longer have the same living standards as before.

Seasonal worker

Building a ‘good house’ was the most common stated ‘goal’ for Li-Lamenu seasonal workers when they fill out the required question on Vanuatu Labour Department forms that Mary collected. The language of ‘goals’ and ‘vision’ has been incorporated into their personal expressions for their

⁸ The minimum hourly rate in 2012 was 170 vatu per hour (Makin 2012)

hopes from participating in the programme, as well as the association of the 'good house' with improvements in 'standards of living', another English term often incorporated into Li-Lamenu expressions of their desires.

Changes in houses and domestic spatial patterns articulate aspects of historical and social transformations and changing identities (Rodman 1985a:269–272). In this section I show how the household's form and function, and its relationship with wider kin and community, has changed over time as a result of outside influences (cf. Rensel 1997a:17), including the colonial promotion of nuclear family models, missionaries' ideas about health and hygiene, and political economic transformation. I examine how Li-Lamenu house styles, and household and residence patterns, have taken shape by examining the changes in moral and material 'standards of living' over 150 years of political and economic change on the island.

Precolonial Life

Prior to European trade and missionaries, people lived in small hamlets; clusters of between one and three clans. Each of these groupings would have shared a ritual ground and men's meeting house (Nakamal, *kumali*). Like Vao in the small islands off Northeast Malekula, hamlets were screened by reed fences. The dancing grounds (nasara) had carvings and slit drums likened to those of Ambrym and Malekula; islands with which Lamenu had strong trade networks, including the transactions of ritual knowledge and practices associated with the grade-taking system, a ritual

complex in which men could achieve status and power⁹ (Coiffier 1988:121–123).



Figure 6 House on Epi, 1880-1881. Sketch by Captain Kenneth Howard-Bury. Source: Trinity College Library: <http://www.theeuropeanlibrary.org/exhibition-travel-history/detail.html?id=173733>

The pre-colonial Li-Lamenu house (Figure 6) featured a low saddle roof that stretched to the ground on either side, and was constructed of a wooden frame of four supports attached by a ridgepole (*marakinsa*). Onto this frame was attached a series of wooden struts (*kui*) on which were affixed panels of woven coconut leaves (*lumāpola*), thatched with wild cane leaves (*lumā i*) and wild grasses (*lumā kurui*). There would be a small entrance door at one end, and a cooking fire inside. Speiser (1996:95, 107) likened the houses to those at Port Sandwich (Lamap) on Malekula. Today

⁹ I discuss the *kumali*, and grade-taking at length in 5.1.

there are just a couple of these houses left on the island and they are known as *kanayunā*, which was translated as ‘kneeling house’, perhaps due to its short stature and the angle of its sides, or because you had to kneel inside them.

Missionary Influence and Moral Transformation

In Vanuatu, changing standards of housing, spatial and residential configurations, the eradication of spatial and temporal prohibitions, or *tabu*, and other material markers such as clothing, made visible and tangible the conversion of people to their new moral temporal order (Mitchell 2013:292). Subdual of warfare, reduction in fear of sorcery and spirit attacks, and missionaries’ encouragement of people to relax or let go of avoidance prescriptions and prohibitions also led to changing residence habits (cf. Chowning 1997:90). Encouraged by missionaries and colonial officers, pacification and a desire for trade clans began to concentrate into adjacent yards (*rove*) nearer the sandy shoreline, divided by low stone walls.

Missionaries and colonial officers arriving in Vanuatu from mid nineteenth century saw pre-colonial houses as dirty, dark and smoky, and enforced new ‘civilising’ moral and material standards that promoted hygiene, cleanliness, ventilation and light (Jolly 1991:39; Rodman 1985a:272; Thomas 1990; LiPuma 2001:46–47; Schram 2007:182; Durand 2015:6). One Presbyterian mission wife, whose house on Tanna island was known locally as ‘the Great House’, saw the construction of her partitioned family home as setting the bar for a civilised Christian life (cf. Rensel 1997b:36). She wrote of the congregation that the local people must, “try to lift them

up to our Christian level in all things. One's Home has so much influence on one's work and life and character" (Jolly 1991:40). Men were encouraged to leave the men's houses and live with their wives as a conjugal unit, where they ate with their families, thus encouraging more household nucleation (Rodman 1985a:272).



Figure 7 Remaining room of Smaill's house at Lamén (1940s). Source: Mrs. Horwell via M. Valia

The first missionaries on Lamén in early 1900s, Smaill and Riddle, had lived in a fairly basic wooden house (Figure 7), though Smaill had a larger house built of stone and timber at a high stop above Nikaura village, his first base (Smaill 1891). When Horwell arrived at Lamén in 1945 (some thirty years later), he stayed in the one remaining room of the original mission house, then a bamboo home (Figure 9). The bamboo house is similar to the ones that many people across rural Vanuatu still inhabit.



Figure 8 Children assist in construction of a cane house, one of few remaining *kanayumā* sits behind

Gradually, during the late colonial period *kanayumā* were increasingly replaced with upright houses with pitched sago (*natangura*) thatch panelled roofs and a more familiar boxy European-style shape (Figure 8). The walls would be made of woven bamboo, or more typically for Lamel, wild cane (*waelken*). Some Lamel people told me this transformation largely took place in 1950s to 1960s, triggered by an infestation of small millipedes, known in Bislama as '*kruked*'. This may be true, but this transition also took place in islands across Vanuatu and it would seem in no small part due to colonial and church influence. This A-framed house style, along with separate 'kitchen houses' (*kitchin haos*), usually of thatch to allow the smoke to escape, and private drop toilets (known euphemistically as 'small houses' (*smol haos*, or *nunu yumā*), were also

enforced by post-war health and development initiatives¹⁰ (Taylor 2008:144–145).



Figure 9 Horwell's temporary bamboo house. Source: Mackin Valia via Mrs. Horwell

Horwell soon began work on a large European-style lime house, for which he brought an architect and a carpenter over from New Zealand. It was constructed using local communal labour, by arrangement with the local Chief. The Chief would not allow their local workforce to cut timber, so the missionary had to import New Zealand pine (France 1953:108–109). When the new mission house (Figure 10) was finished, it drew considerable attention, but also expectations of material assistance:

¹⁰ They may also have been influenced by housing styles of Vietnamese labourers (Curtis 2002:87) then present in large numbers on the plantations of Epi and Malekula.

A house is built for him that is necessarily large and airy for health reasons. The natives eye this mansion with envy... to them he appears to want for nothing... the natives try to sponge on him for all manner of things... He certainly sacrifices many things which we regard as essential to a comfortable life (France 1953:110).



Figure 10 Horwell's house as it stood in 2012

In the decades that followed, some local men were trained as carpenters, and employed by the District Officer to construct buildings elsewhere in the District. Others had experience of construction in Noumea, New Caledonia, a popular destination for temporary migration in 1960s and 70s. When they returned, they often spent their money on cement sheeting and other materials, and constructed European style houses (cf. Petrou 2015:62). Some of these houses were built from manufactured materials or lime, and using styles and techniques that stand testament today to the influence of the mission house, and increasing familiarity with urban and

colonial architecture. More than three decades after Independence and the departure of foreign missionaries on Lamén, there still remain strong associations of the 'good house' with both a moral Christian family life, and ideas of hygiene and material development.

What makes a good house?

Over twenty-five years ago, Rodman's (1985a:275) informants on the island of Ambae, in North Vanuatu, were distinguishing houses in terms of their 'goodness', concluding: "For most people in Longana, a "good" house is a simple structure, perhaps 15 feet square, with a corrugated iron roof, cement floor, and walls of woven bamboo." Li-Lamenu people today also aim for a 'good' house, but most would no longer be satisfied with the house Rodman described. For a New Zealand returnee, what is usually meant by a 'good' house has, perhaps, three to six bedrooms, and a separate 'sitting room', is constructed entirely of durable materials, a corrugated metal (kapa) roof, walls of concrete or a combination of concrete and kapa, and has a cement floor. Ideally, it will have a veranda out front, one or two solar panels, and a large rain tank.

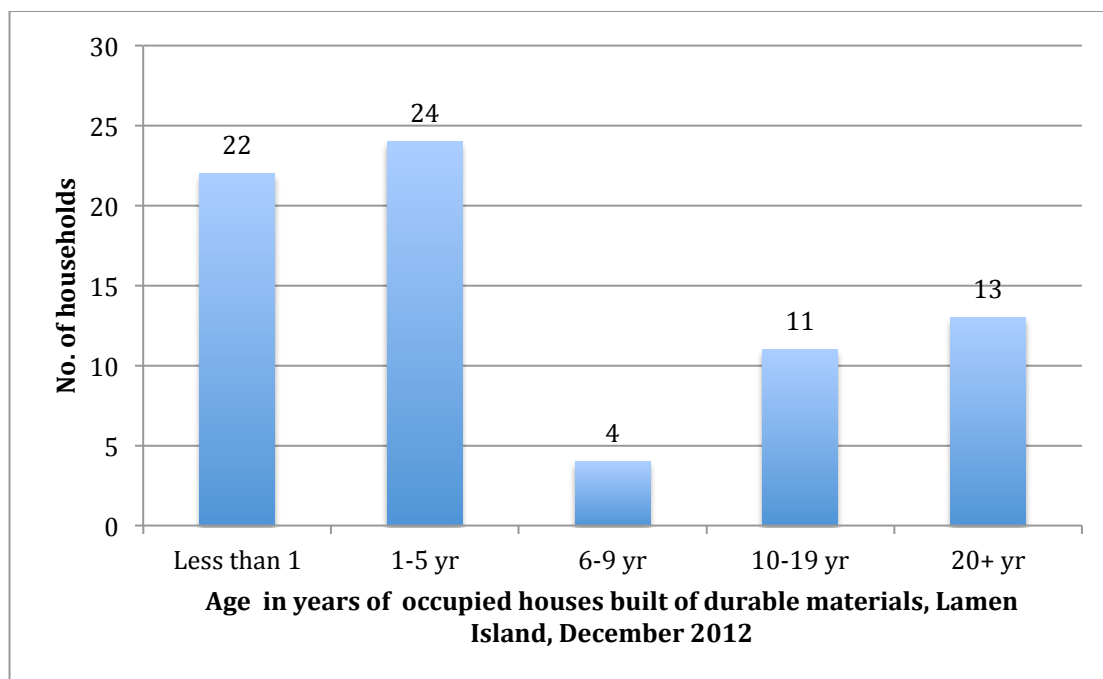


Figure 11 Houses of durable materials (74 of 119 households surveyed) by age, Lamén Island, December 2012

My household survey revealed a rapid transition to more durable imported housing materials on Lamén Island. As Figure 11 shows, there were 46 houses built since the beginning of 2008, when RSE was launched, compared with just four in the five years prior. Given that houses often take at least three successive seasons to build, you can see how many were coming to completion during my fieldwork, and many more were under construction. This transformation was confirmed when compared with the National Census just three years before, as in the graph below (Figure 12)¹¹. Over the same period, use of traditional plant materials for walls and roofs was halved.

¹¹ I have selected Lamén Island as I can directly compare statistics with the 2009 census; reported on an island-by-island basis. My survey, conducted over a period of around 2 months, recorded a de

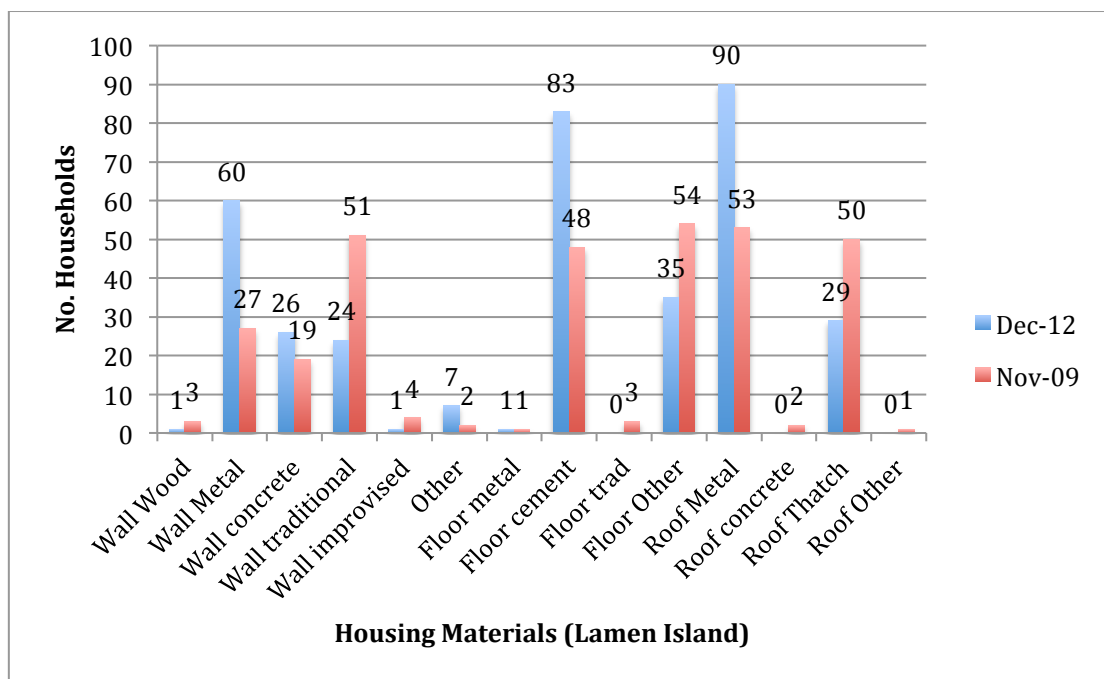


Figure 12 Changes in housing materials for Lamén Island, November 2009- December 2012 (2009: Census data (VNSO 2009), 2012: household survey by author)¹²

An even more dramatic transformation can be seen in terms of lighting sources; kerosene lamp use dropped from 71 households to just eight. In the same period solar lighting increased fourfold (Figure 13). Whilst the census report data does not separate data for ‘solar systems’ (i.e. solar panel linked to battery) with solar lights (i.e. rechargeable solar lamps), my Lamén Island survey revealed 76 of 119 households had workable solar panel/battery combinations. Relatively expensive to buy, solar panels were more likely to be acquired by seasonal worker or paid employee

facto population of 502 people, across 119 households as compared with 440 people across 106 households reported in 2009 census.

¹² Walls that were a combination of cement slab or blocks with metal sheeting nailed above are recorded here as ‘wall metal’. ‘Floor other’ is taken to mean an earth floor covered in coral from the beach, the most popular flooring for those without cement floors. Otherwise ‘traditional’ walls and roofs represent plant fibres (principally sago thatch roofs, and bamboo or wild cane walls).

households. Meanwhile older people and households without waged employment were switching to solar lamps, as over the long-term they were more cost-effective than buying kerosene.

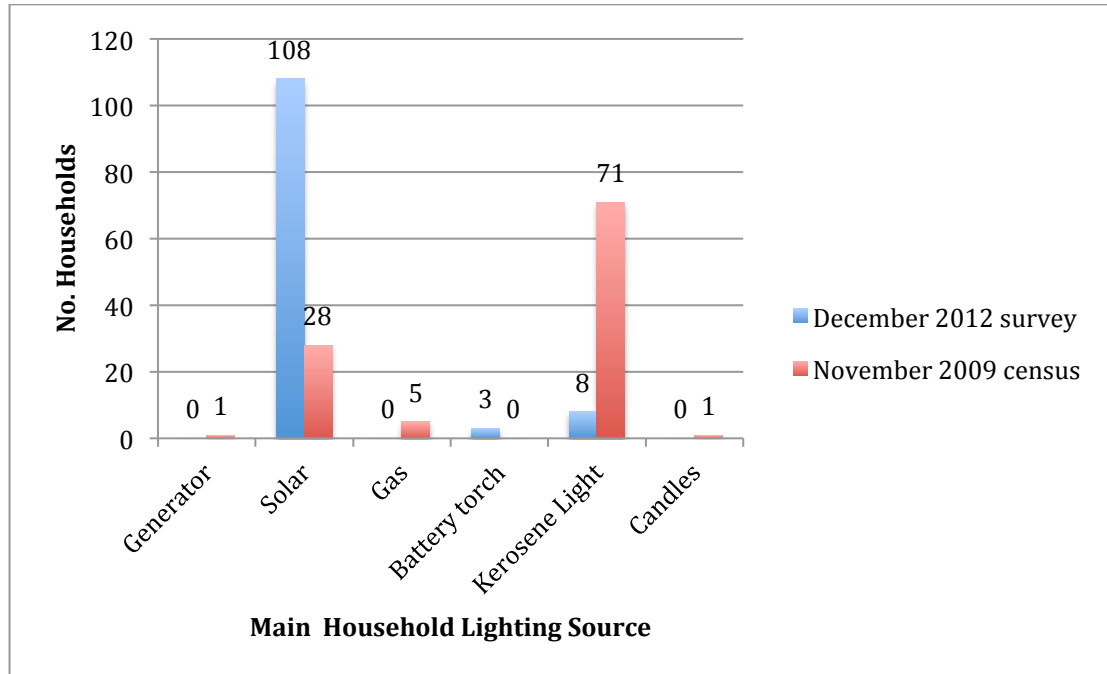


Figure 13 Household main source of lighting, 2009 census compared with 2012 household survey

Transformations in housing styles and residence patterns can be seen to reflect new kinds of social, spatial and temporal orders and values. These are often associated with moral transformations in people's practices and subjectivities in line with teleologies of 'progress' (LiPuma 2001:47), but I argue they also extend existing moral values and terms into new contexts. In the next section, I discuss Li-Lamenu reasoning about the 'goodness' of the good house, and their multidimensional motivations.

1.2. A Meaningful Icon: Making the Future Concrete

A Material and a Moral Good

The building of a new house is a widespread goal for migrants across the world. Indeed, I suggest the house has a general transformative potential

in reflecting and restructuring changing ideas about 'standards of living' and emerging social distinctions. Cross cultural examples of 'good houses' include distinctions between 'real' and adobe houses in Mexico (Binford 2013:89), permanent 'pakka' versus 'kachcha' (crude) mud houses in South Asia (Dahya 1973:255; Gardner 1993), or 'white' versus 'wooden' houses in Madagascar (Thomas 1998). Many ethnographers have characterised the widespread desire for modern styles of housing and imported goods as a form of 'conspicuous consumption' (Colloredo-Mansfeld 1994), or a form of social distinction and differentiation, a means to achieve prestige and stand out from a group.

In post-Independence Vanuatu, ethnographers have also interpreted the construction of a durable house as a form of 'conspicuous consumption' and the competitive flouting of a symbol of modernity. For Rodman (1985a:276), concrete houses afforded richer Longanans on the island of Ambae, "... a new forum for the assertion of inequality... influential individuals have the option to channel their wealth into housing that is a kind of conspicuous consumption." Philibert (1990a:459; cf. 1984:90) noted that a "good house", a haos i kamplit (Bislama: 'completed house') in Erakor, a peri-urban village, was a modern house partitioned into rooms for different purposes, and fully furnished and decorated with store-bought items.

Wilk (2001:275; cf. 1994:73) critiques Philibert's view of consumption in developing countries as submission to a global hegemony, and the alienation that proceeds when pre-capitalist relations are gradually

replaced by commoditized ones (cf. Miller 2001). Wilk suggests that Philibert's explanation is simplistic and defied by empirical research that "finds all people's motivations for buying goods to be complex, deeply symbolic, social, personal and contextual." Although, as I discuss later in this chapter, there is an on-going shift towards commoditised transactions between kin, I agree with Wilk that people's evaluations of the 'good house' are multidimensional, and that it is important to pay attention to people's moral distinctions and reasoning about their, and others', actions and decision-making.

Whilst I heard the term 'good house' rather than 'completed house' amongst Li-Lamenu people, there was nonetheless a value on the successful completion of a 'good house', rather than a competitive expansion or elaboration of house styles that is telling of status distinctions common elsewhere (e.g. Hartman 2007; Lopez 2010; Codesal 2014). Li-Lamenu 'good houses' were similar and relatively plain in style, and most no more than four bedrooms and a sitting room. Indeed, when one seasonal worker, named Adam decided to build a five bedroom house, he said some tried to discourage him by saying it would be difficult to complete it. But he managed to build it within two years using a combination of local timber for the frame, and metal sheeting for the upper half of the walls, as many seasonal workers choose because this strategy is speedy and cost-effective.

Many of these material changes are seen to bring about convenient and pragmatic benefits. As mentioned by the Pastor at the house blessing, solar

panels and rain tanks are valued material outcomes of engagements in overseas work. Rainwater run-off from a metal roof can be collected in a tank, important on Lamén Island where access to potable drinking water is most limited. People would often comment that solar-powered electric lighting allows them to carry out activities at night that they could not have done when they relied on hurricane lamps.

However the transition is not advantageous in every respect of material comfort and practicality. Metal roofed houses, especially those with metal walls too, would be much hotter (often reaching 30-40 degrees Celsius inside) than the cool and airy houses built of natural materials. As such, people would tend to avoid spending any length of time inside until they retired to bed, preferring to congregate outside in the shade, under a veranda or perhaps in a cool thatched kitchen building. Adam, the owner of the five bedroomed 'good house' mentioned above, frequently slept on the floor of the living room by the open front door, or outside on the veranda. And a woman told me in my survey that when it rained, metal roofed houses made the ground very muddy, adding, "When there is a cyclone, the 'good houses' are good, but in the sun, local houses are still good".

One of the main reasons people give for building a 'good house' is the durability of imported materials. A 'traditional' or 'local' thatch house might last only two years; whereas a 'permanent' or 'semi-permanent' house may last twenty years before the kapa (corrugated metal roofing sheets) have to be replaced. Additionally, 'permanent' houses are less

likely to need maintenance during the period the seasonal worker is away (cf. Heyman 1994:133). When I went to interview one married seasonal worker, who was facing criticisms for choosing to return to New Zealand when his wife was seriously ill, he legitimated his decision by stressing his desire to complete the house he had under construction, as a means of demonstrating his care and nurture for his wife and children, explaining:

Most of the workers that go over there: their goals are to build a house; to light up a house. When you stay in a kastom house, it is a short time before you must build another... When you a build a house, a 'good one', you no longer worry about your family; your family has a good place to live when you are away.

As this statement articulates, seasonal workers often emphasised protection for their family when justifying their decisions. The most common reason given for a decision to build a good house, as in the house blessing described at the beginning of this chapter, is to provide protection from cyclones, both for the household and for less-well off relatives. Following the Category Five Cyclone Pam in March 2015, which swept the global news media, such statements demand to be taken seriously. A news item reported from Lamén Island, based on an interview with a local nurse illustrates well the importance of a 'good house':

Even though this big cyclone was here through those who went to New Zealand and came back and built these big, strong buildings. They saved our lives. If it were not for those who went to New Zealand and built these big buildings I can say there many people would have died because we would have been running from house to house and we would have been

killed by the flying debris. But these big buildings that we have saved the lives of everyone on Lamén Island (Radio New Zealand 2015).

Whilst the durability and practical aspects of the good house are almost taken for granted as 'good', moral evaluations of their occupants were underpinned by evaluations of their behaviour in terms of whether it was conducive to maintaining good social relations. Chief Waiwo, the Chief of Lamén Bay, gives typical reasons for the positive valuation, but also describes how the 'good house' and the 'goods' it contains can become 'bads' when they are used in a way that is counter to 'living together well':

Something that we are a glad is happening, because it prevents smoke from polluting the air, is solar which is very good. They build new houses. Houses are better because if you stay with your family in a 'good' house, like in the cyclone season, we no longer worry, not like with a grass house. [When a cyclone comes], everyone runs for a house like this. Before there were few, but now there are many, which is good. Their families are safe. They carry solar, and do good things. But sometimes they use their solar in a bad way; they carry noisy things. When that happens, people no longer have respect. There is mourning, but there's music in another house. It means there is no respect for others. Then you find out they are trying to 'compete'; who can carry the loudest. Some things are good, but some things are like that....

This quote suggests that household goods are only considered 'good' when they appear to bring benefits, without having negative effects on others. In this sense the kinds of effects termed "(negative consumption) externalities" by economists, and even some cultural economists (Callon 1998:246; cf. Strathern 2002) can be seen as integral to value creation and realisation from the point of view of the domestic moral economy, where

the moral grounds of value depend on respect, which is crucial to living together well.

Durable Goods and Lasting Benefits

Whilst for people in Melanesia, and globally, building a 'good house' is a priority for those with the economic means to do so, development economists have often dismissed house-building projects as "unproductive consumption" (e.g. Lipton 1980; Hughes and Sodhi 2006; cf. Safri and Graham 2010:115; Heyman 1994:132). Arguably the glossing of expenditure on anything other than capital investments as 'consumption' obscures the distinctions that people everywhere make between moral and immoral transactions in terms of whether they are conducive to good social relations. Indeed, Graeber (2011b) points out that the very term 'consumption' is a problematic one, where the quintessential illustration seems to be a solo diner, thinking only of one's own tastes and desires. Graeber (2001:260–261) had previously argued that most enjoyable human experiences everywhere come not from the effacement of society as elements of the external world are devoured or appropriated for one's own interests, but quite the opposite, the "certain loss of self" that is achieved through a pleasure shared. Graeber (2011b:502) later argued that, "... it might be more enlightening to start looking at what we have been calling the 'consumption' sphere rather as the sphere of the production of human beings, not just as labor power but as persons, internalized nexes of meaningful social relations."

It is important to understand Li-Lamenu people's own distinctions regarding which activities or objects are productive of value, and what can

be characterised as 'non-productive consumption'. How do these distinctions relate to Li-Lamenu conceptions of social reproduction and securing a good future? Rather than immediate self-gratification, the expenditure that Li-Lamenu people admired were those that represented investments in resources or relationships that would have lasting benefits for the seasonal worker and their family, or could be enjoyed by the community more widely (cf. Polier 2000:204). When I asked Chief Waiwo his views of seasonal workers' spending decisions, he said, "We realise that people go back and forwards to make a 'good living' but some never do that. They just keep going and coming back." I responded by asking Chief Waiwo about when some people fail to make a 'good living', where does their money go? He replied, "Food. It goes into the belly, and down the toilet. And some make ceremonies."¹³

Chief Waiwo's statement reflected others' opinions, which suggest that the good house is valued as it is something to show, something lasting, from one's work and travels. Thus, a house represents a way of using money (and time) to extend its spatiotemporal effects and reach. In Melanesia, the ways cash can be consumed, or used up, quickly on everyday expenditure is often seen as avoidable, and thus wasteful, and is often referred to as "eating money" (Polier 2000:204; Robbins 2004:235; cf. Foster 1995:177), or

¹³ This focus on the lasting nature of the house and durable goods appears to indicate a shift in temporal reasoning and notions of social reproduction, from an emphasis on the reproduction of clans, and their interrelationships, toward an increasing focus on household and intergenerational transfers, as I explain in Chapter Eight.

“wasting time” (e.g. Bailey 2014a:144). The idiom “eating money” (kakae mani) is deployed as a moral critique of others who are seen to spend their wages unwisely, particularly on food and drink, especially alcohol or cigarettes. Not only would they have nothing to show for their money at the end of the day, but it was also seen as greedy and selfish, or that such an individual is too lazy to go to their food garden and work.

The association of ‘eating’ with selfishness evokes the negative value put on personal consumption of food by oneself, vis-a-vis giving food to visitors, or exchanging shells, that Munn (1992:13, 49–52) described for Gawans. Munn suggested that Gawans saw eating as wasteful or non-productive in the sense it has no longstanding effect or influence beyond the immediate body. By contrast, the durability of Kula valuables lent itself to extending value by circulating beyond the face-to-face interactions of the donors who name and give them, and thus bringing ‘fame’ to the owners and their families, and the Gawan community.

In Munn’s terms (1992:16–17), derived from Peirce, a shell’s ‘durability’ is a ‘qualisign’: a sign with certain qualities that convey aspects of a wider totality of which they are part. Munn (1992:9) suggested that, for the Gawans, value is accorded according to the capacity for an action or thing for “spatiotemporal transformation” of self-other relations, within a general totality she terms “intersubjective spacetime”. Munn (1992:10; cf. Foster 1995:174) noted that the quality of durability of Kula shells, relative to the perishability of foodstuffs, affects the mode and extends the capacity

for shells to effect spatiotemporal transformation through their being used by Gawans for sharing and exchange.

The qualisigns of durability and heaviness of the good house also extend to the narrative of protection, which can bring benefits within and beyond the immediate household. By contrast, 'eating money' is a negative value transformation, in that it does not extend spatiotemporal relations. Unlike houses, money is not seen as 'heavy' or 'durable' in itself (cf. Foster 1995:175), but has a tendency to 'flow' and to 'fly'¹⁴, as well as be eaten. In contrast, the positive evaluation on the durability of the 'good house' means it is apt to symbolise and materialise the future of the household, in contrast with selfish personal consumption of perishable foodstuffs. As Munn (1992:53) argued for Gawans' Kula exchanges, perhaps the 'good house' brings "... into the present... a focus on the future... and on the acquisition of value products that themselves 'contain a future' by reminding recipients that eating in itself has, as it were, no future."

The House as an Icon

In embodying qualisigns of a range of different moral, aesthetic and material values, the Li-Lamenu 'good house' is the preeminent way for people to concretise and realise their visions for a good life and a good future. Just as Munn and Foster (1995:178) have argued that ritual

¹⁴ In fact, paper money is particularly susceptible to being stolen through a kind of black magic known as 'kilim poket' ("hitting the pocket") in which a victim's money is caused to fly and land in the thief's pocket, and I heard of cases where people would weigh down notes with stones or coins.

exchange objects in Melanesia embody iconic qualities such as durability and hard work, so I suggest that the 'good house' is so valued because it is an icon of a range of valued Li-Lamenu qualisigns that legitimate its construction. In their attribution to the 'good house', these meanings are recreated and extended to new contexts.

Durability is an attractive quality in a broader sense, in that a good house may endure for longer than the lifetime of the individual, and is seen to have lasting benefits for the household and wider kin, but also in lending itself to visions of the future. The 'good house' is a means or medium by which Li-Lamenu people can create value through meaningful actions – such as overseas seasonal horticultural work – by extending the influence of their actions over time and space. Like people across Melanesia (e.g. Golub 2006:283; Bainton 2010:2), Li-Lamenu people emphasise the 'permanence' of imported housing materials, and the potential for a value transformation as temporal extension of the house, perhaps beyond the lifetime of its occupants (Bashkow 2006:71).

Overseas labour is positively valued as associated with hard work, 'sweat' (cf. Gamburd 2004:172 on Sri Lankan migrants) - a popular Melanesian and biblical idiom in Vanuatu, rather than laziness. The quality of 'hard work', noted by Foster (1995:178) as associated with the value of pigs in exchange, becomes embodied in the 'good house', which stands testament to the actions of the seasonal worker and their household. Meanwhile those deemed lazy or prone to 'eating money' were often the subject of negative evaluation.

Furthermore, Li-Lamenu people can enhance their social reputation and relations by offering hospitality to visitors, which is also common in people's justifications for house construction. When I asked the father quoted in the previous section if it was 'good' that people are building bigger houses, he replied:

Yes, it is good, because of the way we live here... We who live here: we have 'extended family'. Whereas for white people normally extended family does not reach that far, here extended family¹⁵ is very important... For example, when you move from one village to another you must have a family to stay with.

Echoing this sentiment, Nancy, who works in New Zealand annually with her husband, was planning the first flush toilet and running shower paid for with their savings. She termed this as a form of hospitality, explaining "Friends and visitors keep coming, and I see, no, I must have a good toilet and bathroom, so when they come and stay they can use them."

Hospitality extends one's prestige, and the name of the place, and thus can be seen as extending or expanding "intersubjective spacetime", through creating and maintaining relational "roads" (rod) for reciprocal obligations, transactions, and mutual influence, as well as a 'good name'; reputation, or 'fame' of the community or island, as Munn (1992:9, 51)

¹⁵ He used the English term 'extended family', although in general kinship ways of relating can be extended indefinitely employing a universal system of kinship classification (cf. Peterson and Taylor 2003:108).

noted for Massim. Across Melanesia, the term ‘road’ carries connotations of the formation, extension and maintenance of mutual connections, or relational routes, along which people, goods and knowledge can travel, and grounds for reciprocal exchange and mutual recognition between people (e.g. Strathern 1972:65; Biersack 2010:380; Bainton 2010:16). The Bislama term ‘rod’ (lit. ‘road’ or ‘path’), and its Epi Lewo vernacular equivalent *merapa* a course for purposeful action or a means to an end (Early 1994:246, 293), similar to the English word “way”. The term rod can be used for a range of different positively-valued relationships, ranging from customarily preferred and new marriages, to all kinds of political and economic strategies and projects (Maclean 2009:364), as in idioms for seasonal migration opportunities discussed in Chapter Two. All express a direction, or trajectory, frequently linked to hopes for a better future (Kraemer 2013:29; Lind 2014:82).

Particular historic circumstances and connections have given rise to migration opportunities, and thus for the building of ‘good houses’, which, in turn, lend themselves to particular spatiotemporal conceptions and associated ‘qualisigns’ such as ‘light’ and ‘dark’. The ‘lighting up’ of the good house seems to have taken on a particularly spiritual significance, as marked by the Pastor’s prayer when he asked God to shine his light in the house at the moment he turned on the electric lights, recalling the transition between a common Melanesian Christian temporal idiom of the time of ‘darkness’ of the pre-Christian past, and the ‘light’ ushered in by the missionaries (e.g. Tonkinson 1982:51; Jolly 1991; Schram 2007:182; Rio

2011b:61), as well as the association with material housing transformation and moral 'standards of living'.

In fact the opportunity to work overseas, and to changes one's living standards is often said by Li-Lamenu people to be a 'blessing' by which they see it as part of God's plan¹⁶; a source of hope for the future in the face of deep uncertainty. Many, especially Presbyterians, support such statements by citing how the opportunity to participate in the seasonal work programme is a legacy of missionary Reverend Horwell. It is seen as highly significant by Li-Lamenu people that the initial opportunity to participate in RSE came about through the Horwell connection¹⁷.

Li-Lamenu people are involved in processes of rapid socioeconomic transformations, which are often fraught with contradictions and conflicts over the conditions of production and reproduction of people and things, and visions and projects for the future (Soja 1985:98). Whilst Munn describe the mediation of values by qualisigns in a manner that is suggestive of a kind of social equilibrium, elsewhere she (1990:13) suggests that Gawans make sense of events and signs in relation to different

¹⁶ It also has echoes of the 'prosperity gospel' which is becoming increasingly prevalent, especially amongst the more Pentecostal churches globally (Meyer 2010:116–118), and in Melanesia (Bainton and Cox 2009:5) although in the case of the Li-Lamenu 'good house' I did not hear explicit reference to this kind of doctrine, and it tended to be termed as a 'blessing' for the community, rather than individuals.

¹⁷ One of Horwell's daughters was married to the manager of a large horticultural company, which became the first to recruit in the area, as I explain in Chapter Two

positively or negatively valued 'pasts' and 'futures'. Likewise, I suggest that the way in which people reason about a range of possible good and bad pasts and futures makes the vision of the 'good life' and the 'good future' open to contestation.

Moral and material 'standards of living' are in a constant process of change. For Keane (2003; 2014), housing, like other material objects of value, inhere a bundle of different qualities and capacities, and thus can contain a multitude of potential meanings, and future possibilities, whilst the social realisation of these meanings or potentials are inherently historical. Like Munn, Keane suggests particular qualities or 'qualisigns' may be foregrounded, in accordance with a wider system of values, but are always open to other interpretations and possibilities.

The house both stands for the vision of the future, and brings it into being (cf. Nielsen 2013; Rollason 2008:25). As some anthropologists have noted, material goods lend themselves to creating and realising changing values, and conceptions of a 'good life' (Friedman 1994:121). As Wilk (1994:74) argued, "Material goods contest possible futures, by creating images, and tingeing those images with inevitability. Material objects in the present make a particular future seem concrete". However, visions of the 'good life' and a 'good future' are often contradictory and contested.

1.3 From Gifts to Goods

In seeking a better future through overseas work, Li-Lamenu people are confronted with dilemmas and conflicts over what constitutes a 'good life', for their households and community, and how to achieve this. Despite

their apparent fixity and inevitability, good houses and durable goods can be subject to conflicting evaluations according to the social context. As Wilk (2001:269–270) argued elsewhere, “consumption is in essence a moral matter, since it always and inevitably raises issues of fairness, self vs. group interests, and immediate vs. delayed gratification. “Many of these conflicts entail struggles over what is fair, and what people owe one another.

Good houses can be seen as a way for the house-owners to contain their resources whilst embodying dimensions of social and moral values legitimating the construction. As I argue throughout this thesis, the good house concretises a vision of the good life, but one that appears to be increasingly household-oriented. Good houses gain social approval without entailing the extent of everyday sharing of money and resources to extended kin that might have been expected in the past. In this section, I examine the contested social uses of the good house, and whether the ‘good house’ can be seen as a form of legitimation of emerging inequalities.

Giving-while-Keeping

In symbolising an idea of ‘permanence’ or durability (cf. Golub 2006:283; Bashkow 2006:71; cf. Bainton 2010:2), and intra-familial transfers, the ‘good house’ may also be understood as a ‘good’ in Gregory’s (1997:14, 79) sense of an inalienable possession, held within a family and transferred over generations. Gregory (1997:79) defines a ‘good’ (in contradistinction to a neoclassical economic theory of ‘goods’), as an “inalienable keepsake”, or a “priceless non-commodity whose value as a good is to be explained with reference to historically specific relations of consanguinity” and the

perspective of the House. Gregory draws on Weiner's (1992:7) arguments around "inalienable possessions", which Weiner suggests are a means for people to gain some hold over an uncertain future:

Inalienable possessions do not just control the dimensions of giving, but their historicities retain for the future, memories, either fabricated or not, of the past.... The motivation for keeping-while-giving is grounded in such heroic dynamics—the need to secure permanence in a serial world that is always subject to loss and decay.

Like Munn, Weiner (1992:131) was also interested in how Kula valuables mediate relations between equality and hierarchy. In contrast to a Maussian emphasis on prestige accrued through giving things away, or valuables circulating in space, Weiner (1992:103) drew attention to how the effort to keep certain things- such as land, keepsakes or ritual knowledge out of circulation entails the "paradox of keeping-while-giving".

Consumption goods like other 'inalienable possessions' create personal and social identities (Douglas and Isherwood 1996:112; Gregory 1997:81), and this subject-object transformation requires a form of action or work (Weiner 1992:39; Foster 2008:17). But whilst Kula valuables circulate, 'good houses' are designed to sit in place, even if they also symbolise a memory of the travels of the people that funded and built them. The acquisition of a good house appears as a shift towards greater household nucleation and household retention of money and resources. These resources might otherwise be shared or exchanged with extended kin, and thus the act of keeping and containing money and resources for the temporal extension of the household could potentially be contested against the use of money and resources in exchange to create and maintain more extended kin relations.

If Kula is about the paradox of “keeping-while-giving” (Weiner 1992:x; cf. Foster 2008:18), perhaps welcoming houseguests may be a sort-of ‘giving-while-keeping’: a way to engage in sharing or mutual exchange without alienating or losing one’s own use of the object. The same might go for inviting friends and neighbours to watch a DVD, or allowing them to charge a mobile phone from a solar panel¹⁸. Although hospitality entails sharing food, it also potentially limits the ‘using up’ of resources in sharing and exchange of perishable foodstuffs and helps to keep control over what must be shared or circulated. Appeals to hospitality may be a means to legitimate a shift away from, or limitations on, the type of ‘sharing’ or redistribution of food, money and resources with extended kin that Sahlins (1972:193) called ‘generalised reciprocity’.

For Weiner, inalienable possessions, whether material objects or forms of knowledge are inseparable from self and group identities, and thus apt for marking difference and hierarchy. She (1992:5–7) suggested that despite the apparent conservatism of keeping, it is an act imbued with inherent tensions and ambiguities, and thus contains the “seeds of change”. In the remainder of this chapter, I will explore what the implications of the

¹⁸ Such ideas are certainly not limited to the Pacific; Green (2000:82) describes similar tendencies in rural Tanzania, where; “House building also offers a way of being seen to invest in kinship, without having to redistribute everything for kin to consume. Relatives have latent rights to hospitality and residence. They can share in the investment without diminishing it. A person who opens their house to kin avoids the accusations of meanness that denying other kinds of assistance would entail...”

acquisition of the 'good house' are for social relations and transactions between kin.

From Reciprocal Dependence to Reciprocal Independence

Whilst the house cannot simply be seen as an item of conspicuous consumption, nevertheless it can be understood as a concrete manifestation of changing social relations which can be mapped in changing residence patterns and housing styles. This transformation appears to reflect a shift away from generalised or everyday reciprocity, towards more household autonomy or individualism. In other words, relations of 'reciprocal independence' and a new kind of ethics of opportunity, is emerging as distinct from customary expectations of 'reciprocal dependence' or 'interdependence' based on redistributive patterns of reciprocity and sharing of things and services, that has been seen as characteristic of customary Melanesian social orders (Gregory 1981; 1982:100–101; cf. Martin 2013:4–5).

Indeed, this shift from deferred return in kind within a dispersed kin network, to more immediate cash transactions can be seen in the construction of the fabric of the house itself. The construction of a thatched house is an event involving wide networks of kin, and tied up with acts of reciprocity of food and labour. When building a wild cane house, the household gather together a wide circle of kin and neighbours; whose collective efforts mean it could be completed in just one or two days. The women pre-prepare the materials, and then get to work cooking food to feed all those that contributed, who –in turn– could expect reciprocal assistance in future (cf. Rensel 1997b:34–35).



Figure 14 Extended family and neighbours come together to build a new cane house, whilst women prepare their food; Ngalovasoro.

However, permanent houses demanded a certain level of technical expertise, and often a local carpenter, usually a kinsman, is employed for a considerable fee. The demand for a 'good house' has provided impetus for commoditization and division of labour, which undermined the principle of reciprocity of work (cf. Flinn 1997:140). Today people often complain that if you ask someone to come and help with a domestic task, they will expect payment, as I discuss further in Chapter Four.

In contrast with reciprocal thatched house building, during which workers would be fed, the feasting that comes with a 'house blessing', such as the one described in the chapter introduction is more unilateral. These 'blessings' also celebrate the morality of the seasonal worker in saving his

money wisely, and working hard to achieve his or her aspirations and security for the household, a rather different spatiotemporal configuration of relational values. In this sense the 'good house' seems a manifestation of the householders' aim to secure the long-term future of the household.

I argue that changes in concepts of what constitutes a 'good house' reflect a shift in attitudes towards kinship relations and inheritance, toward an increasing accumulative process aimed at the future of the nucleated household over sharing and exchange with wider kin networks. Similarly, Gamburd (2004) found that amongst female migrants in Sri Lanka, spending on the house and land is a means to allocate remittances in such a way that it allows household accumulation without entailing the types of criticism reserved for individual consumption. However, it also limits the wide dispersal of remittances to kin networks; "A newly prioritized object of desire (a plot of land and a house) supersedes both the Western ideal of luxury consumption and the older ideal of a strong family support network" (2004:180).

Rodman (1997:227) also identified a similar transition towards household nucleation in rural Vanuatu, noting:

In the past, a house expressed connection to the community; now it expresses the importance of nurturing the nuclear family and of material success. A 'good provider' under these changed circumstances turns inward toward the household more than outward toward the larger social unit.

Likewise, Li Puma (2001:217) indicates that privacy and locked doors have become a metaphor for the emergence of notions of private property, and

possessive individualism, perhaps in part by keeping goods out of plain sight it helps curb others jealousy or desire (cf. Wardlow 2005:66).

The same might be said of the proliferation of trade stores, which are built in a room within the 'good house', with a caged window to the outside. Trade stores are a popular addition in new Li-Lamenu houses, with one front room usually designated for the purpose. Although few stores seem to have been very profitable, perhaps they are seen as a 'store' for wealth that can be more controlled in how and when it is 'eaten'. Polier (2000:207) saw houses and the creation of trade stores in one room of the house as a strategy to privatise wealth, and limit sharing and redistribution to kin. Likewise, Li Puma (2001:149; cf. Silverman 2005:85), argues for Maring, "The tradestore implies the right of private property, exemplified by a decline in the obligation to share, and private ownership in turn is a metaphor for privacy or the self-containment of the person that is an index of individuality".

Unlike descriptions of businesses elsewhere in Melanesia, which could only survive if operated by outsiders (Curry 1999:288), I suggest that trade stores delimit a space in which it is acceptable to exact a price and a profit from one's kin, and refuse to share. Even where kin take advantage and accumulate too much debt, store holders can retain the right to refuse store credit to kin (by posting signs in the name of the 'store'), whilst refusing to share cooked food with kin would be seen as selfish.

Likewise, Li-Lamenu business owners lending money for interest are using a similar spatio-moral logic when extending credit to prospective migrants. When Leitar, a widow in her fifties, received 41,000 vatu (around £250) tax rebate from a season's work in New Zealand two years before, she decided to 'play around' with the money, and began to lend it out to prospective migrants. The success of Leitar's scheme depended on her ability to enforce the business logic behind it, and keep it distinct from everyday kin behaviour, partly through the spatial and temporal 'bounding' in the construction of a room in the house for commodity transactions. When creditors tried to repay the money as she was walking around, she would explain to them that that is not the fasin blong wok: the way to behave as regards "work". Rather, they should come to her store, in the front room of the house she shared with an adult son, and see her at her window.

Furthermore, good houses are often built in more secluded spots away from the tightly packed yards where clan members have tended to live side-by-side, and as I discuss in Chapter Nine, this may indicate a greater degree of household assertions of autonomy and privatisation of property. I suggest that this incipient spatio-moral order reflects a change in the transactional orders that have so long characterised the ethnography of the region. The changes move from a generalised sharing within, and differentiated exchanges between clans towards a new emphasis on formally commoditised exchanges, even between close kin. This raises the more general question of whether the good house and its store rooms reflects a shift away from a kin-ordered morality towards a more

individualised, or nucleated household spatialised and economised moral order.

Unequal Standards of Living and Deprived Relatives

The construction of modern houses and acquisition of household goods have often been often analysed as examples of capitalist hegemony and incipient class formation (Gardner 1993; Philibert 1990b). Although I have argued that Li-Lamenu ambitions for a good house are not necessarily ‘conspicuous’, in this section I interrogate further whether the ‘good house’ reflects incipient class formation, or status distinctions in terms of ‘haves’ and ‘have-nots’. By Narotzky’s (1997:218) definition of class formation as “... the degree of necessity that impels people into specific labour/capital relations to earn a living, and the degree to which they can choose between different alternative forms of labour/capital relations or other strategies”, Li-Lamenu people are far from becoming a ‘class-based’ society. After all, as I explain further in Chapter Nine, Li-Lamenu people are determined to retain customary land tenure, and this is important in helping to ‘keep their options open’, continuing to draw on diverse ways to make a living (Rodman 1993).

Furthermore, rather than being understood as a cause of inequalities within the community, the building of a remittance house is often termed more as the closing of a gap that has existed for decades (cf. Torres 2015:360). The prevalence of seasonal work opportunities amongst Li-Lamenu people meant that most households with people of working age had a ‘good house’, or one under construction. People would frequently tell me that New Zealand work means that people who schooled to Class

Six (Primary School level) can now build houses that before were only accessible to government workers, politicians, or successful business people; they could not have imagined having a 'good house' before the rise of the scheme. Rather than exaggerating status distinctions between households, opportunities for overseas wage work have enabled those who previously could not have afforded such homes to achieve a similar standard of living.

This closing of a gap between 'haves' and 'have-nots' could be seen as a process of 'levelling' and part of a 'symbolic struggle' that resists status distinctions and class formation (Stirrat 1989:108–109). On the other hand, Rodman (1985a:276) also saw this struggle as part of an on-going process of more antagonistic relations between emergent 'haves' and 'have-nots':

Like the Landrover or trousers, current standards of luxury housing no doubt will be only temporarily effective as a sign of inequality. As more people have an opportunity to earn cash incomes, such houses should become much more common. But as any Western homeowner knows, purchased housing provides almost limitless opportunities for the most affluent to differentiate themselves from their poorer neighbors.

This process of change evokes the contrast that Wagner (1981:91) describes from a balanced dialectic of mutual creation towards a more antagonistic relation of mutual motivation in an economically differentiated or class-based society.

Rather than spurring more elaborate house constructions by the richer elite, the spread of 'good houses' amongst the general population seemed to be welcomed by people who had already had the means to complete

one. In the past, visible signs of wealth invited higher expectations and more demands on the part of kin for redistribution of wealth, and jealousy was associated with a fear of sorcery attacks. Mary, the recruiter who was in well-paid government employment and highly educated had told me that before the migrations scheme she felt self-conscious about having perhaps the biggest house in the community, and was almost relieved that now so many families had the opportunity of achieving a 'good house'. Mary implied that this took the pressure off her to support kin members, saying that seasonal migration is changing people's attitudes to development; people no longer just "sit and wait for hand-outs".

I suggest that some of the reasons for the perceived success of seasonal work as a route to development, include the way that the workers' wages are seen as well-earned, and an alternative to 'hand-outs' from MPs or aid from development organisations (cf. Errington and Gewertz 2005:168), which are often associated with corruption and unfair distribution on the part of the givers, and laziness on the part of the receivers. Expectations of redistributive sharing or 'hand outs' can be seen as the extension of kinship relations of mutual creation and exchange, to a situation where the economic differentiation between kin entails a shift from alternating symmetrical to asymmetrical or unidirectional exchanges, from 'haves' to 'have-nots'. Conversely, the critique of 'hand-outs' has served as an attempt by richer elites or 'haves' to legitimate their accumulative lifestyles and limit expectations of redistribution of wealth to poorer 'have not' relatives (Gewertz and Errington 1998; 1999:49; 2005:168; Martin 2007a:287; Martin 2013).

The motivation for seasonal workers in building a durable house is to attain a certain 'standard of living' and parity with richer neighbours. This motivational factor has been recognised by New Economics of Migration theorists (e.g. Stark and Taylor 1991), who term it 'relative deprivation'. However, although most households had at least one member who had worked overseas, there were those who remained deprived of the opportunity to accumulate enough money for a 'good house'. People who are older, have health problems or are single parents do not have the same access to the income and material goods.

Often those who did not yet have a 'good house' would apologise, or appear ashamed when I came to visit saying that their house was substandard. But often they or others would explain their poor home through the failure of family members to properly provide for them. For instance, Jemima, a mother of three young boys, was initially ashamed to invite me to their house, which was built by a classificatory brother of her partner, Pulpe from woven coconut leaves, and was only ever meant as a temporary measure. Even compared with most 'local' houses, Jemima's seemed particularly battered and lowly. She spoke with sadness about how her partner and his family neglect her and the children. She said Pulpe refused to go to New Zealand to work, unlike his brothers, and he would not share whatever cash he made for producing kava with her and the children. Jemima built their kitchen house herself, weaving the panels for the sides, cutting the wood and nailing on the roof. She had to ask a

family member returning from New Zealand to bring her a small solar lamp, for which she exchanged three of her own chickens.

Widows also seemed to feel relatively deprived by their husband's clan after the death of their husband. One widow I got to know very well grumbled that her thatch house was leaking, but her sons had done little to help build a new one. Another I visited during the household survey also apologised at the state of her house; she told me that since the death of her husband and son she had been dependent on her married daughter for financial help.

As I outlined in the previous section, people talk of a decline in sharing behaviours and mutual help between kin, which may signal a consumption-based form of class distinction, having and not-having. Douglas and Isherwood (1996:154) suggested that class formation should be seen as about absolute distribution of income than about patterns of exclusion and inclusion, which form the "boundaries of sharing and hospitality". Likewise, studies of incipient class formation and the formation of a new elite in Melanesia have highlighted the process of "the social and cultural work of creating new forms of distinction", as Gewertz and Errington (1999:8) put it, with elites investing in new lifestyles, and limiting the extent to which they are expected to share. The claim of everyone having the potential to improve their 'standards of living' has been noted by Gewertz and Errington (1998:346) as a modernist form of legitimization of accumulative lifestyles amongst an emerging elite, whose resisting 'hand-outs' could even be turned upon those requesting them,

blaming them for their disadvantage in a “virtual sleights of hand”. The prevalence of seasonal employment opportunities locally has reinforced and popularised this modernist claim by allowing most households to participate in this quest for better ‘standards of living’, enabling the proliferation of an ethic of opportunity and ‘hard work’ over expectations of sharing. Overseas work is understood to be exhausting and something to be endured for the sake of one’s goals, and the good house as hard-earned and well-deserved (cf. Rensel 1997b:51).

1. Summary: The Good House and the Good Life

The ‘Good House’ is understood as a ‘permanent’ (or at least ‘semi-permanent’) testament to one’s travels, and one’s care for the household. Perhaps it also gives some sense of permanence and security in a changing world, where the future is by no means certain, and a way of extending one’s care for the household and one’s children in time. As I have argued, the good house is iconic of a number of ‘qualisigns’ of value that legitimate expenditure on imported materials. Not only are imported durable materials attractive in offering strength and protection from the elements, and prestige of modernity and money, but ‘durability’ itself is a qualisign that makes the ‘good house’ apt for signifying and concretising a vision for the future, and the longevity of the household, whilst staking a place in the community. As such, the ‘good house’ can be valued positively as a temporal extension with lasting benefits, against the negative valuation on ‘eating money’ and spending on ephemeral personal consumption.

In emphasising social benefits and value of the good house in offering protection for the family, hospitality for kin and friends and embodying

God's 'blessing' for the family and community the 'good house' can be perceived by others as a social and moral good. Such reasoning legitimates the proliferation of the 'good house', even though it appears to make concrete new spatiotemporal moral configurations, such as the increasing preoccupation of household welfare and future over relations of sharing and delayed reciprocity between kin. Further, the house becomes a container for the accumulation of other durable goods, and is evidence of a growing divide between economic production and the reproduction of kin relations, which makes visible a dynamic tension over what constitutes a good life and a good future, putting the grounds of social reproduction into contestation.

In terms of the articulation between production and reproduction that Narotzky highlights, there have been important shifts, as production and reproduction spheres are increasingly mediated through money and imported goods. So if increasing class conflict is the struggle over the means or possibilities for "owning one's future", as Narotzky (1997:218) suggests, the question remains over whether changing material 'standards of living', and access to money and commodities, is creating new kinds of relations or conflicts between Li-Lamenu people. As I argue throughout this thesis, there appears to be more of an emphasis on what each household 'owns' in terms of material goods and intergenerational transfers, rather than processes of (re-) production of social relations between kin and clans.

CHAPTER TWO

The House of Labour: Relations in the Workplace

New Zealand has become a seasonal home for Li-Lamenu seasonal workers; many spend more than half of each year in their workplace. In order to acquire ‘good houses’ and good futures, seasonal workers must spend a succession of seasons working overseas. In this chapter, I describe how seasonal workers understand and experience daily working and living conditions in what has become for many a second home.

In the first section, I will examine debates about temporary migration programmes in the light of the experiences the reported experiences of Li-Lamenu seasonal workers. In the second section, I describe how seasonal workers and employers alike cultivate personal relations and become morally and materially invested in the continuation of the programme. I also explore how Li-Lamenu people actively seek to build relationships or ‘roads’ with employers, although this can be characterised by ambivalence and tensions. In the final section, I describe how seasonal workers cultivate relations of mutuality and reciprocity, and to engage in ‘friendship’, and even kin-like relations with employers, colleagues and acquaintances in church and community.

2.1. Experiences of Work in the ‘Hidden Abode’

Until the right to organize, to protest, to work, and to move transcends national boundaries, guestworker programs will remain what they have always been: the means to create a class of perfect immigrants who live in a no-man’s land, outside the bounds of nationhood and the house of labor.

Temporary foreign worker programmes are being espoused as part of a re-emerging development discourse advocating remittances – rather than foreign aid- for economic development, which has been dubbed the “migration-development mantra” (De Haas 2005:1276; Glick Schiller 2012:92). This ‘mantra’ has been seen to reflect a neoliberal revival of 1960s modernisation narratives (Glick Schiller and Faist 2010; Wise and Covarrubias 2009), in which remittances appear as a panacea or “wonder drug” (Oxfam 2015) for economic development, and ‘social remittances’ import liberal ideals such as ‘work ethic’, ‘financial literacy’ and democracy. This ‘mantra’, claims ‘triple win’ benefits for employers, sending states and workers alike, and promotes temporary worker programmes in particular, because they are seen to facilitate the return of the migrant and remittances, and thus (it is assumed) greater economic development in the area of origin.

On the other hand, precursors to such temporary worker programmes have long-been the subject of much critical attention and debate, especially from Marxian analyses and political philosophy (e.g. Walzer 1983; Attas 2000; Mayer 2005; Lenard and Straehle 2012). Critics have argued that temporary foreign workers are subjected to a kind of double alienation through the collusion of state and capital. From the perspective of the ‘hidden abode’ constructed outside the margins of citizenry not only are workers subject to the separation of work and home, and the appropriation of their abstracted labour-power but they are treated as aliens by the host

state, and cut off from the rights of the citizenry to change employer or seek representation. Much of the literature on similar programmes focussed on the prevalence of economic exploitative practices and lack of political rights, and restricted access to labour markets, making workers vulnerable and marginalised.

Anthropologists of similar seasonal worker programmes in North America (e.g. Hahamovitch 2003; Basok 2002; Hennebry and Preibisch 2010; Binford 2013; Holmes 2013) have suggested that seasonal workers, who are typically tied to particular employers on short-term contracts regulated by the state, are vulnerable to that the threat of deportation or of not being invited back, and so tend to accept exploitative working and living conditions in this hidden house of labour. They note workers are likely to accept low wages, perform exhausting and sometimes damaging work, work long hours, and are unlikely to leave, protest or unionise.

One might suggest that the living and working conditions of seasonal and temporary farmworkers, often living in remote locations, means they are even more 'hidden' and marginal than many other low-paid workers. Seth Holmes (2007; 2013:180) suggests Mexican horticultural workers in the USA are often hidden from public view, in a de-facto segregation along racial and legal lines. This facilitates their structural exploitation in a way that is not consciously intentional for managers, but 'naturalised' and legitimated by preconceptions of lack of citizenship and rights that citizens would expect. In the next section, I examine the opposing claims of proponents of managed temporary migration programmes such as the RSE

and PSWP, versus critics of such schemes (like those mentioned above) who have claimed they are unjust and exploitative, but perpetuated through profiting from a class of ‘perfect immigrants’ dependent on overseas work for a livelihood.

A Model Programme and Ideal Immigrants

The RSE Programme has been declared a ‘best practice’ example of a temporary foreign worker programme, creating ‘triple wins’ for employees, employers and sending states (Gibson and McKenzie 2013b).

The programme is highly regulated; only approved employers may recruit workers and they must ensure that suitable accommodation, transport and pastoral care are available to workers. In addition, employers should cover half the costs of the international flight. In fact, far from cheap and easy, many employers say that the paperwork and costs are the major drawbacks of recruiting through the programme.

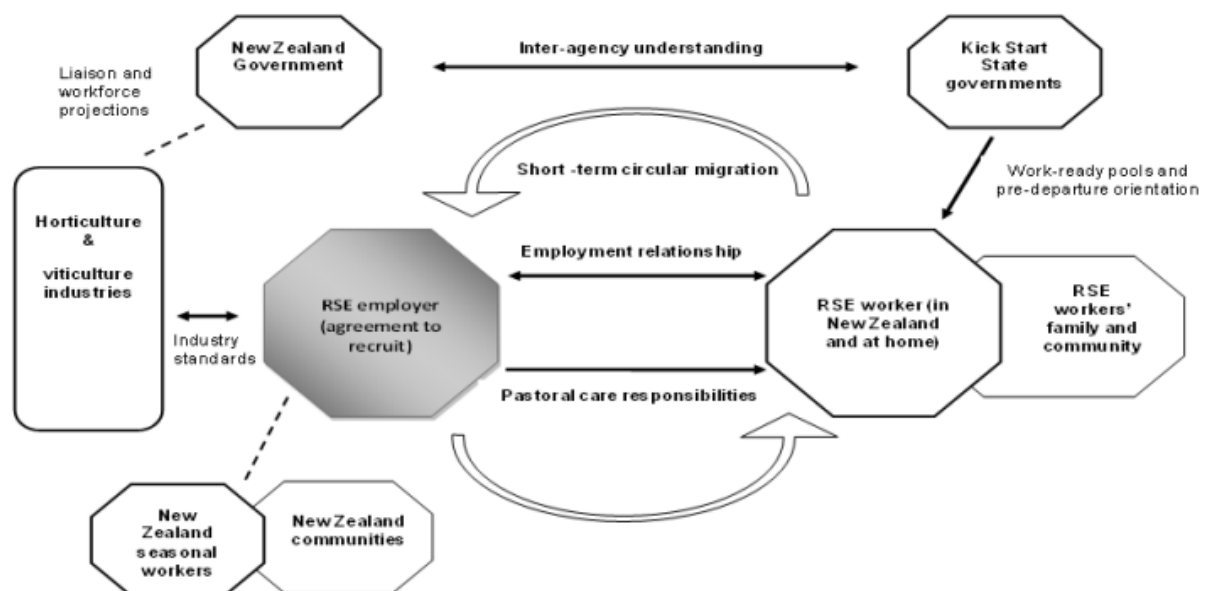


Figure 15 RSE Diagram (source: Final Evaluation Report of the Recognised Seasonal Employer Policy n.d.)

For many Li-Lamenu people, seasonal engagements represent their first experience of formal employment. Entry into the programme is also the first time they have been issued with a birth certificate or a marriage certificate, let alone a passport. Thus seasonal migration can be seen as a process of formalising one's citizenship, and extending the role of the state into people's lives. In addition to required passports, contracts and visas, workers are required to obtain police checks, medical examinations and fill out a form with Vanuatu Department of Labour's Employment Services Unit. Some workers use the services of a local agent or recruiter to help complete the paperwork, whilst others travel to town and often spend several weeks making the arrangements, usually whilst lodging with a relative.

The RSE programme allows workers to be contracted for between three and seven months, and this is enforced through fines and sanctions on employers should any workers stay beyond their visas. The incidence of overstaying amongst Ni-Vanuatu seasonal workers is extremely low (Bailey 2014b:54). The manager of one employer, Appleseed, told me that the low risk of absconding is part of the appeal of hiring Ni-Vanuatu workers over nations such as Tonga and Samoa, countries from which there are large diasporic populations in New Zealand. Indeed, employers feel established communities from other nations are seen to enable seasonal workers to leave the worksite and reside with friends and relatives and perhaps also gives them greater access to drugs or other influences that may lead them astray.

There is also often a preference amongst seasonal employers for workers that are travelling in order to meet goals or obligations at home. Married workers with children are assumed to be more reliable and responsible workers, who are less likely to abscond. A major Australian employer of Pacific seasonal workers confirmed this preference in a recent talk, stating, “When workers they have obligations to family at home, they are far more focussed than someone who is young and single... [who is] more easily led astray than someone who has a partner at home and children to support” (Sharon Wells, Melanesian Seasonal Employers, in Bailey and Ball 2015).

New Zealand employers and Vanuatu government alike characterised Ni-Vanuatu as hard workers in contradistinction to other Pacific nationalities (Bedford, Bedford, and Ho 2009b:11). New Zealand nationals (including Māori) and European and Latin American backpackers who had previously been employed for picking work were often deemed unavailable, unreliable or unwilling. Due to rivalry between the sending countries, the Vanuatu government and department of labour tried to regulate workers’ behaviour in order to enhance the ‘brand’ of Vanuatu workers. The Commissioner of Labour for Vanuatu cited employers’ aversion to workers that drink as the reason for a new ‘Alcohol-Free Brand’ for Vanuatu RSE Engagement, where all prospective Ni-Vanuatu seasonal workers are told they are banned from drinking. Any worker who does so can be sent home and will be placed on ‘stand down’ lists, which restrict them from returning for one year, five years or perhaps indefinitely depending on the severity of the misconduct.

At an orientation briefing they must attend before travelling, seasonal workers are to be educated about the importance of displaying a good 'work ethic' (e.g. Maclellan 2008:28; Ericsson 2009:12; Nunns and Roorda 2010:81; Nunns et al. 2013:15). Time management and work ethics are often implied as values foreign to Pacific islanders, who need to be educated and adapt to a new temporal and labour regime. As one Australian employer put it, "Some of the information that could be provided to workers is the need to switch from "island time", that laid-back attitude where hurrying is not part of their vocabulary, to working at a high pace all day long. High wages in Australia require high productivity" (Bailey and Ball 2015).

This 'skill' of time management and work ethic is often seen as a form of 'social remittances', which may aid economic development in the country of origin. Despite stated preferences for English language skills, time management and other skills or dispositions in which Pacific peoples are said to be lacking, rural people, who are used to tough physical domestic horticulture, are often preferred by seasonal employers (cf. Bailey 2014b:35). The employer representative added that those from rural areas with a lower "standard of living" tend to be more productive workers (Sharon Wells, Melanesian Seasonal Employers, in Bailey and Ball 2015).

"Time is Money": Wage Labour and Estrangement

Rather than a sense of 'lack' of an ethic, Li-Lamenu people often described their experience of working as wage labourers in terms of feeling subordinate to a calculative temporal and profit-making regime. They repeatedly summed this experience up in the equation that in New Zealand, "time is money". Many seasonal workers implied that life in

Vanuatu was better, subverting the value put on 'time management' by suggesting that it was not under a capitalist labour regime, but at home where people could 'manage' their own time, rather than being subordinated to others', as I describe further in Chapter Three.

Workers' statements about subordination to capitalist temporal and bodily regimes evokes Marx' notion of alienation and estrangement and for E.P. Thompson (1967:87) the time-is-money equation was not only a means of labour exploitation, it was experienced by workers as a loss of freedom, making a sharp distinction between work-discipline and rhythms of life and nature. For example, a female seasonal worker who had been working outdoors (but paid by the hour) pruning kiwi vines told me:

Something I experienced over there is when I work and I work and I'm tired, but I still have to work. Because their idea is that if you don't work, you can't have money. So, 'time is money'. But in Vanuatu, you work and you work and you feel you are really tired, so you stop and rest, because you feel you are tired. But over there, you must work to complete your 'hours'. When it is time, you can finish, but if not, you must work... That place is good to go and work and come back, but not to live there.

As has been noted elsewhere people's statements about temporal regimes in wage labour evoke "the implications, both structural and experiential, of production that is abruptly cut loose from its embeddedness in the social fabric by the mediation of money and the clock" (Comaroff 1985:174).



Figure 16 Li-Lamenu apple picker at Appleseed

Li-Lamenu experiences of often gruelling and sometimes exploitative labour regimes were sharpened by the contrast with their experience of autonomy at home, where they saw themselves as their own 'boss'. They often made the explicit contrast between wage work and their home and garden work, where they could work at their own pace, socialise, eat and rest often. As one Lamenu Bay man put it, "In New Zealand, time is the boss

of you, but here we are the boss of time.”¹⁹ In contrast to capitalist labour regimes, it is often suggested that where subsistence agriculture and relational economy was dominant, time was generally not considered a scarce resource (Smith 1982; Gell 1992:87), governed by supply and demand, and certainly not in commodity terms of expenditure and thrift (cf. Bourdieu in Thompson 1967:59). In regards to Papua New Guinea, LiPuma (2001:282) writes; “In this world, time was not an intangible commodity that appeared to possess a life and authority of its own... There was no covert equation of time and economy, no metaphors that assumed that time, and hence human action itself, was a commodity.”

Nevertheless, although for many, seasonal migration was their first experience of wage work, workers quickly became astutely aware and often critical of wage rates and conditions. Most of the outdoor workers, who were mainly tasked with picking, pruning and training trees or vines, expressed a preference for ‘contract’, or piece rates because they can earn more money than the hourly minimum wage, and because they were perceived to be fairer by rewarding hard work. Having autonomy over one’s time and labour can act as a critique of or resistance to capitalist wage labour (cf. Demerath 1999:176; Wardlow 2005:61). When workers feel they are unfairly paid they may resist hourly work through ‘weapons of the weak’ (Scott 2008) such as foot-dragging. Indeed, one Epi orchard worker joked that hourly work means, “work a little, rest a lot”, whereas contract rate work means, “work a lot, rest a little”.

¹⁹ Kumar (2012:62) recorded a very similar statement from a migrant in Lamen Bay.

Around a quarter of the recruits for the two biggest employers of Li-Lamenu workers, Appleseed and KiwiGold, are women and they usually work in the packhouses. Packhouse work is paid by the hour- and together with the fact that packhouse work tends to be for shorter periods, the women who make up the majority of these workers²⁰ are aware they are disproportionately disadvantaged in terms of potential earnings. The women did shift work; those on day shift struggling to get out of bed at “half night” (still dark), to take over from the night shift workers. The women had to clock in and out, and when the machines broke down- which they did often- the clocks would be stopped, even as the women were waiting around to find out if they would be fixed.

²⁰ This would seem like a reflection of the appeal of ‘nimble fingers’ in the gendering of work (Elson and Pearson 1981; cf. Connell 2010:119). There were men working in the packhouse but they were responsible for packing and stacking the boxes, and driving forklift trucks.



Figure 17 Clocking in and out at Appleseed packhouse

For those in the packhouses, their work rate was dictated by the speed of the conveyer belts. I was to experience the relentless pace of packhouse work when I visited Appleseed and was allowed to work alongside the Li-Lamenu women. It proved difficult to have the time or attention required to have a conversation during work, because if one looked away for a matter of seconds there was a danger of palettes of apples falling off the conveyer. Later, when I visited the night shift women that worked in the packhouse at their accommodation, one mentioned they did not like working with machines and 'technology', and summed up their experience in saying they felt the machines were in control and the "world was upside-down". The workers have to keep-up with the machine, rather than it making work easier. Packhouse workers at one company noted their employers tended to slow down the conveyer belts when there were

inspectors present, but they were normally set to a high speed, and he felt this put them in danger.



Figure 18 Women in packhouse at Appleseed

A major frustration for seasonal workers is when they go for days or weeks without work, due to weather conditions. When I arrived at Appleseed, some had been two or three weeks without any work, because a poor summer meant the apples had not ripened as expected. Likewise, KiwiGold had experienced three weeks of heavy rain before the group arrived. In their first week and into the second, there was no work for any of the forty Ni-Vanuatu seasonal workers (cf. Ericsson 2009:32). People were getting increasingly frustrated, with little to do. During these periods without work, the RSE workers still pay full rent and all the same deductions as if they had been working full-time.

The RSE programme does make the employers guarantee a minimum take-home income²¹, but it is possible that workers may go back with little to show for months overseas. Workers spend several weeks in debt to their employer. Employers pay for their outgoing flight and first week's accommodation, and other initial expenses are then deducted from their pay checks, together with weekly rent, transport, medical and often food costs. Their living allowance continues to be paid each week, but is added to the money to be repaid from their earnings.

In effect, the debts owed to their employers increase as they wait for work. By the time I arrived at their accommodation, none of the packhouse workers at Appleseed had any savings to show for the time they had been there, despite the fact that some had been there over a month, and were due to return two to three months later. On other occasions of persistent problems, workers were sent home early; the women at KiwiGold told me they returned the first year after just over two months' work. The supervisor at KiwiGold told me they would never wish to bring Ni-Vanuatu RSE workers over when there is no available work, but that they are required to submit dates of residency to immigration in November, for workers coming in April, when they cannot know how the season will affect the fruit.

²¹ The minimum remuneration for a contract over six weeks, which should be "payment of no less than 240 hours at the per hour rate regardless of actual availability of work; or payment of an average of thirty hours per week at the per hour rate for the time worked," offers some protection in that it should cover costs of deductions (New Zealand Government 2014)

Strained Relations in the 'Hidden Abode'

Seasonal workers at some employers feel they put business interests over their welfare and wages. At Appleseed orchards, several fruit pickers told me that it seemed the more productive and experienced they became, the more the 'bin rate', the piece rate by which their earnings were calculated, would drop. In previous years bin rates for apples would range from NZ\$25 to \$40, depending on the type of apple but that year a flat rate of NZ\$28 was introduced, causing wages to fall in real terms²².

A frequent worry was about the perceived legitimacy of the deductions (cf. Ericsson 2009:33). Some groups felt they were being overcharged for food, transport and work gear, often comparing costs with friends at other employers. But some of these workers told me that they are frightened of reporting poor conditions and practices, as they do not wish to threaten the migration opportunities on which they have become increasingly reliant. It was often those that were not returning to the same employer that were more willing to make complaints to me about their working and living conditions.

In 2011, vineyard workers at Grape Harvest Company, Blenheim, which recruits through an external agency, had complained that it seemed they were being overcharged for their flights. A Li-Lamenu group leader, Sam, spoke directly to the boss to say their deduction was up to \$800 higher

²² This also aligns with employers' preference for piece rates in harvests as increasing productivity rates (Ortiz 2012:71)

compared with other employers of Ni-Vanuatu in the vicinity. Sam had been lucky and had managed to arrange an agreement of work at another local vineyard the following season, and this is perhaps why he was less fearful of complaining. He ignored his boss's warning not to report this to the Department of Labour in Vanuatu, and the department reportedly followed it up. Sam said the deduction fell by \$600 the following season.

However, some remaining Grape Harvest workers approached me the following year to complain they had been barred from migrating for five years, as their boss reported them to Department of Labour for drinking. They said the real reason was their boss had tried to ask them to agree not to take their holiday pay, saying he would use it to pay for their flights the following season. However, the men were unhappy as they wished to spend the money owed them –which may have totalled around NZ\$1200- and keep their options open for the following year. The men admitted the whole group had been drinking, but said they had been unfairly singled out because they had claimed their holiday pay²³. One of the blacklisted men, Henry, complained that their boss had bought them alcohol, and it was really because they demanded their holiday pay, and agreed they were overcharged for their flights. Henry also told me that they were worked really hard, as if he was “just muscles”. He said he and others

²³ Although I've been told they have since been invited back because their novice replacements were not nearly so productive!

suffered from aching bodies, their hands seized up, and they even got nosebleeds and coughed blood. "I'm a man, not a machine," he added²⁴.

Connell (2010:120) has suggested a move towards Pacific seasonal worker schemes reflects a shift towards treating workers as a 'pure commodity', with little opportunity to organise collectively, or campaign for better conditions. Similarly, Li-Lamenu complaints of exploitative practices, statements of "time is money", and experiences that recall the subordination of people to things, and the production of things via the waste of the human body in its compulsion to work, resemble Marx' (1988:73) notion of "self-estrangement" or "alienation" (cf. Booth 1993:254). However, as anthropologists have argued, even when labour is abstracted as a fictitious commodity for accounting purposes, in practice it remains embedded in concrete social relations, and thus should not be seen as abstract value (Narotzky 1997:171–172). James Carrier (1992:541) has suggested that the capitalist separation of the workplace from the home is countered by people's inclination towards forming relations with other people and with things; "for people seem to want to colonise the alienated realm with more durable, less alienated relationships."

This tendency for employer-employee relations to be personalised is true of the Mexican migrants in Canada's seasonal labour scheme that Binford

²⁴ McLaughlin (2012:116) recorded a similar comparison of body and machine from a seasonal worker in Canada, and suggests this over-work is propelled by sense of competition and desire to stay in the programme

(2013 Ch. 2) studied. Employer-worker relations in such programmes are complex and often ambivalent, which can range from close friendship and mutual moral investments, to neglect or exploitation (cf. McLaughlin 2012:115). In the next section, I will explain how Li-Lamenu workers' relations with seasonal employers were not only personalised but highly moralised, and loaded with mutual expectations and disappointments.

2.2. Home from Home: Moralised Relations

Although Epi workers are quite conscious of instances of exploitation and subordination to industrial regimes, their work experiences are also coloured by the moralised relations they form with employers. Whilst employers and workers alike seek to maintain these relational roads for the economic benefits within political constraints, and achieve different kinds of value conversions, they also both imbue these relations with moral expectations, obligations and hopes. These often-incommensurable values can lead to ambivalence and tensions.

Prior Contacts

One characteristic of the RSE scheme is that it allows employers to employ named employees before they enter New Zealand, and for Li-Lamenu people, the initial opportunities for direct recruitment came about through prior social relationships. The first company to recruit on Epi, Appleseed, is managed by the son-in-law of the missionary, Horwell, who was based at Lamenu in the post-war period. Appleseed is a company growing mainly apples, with some kiwis, based near Motueka in New Zealand's South Island, and remains the largest employer of Epi workers. Appleseed's manager felt recruiting on Epi would be a fitting way to both address chronic labour shortages and continue the legacy of his in-laws:

When I read about the scheme... I went to [the company owner] and said “Hey, why don’t we do a trial with these [people]? I’ve got this contact, why don’t I go and do that?” That’s how it started. And I just thought it was a nice fit. I’m not a religious person but knew what my in-laws did, the work they did; their view of the world... It just seemed this is a way to carry on with their contact... Trying to get the same outcomes if you like, but in a different way.

They rang Mary, the then principal of the local High School, with whom his in-laws had maintained contact, and she began the process of recruitment and preparing the paperwork.

As I explained in Chapter One, the missionary connection to the Appleseed company has a spiritual significance for many Li-Lamenu people, who also see it as part of Horwell’s legacy of bringing ‘development’ to Epi. Chief Waiwo described the advent of seasonal work opportunities and their association with the missionary family, as a “sign” signifying both God’s blessing and a reciprocal reward for their on-going relationships with Horwell’s family. Thus, migration itself is understood as a moral, spiritual and relational good:

[The RSE Programme] is a good thing. Since Independence, many men have stayed here, and never travelled. I know there was a time when there was blackbirding²⁵. But now we are asking governments, like that of Australia, to take the people here.... Now we have decided that the missionaries that were here, they remembered all the good times when

²⁵ ‘Blackbirding’ refers to the nineteenth century labour trade that I mentioned in 1.1, and discuss at more length in Appendix Two.

they were here, how everyone looked after them and they wanted to 'make a return' good thing from them to us. So that's it, it's a good sign.

Appleseed's manager and Pastoral Care workers had been visiting Epi annually to conduct interviews since 2008. They were based in Lamén Bay until 2011, when they branched-out and did interviews in at least four other villages. In November 2012, I sat in on the Appleseed interviews at Lamén Bay (Figure 19), which took place at a small thatched building in the yard of Mary, the local recruiter. In addition to meeting criteria for employment, employers also asserted expectations regarding seasonal worker's motivations and behaviour. The manager and his colleague would score the interviewees about their reasons for migrating, as well as their family circumstances. Seasonal workers would be asked about their goals and objectives in using their savings, as part of the selection and review processes, and was taken into account in decisions to re-recruit, although standards of work were prioritised.



Figure 19 Employee interviews, Lamen Bay

The Appleseed manager later told me that he is interested in the ‘aspirations’ of the candidates, and would keep a record of the projects they seasonal workers had completed, and what developments they said they wanted to achieve at home. When conducting interviews, he and his colleagues would often visit the homes of seasonal workers, take photos of their houses and businesses and note their projects and progress. The manager and Pastoral Care workers took pride in the ‘development’ they had enabled, and photographs of seasonal workers beside their new houses, or other acquisitions, were displayed in the communal area at the packhouse (Figure 21), alongside satellite images of Lamen island, which revealed the proliferation of good houses.

Finding Roads

Whilst some Li-Lamenu people have found places with groups organised through Vanuatu's Department of Labour, often using personal and familial contacts to secure a place, others have expressed their ingenuity or agency through finding new employers and opportunities. Following seasonal engagements with Appleseed that came about through the missionary connection described above, subsequent connections have been made through the active efforts and agency of Li-Lamenu people. This is often couched in typically Melanesian terms of local Li-Lamenu people as 'finding roads' (*faenem rod*)²⁶.

Li-Lamenu people describe the RSE policy launch as an 'opening of the road' to New Zealand. A common Lamenu metaphor is that New Zealand has 'opened', and it may 'close' again. The concept of 'roads' as well as idioms of 'opening' and 'closing' highlight the way in which Li-Lamenu people conceive of themselves neither as victims, nor as untrammelled free agents, but engaged in relations that require 'two sides', and particular alignments, or alliances, in order for them to continue. It also emphasises their spatiotemporal understandings of value as produced within these relations, through movements of things and people, and how they are understood symbolically.

Personalised recruitment is double-edged in the sense that seasonal workers are bound by contract to a particular employer before they even

²⁶ See 1.2 for a general discussion of the common Melanesian idiom 'road'

depart Vanuatu. Whilst some legal provision has been added to allow a change of employer, in practice this is extremely unlikely. However, there are several cases where Li-Lamenu people have sought out new recruitment contacts whilst at home, or away, either because their current employer was deemed less favourable, or because they saw the opportunity to be a 'recruiter' as an entrepreneurial or prestigious opportunity.

Li-Lamenu people recognise that opportunities and possibilities for mobility and circulation are constrained by state policies and economic forces (L'Estoile 2014), but also that so long as these opportunities for overseas work remain a possibility, they can be extended and maintained through cultivating relations with New Zealand employers. Seasonal workers' patterns of engagement are shaped by kin and community relations (cf. Tigges, Ziebarth, and Farnham 1998:206), but also social networks with Australians and New Zealanders that were known through church links or tourism. Prior contacts often became directly involved in the recruitment and selection of the workers, and thus these recruitments are far from the kind of 'commoditisation' conjured up by the image of an abstract worker forced to sell his labour on the market.

Seasonal workers actively seek out and build relationships with employers, colleagues and other friends and acquaintances in order to build 'roads' of reciprocal recognition, support and mutual obligation. For instance, during their first season of work at Appleseed, some of the Li-Lamenu workers travelled to work at vineyards around Blenheim (Figure

5) as part of a joint agreement and whilst there two of the men approached two other employers, who now recruit directly through their Epi contacts. Likewise in 2008, eager potential recruits approached a yachtsman, who regularly visits Lamén Bay, to see if he could organise any work. He made contact with a friend in New Zealand who runs a holiday park in near Kerikeri (Figure 5) that specialises in finding horticultural work for backpackers, and the accommodation owner contacted a major local fruit company, KiwiGold.

Since 2008, KiwiGold have recruited annually at least forty workers from interviews based in Lamén Bay, although many travel from other villages. They have said they prefer to employ the same people each year, despite pressure from local Chiefs to recruit different people. Provided someone has been a 'good worker' and not been drinking they can be assured they will be pre-selected the following year. The supervisor of the kiwi orchards told me that he felt everyone had a 'fair' chance to apply in the first year, that they had tried to encourage as many people to apply as possible. Through networks gained while working at Kerikeri, one Li-Lamenu seasonal worker, David, built relationships with two smaller employers whilst in New Zealand, and became a recruiter for them. A manager at a fourth Kerikeri employer used to work in Motueka, where he met and married an Epi woman from Burumba village. Now at a kiwi grower, he recruits through his wife's family a group mainly from West Epi (though the group has included one Li-Lamenu man).

More recently, the first Li-Lamenu group to participate in the Australian Pacific Seasonal Worker programme were also given the opportunity through building friendship with an Australian couple. Invited by Chief Waiwo to stay with him after they visited Lamenu Bay as tourists, the couple became close to Waiwo's family and would spend several weeks each year in a house built in his yard. After being asked several times if they knew of employers, the couple personally sought out a local farmer willing do a trial, took the responsibility of the recruitment and pastoral care work on themselves, and offered considerable hospitality. The group of ten Li-Lamenu based in Yarra Valley, near Melbourne (Figure 20) picked soft fruit.



Figure 20 Yarra Valley, Australia.

Source: http://www.travelvictoria.com.au/images/regions/melbourne/map_small.jpg

Reciprocal Dependency?

Li-Lamenu seasonal workers actively sought migration opportunities, and continue to make efforts to maintain relations with their employers in the hope for the security of being invited to return, and the hope for good

working relations and conditions. Both seasonal workers and employers value the programme in moral ways that go beyond economic self-interest. Nevertheless, some of the structural relations of production under capitalism strain these relations, as employers must ensure profitability and growth of the companies, and seasonal workers are also becoming increasingly dependent on cash incomes, in ways that reveal the power inequalities of their relationships with the employers, and the state.

Despite the seemingly contingent and temporary nature of seasonal employment there is, paradoxically, a tendency for the relationships to be prolonged beyond the immediate economic arguments that precipitate such programmes through increasing economic dependence on such employment relations by employers, as well as by seasonal workers. Philip Martin (Martin, Abella, and Kuptsch 2006:93) has noted that the relationships between employers and seasonal workers have a tendency to become shaped not only by 'dependence' of seasonal workers on opportunities for overseas work, but also through processes of 'distortion'- whereby employers also become reliant on a productive, reliable, increasingly experienced and relatively compliant workforce and reinvest in its continuation. There certainly seems to be a growing dependence, or at very least an emerging preference for, the reliable and productive Pacific seasonal workforce by their New Zealand employers (Prochazkova 2012:80). The manager of Appleseed told me that the RSE programme had given his directors the confidence to reinvest and plant further orchards. As far as he was concerned, there was no turning back with the

programme, unless 'political philosophy', such as fears about political backlash over a rise in unemployment rates, was to intervene.

The structure of such programmes favours the repeat recruitment of the same workers. In addition to recording workers aspirations, Appleseed asks supervisors to make detailed reports of workers productivity. Those that are slow will not be invited back, but productive and experienced workers are considered valuable assets. Typically the recruitment lists remain largely the same each year if the recruitment numbers are stable. There can even be pressure on experienced workers who wish to withdraw for a season, with employers warning that they could use their 'place' on the lists. Appleseed refuses to reemploy any workers that go to work for any other New Zealand employer in the interim, so attempting to change employer can be considered risky.

The cumulative effect of favouring experienced workers can contribute to a widening of the gap between those who have the opportunity for wage work, and those that have not, and also between those areas in which there has been a lot of recruiting, and remoter areas. Representatives from both Appleseed and KiwiGold have noticed a disparity between Lamien and Lamien Bay and elsewhere on Epi, and informed me that they were deliberately expanding their recruitment area into other villages around Epi. The Appleseed manager said he was worried they had created 'haves and have-nots' in the area, and Lamien and Lamien Bay were becoming Epi's 'St Heliers' or 'Mangere East'; two affluent areas of Auckland. As mentioned, Appleseed has assumed a degree of moral responsibility for

development outcomes, and has expanded their interviews to five different Epi villages.

Overall, Appleseed employed nearly 180 Ni-Vanuatu from Epi, and Emae (another base of missionary Horwell), and the numbers had been increasing steadily. By 2012, Appleseed this number could have increased to the full 220 Pacific seasonal workers employed by the company that year, but because there were so many alcohol-related incidents, the manager decided to send a clear message to Epi workers by recruiting forty Samoans. The manager told me that he gave a talk to each of the Epi villages they visited whilst carrying out interviews, and warned them that if such behaviour continued Samoans would replace more of the Epi workers. They said many of the villagers were very angry with the previous seasonal workers when they heard this, particularly as it 'spoiled' the name of the island and prevented others from having the opportunity to work overseas. One of the leaders informed me that they are all trying to repair the relationship with the employers after the problems concerning drunkenness, damage to company property and sexual relationships.

The fact that Li-Lamenu people and their New Zealand employers have become morally as well as economically invested in the outcomes of such programmes, has proved important for their perceived success and perpetuation, not only in economic successes but in forming a sense of mutual obligation and loyalty. However, roads to New Zealand are inherently ambivalent and ambiguous. Li-Lamenu understand that if the roads 'close' it will be at the decision of the New Zealand state, or the

employers, and that this is a relation that is unequal and at times exploitative. Further, sometimes the moralisation of work relationships can lead to contradictions and failures of recognition between business interests, and personal emotional and moral entanglements and dilemmas.

2.3. Hosting Guest Workers

As I have shown so far in this chapter, Li-Lamenu seasonal workers' and employers' "attempts at purposive action are... embedded in concrete on-going systems of social relation" (Granovetter 1985:487). Despite feelings of alienation and marginalisation in some contexts, Li-Lamenu people act to strengthen, intensify and multiply these relationships (cf. Kjaerulff 2015:19), which in turn provides the precondition for further intersubjective spatiotemporal extensions and value transformations. In seeking to go beyond assumptions of homogenous wage employment or narratives of political exclusion in regards to seasonal workers, and reposition seasonal work within a wider framework of social reproduction, it is useful to reflect on relationships in the workplace with the same level of attention and nuance as an anthropologist would in a village or kinship group.

As argued in a recent ethnographic collection, even in the heart of 'flexible capitalism' complex relations and expectations can inhere (cf. Martin 2015), including analyses of 'gift' relations, which have been developed by many anthropologists of Melanesia: "What is thereby obscured is a reality of economic practice comprising a more entangled and ambiguous mix of 'gift and commodity' exchange, in which relationships not only decline but simultaneously proliferate" (Kjaerulff 2015:2). In the remainder of this

chapter, I will examine relationships in the 'house of labour' in terms of expectations of mutual reciprocity and recognition, and how seemingly commoditised relations of selling labour-time on the market can be shaped through sentiments and actions that appear to lend the relationships quite a different moralised character, drawing on obligations and sentiments of gifts and reciprocity.

Welcoming Workers

An organisation that represents two of the employers of Epi islanders, including Appleseed, proudly announces their involvement in the migration programme (which they describe as an 'aid programme') on the organisation's website:

This true connection spans international borders too. [Appleseed] is proud to be a part of the Recognized Seasonal Employer (RSE) international aid programme. Over the past 10 years we've extended the [organisation name] family to embrace a small community in Epi, Vanuatu and Lepa, Samoa. Every year, we host over 160 Nivans and 40 Samoans without whom our operations would not be possible. During the season, our friends assist with thinning, picking and packing, all done with the level of care and attention required for premium quality fruit. In return we're proud to help provide the resources and skills to provide for a brighter future for them back home.

However, their former Pastoral Care workers had a different estimation of the degree of friendship offered to workers by the company. The couple told me that they initially just had contact with the packhouse, but the pickers were just 'dumped' in remote company-owned houses and given very little attention. After there had been a lot of drinking, one of the male

leaders asked them to come to weekly devotion at the men's house, which they did for months, and would take them to literacy classes:

Supervisor: There aren't many people that will go out of their way to do anything for these guys... Most of the supervisors don't want to know after 5pm and at weekends; they don't go the extra mile.

Husband: We could never not do it the way we do it. It could never be just a workplace thing.

By contrast, the couple had made an effort to provide a welcoming environment at the packhouse. Their handbook has been translated into Bislama, and it was they that adorned most of the walls of the main communal area with numerous photos of Ni-Vanuatu at work, and at home on the islands, many proudly displaying some of their new houses and acquisitions (Figure 21). She and her husband have been out to Epi recruiting and visiting families, and often visit and donate warm clothes. Such was her caring role, that the employees took to addressing their supervisor as 'mama' and organised a Mother's Day presentation for her.



Figure 21 Communal area at Appleseed packhouse with display of photos of Epi

However, the company managers considered Pastoral Care workers' demands on behalf of the workers too great, and decided to let them go. Soon after, the manager highlighted the tension between the demands of commoditisation of labour in capitalist enterprise, and personalised relations when he said he would fight to protect the scheme, but compromises would always have to be made to keep it productive and profitable, explaining "There's always a balance in how far do you go in protecting it, how much Pastoral Care money do you invest? ...Versus -the reality is- you still have to run a business and you still have to make it economically efficient."

Appleseed seemed to have a poor reputation in the local area. A seasonal worker team leader told me of frequent conversations he had heard of with

the local people, where they told the Ni-Vanuatu that they were being cheated, or paying too much for accommodation. Several Ni-Vanuatu workers told me that local people would often tell them that the company owners are no good and that they are paying too much for their accommodation, some for accommodation owned by disreputable company directors, which sharpened seasonal workers' worries. The Li-Lamenu group leader wrote, "We feel really bad because of all this talk, but we can't say for sure who is being honest in these cases." Things came to a head in 2010 when online allegations from members of the local community about accommodation prices and deductions even hit the local press.

Not long before my arrival at Appleseed, the New Zealand Department of Labour had visited Mount Olive Park, where I was to stay with all the day shift workers at the packhouse, and deemed the accommodation too crowded. Extra porta-cabins and portable buildings were put in to house people, and the result was a hotchpotch of different accommodation of varying sizes and quality. Appleseed's owners owned the town house where the women night-shift workers were sleeping and there were some questions over whether the employers make money from accommodation rents. Upon visiting the property I found it to be more comfortable than the Mount Olive Park place and much warmer too, which pleased the Ni-Vanuatu ladies who feel the cold. However, because the owners own it they always wish to have the place full, and there is pressure on the organisers to make sure this is so. Whilst I was there two of the day shift ladies were transferred to live there.

Despite the 2010 public allegations against Appleseed, one of the workers from a different island in Vanuatu who had transferred from a company in Blenheim, told me that compared to the Blenheim company, Appleseed had been “komfortim gud mifala” (comforting us), and even said they offered “gudfala hospitaliti” (good hospitality). This choice of terms is interesting, and likewise Li-Lamenu people tend to evaluate their employment conditions as much in terms of their relations with their employers, as ‘structural’ wage conditions and rights. The references to ‘hospitality’ for ‘guests’ that appeared in both Appleseed’s website, and in the seasonal workers’ statement is of interest, particularly as this phrasing evokes expressions common in migration policy and theory such as ‘guest workers’ and ‘host states’.

If Kant sought to invoke conditional ‘Universal Hospitality’ as the just relation between nations, Derrida highlighted the ambivalence of such a law which appeared to negate the values it was supposed to uphold by placing it under controls and regulations (Candea and Da Col 2012:S4). Whilst the regulation and restrictions surrounding Ni-Vanuatu visa requirements belie a cosmopolitan view of migration in terms of the Kantian universal right to hospitality (Dikeç, Clark, and Barnett 2009), nevertheless employers and seasonal workers alike both draw on idioms of hospitality and guests in describing their relationship.

Gifts and Hospitality

This propensity to characterise relations with foreigners and international companies as kin-like, moralised and marked by obligations of mutuality

or reciprocity is well-documented across Melanesia. One such example is indigenous engagements with mining companies in which there are often expectations of degrees of interdependence and mutual obligation (Wardlow 2005:65; Kirsch 2008). As documented elsewhere, the breakdown of these relations, or their failure to materialise, can result in frustration and disappointment (Foster 2005:212, 214; cf. Leavitt 2005). But in the context of Li-Lamenu seasonal work, these expectations are not necessarily one-sided; as we saw in the quote from the company website in the previous section, employers and colleagues also often draw on language of hospitality and friendship.

Evaluations of 'good hosts' and 'good guests' colour how each judge the other. Expectations of 'kindness' as well as 'fairness' come into Li-Lamenu peoples' evaluations of employers, and some bosses were considered extraordinarily generous. When David's new boss rang him and three of his relatives to tell them of discount offers at an electronics store and offered to purchase things on their behalf, three requested laptops, the fourth a mobile phone. They had expected their boss to deduct the money from their pay, but he told them they were gifts. David was very happy with his employer, and said he made two to three times his earnings there as at a previous employer. Despite this, David considered both his current and his previous employer –for whom he also continues to recruit- as 'kind', because they both would visit with gifts of freshly caught game and fish.

The manager of Appleseed, however, came to regret some of the hospitality and friendship he initially offered. As the son-in-law of the

missionary, he and his wife had struggled between their role as manager of seasonal workers as a factor of production, and the personalised relations the family had with the Epi seasonal workers. He has taken conscious steps to distance himself and his wife from the seasonal workers, feeling they were taking his hospitality for granted after they began to drink and flout his rules. His wife is reluctant to return to Epi, where she grew up for fear of being hounded by prospective seasonal workers.

Thus ambivalence and contradictions characterise expectations of mutual obligation and care between seasonal workers and employers, who each seek to appropriate as much of the value produced through workers' labour, whilst ensuring the continuity of the relationship and their respective moral self-worth. An examination of expressions related to hospitality require the anthropologist to go beyond interpretations of expressions of generosity, to understanding such claims in the context of ambivalent and power-laden relations; delineating boundaries and limiting rights to guests even whilst they proffer a warm welcome, and a slip in the terms of the relation can result in suspicion or plain hostility (Graeber 2011a:101; Candea and Da Col 2012). To take statements about 'hospitality' for seasonal workers at face value would be to obscure not only experiences of exclusion and exploitation of workers, but also the vested economic interests that employers and workers each have in the continuation of the programme.

Attention to what each aims to get out of the encounter belies a depiction of a kind of reciprocity as non-calculative free 'gift', given graciously and

without expectations of economic returns (Dikeç, Clark, and Barnett 2009:6). However, whilst power is concentrated in New Zealand, expectations extend in both directions. When employers visited Epi, seasonal workers and prospective migrants would take the opportunity to offer hospitality and gifts to the visitors. On one level, this can be seen as a mechanism to elicit recognition and equality, and counter subordination. As Herzfeld (1987:77; cf. Candea and Da Col 2012:S14) has indicated, making one's more powerful hosts into guests is not understood as acquiescence, but it, "signifies the moral and conceptual subordination of the guest to the host. In this way it "englobes" the visitor to the substituting moral advantage for political subordination."

Offering gifts to employers and recruiters can also be an expression of gratitude and hope to gain their favour in future. As Munn (1992:55) argued in relation to Gawan Kula exchange, hospitality is seen as a foundational form for building relational 'roads' and eliciting not only an equivalent return but the potential for a positive value transformation, as spatiotemporal extension of effects of one's actions. A pervasive ethic of offering hospitality to visitors provides a source of pride for Li-Lamenu people, and the hope that their reputation and good 'name' will carry overseas, as hospitality becomes a marker and mediator of household, village and national identities (Herzfeld 1987). Li-Lamenu seasonal workers place great value on building relationships with both visitors to their home villages, and to 'friendships' forged overseas, and indeed these have proved productive of further opportunities for work, travel and 'development'.

Making Friends and Inviting Visitors

Living at close quarters has its difficulties, but living and working alongside kin can help seasonal workers avoid the loneliness and alienation of life away from home in often-isolated areas. The practice of groups of workers returning to the same locations is also evocative of former domestic circular migration patterns, in which particular kin groups or places often had a relationship with a specific plantation or employer that may endure over generations. As Bonnemaïson (1985:74–75) put it, “This was not simply a matter of habit or convenience, but more like the opening, in the traditional sense, of a new routeway to the outside world. By this means, the local group enlarged the dimensions of its lifeworld, ensured the recognition of a particular place (plantation or enterprise), and directed there most of its reserve of young men.”

Workers also seek to form friendships with those they meet on a regular basis as a group, whether colleagues, people who share their accommodation, or members of the churches they attend. Li-Lamenu people were very proud of friendships they made with fellow colleagues and community and church members in New Zealand, as well as tourists and visitors they met at home. Neighbours and members of church congregations would often give them food. Following the 2010 public accusations regarding exploitative practices by Appleseed mentioned above, some members of the local community organised to give them food parcels, and even arranged a farewell party for them. Some brought round wild pigs they had shot, and one man even brought several turkeys one Christmas.

The AOG Pastor at Kerikeri had taken a particular interest, and in addition to visiting workers' accommodation to lead a worship session each week, he said he was committed to learning Bislama. There had even been inter-church collaboration between churches in two different locations. They got in touch through two different groups of Epi workers, to build a house for the Assembly of God (AOG) church's women's group on Lamenu Island. Ten members of one church who had stayed in Epi said they noticed that firewood was in short supply on Lamenu Island. They had been in touch with a man who organises projects at a local prison, and it seemed they would be willing to do the welding work to convert gas bottles into more efficient 'ovens', that require less firewood.

Although the visitors that returned to visit Epi often brought economic benefits for local businesses, as well as gifts, the offer of hospitality was offered with pride and genuine good will, as well as reciprocity for the gifts and support they received whilst overseas. Frequently, these groups became one; not only did tourists and friends find recruitment opportunities for them, as I have described, but people they met overseas came to Epi to visit them. Friends were frequently told to come and live with their friends in their houses, where they could live and eat for 'free' and marvel at the abundant fruit and fish that could be had without money, unlike anything they had seen before.

Li-Lamenu people often held these friendships with deep sentiments. As I visited people's homes, they often showed me photos and letters from

friends, shared stories of visitors, and on occasion asked me to help them find long-lost acquaintances. Tourists and friends in their turn were often delighted by the generosity and hospitality of the Li-Lamenu people, and moved to create further employment opportunities, and charitable help and fundraisings, as well as returning year after year. These relationships have become kin-like friendships of mutuality and reciprocity, long lasting and de-alienating, and indeed many have led to further 'roads' for overseas employment or local development.

2. Summary: Building Roads for Future Houses

Li-Lamenu seasonal workers value the migration opportunities for the benefits they can give to household, kin and social relations, and actively seek to find and maintain these opportunities through building relationships. Thus Li-Lamenu seasonal migration cannot be simply understood either as exploitation and resistance (or false consciousness), or of conflict-free 'triple win' contractual exchanges between self-interested equals (cf. Bedford 2013). By focussing on the experiences of workers, and the relationships they form with employers and friends in New Zealand, I have revealed the complexities and ambivalence of employment relations.

As Gewertz and Errington (2015:19) explain, the complex and often contradictory relations between 'value' and 'values' under capitalism, often leads to tensions between how to 'do good' whilst also 'doing well', that gives a much more complex picture that 'win-win' mantras suggest, "Of course, unalloyed win-wins rarely materialize. Rather, values and value appear in a diversity of more or less compelling configurations—of different aggregations and disaggregations of the commensurate and the

incommensurate and across a range of social contexts". Employers, the state and seasonal workers alike arguably often try to reconcile 'doing good' and 'doing well', but this combination is an uneasy and often contradictory one.

The mutual expectations and dependencies of employers and Epi workers go far beyond the commoditised exchange of labour in the employment contract. Seasonal workers, employers and counterparts in New Zealand are morally as well as economically invested in the programme. Each become increasingly dependent on the other, and invested in maintaining and cultivating their relationships. In building these relationships, both with potential employers and 'friends in New Zealand and Australia, Li-Lamenu people understand that they are building 'roads' that may lead to further employment opportunities, or gifts, and these roads should extend obligations in both directions. Evaluations of pay and conditions tend to be made in reference to those of other local seasonal worker and non-migrant workers, but seasonal workers' reasons for accepting and continuing employment is in reference to opportunities to prove their economic position at home and meet obligations and aspirations, where opportunities to accumulate such sums are few. As Narotzky (1997:223) suggests, labour should not be understood as an abstract value, separate from questions of embeddedness in social relations. Rather, work and market engagements should be understood within a wider framework of social reproduction.

Whilst seasonal workers are well aware of vulnerabilities, hardships and exclusions, they see overseas work as a 'road' to a better future through a value transformation that allows them to achieve a good house and their hopes for the next generation. As Pine (2014:S100) has suggested labour migration tends to be a future-oriented activity, aimed generally at "building the prestige and the future of the house" through particular goals such as building houses, accessing land and securing a better future for one's children. In the next chapter, I explore how seasonal workers and their spouses and their families turn these value conversions towards household-oriented goals and a different future for the next generation.

CHAPTER THREE

House Work and School Fees

We want recognition for the sacrifice that we RSE workers make.... We make a big sacrifice in our personal lives and our family welfare for this labour mobility scheme.

Adam, seasonal worker / group leader

Time and labour in New Zealand can be a 'sacrifice' of one's personal desires for the good of the family's future, as Adam's quote illustrates. The denial of immediate desires of the self in order to create a good life and a better future for the household is morally valued by workers abroad and their families who remain in Epi. In this chapter, I step inside the houses of seasonal workers like Adam to make sense of the sacrifices and hardships that different family members face for the hope of a better future for their children.

In the first section, I show that the negative valuation on 'eating money' extends to New Zealand and Australia. Workers have little choice but to spend money on food and accommodation, but seek to minimise these costs in order to convert the value of their savings into the prestige and temporal extension of the 'good house', and school fees for their children. Secondly, I step into the household to reveal the often ambivalent or contradictory effects of the seasonal absence of one of their members for those who remain in the household, who suffer from the same forms of loneliness, self-denial, and overwork as seasonal workers. Finally, I

suggest that householders undergo these sacrifices, and channel earnings and resources to effect value transformations into the temporal extension of the household. All the while they focus on securing a 'good future' through the good house and intergenerational transfers via investment in the next generation.

3.1. Working Away, Thinking of Home

Saving for the Future

Li-Lamenu seasonal workers seek to accumulate as much money as possible whilst overseas and, in so doing, they emphasise their sentiments and obligations towards household and family members rather than self-interest. In this section, I show how seasonal workers consciously endure the hardships and structural exploitation of the workplace, in order to achieve their own value conversions. They do so by converting their time away into far more money than could generally be earned at home and then 'buying time' and securing the future of the household through the acquisition of durable goods, and investments in school fees.

The temporary and circular shape of migration in the seasonal work programmes means that money transfers take quite a different pattern from those common to more permanent transnational and rural-urban seasonal workers in the Pacific. Amongst Epi seasonal workers, the majority of the money remains in savings accounts until it is either taken back to the island, or spent on goods and gifts in New Zealand to bring back to Vanuatu. Money could be sent to Vanuatu via Western Union, but the fees and charges meant this option was generally avoided. Workers preferred to send money home in envelopes via other Epi returnees whose

contracts expire before theirs. Indeed, when I visited workers, I was given more than ten envelopes of cash or small gifts, such as cheap mobile phones, to give to their families. Virtually all the examples of money transfers were a response to specific demands from spouses, or household members, or funds to be allocated for specific needs such as school fees or paying a carpenter.

Employers, who encouraged seasonal workers to save money, and advised them not to overspend, reinforced this pattern. From the beginning, Appleseed gave the workers two bank accounts, one for a weekly allowance and one for savings to be paid into (once all the transport, visa costs etc. are paid off). The weekly allowance was set in negotiation with the workers. It had recently risen from NZ\$80 per week to \$100, reflecting rising living costs. However, the majority of the money remained in the savings accounts and was either taken back to the island, or spent on goods and gifts in New Zealand to return to Vanuatu (cf. Ericsson 2009:31). The savings accounts were restricted access and were only meant to be accessed in the case of an emergency, or within the two weeks prior to returning home when workers could use the money to buy goods and gifts in New Zealand.

One could argue that this had particular benefits for the employer, in that it would make it more unlikely that the worker would abscond²⁷, and also

²⁷ The responsibility- and costs of repatriation- rests with the employer if the worker was to violate the terms of their visa.

limit how much money could be spent on alcohol. However, the Ni-Vanuatu described the separate accounts as “good”, as their main objective was to save as much money as possible, and they said that it helped them to do that. In fact, one seasonal worker at KiwiGold told me that in the first year, some workers *requested* that the employer also create two separate accounts for savings and living allowance, as they had already heard of another group’s policy. Most seasonal workers saved individually, although one regular orchard worker said that some groups of men organise their money on a weekly basis to allow each of them to make purchases from their allowance²⁸.

Sacrificing Ones Desires: Not Eating Money

Some of the hardships associated with the RSE scheme are self-imposed by seasonal workers who work maximum hours, and deny themselves all but the basic foods and comforts in order to save as much money as they can. Most seasonal workers try to spend very little on food, subsisting on rice, potatoes, cheap cuts of meat and sausages, eggs, cheap vegetables such as carrots and cabbage, crackers and white bread. Few workers shopped or cooked regularly in groups or pairs, preferring to manage it individually (wanwan). Some told me they had tried to cook in groups but it proved difficult, as some may just choose to try to skip meals or drink tea with bread or crackers to save money. At KiwiGold, Ni-Vanuatu workers were

²⁸ Each week the men in the group will give a certain sum of money to one group member, allowing him to have enough in hand to pay for some goods, perhaps a DVD player or a solar panel. The following week, it will be another man’s turn and so on. This is similar to the mekim sande pooling of wages noted by Strathern (1975:206) in 1970s Moresby.

catered for every weeknight, and charged around \$7 per plate, \$35 per week. Some workers told me they would prefer to cook for themselves as they thought they could save more money.



Figure 22 Free Food; a catch of eels near a motor park, Bay of Islands and women collecting shellfish at a beach near Motueka

Seasonal workers also sought to avoid “eating money” by fishing or gathering shellfish (Figure 22), and even killing wild chickens and turkeys when they strayed onto the orchards. At some of the employers, they were free to take home fruit they had picked, or windfall. Workers enjoyed saving money, and also the chance to fill their spare time, although occasionally this went wrong, and I heard of occasions when seasonal workers were accused of picking nuts, and killing birds without the knowledge of the owners. As I mentioned in 2.3, seasonal workers also saved money and benefitted from gifts through relationships they cultivated with business owners and friends. For example, one group of

pickers made friends and gave apples to an Asian storekeeper, who gave them special concessions at his store in return.

Returning with the Goods

In efforts to maximise the lengths to which their money could go, seasonal workers became acutely aware of comparative prices of commodities, and fluctuating currency conversion rates (cf. Eräsaari 2013:211). In minimising their spending on food and living costs, workers tried to save the remainder of their weekly allowance to buy goods to take home such as clothes (mostly second hand), gifts, and household amenities and tools. But, on the top of the acquisition list for both men and women are solar panels and batteries. With such purchases, there was often an effort by the group leaders to coordinate to negotiate a good price. At Appleseed, one of the men had made friends with a man who worked for a solar supplier and so they would get a discount for buying in bulk; there were requests for over eighty whilst I was there.

Workers have learned the hard way, however, that amassing lots of goods in New Zealand can lead to hidden costs, and some have paid hundreds of dollars in excess baggage fees, or for transportation. Due to the high costs caused by excess baggage fees, staff at both Appleseed and KiwiGold tried to help workers limit their luggage, or book containers to send acquisitions home. However, the fact that workers only have access to their savings accounts in the final weeks they were in New Zealand contributes to the tendency to acquire goods at the last minute.



Figure 23 New Zealand returnees offloading house materials, Lamen Bay

Most seasonal workers preferred to acquire large bulky items in Port Vila, where they usually stop to purchase housing materials prior to returning to Epi on cargo ships loaded with treated timber, bags of cement, window louvers and a range of other durable goods and furniture (Figure 23).

Those who managed to make these shipping arrangements quickly were admired, whilst people who lingered in town and appeared to use money up were subject to criticism for 'eating money' and 'wasting time'. Indeed, the conversion of money into material goods before reaching Epi may also be a way of limiting the tendency of money to 'fly', or be 'eaten' by oneself or others by limiting its potential for redistribution through its finite determination (Hart 2009) in a particular resource that is allocated to the household.

3.2. Domestic Work: Homes and Gardens

... To leave home (work at home, our wives and all our children) with all our different home environments and social life situations to join a scheme like this one in particular- it is a really big sacrifice... home is suffering; especially in the rural areas where we rely a lot on garden foods.

Adam, seasonal worker / group leader

Many seasonal workers were married, and were leaving behind a spouse and children to work overseas. There were parallels in several respects between the workers who travelled overseas and the experiences of those, principally wives but also some husbands, who remained on Epi. Those who remained took care of the domestic work, subsistence gardening, livestock and childcare whilst their partners were overseas. In this section, I outline how it was not just the seasonal workers that underwent hardships and sacrifice, but also those family members that remained behind.

Living Apart

Although seasonal workers said they are travelling to work for the good of the household, in the short-term their absence could put considerable strain on the family, and the negotiations over household decisions could become tense. There was an emotional impact of having an absent spouse or parent, especially in rural Vanuatu where, prior to seasonal work, family members remained close together. Although mobile phones allow families to make contact, phone calls were usually infrequent, as they were very expensive.

Seasonal workers and their family members alike often endured hard and exhausting work, emotional and psychological stress, and health concerns. This evokes a local concept that I heard repeatedly in Lamen language, *kupa*, meaning a kind of weakness felt when one from a group is absent (cf. Fajans 1987:380 on Baining). Although I did not collect specific statements in relation to the absence of seasonal workers, I heard the term on other occasions when family members were away due to school and work commitments. When a very young baby had trouble sleeping, his mother blamed it on *kupa* because a young girl from the household had spent the night in a different house.

Whilst seasonal workers spoke of the hardships associated with living and working conditions in New Zealand, as well as separation from their kin and community, it was the predominantly female family members who bore the brunt of the work at home. Sometimes children too were given extra work to do due to an absent parent, especially daughters. The Primary School Headmaster at Lamen Bay told me that girls whose mothers were overseas were often expected to assume much of her role by sweeping, doing laundry and other tasks rarely performed by men.

Those 'left behind' were often burdened with more domestic work and childcare, and sometimes suffered from poorer diets, less rest and more stress as they sought to support the family. Eva was pregnant when her husband, Adam (of the above quotes), went to New Zealand in 2010. At one point she thought she had miscarried because she had to work so hard in the garden. She said Adam did not want to send money for food, as he

wanted to save it all for a house. The next year the baby was less than a year old when Adam returned to New Zealand and Eva refused to speak to him on the phone because she was so angry he had left her again. Eva said she had contemplated divorce, but did not pursue it, and two years later was berating her reluctant husband to return to New Zealand, saying she was tired of working so hard towards school fees. However, Adam had also experienced the hardships of parenthood whilst Eva worked overseas in 2008. He told me he found it very hard when she left him to look after their two year old.

Despite the hardships of living apart, many people find it preferable to struggling to find cash at home. In 2012, Adam wanted to stay in Vanuatu but his wife pushed him to go to pay school fees for their eldest child, even though it meant she would be left with five children again, the youngest still under two. The following year, Adam decided to remain in Vanuatu, but Eva was cross, saying she was fed up finding all the cash for the household, which she did through selling mats and food at the market. Although her husband worked hard in the garden and rearing pigs, she told me he was not good at finding money. Their eldest child was due to start secondary school and so the burden of school fees was much larger.



Figure 24 Eva returning home with a *karo* full of garden produce

Many women continued to work hard in the gardens and in cash-making activities whilst their husbands were overseas, in order to appear self-sufficient and self-reliant, rather than asking for remittances. Like Eva, Li-Lamenu women are often valued for their ability at finding cash and managing money. Although customarily men have had more opportunity to engage in wage labour and overseas migration, it is women who often perform everyday money making activities to find cash for everyday essentials, particularly when the copra (dried coconut flesh) price is low.

Tensions between family members could escalate when a seasonal worker was asked to send money home, but was not present to enjoy the money sent overseas or supervise its use. Adam's brother, Thompson, sent money back on several occasions to his family and a local storekeeper gave credit

to them in the confidence that Thompson would repay it when he returned from New Zealand. However, Thompson was annoyed when he found out that a sum of cash he gave me to pass to his wife when I returned to Vanuatu was not spent on his daughter's school fees, as he intended, but 'eaten' by his wife and children in everyday expenditure.

Like their family members working overseas, those that remained in the household were also subject to the negative evaluation of 'eating' money and those that relied on money from New Zealand to buy food could receive disapproval. I heard a female relative criticising Thompson's wife for 'eating money', and being too lazy to go to the garden. This relative blamed Thompson's wife's tendency to 'eat money' for the fact that even after several seasons working overseas, Thompson's house was still incomplete.

Whilst some women complained they were overburdened with work (Griffith 1985), others took pride, and perhaps a measure of autonomy, in having an independent income. In some relationships, usually where women were more educated or more strong-willed than their husbands, they even took control of the household budget. One seasonal worker's wife told me her husband would hand over his savings as soon as he returned from New Zealand. Other less fortunate women found a space to enjoy more freedom and independence in the home whilst their husband was overseas (cf. Bee and Vogel 1997). A wife of a violent husband confided in me her relief during the time he was away, but was fearful of

his return when ready access to cash made it more likely he would drink heavily, which could fuel domestic violence.

Extended Kin Extending Support

Many seasonal workers and their households called on extended kin and (often older) relatives to assist with childcare and other reproductive labour. Single parents or couples who both worked overseas were especially reliant on kin for support. Often recompense to extended family members took the form of voluntary gifts, rather than negotiated sums. Typically, the seasonal worker would return with money and gifts such as clothes or solar lights for their family members to repay them for their help.

Of the forty-five migrants I interviewed in New Zealand, over thirty said they were planning to take back gifts or money for family other than the immediate household. Often this was for their parents, but in many other cases it was to show gratitude to family members for helping to look after their children, gardens and animals. Nancy and her husband, who both worked overseas annually, even built a good house for her husband's parents on Lamén Island because they looked after their young son while they were working in New Zealand. Occasionally, a lack of agreement over this compensation could also be a cause for tensions. For instance, when Eva looked after her brother-in-law, Thompson, and his wife's children whilst they both worked overseas for a period of months, she was dismayed to receive only 10,000 vatu; a sum she felt was far too small for the effort, and a very small proportion of the couple's likely cumulative savings.

Many also gave gifts or money to relatives in Port Vila for hosting them, often for considerable periods of time, whilst they arrange paperwork for travel before their departure and make arrangements to buy goods on their return. Li-Lamenu people can become very reliant on these relations with urban relatives and may also send baskets of island foods during the period when they are at home. In some cases, these relationships have strengthened or renewed ties with urban kin.

Working Free at Home

As I discussed in 2.1, Li-Lamenu seasonal workers frequently made comparative distinctions between centres of wage labour, where ‘time is money’, and village life where one can ‘live for free’, or ‘eat for free’.

Unlike statements Bailey (2014a:145) reported from North Ambrym, I never heard the ‘time is money’ epithet in garden work at home. Rather, the contrast is frequently made between working in New Zealand and life in rural Vanuatu, where one can live ‘for free’, and have free time. Similar distinctions can be found across Melanesia, and can function as a way of valorising rural identities and ways of life.

Living for ‘free’ in terms of money is often associated with ‘freedom’ in a broader sense of being one’s own boss. Whilst the notion of ‘free’ food and ‘free’ time are associated with autonomy, statements about being subordinated to gruelling work regimes and to powerful others evoke some of the dark days of colonial domination by white “masters”, a term today associated with political subordination. Such sentiments were

epitomised by Parakuluwo, the Chief of neighbouring Wenia village told me:

Mary [the recruiting agent for Appleseed] asked me. "Uncle, do you want to go to New Zealand?" I replied, "For what?" And she said "For a little money". I replied, "Mary, I stay here and I do not want a 'master' to be my boss. I want to be my own boss. I stay at home and if I don't have money, I'm still living. You have money in the bank and you collect money every month but there's no difference between us. The only difference I can show you is that you work really hard, and I just sit here.

Parakuluwo, who was then acting as Epi representative in the National Council of Chiefs (*Malvatumauri*) and a great advocate of kastom, contrasted the regime he heard about from seasonal workers in his village, "You must wake up at a certain time, work according to time, no rest". He said they told him, "We are still lucky here".

However, the equation of 'time is money' in New Zealand is often said to be at the root of a perceived change in attitudes of seasonal workers.

People say that seasonal workers no longer maintain gardens, and suggest they are too lazy; they 'eat money' via store-bought foods. Li-Lamenu people often commented that rice consumption had risen greatly. When I was buying an order of rice in Port Vila on behalf of the school, the shopkeeper told me Epi Island, though relatively small in population, had become one of the main destinations for rice orders.

Sometimes the decline in garden foods was blamed on wild pigs eating favoured ground crops. Others blamed the pig problem on seasonal workers who had neglected their domestic pigs, and said feral pigs were

undeterred as gardens were rarely attended. Some suggested that climate change²⁹ had led to a decline in crops (cf. Craven 2015:5) and changes in their seasonality. My *ata* Joseph, somewhat of a comedian, often made jokes in which problems such as extramarital affairs, or youthful misbehaviour were examples of “climate change”, implying that ‘climate change’ was often just an excuse for human failings.



Figure 25 Planting Yams, Lamen Bay

There were many general comments that seasonal workers were increasingly shunning horticultural work at home. Perhaps because of a

²⁹ See Craven (2015) for an argument evoking systems theory and dependency theory about the effects of such processes on the Lamen Bay community’s food security, and their vulnerability to further climate change, which may act as a critique of some of the more one-sided proclamations of RSE promoting development and well-being.

negative evaluation of 'eating money', seasonal workers tended to deny that they had abandoned garden work. Instead, they blamed such accusations on 'jealousy', although in my household survey one householder admitted to me that she and her husband had virtually abandoned their gardens. Seasonal workers more commonly admitted that due to the timing of the work periods, they had changed the crops they planted. Yams, the most highly valued garden product, are increasingly less grown as they require a lot of work, especially in the middle of the year, when many seasonal workers are overseas. Overall, there appears to be a shift away from yams, towards less labour intensive foods such as plantain (cf. Craven 2015:6).

The decline in yams is associated with a weakening of kastom; yams are the most highly prized vegetable foods, with much symbolic value in ritual. When it transpired at the New Yam celebration (which I describe at length in 5.2.) that there appeared to be a sharp fall in the number and quality of yams on display, Chief Waiwo said that kastom food should become the priority. He said that kastom, the system, the traditional way of life in Vanuatu, is 'very cheap'; and for many things you do not need money at all. Before, he said, people did not use money but many things have come just to 'take' money. Despite their contrasts between 'time is money' and 'eating money' in New Zealand with 'free time' and 'eating free' at home, households are becoming increasingly dependent on cash income, pinning their hopes on their children obtaining good jobs for a secure future.

3.3. Strong Foundations for the Next Generation

There is a growing concern that in the future people will depend on wage work in order to ‘make a living’. Seasonal migration opportunities allowed parents to pay school fees (the second most common stated reason for migration) in the attempt to secure a different future for their children.

However, this vision of the future is not the only one; often people imagine contradictory scenarios in which people can neither work the land as their predecessors did, nor secure wage work.

Finding School Fees and Contributing to the Future

School fees were the second most cited reason for seasonal work and income expenditure, and perhaps the most common reason for returning to work overseas after a ‘good house’ has been built. The costs of educating children were perhaps the most pressing financial ‘need’ for families of children over twelve. By the time my fieldwork began, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)³⁰ meant that parents no longer needed to pay school fees for Primary School children in Years 1 to 6 (around 6-12 years of age)³¹, although children in Kindergarten (aged around 4 or 5 years old) would cost around 6000 vatu (around £30) per year. Low fees of around 15,000 per year were introduced for Years Seven and Eight.

³⁰ The MDGs were United Nations targets, which were formulated and agreed internationally as a framework for eradicating poverty and guaranteeing rights. Target 3, out of eight, reads: “Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling.” <http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/goals/>

³¹ ‘Fee Free’ Primary education was implemented by the Vanuatu Government and development partners in 2010 (Athy 2010)

But given that these years were not provided at Lamén Island school, children from Lamén Island often had to be accommodated by relatives in Lamén Bay, or parents would tell me they planned to relocate to the mainland.

Year	Fee (vatu)	Fee (GBP)³²
Year 9	70500	£484.34
Year 10	65500	£449.99
Year 11	81000	£556.47
Year 12	92000	£632.04
TOTAL	309000	£2,122.83

Table 1 School Fees per year, Epi High School, Lamén Bay 2012.

From Year Nine to Twelve, where children were to board at the school, annual fees would range from 65,500 to 92,000 vatu (Table 1) not including ‘pocket money’, supplies and transport costs, which could be considerable if the child was allocated to a school on another island. The most senior school year, Year 13, could not be accommodated at Epi High School, and so would require considerable fees (typically over 100,000 vatu per year), as well as transport costs to board at schools on islands such as Pentecost or Efate. Increasingly, seasonal workers were choosing to continue their children’s education beyond school, supporting them through to Bible College, Technical College or University of South Pacific, often at considerable cost and dependence on urban relatives for help with accommodation.

³² <http://www.oanda.com/currency/converter/> for 20 January 2012

Unlike elsewhere where school fees are organised in the community through reciprocal financial contributions, Li-Lamenu people tend to consider it the parents' (or adoptive parents') responsibility to cover the fees. A woman from Ambae Island who married a Li-Lamenu man told me that on her home island, extended family were expected to contribute money to each other's children's fees, but that was not generally the case at Epi. When I questioned forty-five seasonal workers whilst in New Zealand, only one in nine told me they have contributed to or plan to contribute to the school fees of a family member who is not their own child. This is subject to negotiation; one female Primary School teacher told me she had spoken to her husband's brother's wife about joint contributions to their children's school fees, but she had declined.

Finding school fees is difficult for those who do not have income from migration, especially as the copra price is very low. Those parents that do not have the opportunity to migrate, or other paid employment, often combine economic activities such as making copra, selling mats or marketing garden foods. Jemima, who I introduced in Chapter One, was dismayed because her partner Pulpe refused to go to New Zealand on health grounds. Jemima thought him capable of doing work to make money for the family, but that he was rather lazy and irresponsible, spending any cash on kava. Jemima was fretting about how to complete the third term of kindergarten fees for her second child. She had managed to deposit 2500 vatu of the 6000 vatu annual fees by selling kava, and the

kindergarten treasurer accepted two mats worth 700 and 800 vatu to complete the second of the three terms³³.

For those households who could obtain enough food to sell, fundraisings were a means of households gaining contributions from kin and community members. These strategies were more common before seasonal migration opportunities arose. One female seasonal worker told me that, “It’s easier now to find money, and before New Zealand it was hard. Before New Zealand you depended on fundraisings and copra. And people would have to take their children out of school.” Several household fundraisings took place during my fieldwork. Typically the parents of the child, with help from family members, must provide some kind of ‘meat’, which will often involve killing a pig, or some of their chickens, or going fishing before the event. Then the female relatives of the child will gather together to prepare the food for sale later in the day. Many family members will also contribute ingredients, perhaps a bag of rice, in the morning when they turn up to help.

There was a particularly strong obligation for close family members to support such events, and if a close relative did not turn out to support the fundraising, they may be the subject of gossip. This was the case for

³³ In 2007 Vanuatu had a UNESCO-funded ‘Traditional Economy’ project which included the recommendation to introduce an option of paying school fees in traditional wealth items, but it does not seem to have been widely incorporated on Epi at least (Shakuto 2010; Huffman 2007; Rousseau and Taylor 2012:171). A number of people do gain money by selling food to the local High School.

Jemima, who was accused by her partner's brother and his wife of snubbing their household fundraising for their daughter's school fees. However, Jemima, who already saw her partner's brother's household as better off, and benefitting from unjust favouritism from her partner's clan members complained that the reason she could not attend was because she had no money. If Jemima wished to arrange a similar fundraising it would be very difficult, as she did not have the means to provide the meat required, nor the support from her partner's clan.

Community leaders attempt to both maintain and limit the obligations of reciprocal contributions to fundraisings by attempting to manage the prices of locally produced goods. Prices for cooked food and mats³⁴ were collectively agreed at Council meetings. After one mother had charged 150 vatu per plate, rather than the standard 100, at a fundraising for her daughter's school fees, the Council approved a new standard price of 150 vatu, provided it was of good size and had meat on it. This was intended to limit the expense of supporting such events, and in line with an ethic of reciprocity. The continued expectations of reciprocal contributions means efforts must be made to ensure others can match these contributions.

At a Community Council meeting the council reminded everyone that school fees are about ensuring the "future of Lamen Bay", and thus every household should turn out at a fundraising to support the families. In fact,

³⁴ Although the 'Market Committee' encouraged the women vendors to up their prices on some vegetables, mostly purchased by teachers and government workers.

one Chief suggested that a record should be kept of all support given at a fundraising, and suggested it must be returned in kind if that family hold a fundraising themselves in the future. However, where a household was deemed to have the means to pay school fees themselves, fundraising was morally disapproved of for placing undue obligations on others. A strong moral discourse against seasonal worker or working households holding fundraisings developed because they were deemed to burden other households. When one regular seasonal worker and his wife held a fundraising for their only son's school fees, there was much criticism as it was felt they should have made sure they saved enough money.

Education as Investment in the Future: Giving is Receiving?

Many of the parents I spoke to talked of their struggle to pay school fees to ensure that their children could obtain good jobs in future. For instance, the AOG Pastor told me he wanted to make sure that when his daughters were married that they had an independent income and did not depend on their husbands. He told me that education is the "key to life... Change is coming tomorrow, and we need to make sure that our children are included."

The Primary School headmaster welcomed the timely payment of fees by seasonal workers:

On the 'good side', many of them have new uniforms, flip flops, umbrellas, school bags. They no longer burden the school so much. They hardly ever ask for pencils. ... But in the other schools I've worked in, the children are always asking. We have crayons and coloured pencils to give them, but the children have their own... Those that go to New Zealand pay

[school fees]. If neither of the parents works, they will never come to pay 15,000 vatu at once. Just a little at a time; many would come and give 2000 to start with... Or 3000. (One term is 5000). But when those that go to New Zealand return, they will come and give the full annual fee at once.

However, the headmaster described how improvements to standards of living are double-edged, and has a “bad side” too, in that children become accustomed to a different kind of lifestyle, which entails a different set of projects for the future:

I keep telling the Year Eights, “You must get a good education, because it’s not good if you stay here, and your parents have screens and solar lights and everything, but you grow up and you get married but you are using hurricane lamps. It will look bad, because you won’t be able to use the same lights as the others, because you are used to a ‘good house’.

When they get married, if they don’t get a good education, and the ‘scheme’ is closed, then these children won’t be able to live the same life that their parents provided for them. And for them to reach that standard will be hard, because they don’t have the same knowledge that their parents had. And when you see the children today, you see they don’t work like the older people did in the past.

The Headmaster added that a house and household goods were not the wisest long-term strategy for expenditure of wages. Rather, he argued that parents must prioritise a child’s education to equip them with the means to reproduce the same ‘standards of living’ that the parents are striving for:

If this scheme in New Zealand stops, where is your investment, the money for which you worked hard? If the scheme closes tomorrow, everyone will see that you did it to invest in your children, and too, the child will be able

to support himself because he has a strong foundation. But if it is just a house and solar, the child will not be able to achieve that if the scheme stops. It is better that you support the child in their schooling.

Even more important than a good house for securing the future of the household is investment in children's education. 'Investment' here does not necessarily entail calculated self-interest, but can be meant in the broader sense as "An act of devoting time, effort, or energy to a particular undertaking with the expectation of a worthwhile result" (Oxford Dictionary³⁵). Drawing on Munn, Graeber (2001:45) defines value as that which "requires an investment of human time and energy, intelligence, concern... One invests one's energies in those things one considers most important, or most meaningful." Notions of 'investment' can be inclusive of a variety of different- and often contradictory- motivations and values, albeit aimed at a better future, and aligned with the social reproduction in conditions of radical change, and uncertainty about the future (cf. Narotzky and Besnier 2014:S10). To the extent parents do spend large amounts of money on their children's education it is with the expectation – or hope – that their children will be able to obtain well-paid work. Although it is true that they often describe this in terms of expectations of returns, such as remittances and financial support in their old age (cf. Mitchell 2004:366), their concerns are, more broadly, of securing a good future for their children and the community at large.

³⁵ <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/investment>



Figure 26 Epi High School sign, Lamen Bay.

Like the Headmaster, the class teacher urged students that they must work hard at school to obtain a secure future:

I keep telling the pupils in the classroom, “Don’t you think this scheme will last forever. It will stop. And if you don’t have an aim for your education, you think that when you finish school you will go to New Zealand, one day you will find it really, really hard, because one day this scheme will stop. It’s not like your land, which will always be there, to make gardens on. This scheme belongs to different people”.

Whilst this is a warning to the children that they cannot depend on the fact they will be able to work in New Zealand or Australia as their parents have, the teacher’s emphasis on the value of education also expresses the increasing anxiety that future generations can neither rely on subsistence gardening for a secure future.

Many Li-Lamenu realise the scheme may be short-lived, and are also using the money to invest in their children's education against decreasing access of this younger generation to traditional land. But, unlike the teacher's quote above, there is even the fear that the next generation cannot rely on having access to enough land. Fears over land shortages and disputes, exacerbated by high population growth, are causing parents to pin their hopes for their children's security on their education and employment in the wage sector. A young woman, Rita, whose seasonal worker husband has spent the vast majority of his New Zealand earnings on buying an area of land from a local Chief (as I describe in 8.2) told me that their primary motivation for the transaction was to secure the future of their small children, and to prevent them being pushed out of the land due to a dispute. She said she worried about the children's future, especially if they had no land, but perhaps it would be alright if they were well-educated and managed to obtain 'good' jobs in town.

Unproductive Youth Going Astray

The young people have forgotten our traditional practices. They no longer know our stories. They only want to look at technology.

Mother, former MP

Deterioration of children's behaviour is often associated with influences from 'outside', whether experiences of urban life, or foreign goods brought back by seasonal workers. Many people blamed the fact that 'foreign things' were coming in for the fact children seemed to be losing traditional knowledge, such as gardening and language skills. A Primary School

teacher blamed some of the children's behaviour on seasonal worker parents buying them unnecessary goods:

Many times, when the parents come back from New Zealand, they bring things like stereos, videos, mobile phones, and DVD players for the children. It really distracts children's interest from their studies at home. They go home, and their so interested in doing all these things they forget their studies.... It's really a big issue. The older ones they keep texting other ones on their mobiles. The parents should only bring things that are good for the child, but the child says, 'I want this, I want that', and they don't realise they are creating a big problem.

Whilst some seasonal workers wanted to treat their children to desired items such as electronics and bicycles when they returned home, others deliberated over what the effect of such items would be on family life, and chose items they thought might encourage a child to learn new skills, such as musical instruments or laptop computers. When I went to interview a returned seasonal worker, and mother of three, she said:

When I came back the two children said 'Oh mummy, when we visit other children whose fathers have come back from New Zealand, they have this and they have that. They have just about everything'. But my reply was that, 'You must get a good education, that's my plan'. When I was still in New Zealand and I talked to them on the phone, I told them, 'I only want that your life is good with Father God'.... So I didn't bring anything for the children that would distract them... The youngest son has computer classes at school, so that's why I brought a laptop for him.... In my experience those children whose fathers go to New Zealand, their lives are different. But in my home, I don't want my children to have all these things. I want my children to live a 'local life', so their thoughts remain

good all the time. So when I came back, they asked me, 'What did you bring for us?' And I replied, 'The things I brought are clothes, and money just for paying school fees. So I paid for things to help your future'.

Youthful indifference amongst Li-Lamenu young people is often associated with exposure to 'town', as well as foreign things and lifestyles from 'outside' (cf. Sykes 1999:164; Mitchell 2004:368). Children and youth are often said to be losing 'respect' for elders and affines, and are generally ignorant of avoidance relations, as I discuss further in Chapter Six.

Furthermore, many were fearful that school leavers, unaccustomed to garden work, would take off to town. Town life is associated by rural dwellers with 'eating money' and 'wasting time'. Unless one's income allows enough surplus to support building a home and other lasting products, then one is merely 'eating money' and will have nothing to show for it. Young people in town were often told to 'go back' to the island, rather than 'wasting time'.

On the other hand, going to town can be a means of asserting autonomy and escaping the watchful eye and control of elders, an attractive prospect for youth (cf. Strathern 1975:137,256). Whilst Mitchell (2004) found that unemployed youths talked of 'killing time', this seems to express the fear of rural adults that youths will use time unproductively, or delay adulthood indefinitely (cf. Strathern 1975:88–93; Kraemer 2013:30). Mitchell (2004:369) understood young people's behaviour as the embodiment of a spatiotemporal shift, associated with wider socioeconomic transformations of globalisation and post-coloniality,

creating a “rupture in the narrative of place, movement and the purpose of work”.

Unmarried Ni-Vanuatu youths celebrate the passing of time while not working. ‘Spel nomo’ (“just rest”) (Figure 27) or ‘waet pej nomo’ (“just a white page”) are common phrases and typical captions on Facebook posts of photographs of young people posing for the camera. Whilst for unemployed youth this seems to denote a potential usefulness, rather than a waste (cf. Kraemer 2013:101), it also seems a celebratory defiance against adult responsibilities, and is incorporated into youth identities as a way of delaying obligations and responsibilities in contrast with married life (cf. Strathern 1975:301, 371–372).



Figure 27 'Spel Nomo'. Bench built by a young man, too young for seasonal work

This ethos is almost subcultural in that the youthful value on rest and play subverted many of the more formal types of positive behaviour associated with senior men (cf. Strathern 1975:371–379). Even young people working overseas in Australia or New Zealand, and likely working over fifty hours a week, will often post photos of themselves captioned with these phrases, suggesting they do not wish to appear as defined by work. But kin, especially those with whom they have joking relationships, will often tease them with replies such as ‘Nokat wok?’ (“Don’t you have work to do?”), or “Go find a job”. This does not suggest youth are rejecting aspirations for wage work: quite the opposite. The phrasing of this ethos comes about through the frustrations of youth unable to realise their hopes for a good paid job, but unequipped to live a life on the land.

Fears about ‘wasting time’ would seem to be contradicted by Li-Lamenu adults’ often proud statements about ‘Vanuatu time’ and ‘Island time’, or ‘Aelan ia’ (“this is island [living]”), i.e. the choice to rest whenever one feels like it. But I sense the fears of youth ‘wasting time’ is more about the limbo for a generation that seems to have turned their backs on gardening and subsistence livelihoods, but with no certainty of obtaining a livelihood in the commodity economy (cf. Maclean 1994:680). Young people are said to be ‘wasting time’ or delaying adulthood if they are not working towards something productively. Li-Lamenu adults often talk about youths ‘walking around’ in the sense of an aimless movement, whether around the village or in town. How this apparent laziness may impact their ability to marry and have children, and the future of those children, as well as fears over social reproduction, will be addressed in Chapter Six.

In an attempt to steer clear of either of these dead-ends, Li-Lamenu seasonal workers and their households are spending much of their income on secondary and tertiary education for their children, with the hope that they will have an advantage over less-educated peers in the future. Youth must be educated in order to be 'inside' a better future and included in economic development, not 'walking around' aimlessly for lack of productive work (cf. Mitchell 2004). However, the question remains whether Vanuatu's economy will be able to provide enough employment opportunities for increasing numbers of young graduates in the long-term, and whether people can still rely on overseas labour mobility for income in future.

There is some ambivalence over the value of education, vis-a-vis customary ways of life, particularly as the national economies in Melanesia have failed to absorb school leavers into the formal economy, and thus the possibility of alternative futures can be open to moral contestation (Demerath 1999:167). A senior schoolteacher told me that due to the Millennium Development Goals, the government is keen to progress every child to at least Year Nine. He felt this plan was detrimental because, in addition to putting strain on schools and teachers, many youths who are struggling at school, or who have little interest in education, are pushed to continuing, at considerable expense to their parents, even though they are unlikely to succeed or find employment. It was his view that such children are better off returning home and learning traditional cultivation techniques; he felt it was 'too late' to learn such skills past adolescence.

There is a long-held observation amongst researchers in Melanesia of that increased education may make young people unwilling or unskilled to do subsistence agriculture or cash cropping, but left with out opportunity for formal employment and the divergence between expectations of education, and work opportunities can cause malaise amongst both unemployed school leavers, and their parents, and kin (e.g. Conroy 1970; Pomponio and Lancy 1986:55; Demerath 1999).

The payment of school fees, increasingly to the final years of secondary schooling and even into tertiary education, suggests that the future may be one that is increasingly economically differentiated and based on urban-rural flows, which is also a source of anxiety. If educated children do secure white-collar work, income inequalities may become cemented as class differences in next generation. As richer families invest in education for their children in the hope they will obtain good jobs in town, which may entail a further withdrawal from wider kin networks in the long-term (cf. Eriksen 2008:79–80).

3. Summary: Producing a Different Future

In this chapter I have discussed how seasonal workers and their household members alike avoid ‘eating money’ and endure hardships and short-term sacrifices for the long-term good of the household. Although decision-making is often fraught with tensions, householders tend to agree on the long-term goals of the temporal extension and prosperity of the household, through the acquisition of durable houses and household goods, and the education of their children. Just as the ‘good house’ is understood in terms of long term investments in ‘standards of living’ and future household

welfare, so investment in school fees and education is also framed in these terms, but with the greater depth of projection into future goals, and potential for maintenance and reproduction of these standards.

For Li-Lamenu parents, education for their children allows them to imagine a future-with-a-future³⁶, which they hope will not only lend them security in their older age, but different standards of living for the generations that follow. There is a strong hope that they will be included in this new economy, and not left unemployed, where one's resources will be consumed by them and others, 'outside' the productive reciprocal relations of the Li-Lamenu community (cf. Maclean 1994:682). Anxieties over land shortages, together with increasing dependence on money, exerts a "simple reproduction squeeze" (Bedford, Bedford, and Ho 2009a; Nunns and Roorda 2010) and a pressure on households to plan for a different kind of future.

From the perspective of household decision-making, 'reproduction' is not replication, but the imagination of a different future in which people make a living through wage work. Visions of the future are increasingly concerned with household allocation, and intergenerational transfers, rather than the reproduction of relations between clans. In the next chapter, I explore how the shift towards household nucleation has been met with collectivising efforts, and how changing attitudes to time, work and money is giving rise to contests over what seasonal workers owe to the

³⁶ Thanks to Madeleine Reeves for this phrase

community, and how a shift towards household nucleation has been met with collectivising efforts to build the community.

CHAPTER FOUR

Building a 'Model Community': Work, Money and the Common Good

In the week I arrived in Lamén Bay in November 2011, Chief Waiwo, invited me to be introduced at a Community Council Meeting. The Chief sat at the front of the open Market House where the meeting took place, alongside the Council Chairman (a local businessman and Church Deacon) and the secretary. When it came to my turn on the agenda, Chief Waiwo beckoned me to introduce myself. I stood up, and, in faltering Bislama, tried to explain that I had come to do a research project on the changes going on in the area, and that I was drawn there since I had read in an official report that this area was a 'model community' in terms of participation in the seasonal work programme (Bedford, Bedford, and Ho 2009b:12; Nunns and Roorda 2010:48). No sooner had I said, "model community", there was a spontaneous round of applause from the villagers who had gathered there. I had the impression that it was not I they were congratulating, but each other.

After my speech, the Chief and the Chairman lead a discussion to thank the seasonal workers for the development they had brought. The Chairman stood up to say, "Thanks a lot to those of you who have made development with your houses and the things in which we can see that now this place is developing. Those around the island hear about it, and can see it." Then the Chief stood up and reaffirmed his sentiments, "It is a

good thing that we go and come and make... our homes. We have changed Lamén Bay, all the buildings.” But both the Chief and the Chairman took the opportunity to admonish seasonal workers for failing to live up to certain moral standards. Chief Waiwo said people should not only travel to New Zealand for money, they should also try to learn new ways of behaving:

Whose future is this for? It’s for your own children’s future. We should be glad about New Zealand... I want to see good things everywhere we go.... We keep building our houses, but the community is still asking. The Church is still asking... They all keep asking. The community is here: it is not complete. We need to change ourselves in some ways. We shouldn’t go just for money: we need to change our attitudes. Anything they have that is better, you bring it with you.

Soon after its entry in 2008, Lamén and Lamén Bay became cited as a ‘model community’ in evaluation reports of the seasonal work programme (Bedford, Bedford, and Ho 2009a; Nunns and Roorda 2010). This attention is a source of pride for Li-Lamenu people, for whom being considered a ‘model’ to be emulated is highly desirable source of fame or reputation. In this chapter I explore contradictory statements about socioeconomic change in terms of the ‘community’; figured both as a ‘model’ for managed migration for seasonal work and development, and under threat of dissolution through lack of respect and cooperation.

I first discuss how Li-Lamenu people value the fame and moral distinction achieved through being termed a ‘model community’, but also how this attention also provokes reflexive critiques of community members’

behaviours and decisions. In the second section, I describe the efforts of Chiefs and leaders of various community and church associations to make demands on seasonal workers' and their households' time, money and labour in terms of community. It is often said that seasonal workers think too much of money, and are individualistic or household-oriented, and not assuming their share in responsibility of working for the common good(s). In the final section, I discuss the positive and negative counter-narratives regarding the spatiotemporal transformations underway due to the 'flow' of money from overseas seasonal work.

4.1. The Model Community: A Contested Ideal

I had not anticipated, when I mentioned the "model community" reference, unable to find words to translate it, that the combination of terms "model" and "community" would be so widely understood, or greeted with such an enthusiastic response. The term 'community' no doubt was introduced as a result of colonial and neo-colonial influence, including the establishment of churches and polities such as councils and courts (cf. Rasmussen 2015:122, 135; cf. Rio 2014:172), and most likely has been reinforced in the context of development discourse. Nevertheless, the term community has become one of great import and significance in Li-Lamenu ideals and statements about the good life.

When Li-Lamenu people use the term 'community', they usually refer to a village, or the entire Li-Lamenu ethno-linguistic group. There has been much debate in the anthropology of the region about the presence or absence of solidary 'groups' in Melanesia (Wagner 1974; Strathern 1988), and a corresponding critique of the utility of analytical concepts such as

‘society’, or ‘community’ as an ethnocentric morphological category (cf. Curtis 2002:45; Martin 2009; Rasmussen 2015:12). For Wagner, colonial forms of governance redefined social relations in terms of “consciously sociopolitical bodies”, in an effort to “make groups visible” (Wagner 1974:112–114). Although the formation of ‘villages’, as with congregational, district, island, provincial and national identities, are profoundly influenced by colonial and postcolonial forms of governance and political economic interventions (Stasch 2010). I agree with Rio (2014:172) that in Vanuatu and elsewhere that these new types of group-based identities emerged as “fluid and pragmatic responses” to political economic transformations.

I suggest that it is the moral dimensions of belonging, shared identity and mutual obligation that hold the key to moral and political import and popularisation of the term “community”. The subjective orientation of being part of a ‘community’ is one that has become a part of a “morally valued way of life” (Calhoun 1980:106–107; cf. Creed 2006:4). As Stasch (2010:43) argued for the formation of villages as a concrete spatial form in Melanesia, the village’s subjective form of relating as ‘community’ “...is not self-evident or natural but is an incarnation of specific values, ideas, narratives, feelings, political and moral projects, and visions of what social life should be.” I understand appeals to ‘community’ as an assertion of a kind of moral order that may seek to co-opt the efforts and resources of others, and oppose, or even disguise, other modes of relating.

Li-Lamenu people are proud that the name of Lamenu and Epi is spreading nationally and internationally in relation to success in overseas work and local development and they aspire to be an example for others to follow. But, paradoxically, at the very time when attention from 'outside' is renewing pride in the community, long-held fears about the 'decline' of good relations are being exacerbated by changes brought about by the programme in which it is held to be such a good example. Further, Chief Waiwo's opinion given in the Council Meeting described above, regarding the community as 'incomplete' suggests that 'community' (komiuniti) is an on-going project of collective realisation – a dream, or aspiration (cf. Bainton 2010:11; Rasmussen 2015:164). But the constitution of community is a process of "the offering, reception and comparison of new meanings, leading to the tensions and achievements of growth and change" (Williams 1965:55).

For Li-Lamenu people the realisation of a good community involves the selective reform of certain things and behaviours by incorporating material and moral goods from 'outside', whilst at the same time retaining valued vernacular modes of relating and behaving deemed conducive to 'living together well'. Appeals to 'community' emerge in an on-going process of negotiation of social relations as a "contested ideal" (High 2006:42). Arguably this process has intensified in the period following being named a 'model community', as people seek to achieve 'good development' in the community, whilst living together well as kin and neighbours. In the section that follows I will describe efforts to channel seasonal work opportunities and incomes into 'developing' the community, before

turning in later sections to reflexive critiques over emerging 'individualism' and household nucleation.

The Good Name of the Community: Model Behaviour

Li-Lamenu people were delighted to be declared a 'model' for collective endeavours, and were keen to be seen as setting examples to be emulated across Vanuatu. They often compared themselves favourably to other villages in a variety of realms of social life in how they made good decisions about the allocation of money and resources. And, unbeknownst to me, there was excitement in the Presbyterian Church and Kindergarten also being designated 'model' examples.

The Li-Lamenu pride in terms of their 'good name' that travels beyond their shores recalls the way in which Munn (1992:6) describes how Gawans accrued value through the achieving 'fame' in Kula. The circulation of one's personal name, or community's name, overseas as an expansion of intersubjective spacetime. As Munn articulated, "the community asserts its own internal viability through the concept of its positive evaluation by these external others, expressed in the Gawan emphasis on fame (butu), the renown or good name of Gawa in this world" (Munn 1992:15; cf. Rasmussen 2015:123). Munn (1992:15) explained that Gawans hoped that through their actions, the name of the community would circulate, allowing it to achieve fame and influence with Kula trading partners, even in lands they had never reached in person. Arguably, the advent of the commodity trade, labour recruitment, missions and the colonial government led to the disruption of comparable exchange networks in

Vanuatu, but opened up new forms of reflexivity regarding how to achieve influence and regard, and extend one's spatiotemporal horizons.

The Li-Lamenu recruiter for Appleseed, Mary, was concerned to establish a good reputation for Epi workers in New Zealand and good community relationships at home. From the beginning of the first RSE recruitment opportunities on Epi in 2008, Mary started to record prospective seasonal workers' reasons for wanting to work overseas evaluating them according to their goals. She said:

I made it a criterion, and I told them from the beginning, "You go and come back, but make sure you make good use of your money. On my 'confidential forms' I recorded what they said they wanted to do with the money, and said I would check it. If they came back, I would check they really did what they had proposed on the forms, or what else they had done with the money.... I prefer that they benefit all the family. When you go 'out', the wife stays working hard for the children. Or, if you are a woman, the husband stays working hard with the children. So you come back, you must do something that benefits [others], because we want to maintain the community.

Mary said she would specifically try and put a church leader and a Chief in each group to take leadership responsibilities (cf. Bailey 2014a:148), and help to solve problems and disputes within the group, thus replicating the moral structure and authority of the village: "When I first heard about the scheme on the phone, I sat down for a long time after that I started to think, 'Good side, yes'. But there will also be the 'bad sides'.... That's why I came up with those rules... Then straight away I thought that I must

choose leaders, like Church leaders, and Chiefs.” Indeed, Lamen and Lamen Bay have become a ‘model community’ in that some of Mary’s initiatives regarding recruitment of workers and conduct overseas have been adopted by the Department of Labour and become part of the policy. Mary introduced a rule that Chiefs had to sign a letter giving permission for all seasonal workers to travel, as did their spouse if they were married. She added that she thought it was important that rules were in place from the beginning and, chief among these rules, those that caused problems with alcohol were banned from returning.

Like Mary, Li-Lamenu people often say that the community is both supported and undermined by the seasonal work programme, which it thought to have both a ‘good side’ and a ‘bad side’. There is a growing tension between household decision-making, and demands for cooperation and sharing beyond the household. This heightens fears that the ‘bad side’ of seasonal migration and wider socioeconomic changes may threaten to upset the ordered social relations and collective goals that had received so much ‘outside’ acclaim.

In practice, Mary’s rules and Chiefs’ decisions regarding respect for spouses and family relations, and alcohol, have often been ignored or undermined. Mary discussed with me how she felt recruits from other islands were jealous and trying to ‘spoil the name’ of Epi:

There was jealousy, something like that, that made them try to get close with some of the supervisors, trying to spoil, destabilise, the relationship that Lamen had with the company.... They were trying to spoil the reputation of Lamen Island, so they could take people from elsewhere....

But Lamén follow the rules, and they take it more seriously. People from Varsu district too, they had just gone there but started to play with the rules; they would drink, and drive. They were 'hiding' and drinking. But now many of them can no longer return.

There is a moral disapproval and a negative value on disrespecting or defaming someone else through cruel mockery or gossip, or harming the reputation of your clan, village or island through shameful actions, which is often termed as spoilem [pronoun]' ("spoiling them"), or spoilem nem ("spoiling their name"). For instance, when two old men performed love magic (*masing*) on visiting volunteers who were married women, they were said to be "spoiling the name" of Epi island.

Developing the Community

Mary told me that from the outset of her role as facilitating recruitment for Appleseed, she and the manager had agreed that the seasonal workers' continued participation should be conditioned on them returning to their home village and helping to 'develop' the community and the island generally. When I was taking a tour of Lamén Bay with Mary straight after my arrival, we talked with a visiting Pastor, who said that in Santo 'bush' many men had worked three seasons in New Zealand but had spent the money on solar panels and electrical goods, without improving the structure of their 'local' houses. The visitor laughed that sometimes they bought DVD players and laptops they could not even use. The visitor's comment about the Santo 'bush men' highlighted the fact that such goods were purchased without the 'good house' in which they should be stored, suggesting misplaced priorities, and implied that buying electronic goods alone is not an 'achievement' to be celebrated. Mary agreed, mentioning

that even in other villages on Epi mainland people had failed to use their savings to build a 'good house', in contradistinction to most Li-Lamenu workers.

More than just a material distinction of 'conspicuous consumption', the achievement of good houses and other desirable 'development' is seen as a marker of moral distinction for the community as a whole, often made in contrast with elsewhere. Mary had made a rule with the employers that any seasonal workers she recruited must return to Epi, and not stay on in town and "eat the money", or spend it on kava, alcohol and frivolities, "like those on Tanna and Ambrym". Mary suggested that workers from these other islands have failed to achieve a 'good house' and had not 'done anything' with the money, or they had 'wasted time' in town. Petrou (2015:61) recorded similar statements on Paama about the achievement of permanent housing through self-disciplined spending and careful planning and thus a moral achievement, when compared with other islands that just used their incomes 'olbaot' ("all about", any which way). Although few from the local area had worked through the RSE Programme, Paamese people still made similar positive evaluations of those that returned swiftly to the island to build a house, rather than spending the money on town living (Petrou 2015:174, 179).

The opportunity to gain wage work and save money, whilst remaining for most of the year in rural areas in which money was seen to be able to be used more productively was a huge part of the appeal of seasonal migration. As I discussed in relation to youth in Chapter Three, the

trappings of town are also seen as a lure for wasting money and time. As Chief Parakuluwo said of urban-based Wenia villagers:

Many people from this place are in Port Vila. But what work are they finding over there? They go over there and they have no house; they are renting and 'wasting time' Those of us who remain here have everything. We have cows, pigs, coconuts and kava. If those working over there are hit by any problems, and they need to return to 'their place', then when they get back here they will be at 'zero' again. Then people will say; "Why did they not do something for their future? The little money they had has been used up; it's gone.

Whilst Li-Lamenu people are proud of educated relatives who have found good (white collar) employment in town such as civil servants, they often disparage those who are resident in town but have poorly paid jobs, or no employment at all, saying they are just 'wasting time'. They have nothing to show for it. Even those that had been employed successfully but then retired could be said to be 'wasting time' if they remained in town, rather than returning to the island.

Increasingly, people are interpreting the on-going transformation of Lamén Bay and Lamén Island as if it is turning into a 'town'. For some people, such comparisons are part of a positive evaluation, as people associate it with achieving desired development and modernity (cf. Bainton 2010:2, 161). For instance, the transition to solar power can be seen as 'do it yourself' infrastructure where the government have failed to deliver desired development, in terms of infrastructure and amenities. Even a Vanuatu Post (Garae 2013) article opened with, "Travel along the coast of Lamén Island on Epi and you will be misled into believing Unelco

[energy company] has extended its power to that sleepy island too, as it is literally lit up with bright lights every night". But people in other villages did not necessarily perceive this moral distinction as good. Others around Epi would say that they saw Lamenu Bay as a 'town' compared with other villages, and whilst such statements were comments on material development or acquisitions, they also implied that Lamenu Bay lacked the community cohesion of other villages. They often made less favourable moral evaluations of some of Li-Lamenu conduct and lifestyle, such as the prevalence of land disputes and lack of cooperation.

Occupying Youth

Imagined development and desirable futures are often expressed in terms of 'goals' and 'vision', just as seasonal workers talk about household decisions in these terms, aspiring leaders and politicians are frequently expected to express their 'vision' for the community or island. As the Epi High School Principal, Mary had previously expressed her 'vision' to have more university graduates from Epi. Mary is one of very few to have completed higher education, and is concerned when young people leave school and return to the islands, which she associated with young pregnancy and drugs. As I discussed in the previous chapter, the idea of a misspent youth is a major anxiety for Li-Lamenu people, who stressed the importance of occupying younger people with productive work to keep them out of trouble.

One evening, I accompanied Mary to a 'dedication' and celebratory meal organised by Derek and his wife Elizabeth in honour of a young man from their clan, Mawa. The dedication was not for a house but for a

lawnmower, which was decorated with flowers and prayed over by a church Elder before the meal. It was under the instruction of Derek that Mawa bought the lawnmower in New Zealand at a considerable cost of 69,000 vatu (£460), as announced several times. The family said that he could cut people's grass to earn money. They had instructed him not to start building a house right away and that they preferred that he saved the money and builds his house in one go when he had enough money to pay for all the materials, rather than build gradually over years as others do.

Mawa's father was still in New Zealand and Derek had gone to Port Vila to greet Mawa at the airport, and escort him back to the island, reasoning if Mawa had been allowed to join his classificatory brothers in Port Vila, all the money would have been spent there. In fact, Derek also paid for the passage of Mawa's elder brother, who was present at the meal but was not given the same honour; he had returned from New Zealand the previous year but decided to remain in town where he spent all his savings. He did not even have the 3000 vatu (around £20) required to pay for his boat trip back to Epi. When Mawa returned, Derek checked his spending and savings and found them to be in order. Mawa told me that Derek looks after him like his own father and he had given him an advance to pay his fares and expenses, which he has since repaid.

Mawa had just returned from New Zealand and, at 21 years of age, had just met the minimum age requirements. Such was Derek and Elizabeth's will for Mawa to work overseas, the previous year they tried to send him to New Zealand under a false identity because he was still underage. Then

when a space opened up on the New Zealand lists after somebody dropped out, Elizabeth and Derek put the agent Mary under considerable pressure to add him to the list. Mawa presented Mary with a mat and cloth to thank her for his inclusion and Elizabeth referred to the tension over Mawa's inclusion in the seasonal work programme in her thank you speech. In a return speech, Mary replied that she was glad Mawa was given the opportunity, as it helps focus young people like him, and prevents them drifting to Vila. Instead they help to 'develop the island'. However, there are fears that youth are increasingly only willing to work for money and that the model of developing community through collective work projects is in decline.

4.2. Community Work

On 'Kindergarten Day' in 2012, the Kindergarten Committee in Lamén Bay organised a parade and gifts for the children. Following this a Church Elder came to dedicate the newly completed kindergarten building. He read the parable of the Good Samaritan and, after a prayer, he explained to the on-lookers, that the kindergarten was like the injured man in the Bible reading: "How many people walked past after the building was falling down in disrepair, but did nothing to help? God honours the 'few' that came to assist." Then he prayed over the building and opened the door.

Despite the fact the Lamén Bay kindergarten had been declared a 'model kindergarten' by the Coordinator based in Port Vila, the bamboo building had been rotting. Early in 2011, work began to build new cement walls, but with the exception of the Chairman's own residential section, and the

Presbyterian women's groups who were "faithful", turnout had been very low. The Chairman and another Elder were firm in reminding people that such work is not only the responsibility of the parents of the Kindergarten children, after all everyone would eventually have a family member attending kindergarten, and these children are the "future of Lamén Bay".



Figure 28 Opening of new kindergarten building, 2012. Theme: "Quality early childhood is the core of good knowledge"

The Chairman said he thought the low attendance was a relatively new phenomenon that had only arisen that year, and before that community work was very good. He blamed New Zealand as the main "excuse" for people not coming to work. He told me people no longer cooperated, and were reluctant to freely work for the common good. Now they have to employ people who purchased lawnmowers to cut the lawn (like Mawa in

4.1.), for instance, “The people who go to New Zealand, they work for their money, they don’t work for all of us. That’s the problem.... They never work for free. You have to pay them now.”

Despite constant contrasts between work and life in New Zealand where “time is money” and one must “eat money”, and island living where one can live for free (as I discussed in Chapters Two and Three), there is a perception that people increasingly expect money in return for work that in the past would be given freely as part of a generalised reciprocity or ethic of mutual help, with the expectation that the other would do the same for you, when the need arose. Perhaps the value of being one’s ‘own boss’ at home, also makes people resistant to impositions on their time. In this section I discuss the implications of changing evaluations of work for community work.

Is the Community Working?

The Chiefs call, but there is nobody. The bell rings for church, but church is empty. It's people's mindset: they are lazy.

Seasonal worker

Before [the Village] Chief would call everyone and they would all go. But now many people visit town and they think they know it all; they just do their own work.

Seasonal worker

People don't cooperate to discuss [community work]. They are too individualistic. They are weak in their work.

Seasonal worker/Youth Group Leader

Community work (komiuniti wok) has long been an important part of weekly routines across Epi, most likely influenced by missionary and colonial collectivising efforts, and the constitution of moral and spatiotemporal regimes based on new modes of relating. The advent of church and state gave rise to new forms of collectivity and association, including districts and congregations (Eriksen 2008; McDougall 2009; 2014). New ideas of social relations and ethics of egalitarian communitarianism emerged in response (Rio 2014:172; cf. Eriksen 2008). Community and church arrangements have become a visible and conscious object of thought and action, as elsewhere in Melanesia (McDougall 2009:7, 14; 2014; Rasmussen 2015).

Li-Lamenu people have embraced and elaborated many of these forms of association and put enormous amounts of time and energy ensuring they operate well. Community Council meetings provided a forum for a myriad of different committees to be formed and report back, each representing a common 'good', resource or event, such as the Market, Primary School, Kindergarten, water supply, and collective celebrations such as Christmas. Any labour required for building, maintenance and gardening work on these public assets was typically communal work, organised by the Chiefs and Council, or the Church in the case of church buildings and areas.

However, people say that due to the seasonal absences of a large part of the community working overseas, as well as a general change in attitudes towards collective labour, community work is in decline. In an interesting

turn of phrase, people repeatedly talked of problems regarding “human resources” (human risos), or “manpower” (manpaoa). At the Council Meeting I first attended, one Elder called for a limit on numbers of agents allowed to recruit in the local area to ensure enough people remain.

Working for money or working for the community?

Those that go over there, they do not recognise our struggle to keep the community in place... [The seasonal worker] works over there for his own money, but those of us who stay here, we stay as “slaves” working free for the community.

Chief Waiwo

Everyone has a lot of money- they don't want to be bothered by all the Chiefs now.

Seasonal worker

Li-Lamenu Chiefs’ and church leaders’ complaints³⁷ about seasonal workers in general often relate to the loss of the seasonal workers’ time and effort during their period away and requests for financial contributions are often justified in terms of this absence from community work and roles. Council and church alike have attempted to oblige seasonal workers to contribute to the community on their return and these demands for financial contributions are often framed as compensation for the seasonal workers’ absence from community work and activities (cf. Torres 2015:359). In demands for cooperation in komiuniti wok and

³⁷ Luke Craven (2015) recorded similar statements in Lamenu Bay

monetary contributions (kontribusen) from seasonal worker households, community members and especially Chiefs and church leaders are expressing expectations of the extension of mutuality beyond the household. These demands and expectations of community, or forms of association, can often be in tension with wants or needs at household level.

Chief Waiwo said that some persistent recruits come back “different”, as if they have become “greedy”. Craven (2015:8), who carried out short-term fieldwork in Lamén Bay after my departure, recorded an explicit statement to this effect: “Community has become a dirty word. Sometimes when you mention the word community, ears turn off because people think ‘I don’t want to do things for the community. I want to do them for my household. I want to do them for my family.’” Likewise, a prominent ex-MP told me that she believed that the ‘good houses’ springing up in Lamén Bay, which tend to be spread out and have private yards, often hedged off from the road, were conducive to villagers “hiding away”, and not taking part in community work.

As Chief Waiwo perceived it, problems are exacerbated by the persistent return of the same workers each year, which not only affects their role in the community but also prevents others from having the opportunity to migrate. Chief Waiwo, who was shortly to be leading the first group to Australia³⁸, told me that he had made it a condition for his ten recruits that they must give whatever the community asks for, in order to set an

³⁸ See 2.2.

“example” for the rest of the community. Chief Waiwo said he wants everyone to benefit, and minimise the negative impacts, “Whatever the church says, you bring. What the community asks, you give. And we will make sure that anyone who wants to go through this scheme agrees... so that there is no ‘talk’. I want to ensure everyone is happy.” ‘Talk’: complaints or gossip about the moral failings of others, is a socially valuable way for people to sanction and regulate the behaviours of others in a relatively egalitarian ethic (Gluckman 1963a; Brison 1989). But the Chief did not manage to deflect such ‘talk’: whilst he was in Australia, a number of people criticised his absence, suggesting he had neglected his duty to the community. When I returned to Vanuatu later that year and asked the Chief how he and his wife had spent his savings from Australia, he told me they were in the bank, for his sons’ school fees.

This tension is evident in seasonal workers’ response to Council demands. The demand at a Community Council Meeting that New Zealand returnees pay a 2000 vatu annual ‘contribution’ rather than the usual 500, because they are ‘out’ of the community and do not do community work was met with anger and resistance. Seasonal workers variously argued that government workers never had to pay such a fee, or that they and their families continue to do community work, which now takes place mostly when the numbers overseas are at their lowest. At the meeting, it was decided that government workers and business holders should also pay the higher contribution, especially as businesses were growing due to seasonal work incomes.

It seems that those who have been to New Zealand for more seasons may be more likely to make donations. In a small survey I conducted of forty-five seasonal workers whilst in New Zealand, half said they were intending to contribute money to church, Chiefs or community groups. However, those who had returned to New Zealand for the fourth or fifth time said they were planning such donations three times more often than those that had come for the first time. Perhaps they had achieved main spending goals, but likely they also wish to deflect such 'talk'.

'Working for money' versus 'working for free' and working for oneself or one's household versus the community at large, are setting the terms of debate at home. Melanesian and other 'gift' or 'relational' economies have contrasted the disembedded nature of labour under capitalism, with the way in which work is deeply embedded in kinship relations and mutual obligations (Sahlins in Godelier 1980:167; Gregory 1982; Curry and Koczberski 2013:338). Narokobi (in Sykes 2002:18) contrasts the ethos of giving work to others in a spirit of kinship, and the labour-time given up to employers, explaining "To work for others is part of the Melanesian spirit of caring for others." However, those who remain and see themselves as performing disproportionate amounts of communal labour are increasingly suggesting it is *they* who are treated like slaves by seasonal workers, in statements that recall seasonal workers' statements regarding unjust demands from their overseas employers. Appeals in terms of 'community' obligations and benefits are used to make demands on seasonal worker households for redistribution of money, and moral critiques of their absence from communal work.

Phrasing claims on seasonal worker households in terms of 'community' places obligations and demands on seasonal workers that are meant to transcend relationships and obligations based on household and clan relations and affiliations. Community leaders often berated seasonal workers for only 'working for money', or working for themselves, and refusing to 'work for free' for others. Working for money seems now necessary for household and community reproduction, but nevertheless seems threatening to the relational economy on which community relations are supposed to be built, in which labour is for others.

The very meaning of work is subject to contestation; is it something owed to others, or one's individual capacities that one can choose to sell on the market, or is it wage labour that is immorally appropriated by employers. Paradoxically, the very statements of Chiefs about 'working for free', or working 'like slaves' reasserts the conceptual links between calculation of work, time and money. The discourse about 'working for free' contains a contradiction, in that it both berates seasonal workers for not performing community work, but in invoking 'slavery' suggests that 'working for free' is somehow exploitative in itself. Further, demands for monetary contributions from seasonal workers as compensation from their absence from community work implies that there is a monetary equivalent, or at least substitute, for labour-time.

Distinctions between working for 'oneself' and working for 'others' can take different moral tones according to perspective. Arguably, part of the

resistance of seasonal workers to demands for compensation for their absence came from an ethic of wanting to be 'one's own boss' at home, and not having to submit to demands that appeared quite arbitrary. The monies requested by the Council were relatively small compared with the amounts of money that seasonal workers typically accumulate overseas (around 200,000- 1 million vatu). And neither did the demands for community work seem particularly burdensome; most weeks went by without any community work at all, and people were divided into residential groupings in terms of contribution, to work by rotation.

It seems resistance to community work, and demands for contributions, were at once defiance to the imposition of authority, when it was seen as undue. Likewise, statements that people are too busy, or do not have time (nogat taem) seem less a statement about time scarcity, as rejection of demands that seemed not worthwhile, or unreasonable (Smith 1994:221). Similarly, Bailey (2014a:199) found that seasonal workers in North Ambrym, an area in which initial recruitments were part of a pilot scheme obligating workers to contribute sums to the Development Council, had also stopped donating to the community, although continued to give tithes to the church. Like on Ambrym, Li-Lamenu seasonal workers often invoked distrust of community leadership or committees, and suspicions of corruption or incompetence.

Where commands to work or share are more direct, they tend to be less successful than occasions for people to voluntarily give time and labour as expressions of mutual support and unity. As Rio (2014:170) recently

argued, the influence of traditional authority figures characterised as 'big men' or 'great men' in Melanesia is limited by the value on individual, and I would add household, autonomy, and there are "...clear limitations on how much influence a person can realize or demand, before he becomes subject to fears about sorcery attacks, jealousy, gossip and foot-dragging when it comes to carrying out work and other odious demands."

Free Gifts: Offerings and Tithes

Although seasonal workers were resistant to demands for contributions, they were often generous in voluntary gifts figured as Christian offerings. Arguably this tension between respect for hierarchical influence, and a value on autonomy has become intertwined with forms of communitarian leadership and new models for egalitarian modes of relating, such as Church and market trade, that have emerged in the context of socioeconomic changes (Rio 2014:171). It seems that church offerings and tithes were seen as a voluntary sacrifice that could bring blessings on the giver and their household.

The finding of fees for tertiary education had proved a particular anxiety for Atis John, the Pastor at the United Pentecostal Church in Lamien Bay. Twice, he told me, they had to pray to God to find the fees, and twice they had miraculously been paid. On first occasion Atis John owed 78,000 vatu (£520) for the fees of his two boys who were schooling at St Patrick's secondary school and he prayed and fasted because he knew he could not pay the required amount. Then one day his wife received a letter that contained a cheque from an unknown donor for the exact sum inside. Then in 2011, their elder son, who was studying law at University of South

Pacific, owed 90,000 vatu to the university. Miraculously, one day he went to the office to find it was already paid. Atis John insisted that they could only have been miracles, given as a 'blessing' because they had been faithful with their tithes. He said that everything belongs to God, and you cannot receive His blessing unless you are willing to let go of everything else and quoted Malachi 3:10 "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it." This scripture, and its summary, "giving is receiving" was popular amongst Li-Lamenu people; not only was it the High School motto (Figure 26) but I also saw it written on notices for church fundraisings.

In contrast to contributions to the Council, financial contributions to the Church in the form of donations and tithes increased after the RSE scheme opened. I was told with pride that Varmali Session, the Presbyterian polity on Epi in which Lamenu and Lamenu Bay is located, boasted that it had been declared a 'model', as it was the only one that had completed all its dues. Lamenu Bay alone pays 140,000 vatu (around £930) of dues each year. The Presbyterian Pastor, who represented a number of village churches (or 'pulpits') in the same district, said the congregation in Lamenu Bay was one of the few that had been meeting the 2600 vatu per month that was to pay his salary. Other villages had been unable to raise the required amount, as they had not sold their copra. He said that in Lamenu Bay, by contrast, money "flows", as there are wage-earning teachers, overseas seasonal

workers, tourism and custom from people awaiting the arrival of ships and planes.

The Pastor added that when compared with other villages in his district, Lamén Bay tended to give more tithes, but that participation in community work is 'slack'³⁹. A common complaint by leaders was that seasonal workers continue to return overseas year after year and they do not consider staying back for a year to help the church and community. It is others who are left burdened. Like associations such as the school committees, the Church had problems in that many of their office-bearers or potential leaders also wished to migrate. One Youth leader told me he was keen to go to New Zealand, but he felt tied to the role until he finds someone willing to replace him in his role. Another Elder and music leader had been trying for some time to try to train someone to take on his role, and felt he could not go to New Zealand until he has done so.

However, many Church office holders that engage as seasonal workers feel that the Church should appreciate their work more, because they carry on their leadership role and evangelise. A female Deacon, who had travelled on several occasions, was cross when the church tried to demand that she

³⁹ However, even the Pastor was subject to gossip about shirking work. At a Session meeting long after his appointment, a Deacon said that many people were complaining that the community had worked to repair the Pastor's house, and continued to cut the grass but the Pastor rarely slept there. There was much gossip he was too busy preparing copra in his home village, another village in Varmali District.

cease from seasonal migration for a while and return to her role on the island year-round. She argued that she was busy performing Christian duties whilst in New Zealand, and 'bringing souls to Christ'. Whilst they were in New Zealand, many seasonal workers told me that they plan to give donations or gifts to the church and subsidiary groups including Sunday school, Youth and women's groups on their return to New Zealand, often in recompense for their absence from a role they previously had in the group. A Presbyterian Women and Mother's Union (PWMU) member said that she planned to give a gift to the PWMU to say 'thank you'. Another woman had provided two tonnes of cement to the church for an entirely new church building to be built in her village on Epi.

In general, seasonal workers seemed to respond better to requests for money when the donations were seen as voluntary, rather than in response to direct demands of certain amounts. It seems that when donations are sanctified as church offerings, they carry a moral-spiritual force; even when people seem decidedly reluctant, their capacity to refuse seems somewhat diminished. Some migrant groups organised collective donations whilst they were in New Zealand, typically by arranging a church service, where donations were voluntary and allocated to an agreed project. Some groups arranged amongst themselves to donate a day's earnings to rebuild the kitchen at the local hospital, and others brought solar panels for the hospital, the Pastor's house, and the house of the young church Elder who had deferred from working overseas and stayed behind to oversee the youth work. Purchasing the materials before returning to the island was a practical strategy that avoided problems

related to the 'misuse'⁴⁰ of money, and was suitable for public presentation in its visibility.

Li-Lamenu people prefer gifts to the church to be figured as voluntary donations, given with a 'glad heart', whilst they resist obligatory demands for fixed amounts. This was even the case in a particular church fundraising, in which unlike regular offerings or village-based fundraisings, the donation was requested as a fixed sum. On 1 July 2012, the Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu (PCV) called for a nation-wide appeal called 'Yumi Kivim' ('We Give') where they requested that every church member (man, woman and child) across Vanuatu must give 1000 vatu. A Church Elder compared this project with the Five Year Plan for 'self-reliance' that was spoken of by the new government when Vanuatu achieved political Independence in 1980. He said that they hope that the achievement of economic self-reliance will set an example, 'open a road' and 'set a direction' for the Republic too.

The Elder told me that the Presbyterian Church in Lamenu Bay 'tries hard' with its tithes and offerings, unlike some other congregations. I mentioned that some comment that Lamenu Bay has more money than other villages, but he disagreed saying that congregations with more land should find it easier to raise money, saying their church comes top because "we give"

⁴⁰ 'Misuse' is a common term used to suggest corruption of public virtue, and the appropriation of community funds for private vice (including distributing narrowly with close kin and clan members). Sometimes people say such money has been 'eaten', or is 'in the pocket'.

(“Lamen Bay hemi olsem from we yumi kivim”). At first he told me that New Zealand returnees are good at giving, but retracted this later on, saying that ‘some’ are willing to give, but some ‘freeze’ their money to pay for luxuries and their continual return, without thought for remaining to work with the church. But some families questioned the policy, particularly the same charge being applied for children and widows. Others said it represents too many demands from the church, which already asks for tithes and offerings. One man (who rarely attends church), who had travelled to Australia, commented that white people have ‘run away’ from churches because of excessive demands such as this, and he was thinking of changing congregation.



Figure 29 'Yumi Kivim' Celebration; The banner reads "The 'Road' for achieving Economic Self-Reliance"

The amount raised at the Yumi Kivim fundraising exceeded all expectations and initially became a source of pride for Lamén Bay residents, reinforcing their pride that the Lamén Bay congregation should be seen as a 'model'. But, there was some anger when it transpired that the church and the district were receiving back in funds from the Presbyterian Church less than the sum they had raised, because the funds were being redistributed to other departments or areas of church administration. Several people suggested that it was not fair and that, in future, the money should be retained by the local church and district (as is usual for local fundraisings), rather than going to the central headquarters for redistribution. People felt that community resources should be pooled for use at community level, but not allowed to dissipate 'outside'. In the next and final section, I will discuss the positive and negative counter-narratives relating to the increased flow of money in the community, and attempts to contain its effects for the good of the community.

4.3 Money Flows

Fundraising and Eliciting the Community

Whilst the Council expected dues from all residents, committees were mostly financed through fundraisings, the dates of which were coordinated and publicly announced by the Council. Each of the community associations were requested to provide the dates of their fundraisings well in advance, so people had adequate time to find the money required to attend the event, and so that they were adequately spaced out throughout the year (Figure 30). Community members were strongly expected- morally obliged- to 'support' fundraising events by purchasing food for the family, often plates of rice and soup for lunch, and

laplap to save for the evening meal, whilst men would buy kava. These obligations were felt so strongly that people often have to make an effort to find the money in order to do so, and sometimes asked a family member working overseas to send money to fund their fundraising purchases (cf. Eräsaari 2013:196).

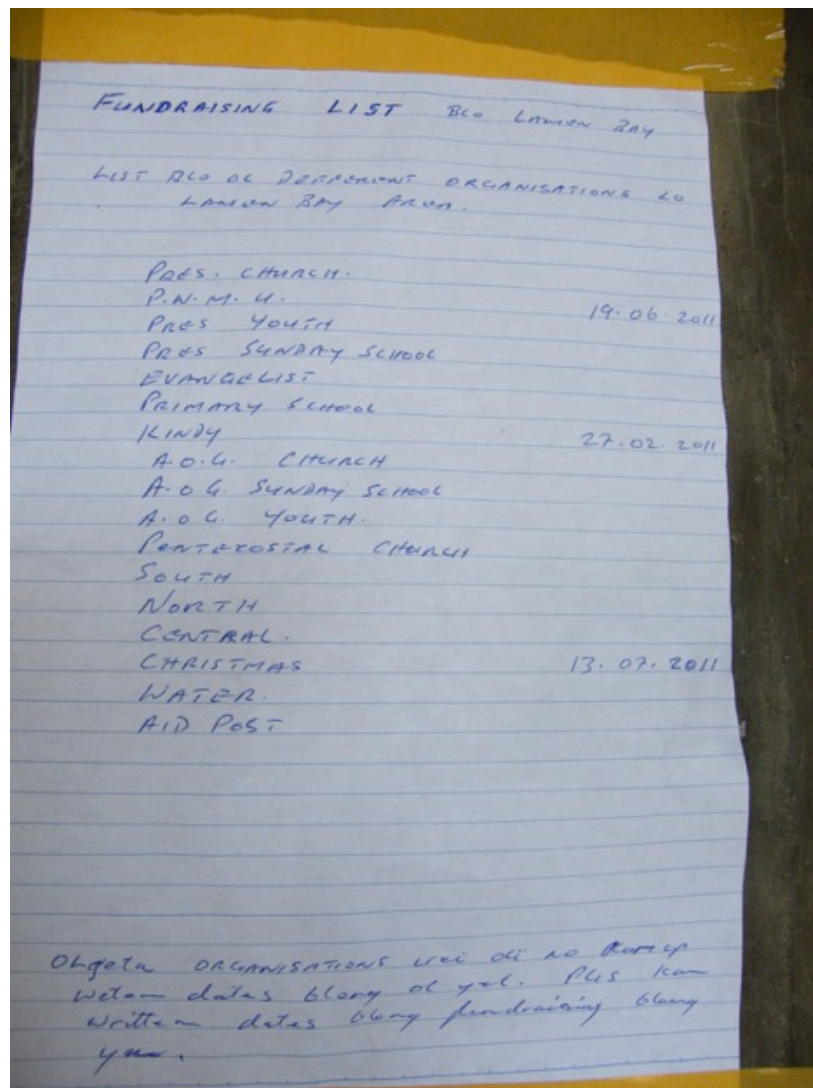


Figure 30 Proposed Fundraising List, Lamen Bay 2012

Fundraising events can be seen as redistributive mechanisms, but whilst household fundraisings can function to redistribute money and resources to other households in need, collective fundraisers allow surplus money to be accumulated for the Church, or other associations (Gregory 1980:648).

Whilst the logic of inter-clan exchanges at life-cycle rituals tend to entail 'gift-debts' to be repaid at future events, as I describe in Chapter Seven, the 'sacrifices' made by households in giving to collective fundraisings entail no such debts to the donors that demand a return (Gregory 1980:647).

Fundraisings are also occasions for creating a subjective orientation to the community, a context for sharing and cooperation, and being part of a whole (cf. Eriksen 2008:101). Like Stasch (2010:56), I suggest that the rich theorisation in Melanesian anthropology of how relationships are drawn out through ritual and feasting practices, can be applicable to understanding how village communities are made through a temporal process, "...in which societies alternate or mediate between different visions of social life, thereby living their most basic value commitments in a more intensified form, or confronting more directly the contradictions and synthetic possibilities of competing values."

I understand the Li-Lamenu appeals to community work and donations as the processual creation or the 'elicitation' (cf. Wagner 1974; 1981:68; Wagner 1986a:xv) of the community. Wagner (1986a:215) defined elicitation as a process which "...implies a seemingly indirect and reactive or competitive inducement to action... instead of literally commanding or explaining what the actor is to do, the actor is confronted with the contingency in which he is to act." Wagner (1986a:xvii) described how Barok social relations are implemented and iconified in the image of ritual feasting in the men's house, or 'taun'. Similarly, I suggest that appeals made in terms of 'community' are aimed at inspiring collective action and

cooperation and sharing, culminating in an 'image' of their collective achievements, whether in the form of a collective event such as a fundraising feast, or a material commons such as a school or church building.

However, as has long been argued in the context of Melanesian ritual exchanges, food distributions unite households or clan groups that share food allocations, but differentiates them from others (Gregory 1982:51; cf. Foster 1990:57). For instance, Rio (2014:185) suggests that ritual food distributions in North Ambrym both erase any hierarchical or individualising distinctions, and destroy wealth, the accumulation of which may lend itself to assertions of individualised power. For Rio, not only do such distributions prevent the formation of individualism, but also a collective whole; he suggests that just as heaps of food are further divided into allocations to be dissolved into household allocations, so any image of community or unity cannot last. But Eriksen (2008:104–105) likens collective fundraising events in Ambrym to ceremonial exchanges, arguing that both entail the 'circulation' and 'communalisation' of 'individual produce'. Whilst ritual occasions reinforce clan alliances and especially relations of affinity, emphasised by the allocation of foodstuffs and wealth to different clans according to their kinship links in a long-term cycle of reciprocities in 'between-group' relations and alliances, community fundraisings are more specifically about affirming the mutuality that unites the community, through patterns of sharing.

In this respect, there are important distinctions between collective community or church-based fundraisings and celebrations, and life cycle rituals that serve to reproduce relations between clans. In contrast with ‘differentiating’ gifts of food at life cycle rituals, Li-Lamenu appeals made in terms of the ‘community’ are intended to collectivise clans and kin into one unitary group composed, like a household or clan writ large, in terms of men, women and youth. Church and community events as contexts for sharing and cooperation, and represent efforts to build a moral community based on sameness and shared membership, or part to whole (cf. Eräsaari 2013:221). In the context of such events, people act more like brothers and sisters, or members of one group, unlike at life-cycle rituals and affinal exchanges, where the different *pamerasava* eat separately, and assert difference and complementarity, rather than sameness and unity.

Collective acts and their material achievements are iconic of the realisation of ‘community’ against uncertainty and anxiety over its future (cf. Stasch 2003b). Rather than seeing rural communities as survivals of a past moral order, Stasch (2010:56) adds that for village residents, “...concrete villages are also lived as sites of orientation to the future”. Likewise, I suggest the Li-Lamenu stress on ‘community’ in speech and making mutual claims and evaluations on one another acts as an appeal to collective unity as a future-oriented moral orientation, and a form of ‘living together well’, but this entails a conscious process of negotiation in tension with a refractory process of increasing social differentiation, individualism and household nucleation.

Even complaints about a decline in social relations and cooperative behaviours may help to recreate the idea of community, “by challenges that force it into consciousness and set up its renegotiation” (Wagner 1986a:54). Through speech acts including complaints and admonishments as well as direct demands or requests, people are induced to react or respond. Even where these efforts are not directly successful, ‘community’ is reinforced through further complaints or accusations that reinforce expectations of mutual obligations.

In the next section, I will discuss counter-narratives regarding the contested use of money in transactions between kin. Li-Lamenu people complain about the increasing monetisation of transactions of food and services, which they suggest is undermining relations of mutual support and sharing. However, others may depict these transactions as mechanisms for the circulation of money, and a positive step towards economic development and collective autonomy, or self-reliance.

‘Money Talks’: from Cooperative to Private Enterprise

The use of money and fundraisings as collectivising occasions, as well as a means of redistribution, belies assumptions that money depersonalises relations and destroys the community. Parry and Bloch (1989:5) famously critiqued the assumption that money is a kind of acid, dissolving social relations and corroding communitarian bonds, and that “...once objects have become commodities in external trade, they inevitably tend to become commodities within the community and to dissolve the bonds of personal dependence between its members. Independent communities become dependent, and dependent individuals become independent.”

They (1989:8) suggest that monetisation alone does not indicate a declining 'moral economy', nor can one easily classify transactions as 'gift' or 'commodity', or personalised versus commoditised; after all, even under Western capitalism, "money talks" (1989:11; cf. Hart 2009). Although money need not entail depersonalisation or 'commoditisation', but can be used to perform and even enhance gift exchanges (Gregory 1980:648), I suggest general-purpose money lends itself to moral ambiguity, and this means it is often subject to ambivalent and tense arguments about the appropriate uses and limits for monetary transactions.

Li-Lamenu people say that money is increasingly changing hands for goods and services that in the past would have been given as a part of an expectation of generalised reciprocity, in Sahlins' (1965) terms, or as Graeber (2011a:94) prefers it, 'communism'. Whilst Li-Lamenu people take pride that now 'money flows' and circulates in the community, they can also lament the fact that relations once based on sharing and mutual help, are increasingly becoming monetary exchanges. During the household survey, I visited the home of a man who had returned to Lamenu Bay after many years living and working in Port Vila. Now a church Elder, he told me he was dismayed to find that some of the cooperative and sharing ethos that he had grown up with in his younger days and come to associate with island life was eroding:

Lamenu Bay is almost like Port Vila now- it's getting so people are depending on money alone: if you ask a girl to wash she will expect money. Or to work in the garden. Even children helping their father prepare kava will expect 100 vatu. If you don't give money, you have to give kava and cigarettes. "Money talks". Before, people would work for

free for someone. If you don't give money today, people aren't happy, they will no longer come. Now, if you bring (surplus) food from the garden you must sell it, whereas before people would give it away for free.

Like the oft-repeated statements that people are increasingly unwilling to 'work for free', it was also often said that assistance or foods once given out of obligations of care, duty or respect towards kin are increasingly being displaced by expectations of immediate monetary reward. Li-Lamenu people would comment that the selling and buying of foods more generally, as well as for assistance and work in kind (such as building a house or garden assistance), where immediate, or only slightly deferred, cash payment is replacing what I'm told were customary sharing behaviours and obligations of mutual assistance. As anthropologists elsewhere in Melanesia have long-noted, for many tasks such as building a house or planting a large yam garden, people would rely on extended kin members, who could then expect the a return in kind, or a share of the produce, when their time came (cf. Carrier and Carrier 1989:205). As another elderly man, and church Elder, told me, "Before life was really good, people had compassion for each other, but not much any longer. They would have shared food. If a woman gave birth, all the women would collect firewood and take food to her." But this man too now made cash through selling fruits and vegetables to others on Lamenu Island; he was renowned for his pineapples. He said that there was no longer any money in copra, but luckily returnees for New Zealand would come to buy his crops.

Creating Markets: An Ethic of Circulation

Buying and selling foods, as well as mats and other items of domestic manufacture, were a means of encouraging the circulation and redistribution of wealth from seasonal workers and waged professionals to those – especially older people- unable to participate directly. People repeatedly told me in my household survey that it was easier to find money now for everyday needs and older people could make some cash by selling mats, baskets or vegetables. The benefits could spread beyond Lamén Bay, particularly to women from other mainland villages who arrived twice a week to sell vegetables at the market, which took place in a large Market House⁴¹ on the shore.

The idea that money ‘flows’, or ‘circulates’ (goraon) in Lamén and Lamén Bay was often positively stated by Li-Lamenu people, who were not only proud to be seen as a place of ‘development’, but could see that each time money changed hands, it allowed others to benefit that may not have had opportunity for wage work, for they could sell vegetables or mats to those that did. This effect of money flowing into a local economy leading to further transactions of goods and services, and often boosting production and demand, is known in migration studies as a ‘multiplier effect’ (Safri and Graham 2010:110; e.g. Connell and Brown 2005:32; Gibson and

⁴¹ The Market House was funded by an ex-MP and, like the church, the land for the Market House and been given to the community by the widow of a late Chief, and its prominent central location gave it pride of place in Lamén Bay, where it became the main venue for collective events.

McKenzie 2013a:16). Small businesses, such as transport, selling benzene or stores, have become more viable in that there is a lot more money in circulation locally, and the fact that most households have access to income from overseas work means less fear of jealousy, sorcery or depletion of resources through demands from kin.

The circulation of money is increasingly being emphasised over reciprocal like-for-like exchanges, albeit with based on containing these 'multiplier effects' within the community. This shift from sharing and reciprocity with foods towards selling and buying, due to the increasing emphasis on household funds over generalised reciprocity between kin, was also reflected in the rapid but significant rise and fall of 'road markets', also known as '20 Vatu', that sold cooked food and snacks to kava drinkers and others, mainly teachers from the High School who lacked gardens. Inspired by their popularity in Vila, about six opened up just along Lamén Bay's waterfront over in the three months or so after my fieldwork commenced and a further four on Lamén Island. By the time I did my household survey in February many women listed it as a principal source of obtaining cash for the household, although the stalls seemed in decline by the time their partners returned from New Zealand. It seems that Road Markets were more effective at creating supply than demand, and perhaps the injunction on eating money helped to deter a large customer base.

Businesses or commodity transactions are often deemed desirable if they offer a 'market' for others to sell their produce, and thus offer opportunities for households to obtain cash income. Tim, the owner of the

Tourist Bungalow at Lamén Bay and also the Council Chairman, told me “We buy mats from the women to put inside the houses. We buy bread... A business like a bungalow, you can say it is like a market... When I first made it, everyone was cross at me. They didn’t know; they didn’t have any idea. Now, they are happy about it.” However, rather than reflecting a wholesale endorsement of commoditisation and the ‘invisible hand’ of the market over mutual obligation, this ethic of circulation pertains to encouraging a flow of money within the community.

Rather than freedom from lasting obligations and relations of indebtedness, advocates of business activity emphasise how commodity transactions between kin create opportunities for others to win a share of the money from overseas, and bring prosperity and fame for the community as a whole. For instance, the women that headed the ‘Market House Committee’ told me that road markets and sales of garden produce between kin should be seen as a positive, because buying local produce contains the benefits within the locality, “It means that the money stays inside the community, and it doesn’t go the Chinese stores, and ‘get lost’.”

Further, this woman’s statement expressing antipathy to Chinese stores reflects a common view amongst Li-Lamenu people also that flows of money can have the most benefit when ‘contained’ inside the community. In emphasising the autonomy or ‘self-reliance’ of the community, or congregation and aims to guarantee the conditions for “living together well”. Following Maclean (1994:667), ‘autonomy’ here is meant as a ‘stance against the world’, or ‘the outside’, and a grounding in particular ties to

people and place, rather than independence as freedom from these obligation and ties. Whilst local entrepreneurs can be admired, this is not the case for outsiders who wish to start a business, unless they are conducted in such a way that allows local people to profit, such as buying local produce.

The Presbyterian Church in Lamén Bay had also begun to look to harness some more flows of money in Lamén Bay. The district Session of the Presbyterian Church reported that they wish to open a 'community store' in Lamén Bay. The idea for opening church stores was initiated by a Korean missionary, who proposed that the church could import goods directly. The 'capital' for the community store was to come from the churches of Epi. The Church Elder told me that the stores would help to 'develop' Vanuatu, as local people will benefit, rather than Chinese businessmen. But, when I spoke with the Elder, the church was struggling to find a venue for the store; they had asked several people with private stores in their houses, but they had declined. The proliferation of 'private' stores, along with accusations of financial mismanagement was also blamed for the demise of cooperative stores⁴² on Lamén.

⁴² The British colonial government had instigated the cooperative movement as a means of fostering economic development. Cooperative stores functioned successfully for several decades from 1964, while copra was the main source of income; copra ships would carry supplies for the stores, and collect the copra that people had sold via the cooperative. Those members who had shares would receive a dividend.

‘Privatisation’ as a model of free commerce rather than cooperative resources were also suggested as models for development in that it forced the family holding the enterprise to take charge of the labour and finances, and thus avoided the kinds of corruption and jealousy said to stymie collective projects or divert state support for local projects and resources. For instance, the Kindergarten Chairman (in the case study above) told me that, when all the work is complete he wishes to ‘privatise’ the kindergarten. This means that the teachers will be responsible for collecting all the school fees themselves, giving a small amount to the Kindergarten Committee. The Kindergarten on Lamien had already gone ‘private’ due to the failure in collectively renovating a suitable venue. Whilst I was somewhat surprised to hear talk of ‘privatisation’ in those terms, it seemed to refract both a growing dissatisfaction with the failure of the state to create effective development, and a growing concern with a weakening in collective and cooperative efforts towards community based projects.

4. Summary: reciprocal interdependence to an ethic of circulation

International and national attention on outcomes of seasonal work for “model” communities is valued by Li-Lamenu people as a source of ‘fame’ and moral distinction, but also leads to reflexive contestations over what type of ethos and exchange relations should constitute a ‘model community’ and good development. The community emerges through a contested process over modes of relating and ‘living together well’. Arguably, the attention of being termed a ‘model community’ has prompted even more in depth reflexive examination and conscious

critiques of different modes of relating and authority, and whether they are conducive to 'living together well'. Whilst people are proud of the outcomes of seasonal work in terms of spending decisions on the 'good house' and school fees, nevertheless there are also growing anxieties about a decline in cooperative and sharing behaviours, as seasonal wage workers are said to be increasingly reluctant to 'work for free' and 'work for others'. There is an apparent on-going shift in ethos from sharing and everyday reciprocity with extended kin towards an ethic of circulation and flow of money.

Whilst an emphasis on reciprocal gift exchange between clans serves to reproduce clan relations and reciprocal dependence and claims, the emerging ethic of circulation of money appears not to dissolve society, but to mediate a form of community as a collection of reciprocally independent but alike individuals or households. As Wagner (1981:89) suggests that whereas in many pre-market societies, 'society' is made of 'relational oppositions', mediated by alternating flows, in societies with market exchanges, money has a role in the invention of a notion of 'society' as a unified and collectivised whole.

Transactions are not only valued as means to an end, but as signs of the virtue and intentions of the transactors. Contestations and contradictions over the good life are more often articulated in terms of a decline in respect (rispek), a term which often glosses the observance of avoidance relations between affines and differentiated kin, as well as recognising the authority of Chiefs and Elders. As I discuss in the next chapter, ideas of respect, and

respectable leaders remain at the heart of Li-Lamenu visions of how to live together well, and achieve good development.

CHAPTER FIVE

A Good House and a Strong Nakamal: Chiefs, Unity and Good Development

The growing prevalence of the durable ‘good house’ is a sign of the emerging shift towards household nucleation and visions of a household-oriented future and community development. But this raises the question about the continued prominence of the traditional men’s house, known as the Nakamal (*kumali*), which acts as a focal point to the villages on Lamén Island, as across Vanuatu. The *Kumali*, or Nakamal, serves as a ‘meeting house’, and is the usual venue for Chiefs’ meetings, village courts, certain ritual occasions and Council meetings. In Lamén and Lewo languages, *Kumali* also operates as a metonym for ‘village’, as well as for the collectivity for Chiefs, and the village court. Whenever there is a dispute or moral transgression the *Kumali* is seen as the appropriate venue for settling disputes and addressing misdemeanours (cf. Jolly 2012:119).

Just as the durability of the ‘good house’ lends itself to representing and bringing about the future of the household, the construction of a Nakamal represents a conscious effort to secure social relations of respect between kin and clans (Strathern and Stewart 2000:72; Stasch 2003b). In this chapter, I discuss Li-Lamenu concerns to maintain respect, kastom and strong leadership in order to ‘live together well’. First, I outline the changing function of the *kumali*, and how this reflects changing ideas of authority and social relations within Li-Lamenu settlements. In the second section, I

explore on-going narratives about the role of Chiefs, and their seeming failure to maintain authority and respect from community members. Finally, I look at how Li-Lamenu people continue to summon the role of Chief to oversee respect and peace, which are crucial to 'living together well'.

5.1. The Nakamal: A Conduit for Relations of Respect



Figure 31 Nakamal at Wenia village

The Nakamal is strongly associated with kastom (from 'custom') practices associated with indigenous origin, or tradition. In contrast with the good house, as an icon of household-oriented futures and development, the Nakamal, like kastom in general, accrues value through perceptions of temporal extension in ancestral history and narrative. Despite the conservative and consciously traditional appearance of the Nakamal in Epi

villages, however, it too has undergone historic changes in form and meaning, and these changes reflect changing social relations between Li-Lamenu people. In this section, I will outline the changing role of the Nakamal as a conduit for relations of respect.

Former Men's House

In the Pre-Christian era on Lamenu, the Nakamal was socially and spatially structured quite differently. Each small hamlet or settlement, often based on one to three patrilineages per settlement, would have converged around a *Kumali*. Whilst women and children slept and ate in the *yumā*, or dwelling houses, the Nakamal was used exclusively by men and symbolised their status. But unlike in some areas of Vanuatu (Rodman 1985a) it seems that Li-Lamenu men did not always sleep in the Nakamal, but could go back and forth between the *yumā* (domestic house) and *Kumali* (cf. Jolly 2012:118).

In precolonial North Vanuatu, men's ritual life and its spatial manifestation in the Nakamal and nasara (ritual grounds), with their ritual stones and objects, shaped and "held the power over life, growth, and reproduction" (Rio 2011a:227). Men could obtain rank through the 'grade taking' system, known commonly today as *kapi lo* (tabu faea), meaning "sacred fire" because it was symbolized through different seating positions at ranked cooking fires pertaining to different grades. Men could be members in a number of different lodges and systems, and accrue different insignia and titles and some men's houses were exclusive to different grades of men (cf. Rio 2011a:222). Through ceremonial pig sacrifices, men were able to accrue potency and prestige.

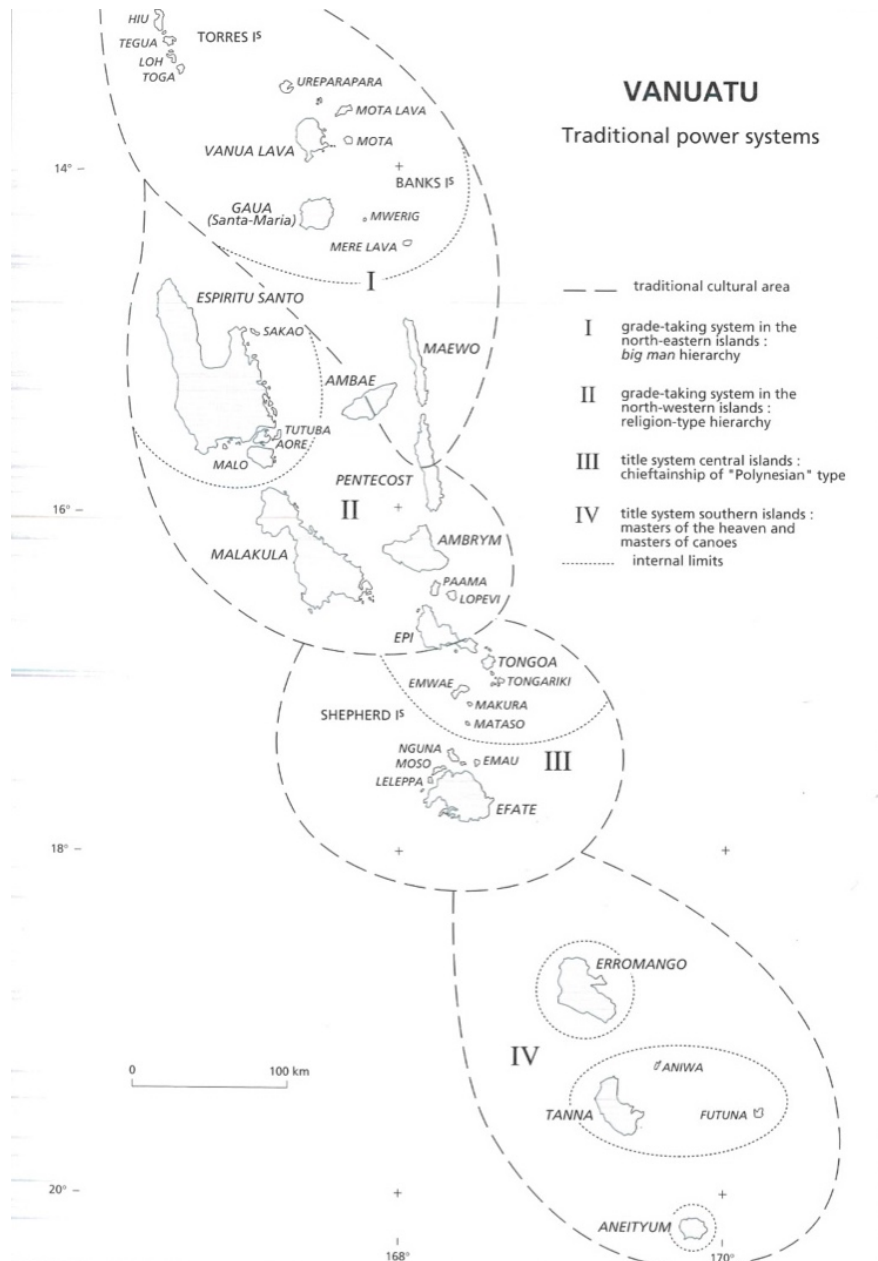


Figure 32 Map of forms of traditional power in Vanuatu (copied from Bonnemaïson et al. 1996:201)

Encouraged by Presbyterian missionaries, converts were persuaded to abandon sacred sites and burn ceremonial objects, which were seen as 'idols'. Young (1995:70–71) wrote about a "political struggle" between Church and Nakamal on Epi over the decades that followed, and how the fervent efforts of the Presbyterian missionaries ensured that the values of the Church quickly won the day against the Nakamal. Li-Lamenu people

today, who have only a limited memory of how the grade system once operated, also describe it in terms of the ‘darkness’⁴³ and sorcery that preceded the arrival of the Gospel.

Lamen and North Epi were at the intersection of different systems of traditional authority (Bonnemaison 1984a:4; 1996:201; Bedford and Spriggs 2008:110); sitting in the Venn-like overlap between II and III in Figure 32. Whilst Presbyterian missionaries sought to stamp out the “morally depraved” grade system (Riddle 1949:57), they looked favourably on the noble practice of hereditary Chiefs. Nevertheless, the role of Chief and the Nakamal been transformed, as I outline further in the next section.

Moral Reform: The Church and the Chiefs

The coming of Christianity may have led to the eradication of the grade system but it also strengthened the role of the hereditary Chief (*Supē*) as a figure of peace and authority, and likewise the *kumali* became a structure to unite a village, and help maintain order. Chief Tom, of Ngaloparua village on Lamen Island told me:

In the past, if you wanted to gain membership to the Nakamal, you would have had to perform a kastom ceremony. The Nakamal was in a tabu [sacred-restricted] place, and if you wanted to enter you would have had to present a chicken to become a member. Because before the Nakamal

⁴³ As I mentioned in Chapter One, darkness and light are popular moral temporal idioms used across Vanuatu to describe the periods before and after Christian conversion respectively (e.g. Tonkinson 1982; Lindstrom 2008:167). These idioms are widely used even if the revalorisation of *kastom* has led to a certain confusion about their value (see 6.2)

had a different function... I think that when the Gospel came, it made it so that the Nakamal was to unite everyone... When 'the light' reached us- the Gospel reached us- it changed things. The missionary came and I think he helped us to change, ...to form a single kastom to rule a community. The missionary came to make peace, to bring everyone together. He persuaded the leaders to say that we must unite everyone, to live in one place.

Unlike the former grade system of achieved rank and warrior status, hereditary chieftainship on Epi is traditionally associated with ideals of peace and social order. In the past, such Chiefs would be the only ones allowed to grow namele (*cycas circinnalis*), and nangarria (*croton*) leaves by their house, which would be used as potent symbols of peace. If a fight broke out, the Chief would only need to hold up the leaves in order to stop it (Koli 1996:52). A descendant, ideally the eldest son, would assume his title on his death, standing at the feet of the dead Chief's body. In the case of Hereditary Chiefs, an official 'ordination' should still take place, whereby other local Chiefs would come and 'hold head' to show their approval of the new Chief, literally placing their hands on his head to symbolise recognition of his new status (Lemaya 1996:78). Li-Lamenu people no longer perform formal 'ordination' ceremonies⁴⁴ to mark the taking of the role, although some people today advocate the revival of this practise to help endow a Chief with recognised authority.

⁴⁴ The last socially recognised ordination of a Li-Lamenu Chief took place in 1979, when a Li-Lamenu Chief is believed to have been killed by sorcery shortly after his ordination by a jealous rival, although a controversial ceremony took place in 2011, which I mention in 5.2.

The missionaries' influence may have stripped senior men of magical or spiritual efficacy⁴⁵, but also strengthened their judicial powers. In 1899, the first missionary for Lamenu and North Epi, Smaill, wrote:

...the people as we found them had but the faintest shadow of social order, the chiefs having, in particular, no power to punish offenders. But with the advent of a more enlightened religious faith, & the dispelling of some of their gross superstitious fears the chiefs found that they could govern, & increase in knowledge shewed them the direction in which to assert their authority... (in Scarr 1967a:236).

Missionaries appointed Christian men to take on leadership roles as 'Elders' and 'Chiefs', and in some islands appointed 'Paramount Chiefs' to oversee the whole island (cf. Lindstrom 1997:212–213; Rio 2007b:30–31).

The period in the mid-twentieth century is recalled as one with strong Chiefs, with the respect and authority required to command collective labour⁴⁶. Later, in association with anticolonial movements towards Independence in 1960s and 1970s, there was a promotion of the ideology of kastom, although a version compatible with Christianity, and the Nakamal once again began to become the focus of collective activities, alongside the Churches (Rodman 1985a:273; Young 1995).

⁴⁵ It is unclear the extent to which Chiefs had the power to rule and punish in the precolonial era. Li-Lamenu people talk of a time when the Chief had a 'secret police', specialist sorcerers that would kill offenders, but with the disruptions during the colonial era, the use of sorcery spread and began to be used for selfish purposes.

⁴⁶ For example, in building Horwell's house as I described in 1.1.

Contradictions between House and Nakamal

Today the Nakamal is no longer a singularly male space (though predominantly so) and is stripped of its spiritual or sacred aspects, serving more like a town hall and a court, but it maintains the moral-legal force of kastom and represents the authority of Chiefs. The argument I will develop throughout this chapter is that kastom, its embodiment in the Nakamal and its personification in Chiefs (cf. Rio 2011a:225), remains in tension with assertions of autonomy at the levels of the clan, house and person, and at all these levels there are on-going negotiations over what it means to 'live together well'.

For Rodman (1985a:278), the Nakamal, or in Ambae *Na Gamal*, and the house (*valei*) together form a symbolic contrast that express crucial meanings and contradictions both within and between the structural types. Rodman (1985a) argues that the domestic house (*valei*), which had been principally the residence of wives and children, a "container of women and wealth" became the focus of missionary reform toward new moral standards, especially the promotion of the nuclear family (cf. Taylor 2008:153), and ceased to be so gender segregated, a similar process to that on Lamel that I outlined in the Introduction. This made the house the appropriate site for the continued expression of female roles and perspectives, as well as the accumulation of material wealth and stylistic innovation.

Meanwhile, for Rodman (1985a:277), the stylistic conservatism of the Nakamal gave it a dimension of permanence and rootedness in the past,

despite the changes in its form and function. For instance, the openness of the structure and its function as a gathering place, made it apt for symbolising the passage of the life-cycle, particularly for men, who in contrast to women are seen as steadfastly rooted in place. In contrast to the house as a container for individual accumulation, the Nakamal is the site for the exchange of wealth and the circulation of people, as Rodman (1985a:277) explains, “The valei is a testimonial to accumulated personal wealth, while the na gamal attests to social generosity; the house objectifies individual wealth, the men's house provides a channel for the flow of social relations”. For Rodman (1985a:278), the symbolic contrasts that had long characterised Ni-Vanuatu social identities in terms of gender and moral and transactional orders made them apt venues for the expression of emerging contradictions, whereby people’s idea of a good life drew on a combination of elements drawn from both endogenous kastom and exogenous goods and practices:

The fact that na gamal and valei continue to be linked elements fundamental to the structure of domestic space is indicative of a conviction, pervasive among the people of Vanuatu, that kastom and European ways are two equally important and interrelated aspects of contemporary life.

Like the kastom that it signifies and materialises, I suggest that the Nakamal represents a conscious commitment and identification with kinship relations and community identities that is prospective as well as retrospective, and thus the ultimate icon of collective durability across generations. The Nakamal accrues value through its embeddedness and embodiment of endogenous origins and identity, and rootedness in place.

It serves as a channel for social reproduction, and the replacement of relations between clans.

The Nakamal should not be seen as a relic of the past. Not only is the form and function of the Nakamal much changed, but it also stands today as a result of a resurgence of pride in indigenous identities and practices, and retains a place as a future-oriented commitment to 'living together well' as kin and clan members. As Foster (1995:110–111) suggests, the Peircian notion of iconicity in itself provides a non-verbal means of communication of intentionality, through providing a model for those qualities that both convey and presage future action, even if they simultaneously reference continuity from the past. Similarly, Gell (1998:256–258) argued that Māori meeting houses, though self-consciously traditional, were an innovative response to social change, an index of agency and the materialisation of intentional, future-oriented action. But, as Gell added, in practice the ideals expressed through such forms can never be fully realised, but are always ultimately constrained by practical conditions; an irreconcilable gap between aspiration and actuality. I now turn to the role of the Chief, who also finds himself caught in this gap. I discuss the continued arguments and complaints about the role of Chiefs in uniting people as a precondition for 'good development'. I also explore how these collective aspirations are also said to be undermined, often blamed on a lack of respect, or growing jealousies.

5.2. Good Leaders and Moral Authority

Chiefs' Speech

In February 2012, an organising committee was hurriedly formed at the Community Council Meeting to arrange the programme for National Chiefs' Day. Chief's Day is usually combined with 'New Yam Day', a sort of 'first fruits' celebration, which commences with a blessing of yams in the Church. Several people commented to me that the yams were much smaller and fewer than in the past, and had to be supplemented by other kinds of garden produce. It is usually the only day that turtles can be hunted due to national regulations on endangered species, but the community had not allowed enough time to ask for official Government permission to hunt turtles for the occasion so a Church Elder donated some pigs to accompany the laplap baked puddings. At this time, Lamén Bay had no Nakamal. Such meetings had to take place in a large concrete 'Market House', which on market days it would be populated by women from villages elsewhere on Epi mainland, selling vegetables.

On the morning of Chiefs' Day on 5th March, Chief Waiwo gave a speech, saying he was glad that the Chiefs' Breakfast was made according to kastom, with no store-bought items. He thanked the committee and said that kastom food should become the priority, as it is how Melanesian people live⁴⁷. But he also warned that if people do not follow kastom, it will be lost; parents must teach their children kastom and culture, not just

⁴⁷ I referred to part of this speech in 3.2.

give them schooling. Today, he said, people should be ashamed where they no longer know about kastom songs, nasara (clan grounds), making canoes, and making traditional houses. He added that children must live according to these things before they move to something different; “we must start small”.

After breakfast, a woman from the organising committee, the UPC Pastor’s wife, read a poem she had written in honour of the day:

I am an old person who lives in a cave that is really very dark. The owner of the cave lives far away. This cave has lots of good things inside, but I can’t see them. One time I went to the sea and found the owner of the cave. It is like something that has a big light has come inside the cave. I let him come inside. He carried a good thing, called “Gospel”. It is like light inside the cave. We both found many good things inside the cave. One of these things is Independence. That’s why we remember my day today. My name is ‘Chief’.

She concluded by saying God existed before Chiefs, but the country lived in darkness. But light came in through the Chiefs, without the Chiefs the gospel could not come inside. And so the Chiefs deserve our ‘honour and respect’.

The Presbyterian Pastor gave a short reading about Moses being a good leader, and a talk about ‘firm relationships’ with God and the people, which are required to achieve a “good life” (gudfala laef) and “good development” (gudfala developmen). Then a member of the organising committee gave a short speech as a ‘thank you’ and encouragement for the Chiefs’. He explained that, in the past, in the ‘time of darkness’, Chiefs still

cooperated well. He appealed to the Chiefs to work as ‘one team’. If there is no Chief in a community, the community cannot ‘unite together’; there will always be conflict. There are no police on Epi, but the Chiefs solve the problems and ensure that there is always peace in the community. Lamenu Bay must have its own Nakamal, so the Chiefs will sit down together with their people.

Chief Waiwo gave a return speech, saying that after the missionaries came the law of the Bible joined the law of kastom, but God oversees both.

Waiwo said that Chiefs must always be ‘neutral’, and ‘patient’, and represent ‘peace’; Kastom reveals this, such as the meaning of the different leaves that the Chief holds. But kastom is being lost. Before, when a Chief talked, everyone listened. If you disrespected the Chief, they would beat you in the Nakamal and the ancestors respected the Chiefs. Waiwo said Chiefs must always be “fair” and “just”; there must always be justice.

According to the Chiefs’ law, people must always be ‘friends’ in the end.

But according to ‘white man’s’ law (loa blong waetman), in the end you will become enemies and will separate⁴⁸. He added, “If you think the Chief no longer has power, it is time to give him power... If you trust him, give it to him”.

⁴⁸ Li-Lamenu people –as elsewhere in Vanuatu- see the principles of these ‘courts’ in marked contrast to State law. It is common across Vanuatu, people often say white man’s loa, whether relating to land, criminal or civil cases creates ‘winners’ and ‘losers’ (cf. Forsyth 2009:195), whereas the principle behind kastom courts is to restore peaceful and ordered social relations; that is, ‘everybody wins’. I discuss this moral distinction between kastom and loa at length in Chapter Nine

Chief Waiwo then told the other clan Chiefs gathered there to continue their work, wherever they may be, even in New Zealand. He said he agreed that the ordination of Chiefs should be revived, and a Nakamal must be built at Lamén Bay. He put one of the clan Chiefs (who is a carpenter) in charge, who said he would 'try his best' to do the Nakamal work this year, although he had plans to travel to New Zealand, adding; "With respect, the work can go well. Without respect, it can fail." Finally, the MC, a Church Elder, reminded everyone that, "A firm relationship with the Master [God] and firm relationship with your people allows you to have 'good development' inside the Lamén Bay community".

In the next section, I discuss the Li-Lamenu emphasis on good leadership and respect for Chiefs in order to 'live together well' in the community. I will also examine the anxieties that kastom and respect for Chiefs are being lost. Finally, I will discuss how these values impact notions of good development.

Too Many Chiefs: Declining Respect

Before it was good- everyone had respect for each other but today the youths no longer respect their Elders. They don't respect the Chiefs, and so the Chiefs no longer 'talk'.

Seasonal Worker's Wife

Amongst Li-Lamenu people, the 'true' Chief is supposed to maintain harmonious and cooperative relations within the community, and ensure that moral misconduct and disputes are dealt with. As I discussed in the previous section, hereditary chieftainship is associated with ideals of peace

and social order and Li-Lamenu people say that if the Chief is of the correct 'bloodline', everything should proceed correctly "...for he that is 'true blood', they follow the line [of descent]. There will be no fights near him" (Lemaya 1996:78). The ideal of inherited chieftainship remains strong, and it remains socially-recognised hereditary Chiefs, or their chosen relatives, that tend to be seen as the appropriate candidates to be village Chief, and to represent them at the Area and Island Council of Chiefs.

As in Chief Waiwo's speech at Chief's Day, Chiefs are associated with justice and peace, and are seen as the appropriate adjudicators in village court cases. The word for court (*kotena*) is derives from the word 'court', but people more often say that a case must 'go to the Nakamal' (cf. Walker 2013:312). Although the Chiefs have created a long list of 'by-laws' and respective fines to govern the community, the aim of the village court tend to be based on restoring kinship relationships and 'respect', rather than private property relations as is often the case in a western style court (as I will explain through case studies of adultery in Chapter Six, a property dispute in Chapter Seven and land dispute cases in Chapter Nine). Village courts and meetings are occasions in which disputes or disapproved actions become the object of public debate and conscious reflection. What is usually sought is a confession, shake hands, make a customary transaction or exchange, and 'forget' the whole affair.

Rather than absolute power to rule, the Chief should be an arbiter of moral authority that deserves respect, and in this sense his status is more

achieved than automatic. It seems from genealogies and oral histories that succession to the role of Chief is highly contested, but even within families it has not always followed the primogeniture rule. Particular descendants could be chosen because they are deemed to have leadership skills and the ability to 'talk', an essential quality for effective leadership. In recent decades the village Chiefs have instructed each clan to nominate their own 'Chief' to help keep order and this is often done with a fair amount of flexibility.

However, people often say that there are now 'too many' Chiefs, and some are not 'true' Chiefs, and that they cannot cooperate. There is little agreement in practise in identifying the 'true' Chiefs or whether they are working effectively. Significantly, on this Chief's Day, the people of the 'North' section of Lamén Bay decided to have their own Chief's Day and New Yam Ceremony. Lamén Bay in particular is a fractious settlement, which is not only comprised of people from Lamén's three villages. For the purposes of community work and other administrative aspects, Lamén Bay is divided into three sections, North, Central and South. Whilst the 'Central' section is mostly occupied by people of Ngaloparua village, whence Chief Waiwo originates, most people of Ngalokumali village live in Purke, in the North, whilst South is a fractious mix of clans from Ngalovasoro, and Ngaloparua. There are many rival claims and histories to chiefly titles, which are tied to land rights on the mainland, as I discuss in Chapter Nine.



Figure 33 Varsu Chiefs open new Nakamal on disputed land at Lamén Bay on behalf of Joseph and his clan

Indeed, it was to transpire that the first Nakamal at Lamén Bay would not be a structure to unite the community, but the materialisation of divisive alliances and rival claims to land. Joseph, a self-proclaimed Chief residing in Lamén Bay was in a bitter land dispute with Parakuluwo, Chief of nearby Wenia village. In 2011 Joseph had staged a ceremony with Chiefs from villages in other districts, also rivals of Parakuluwo, to confer a chiefly title on him. The following year, Joseph and his sons built a traditionally constructed *kumali* on the disputed land, the first in Lamén Bay, with an elaborate opening ceremony, again inviting Chiefs from neighbouring districts. However, the majority of Li-Lamenu Chiefs, and Chief Parakuluwo, were notable by their absence. As Strathern and Stewart (2000) have argued for longhouses in the New Guinea Highlands,

the ambiguous and often contradictory symbolism embodied in architecture and artefacts can communicate disjunctive as well as conjunctive social relations.

Chiefs Talk, but Who is Listening?

The Chiefs are not thinking seriously about work and they don't meet to talk about it. Before it was really strong... There is weakness regarding the Nakamal- the Chiefs should concentrate more on their work.

Migrant/Church Deacon

Much of the reasoning around why there is not unity is centred round a perceived decline in 'respect'. Many say that the current Chiefs are 'weak', whilst others blame his subjects for being 'strongheaded', or stubborn, and disrespectful. Sometimes, the blame is put on the Chiefs themselves; they don't 'talk' effectively, or cooperate together, and some say Chiefs drink too much kava or alcohol, or otherwise do not behave in an honourable fashion. Others point to the fact there are too many Chiefs, and none are ordained or, conversely say that the conflicts emerging prove that the Chiefs asserting authority are not the 'true' ones.

Some Chiefs told me that their work was hampered by people's pursuit of money, and the imposition of Western-style political and legal systems that 'divide' people. They express concerns that the state and discourses of human rights, and shifts away from customary economic and social forms are detracting from their authority. The Chief of Ngaloparua village on Lamén told me:

Today we just talk. But in the past, Chiefs spoke with a different power. Before Independence, when the Condominium Government was in existence.... they really respected the Chiefs. If the Chief gave an order, for example if the young men were too stubborn, they would act. But it's not like that today.... The law now covers all of us.... Today, often the Government just ignores the Chief's 'talk'. For example, today New Zealand is 'open', but I keep saying, 'Look, I want to stop him. This man is travelling but his child is too young. He should wait a while.' But the agents say 'No, he must go.'

As this quote illustrates, Chiefs often desire some control over the recruitment and outcomes of seasonal migration programmes, but complain that employers, recruiters and seasonal workers undermine their authority.

Village Chiefs have tried to have a say in the workings of the RSE scheme since it was first opened in 2008. Originally, Chiefs planned to limit the numbers of the number of seasonal workers allowed to go each year. These efforts appear to have failed, as have their efforts to try to curtail how many times each migrant can return, mostly due to the fact their decisions are overridden by employers, who prefer experienced workers. The interests and contractual conditions between employer and employee shape seasonal work programme recruitment and management, and this is determined at another level by a 'Memorandum of Understanding' between the receiving and sending states. But this creates frustrations for Chiefs, Church and community leaders and organisations that wish to have their say over who should travel, and how seasonal workers behave both at home and overseas.

Sometimes Chiefs would try to prevent a prospective worker from travelling if they were involved in a dispute, or had committed some misdemeanour that was not yet resolved satisfactorily. For instance, Waiwo complained that those that go to New Zealand have learned to obey the laws of the land, such as limits on fishing, because they are frightened of fines. But when they are in Lamén Bay they continue to break laws and prohibitions, such as the tabu (prohibition) placed on fishing on the reef. In Lamén Bay, Chiefs tried to stop three men from migrating to New Zealand because they had hunted a turtle without permission. They were reported to the Vanuatu Department of Labour, and then forced to attend a village court and pay fines of 3000 vatu each before they were allowed to return to New Zealand.

Chiefs were dismayed or frustrated when seasonal workers, or their employers appeared to undermine their authority. When one man failed to turn up to court, the angry Chiefs resolved that his wife, a seasoned RSE migrant, could never return to New Zealand until the dispute was resolved. However, when the local recruiter was urgently seeking female seasonal workers as last-minute replacements, the woman was quickly added to the list of workers. Another employer also undermined a Chief's decision not to sign some seasonal workers' papers saying he already 'trusted' the men. The prospective migrant asked another 'Chief' to sign the papers, and was gone before the village Chief found out; a common solution in a society with numerous Chiefs. In the next section, I will discuss efforts to minimise the 'bad side' of seasonal work in order to bring

about 'good development', composed of not only good houses, but also a strong Nakamal and effective Chiefs.

5.3. Good Development: Bringing Back Respect

Chiefs and Good Dvelopmen

Whilst 'good houses' may be seen as 'unproductive consumption' by many migration and development theorists, for Li-Lamenu people they appear to epitomise development and its association of material 'standards of living' in the form of durable materials and manufactured goods. However, as seen in the Elder's statement on Chiefs' Day ("A firm relationship with the Master [God] and firm relationship with your people allows you to have 'good development' inside the Lamenu Bay community"), Li-Lamenu people make distinctions about what constitutes 'good development' in terms of collective cooperation and well-being, that may entail degrees of market engagements in order to gain access to money and imported goods, but also cooperation, faithfulness and respect. Hereafter, I will use the term dvelopmen to describe Li-Lamenu aspirations for the future in order to distinguish it from predominant ideas of 'development' as a teleological progression towards capitalist production and economic growth. The desire for dvelopmen as a collective achievement compatible with 'living together well', and this often is phrased in terms of harnessing money and imported goods, but in a way that enhances collective well-being and good relations between kin (cf. Curry 1999:295).

The form and extent as to what kinds of dvelopmen were desirable was open to contestation. Chief Parakuluwo suggested that many seasonal workers were putting themselves through hard times unnecessarily:

We are fully “developed” here already. We live like kings already. You just get up, and go to the garden... In the afternoon, you come back and you eat. You take some kava, drink and sleep. When the sun rises, you can get to work. But in places you say are ‘developed’, where ‘the economy grows fast’ there are many troubled people. Some sleep on the road, no food and no bed to sleep in. They don’t have work and they worry... People that [do wage] work must make sure they live according to ‘time’; if they are late, they are lazy, they might be out of work and they have no food or money. With us, we can stay in the house until dark, but we are alive. ‘Diveelopmen’ should mean you make sure you can live. That is diveelopmen; a kind of development that you can live with. The ‘development of kastom’ has enabled us to live for a long time. You don’t buy the bananas in your garden; you don’t pay for your island cabbage. No, you just take them.

There are similarities here with Sahlins’ (1992) concept of ‘develop-man’ in that consciousness of different ‘standards of living’ may catalyse this reflexive desire for transformation (cf. Errington and Gewertz 2005:164). But, for Sahlins (1992:24), a desire for economic ‘development’ is preceded by a deep cultural humiliation (cf. Robbins and Wardlow 2005):

Humiliation is an important stage of economic development, a necessary condition of economic “takeoff.” The role of disgrace is critical, for in order to desire the benefits of “progress,” its material wonders and comforts, all indigenous senses of worth, both the people’s self-worth and the value of their objects have to be depreciated

Arguably, Ni-Vanuatu communities did undergo a form of cultural ‘humiliation’ (Rio 2011a:225; 2014:174) in the colonial period. Under

missionary influence, reverence for chiefly spiritual power was rejected in favour of new models of relating and authority. Following the anticolonial revalorisation of kastom, it remains symbol of unity and pride, but a version that is intertwined with Christianity.

Chief Waiwo's comments on Chief's Day about the value of kastom produce and practices echoes a similar kind of value on 'living for free' expressed by Parakuluwo in the quote above. But, as we saw in Chapter Four, Waiwo's statements at the Council Meeting also reflect commonly held views that seasonal work should be welcomed to the extent that it brings money and divelopmen. Development becomes problematic when overseas work and money appear to undermine good relations and the possibility of living together well.

Li-Lamenu people were proud of setting an example as a 'model community', but were also concerned with choosing which elements of kastom, and which elements of change should be incorporated in order to secure the future in the present. They strive to retain the good relations associated with vernacular ways of living together, such as reciprocity, hospitality and cooperation, whilst seeking to incorporate modes of working that will bring access to money and desirable material goods (cf. McCormack and Barclay 2013). Statements about achieving divelopmen and being a 'model community' sometimes focus on what should be incorporated from 'outside', but also how to avoid disrupting or damaging the 'good relations' that should endure within Li-Lamenu society.

Contesting Developments: Jealousy and Divisions

The term divelopmen as deployed by Li-Lamenu people paradoxically entails much moral contestation and conflict as to what this would entail (cf. Curry and Koczberski 2013:340), and thus it is an ambiguous term, in a “dynamic process of contestation” (Martin 2013:2–7). Different people can be proponents of ‘development’ or develop-man to different degrees (Errington and Gewertz 2005:167). For instance, Martin (2013) showed how Tolai in East New Britain reciprocally critiqued each other as wealthy ‘big shots’ seeking to limit the extent of their sharing and obligations to others, or ‘bighead’ villagers who were becoming lazy and dependent on hand-outs. A critique of ‘hand-outs’ is also used amongst Li-Lamenu government employees and seasonal workers alike to legitimate household-oriented expenditure, as I discussed in 1.3.

Although most Li-Lamenu people agree that in order to achieve good development and live together well the community needs not only good houses, but also a strong Nakamal, in practice the roles and responsibilities of good householders and good Chiefs are ambiguous and contested. For instance, Chiefs’ complaints about seasonal workers’ selfishness or lack of respect can be met with counter-accusations that they are ‘jealous’. But whilst the complainants see themselves as morally superior, the subjects of such gossip often reply that the complaints are unjust, or motivated by envy (cf. Gluckman 1963a:315).

One seasonal worker put Chiefs’ attempts to block prospective migrants down to jealousy, or spite (‘spoilem man’), and said that some Chiefs did

not like the fact that some seasonal workers had better houses and more things than they do. They said it was the Chiefs' job to resolve, or 'straighten', such problems before they come to New Zealand, perhaps by enforcing fines, but not to prevent them from coming altogether.

Li-Lamenu people often blame the 'sickness' of jealousy, sorcery, disputes and lack of cooperation for upsetting good relations, and inhibiting development (Smith 1994:230–231; cf. Wardlow 2005:68; Leavitt 2005:76)⁴⁹.

One seasonal worker compared accusations of Chiefs' jealousy to the problems surrounding the large P&O Cruise Ship that frequented Lamenu Bay from 1999⁵⁰ to around 2004. Prior to the rise of seasonal work opportunities, the cruise ship was seen as a source of income for people on Epi. Tim, a former member of the original Cruise Ship Committee, told me "When the boat came it gave work to people". Ten people or so were paid each time the ship arrived to greet people and give tours, and many people, especially women, made stalls selling food, handicrafts, massages, and hair braiding, mostly based on the school site.

However, there was much speculation and conflict over the allocation of the sizable anchorage fee, which is typical of the kinds of disputes that arise over claims to land and resources. Tim was keen to emphasise that in the early years of the cruise ship visits, 275,000 vatu of the anchorage fee

⁴⁹ See for example 'Conflicting Claims' in 7.1, and 'Non-Constructive Conflicts' in 9.1.

⁵⁰ The first arrival of the cruise ship is documented in the short documentary film, 'Selo Selo Bigfala Canoe', directed by Randall Wood.

‘went to the community’, though was vague about the details. At that time there was increasing ‘talk’ or gossip especially from Purke area, that because they were closest to the wharf, they should receive the anchorage fee. In 2001, they held a meeting at Lamén, ousted the Tourist Boat Committee, and formed a new one. They proceeded to oversee the operation, but Tim told me the money no longer went to the community. Around three years later, inhabitants of Purke and their Lamén relatives reported Tim to the police, who seized the bank book of the original Committee, claiming ‘fraud’, saying that he was siphoning the money into his tourism business. The police handed the bankbook to the disputants, who created a private account. Tim said the Purke residents withdrew the money, which amounted to several million vatu, and quickly spent it.

Tim said there were negotiations underway to invite the cruise ship to come back, and he was already planning how the proceeds would be allocated. He told me half the money would be distributed according to the distance from the wharf: the nearer each clan’s stretch of shoreline, the greater their share. At first I was surprised because this appeared to be a major concession to the people of Purke, whilst Tim resided at the other end of the bay. But it transpired that the wharf was not to remain at Purke: Tim added that there were plans under the UNDP Climate Change project to relocate the wharf to the stretch of beach belonging to Tim’s clan. Not only would Tim’s clan stand to benefit the most, but also the new arrangement would only include eight clans, the bulk of which belonging to clans from Ngaloparua village on Lamén Island. In fact the shoreline claimed by Ngalokumal, including Purke, and much of Ngalovasoro is

located at the other end of the Bay. He said the remainder of the money would be divided up between all these clans so everyone would receive a 'small' share. It seems to me this is unlikely to be a peaceful settlement, and further conflicts will probably arise. Tim told me "Dispute is dispute, business is business, and development is development. If there is a dispute somewhere, let it stay, but development must proceed." Appeals to divelopmen have ideological force, in that it is taken for granted as 'good' and 'desirable'. But the term divelopmen may be deployed in order to justify highly contested decisions regarding land claims and use, as in Tim's statement above.

Migration, Development and Land

Land disputes are often said to be part of the 'sickness' of jealousy, sorcery and social divisions that inhibit development (as in the case I outline in 9.1.). Li-Lamenu people often described other islands, such as Malekula, as suffering worse from this problem, pointing out that the airport had been burned down and there were many tractors just 'rusting' for lack of use. But even though Lamenu Bay was thought by others on Epi mainland to be a place where disputes and conflict were rife, it had also benefitted the most from seasonal work incomes. Unlike other attempts at divelopmen, work overseas circumvents the obligations and conflicts associated with customary land tenure and I suggest that this has much to do with the fact that seasonal work engagements have endured.

However, a certain amount of geographical and historical fortune means the seasonal work opportunities remain concentrated in Lamenu and Lamenu Bay. I had expected Chief Parakuluwo, who was from another Epi village

and represented all of Epi at the National Council of Chiefs, to express injustice at the fact that so many seasonal workers came from Lamén and Lamén Bay, in comparison to other Epi villages. However, his opinion was quite the opposite. The Chief said that he thought seasonal work opportunities should be allocated according to 'need', such as those who require school fees or new houses, and should prioritise areas in which land is scarce. He told me that he had said as much to Mary when she invited him to work overseas:

I told her if you are acting as the agent and you send the people from the small island [Lamén] that's all well. If you go and take people from Paama, that's good. Then you send people from Tongoa and the Shepherds, because they are many but they don't have land.... If Lamén wants to go that is fine. Then, us who have a lot of land, we won't go. If the agent tries to find those that don't have land, only have a little land, that's good. But us that have land, we plant kava, and we have the chance to find money.

The islands Parakuluwo mentioned, Paama and some of the Shepherd Islands (such as Tongoa and Emae), are known to have very high levels of out-migration to Port Vila and Luganville towns. Bonnemaïson (1977:127) identified these small islands as having undergone a shift in circular migration patterns in the twentieth century from 'culturally structured' or 'controlled' migration, where migration rates were collectively organised and kept within manageable limits, to forms of 'wild' or 'uncontrolled' migration, which had reached a level which was detrimental to the community.

Bonnemaison (1984a:144–145), explained that the predominant pattern of circular migration in 1960s and 1970s (cf. Bedford 1973a; 1973b; Bonnemaison 1977; Chapman and Prothero 2012; Haberkorn 1989; 1992), which he termed ‘culturally structured’, or ‘controlled migration’ were kept within manageable limits by Chiefs and Elders. Circular migrants would gather around loci of established kin, creating a patch of territorial solidarity in town and formed “companies” (kampani), giving them a degree of collectivist solidarity as they engaged in the labour market. The fact that groups of seasonal workers from Epi tend to travel and live together has resonances with the past patterns of circular migration, when Epi islanders were housed together in Vanuatu urban centres and in Noumea. However, Li-Lamenu perceptions of increasing land scarcity, and Chief’s complaints about a lack of respect raises the question of whether Li-Lamenu people may begin to migrate to towns in numbers that might be detrimental to the community in future, especially if the seasonal work programme was to end. It seems that the education of children is prioritised in anticipation of pressure on land.

5. Summary: Tensions between the Nakamal and the Good House

Now people no longer listen to the Chiefs- they no longer have respect. Disrespect has increased so much- people swear, are drunk, and make noise. Some are young, but some are married. Before, all the old people had a lot of respect- they would bend down before the Chief. Now they just joke around. They should tell people in the speech at Chiefs’ Day.

Seasonal worker’s wife

Despite the profound changes in its form and function, I have argued that the Nakamal is iconic of a self-conscious commitment to respectful relations require for peace and unity. Thus most people agree that in order to live together well, a strong Nakamal is required, in addition to ‘good houses’. Gell (1998:252) argued houses are apt icons of collective action, or what he, also drawing on Peirce, terms “indexes of agency”. He points out that not only are they places for gathering and collecting persons, but also their composition from different parts assembled together, and because they are like bodies and containers, hence they commonly feature in idioms for social groups. Although Nakamal are not competitively elaborated like the Māori meeting houses that Gell discusses, I have suggested that the Li-Lamenu *kumali* is iconic of relations between clans, and the location in which these relations are mediated in meetings and court cases, and materialised in ritual.

However, if the Nakamal is an index of collective action, then the house or *yumā* is an index of the autonomy of the household, and also the negotiation of household decisions and mediation of women’s perspectives. Thus the Nakamal and the house sit in tension with one another. This tension is gaining new significance in the context of an on-going cleavage between household (re-) production in the form of new ‘standards of living’, and social reproduction as clan replacement. In practice the boundaries of household autonomy and Nakamal authority are subject to contestation, and counteraccusations of jealousy and selfishness.

Although 'development' in the abstract is widely seen as desirable, the form and extent of socioeconomic change is subject to a process of contestation, as many people seek to uphold relations of 'respect' that are understood to underpin good relations and collective well-being in the community. Not only do people complain of disrespect for Chiefs but there are also increasing anxieties over a decline in an 'ethos of respect' (Wagner 1986a) in terms of avoidance relations between kin. Increasingly youth and seasonal workers alike are subject to a similar discourse; said to be losing kastom, becoming too 'selfish', and thinking they know it all. This decline in respect and avoidance is associated with a perceived rise in sexual immorality and extramarital affairs, as I describe in the next chapter.

CHAPTER SIX

Restoring Respect and Relationships: Fixing Roads and Broken Homes

These behaviours have come from money. People overseas are 'out' of respect, they joke and tease with affines. But it started here and spread outward. If you neglect things, then the next day other things will come in as well... Money flows in but many problems follow this change. For instance, problems with marriages: before they didn't happen. Families have been broken. When change comes, a lot of other things flow in too, if you're not careful.

Seasonal Worker and Pastor of the AOG Church

Whilst the flow of money into the community is generally welcome so far as it generates 'development', people often describe one of the major 'bad sides' of seasonal work opportunities as a perceived decline in 'respect'. 'Respect' (rispek) is a key value for Li-Lamenu people, as elsewhere in Melanesia, and not only conveys a general recognition of other's feelings, or deference to authority, but is exaggerated or intensified in a range of avoidance behaviours pertaining to affines and certain categories of kin relations. As in the quote above, a decline in respect is associated with negative influences from 'outside', and there is said to be a concomitant escalation in extramarital affairs and sexual immorality. These disapproved-of behaviours are often expressed in spatiotemporal idioms such as straying from roads, or wasting time, and both are often mentioned in reference to town, as I discussed in Chapter Three.

In this chapter, I address Li-Lamenu concerns about a decline in avoidance relations, and a concomitant rise in sexual immorality, as well as the efforts of the Nakamal to address these problems and restore peace. Extramarital affairs and a decline in respect not only result in 'broken homes', but also threaten the 'roads' between clans crucial for social reproduction.

If marriage creates and retraces roads between clans, then these roads should intersect at the Nakamal, which mediates and restores these relations, and asserts the values of reproduction that uphold the perspectives of Chiefs and senior men. In contrast, the house often represents an alternative site for the assertion of autonomy, and a domain in which women may assert their perspectives. In the first section of this chapter, I discuss Li-Lamenu marriage idioms and practices, and how the house and the Nakamal play a significant role. Secondly, I discuss efforts to maintain 'roads' of marriage and exchange between affines against concerns that they will be corroded by people 'wasting time' and 'walking around' too much. Finally, I explain how the perceived rise in extramarital affairs and sexual misdemeanours associated with overseas work are seen to be 'breaking' families, unsettling the future of the household, and destructive to the roads between affines that are the routes for clan reproduction.

6.1. Negotiating Marriage: The House and the Nakamal

The Authority of the Nakamal and the Autonomy of the House

The Nakamal is the site of the affirmation of clan relations, and it's the perspectives of senior men that predominate in the space both figuratively and literally. Although women can now enter it on Lamenu as elsewhere

(Jolly 2012; Taylor 2008:159–163), I contend that the Nakamal remains a strong symbol of male identity and chiefly authority. Women tend not to speak in that domain, but defer to Chiefs and senior male relatives. The symbolic expression of male and chiefly dominance is expressed every time there is a meeting in the Nakamal. Even when the Market House in Lamén Bay was used for courts and Council Meetings, it took on the spatial and social aspects of the Nakamal, in that the benches were nearly all occupied by men. Aside from a former woman MP, also on the Council, the High School Principal, and an urban educated School worker and head of the Market House Committee, other local women carried pandanus mats and sat on the ground, around the periphery of the raised structure.

Wagner (1986a:46–48) described how Barok relationships of respect and avoidance are cast as visible and invisible “walls of reserve and sanction”, most concretely in the dwelling house, and surrounding spaces, that exaggerate the “boundaries of human action”. Whilst the Barok men’s house was the site for collectivising events, interior sections of houses were considered private and inviolable; visitors would be hosted in a veranda. Likewise for Li-Lamenu people, the thresholds of house and clan act as spaces of differentiation of kin relations and demarcate loci for autonomous decision-making. Dwelling houses are considered private spaces, and people tend to use a kitchen house or veranda to converse with neighbours. Clan yards or *rove*, in which dwelling houses nestle on Lamén Island, are largely out of bounds to non-clan members, and especially affines. This is comparable to how Munn (1992:69) showed that, for Gawans, the autonomous domains of the house and the clan space are

manifestations of “matrices of self-identification”, and the house itself as the “artifactual form” of the assertion of autonomy of its occupants.

Roots and Routes in Marriage: The Calling of the Nakamal and the Calling of the House

In Vanuatu, as is common across Melanesia, moral narratives are often highly spatialised as well as temporalised, and this is reflected in idioms of kinship and identity (cf. Jolly 1999). The Lamenu Lewo term for household is *merasava*, meaning ‘door’, which recalls the attention that Levi-Strauss brought to the house as a site for the negotiation of different principles and obligations. As Levi-Strauss (1983:185) highlighted, the ‘house’ idiom, to which one might add the Li-Lamenu ‘door’, suggests no singular form of affiliation and incorporates different forms of attachment and recruitment including marriage, descent, adoption and residence. Further, the concept of ‘house society’ highlights the temporal continuity of successive generations, both in reproduction of people, and access to land and resources, and combines social, political, economic and ritual ideas and practices (Gillespie 2000a:7; cf. Carsten and Hugh-Jones 1995:8; Durand 2013:33).

In the house, different and sometimes contradictory principles, relations and actions, and local idioms, residence and ritual patterns are brought together (Carsten and Hugh-Jones 1995:2; Gillespie 2000b:22). On Lamenu, the dwelling house is a domain where women’s perspectives can be negotiated with that of men, and the house itself is seen as a site for household decision-making and expressions of autonomy, and this is also expressed in other kinship idioms. Further, the contrast between Nakamal

and house is reflected in kinship idioms for preferred marriage routes and modes of relating between kin, in which women's pre-marital kinship terms and behaviours should be subordinated to those of her husband upon marriage.

The main idiom used to describe the positive rules of marriage is to follow one's *piya-paravi* (*piya*: roots, *paravi*: breadfruit). The roots of the breadfruit extend far from its base and from these roots new shoots re-emerge above ground, which can be replanted. The tree idiom can be used to signify not only rootedness, but movement and growth, which makes it an apt symbol for reproduction (Eriksen 2008:49). Across Vanuatu and Melanesia more widely, the passage of women in marriage between houses and clans is said to (re-) create roads; relations of reciprocal obligation, between clans which often create the opportunity for further marriages and exchanges (Strathern 1972; Patterson 2001:45; Lind 2014).

In patrilineal societies in Vanuatu, it is very common for men to be associated with rootedness in place, and arboreal metaphors, and women with movement and 'paths' or 'roads' (e.g. Godelier 1999:41; Jolly 1999:284). Unlike marriage between prohibited kin categories within Li-Lamenu community, marriage to someone 'outside' is perfectly acceptable, and may even be positively valued, as it creates new "roads" (cf. MacIntyre 2010:376). An in-coming woman will be assigned a set of *ata* ('fathers'), following her husband's *piya-paravi*. These men will act on behalf of her family in rituals and disputes, and in return they would receive a proportion of the bridewealth for the woman, and future

prestations on behalf of her offspring. But it may be hoped that the road created through her marriage will provide a route for further marriages for her siblings, or grandchildren.

The *piya-paravi* follows the patrilateral ideal, which is epitomised in the marriage of a man to his actual FZSD or FMBC⁵¹. This is said to uphold the crucial reciprocal relationship between mother's brother (*apopa*) and sister's son (*meyaru*), and ideally return a woman to a clan from which you had received a woman two generations before. This preferred marriage of classificatory FZSC and FMBC, is known as “calling of the Nakamal” (*piyo ko kumali*), evoking the structure that remains a symbol of male solidarity because it is traced through the male kinship terms⁵². Thus it upholds the preference for the child to trace their own relationships via their father's terms of address, in order to affirm and uphold the alliances and relations of reciprocal respect between ‘groups of men’.

However, it is important to recognise that the stress on these ideal matches may obscure the flexibility of kinship and marriage practices. Eriksen (2008:24; cf. Jolly 2012:131) argues that anthropologists describing Ambrym's famous ‘six-section’ system have tended to focus on the ideal structure, based on patrilateral links, but the “on the ground” practice

⁵¹ See Appendix 3 for kinship abbreviations and terminology

⁵² The verb *viyo/piyo*, “to call out to” is also the polite idiom for a man to talk about finding a wife e.g. “*Tom piyo Annie*”. But for a woman, the verb is different; “*Annie sopū Tom*” (Jolly 1994:117 gives a similar terminology in S. Pentecost)

gives many options, including the 'alternative roads' tracing potential marriage partners through matrilateral links. Likewise, Li-Lamenu marriages can be made via matrilateral links, though there is a preference for patrilateral links, following *piya-paravi*.

If no suitable match is found following the ideal arrangement of the Nakamal, there is another, less preferred, option available: the children of a man and his sister's daughter (classificatory FZDC and a MMBC) may marry provided they are in an affinal *pamerasava*, i.e. a marriageable clan. This is said to follow the "calling of the house" (*piyo ko umā*) - the domestic abodes being associated with women. In such marriages, the woman is passed by the hand of the betrothed's matrilateral relatives (cf. Eriksen 2008:26–28 for N. Ambrym), who should then be acknowledged in bridewealth arrangements for their role in making the 'roads' for marriage. This can be seen as a 'shortcut' in the roads of the long-term cycle of reciprocity in kinship ideology. From the perspective of the mother's brothers of the betrothed, their sister's daughter takes the place of one of their own daughters. This is not ideal, and would entail a ceremonial pig killing, as each must change their terms of address towards their prospective partner and their close family members.

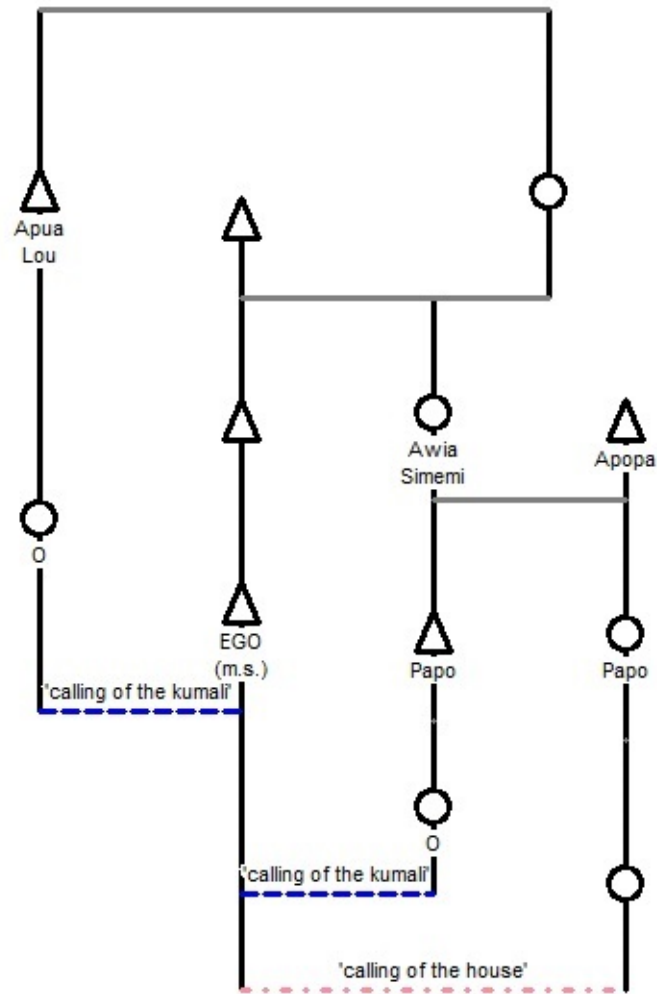


Figure 34 *Piya-Paravi*: Preferred marriages of Ego (m.s.) with O follow 'calling of the *kumali*'. A less preferred option is Ego with [x] (term of address would depend on relation of Ego to x's F) following 'calling of the house'.

An example of an engagement following the “calling of the house” is that of Andrew and Judy, who had been carrying on a relationship since school, and though it had never been made ‘official’ it had long been public knowledge. Andrew’s parents approached Judy’s parents to say they would like to perform a ceremony known as *switat* (“sweetheart”), which is a kind of engagement or betrothal ceremony, conducted in advance of the payment of bridewealth. However, Andrew and Judy’s relationship was not ‘straight’ according to the ‘calling of the *Nakamal*’, because Judy was a classificatory mother to Andrew, following the

reciprocal relationship between their respective fathers⁵³. Following the 'calling of the Nakamal', Andrew's father would be eligible to marry Judy or one of her sisters (his classificatory FZSD)⁵⁴.

⁵³ Andrew's father should address Judy's father as *papo* (classificatory FZC), and Judy's father should reciprocate with *tawana* (classificatory MBC). Thus Andrew's mother, Margaret, addressed Judy's father as *ata* (father), and Judy as a sister. And Andrew should address Judy as *awia* (classificatory mother).

⁵⁴ In fact, Andrew's father married a woman from Nguna island, and when she was married Judy's fathers were assigned to act as her *ata* (fathers) in ceremonial contexts.



Figure 35 Andrew and Judy perform a switat ceremony

However, following Judy's mother's terms of address⁵⁵, *piyo ko umā* ('calling of the house'), the relationship could proceed. Judy's mother's brothers addressed Andrew as *tawana*, and he reciprocated *papo*, which makes them classificatory wife's fathers to Andrew. Thus Judy is seen to

⁵⁵ Judy's mother, Mary, and Mary's brothers address Andrew's father as *apopa* (classificatory MB) and Andrew as *tawana* (classificatory MBC).

pass from the hands of her mother's brothers (*apopa*) in marriage in substitution for one of their daughters, and Judy and her family must adjust her terms of address accordingly towards Andrew's clan. As we have seen from the kinship idioms and practices, the Nakamal symbolically represents normative or 'proper' relations between clans, and thus is a site for the assertion of dominant values by senior men, whereas the perspectives and sentiments of women and individual households should be subordinated to these values.

Setting Boundaries: Sites for Ritual Expression of Sexual Prohibition

Arguably, although the everyday behaviours of avoidance and respect appear to be on the wane, the importance of classificatory kinship and clan relations remains strongly expressed in life cycle rituals, in which house and Nakamal play key iconic roles. Wagner described how Barok gendered moral values of complementarity and nurture were periodically accorded public recognition in ritual feasting in the men's house. Wagner (1986a:89) saw the Usen Barok men's house, or *taun*, as:

... the embodiment, at once the symbol and mechanism, of the act of containment that is the validating feast... the taun is the supreme artifact and instrument of legitimation in Barok culture; it literally contains the dead, and sustains the living in all their life crises.

The *taun* is the site of the "ritual and conceptual elicitation and resolution" of differentiated (i.e. classificatory) kin relations and 'ethos of respect' through the "iconographic image" of feasting (1986a:50).

The Nakamal also has a crucial role in life-cycle rituals, where it is the site for major prestations at boy's circumcision ceremonies (*Paviyuyana*),

marriage prestations and feasting, and death prestations. My *apopa* who gave me an ideal narrative of life cycle rituals told me the Nakamal is the proper place for all life-cycle events in that it should entail an official status and a publically recognised legitimacy. He likened it to a customary version of an official marriage certificate in state contexts.

The *Paviyuyana* boy's initiation ceremony is possibly the most important occasion for Li-Lamenu people each year. The ritual is said to have been at one time the first stage of the men's grade taking system, where boys would have gained entry to a Nakamal, and the society of men. Although the grade system has faded from practice as I discussed in Chapter Five, I suggest that *Paviyuyana* has retained importance because it is a crucial occasion for the expression of the values and meanings pertaining to kinship relations and marriage (cf. Lewis 1980:89). Boys are removed from their houses and taken into seclusion in the care of their *apopa* (classificatory mother's brothers), where they undergo a penis incision and a period of seclusion, food prohibitions and trials. On the boys' emergence from seclusion, which traditionally took place at a Nakamal, there is a series of ritual events that signify the crucial kinship relations and roles, between the boy and his *apopa*. This includes the reinforcement of the prohibition on sexual relations with classificatory sisters, and the injunction that they must marry out to affinal clans through a gift exchange called *A Par Karo* ("they carry the baskets").

In *A Par Karo*, each of the classificatory sisters (*ovinana* [m.s.]) of the *paviyu* should arrive with a *karo* (women's food basket) filled with *kurupila* yams

and firewood⁵⁶. As the sisters' names are called, all the women and girls line up, with their backs turned to the boy. Usually the closest sisters (i.e. those of the same parents, followed by those of the same *pamerasava*) stand at the head of the line. Then the 'cook', who has looked after the *paviyu* during seclusion, makes his way behind the sisters along the row, chewing and spitting a spray of leaf onto the back of each sister's neck (Figure 36). The *paviyu* should not look at the girls throughout, instead directing his gaze to the ground. The prohibition of looking at one another, and the leaf spitting, is to symbolise that they are not marriageable or sexually available to one another. This ritual act is seen to confirm the sexual prohibition between the novice and the female exchange partner. In cases of categorical incest, or sexual relations between classificatory brother and sister, the accused are often reminded of the gift exchange when they are reprimanded.

⁵⁶ The *karo* and the *kurupila* yams have important symbolic value in terms of the regulation of gender and reproduction. *Kurupila* yam is associated with sexual reproduction; when a young woman becomes pregnant and tries to hide it, people say it is like a *kurupila*- it must come out, as *kurupila* grow in such a way as they re-emerge from the ground when grown. The *karo* is a symbol of femaleness and sisterhood: as I discuss in 7.3 and 9.1, the land allocated to sisters was called *Aṗere Karo* ("the seat of the woman's food basket").



Figure 36 The 'cook' blows leaves on the neck of the sisters of the *paviyu* to symbolise sexual prohibition. They carry *karo* filled with food that will be exchanged with the *paviyu* for gifts.

Women who are not classificatory sisters following the 'calling of the Nakamal' should not exchange gifts with the novice in this ceremony as it is seen to prevent the possibility of marriage thereafter. At one *Paviyuyana* ceremony in which I participated, the Chief complained that some women were standing in line that did not have the right to do so. The boy's mothers were blamed for including girls from elsewhere, or wishing her sister's daughters to also receive gifts.

In one example, when Apia went through *Paviyuyana*, his mother wished her sister's daughter, Vera, to carry a *karo*. Vera's father refused, as Apia's father was from an affinal (*puna*) *pamerasava*. Apia and Vera should address each other as cross-cousins (*tawana* and *papo*). He told me that if

Vera carried a *karo* in the ceremony, she would officially become a sister of Apia, and this would prevent possible marriages between the two *pamerasava* in the following generation. Rather, Vera and Apia would be allowed to exchange gifts at the house, as private expressions of sentiment, unlike the Nakamal where it would become a publicly and officially recognised statement of a cross-sibling relation. In the next section I will discuss projections of the future in terms of narratives about youthful wandering, vis-a-vis moral histories of following roads and observing avoidance of the autonomy of affines, and the authority of Elders.

6.2. Losing Respect and Crossing Boundaries

At 'Children's Day' in 2012, a Presbyterian Church Elder stood up and addressed the children, saying: "The power of darkness in the 'daylight' of today, is even worse than the darkness of before... We claim that today we are Christian and we are in the daylight, but the behaviours emerging today, if you compare with before, are much much much worse". The Elder talked about how past attempts to revive customary practices had gone amiss, but how everyone must work to 'pull up' kastom, and the values of respect (rispek) and honour:

Those [customary practices] that are bad; we will throw them out, for example, poison and killing people. But we must take those where we think that they have come to help us to bring back respect and honour to come back to our island.... You need to pull all the things and you will see our lives grow and rise up.... You must try to pull back honour and respect.... Kastom is our identity. We don't know our future... Identity shows that this is your place.

The Elder then introduced some of the oldest inhabitants of Lamén Bay, the “last ones” to demonstrate kinship avoidances and tabu (taboos/prohibitions) and explain the ‘correct’ roads of marriage. He asked one elderly woman to explain *piya-paravi* using her young grandchildren, who were related as *tawana* and *papo*, as an illustration. The common complaint about a decline in respect (rispek) amongst young people not only denotes a lack of deference to authority, but also the lack of observance of avoidance behaviours, ignorance about obligations to kin, and a loss of knowledge associated with how to perform kastom (cf. Sykes 1999:164).

Respect and Avoidance

Many people complain that children, especially those with seasonally absent parents, lack discipline when the parents are away and are becoming ‘stronghed’ (“strong-headed”: stubborn, wilful), lazy and disrespectful. My *apopa* commented that many young people do not recognise the avoidance behaviours and languages that should be observed towards affines and now just use one register for all. Cross cousins (reciprocally *tawana* and *papo*) are too often being seen playing and eating together, but in the past this was forbidden. And they tend to address and refer to each other as ‘*Tawana* [Name]’, or ‘*Papo* [name]’, whereas in the past I was told personal names were avoided altogether. Occasionally I would see the parent admonishing their child if they were touching the hair or head, swearing or joking, or fighting with their cross cousin.

Children and youth are frequently said to ignore the regulation of space, which long manifested the “ethos of respect”. Customarily, one should not

enter a garden or remove fruit from trees without asking in advance. Nor should they enter the yard, and certainly not the house, of an affine without permission. Children were frequently said to run or cycle around out of sight of relatives, knocking fruit out of trees and stealing chickens, even in the yards of kin they should respect. People often blamed bicycles - brought from New Zealand- for encouraging children to speed around, flee work at home, and move around aimlessly. One Elder even tried to slow them by creating a speed bump outside his yard, but it soon disappeared.

Respectful relations between affines are not only maintained through transactions of gifts, but also observing terms of reference and address, systems of naming, avoidance behaviours and tabu (Gregory 2011:192). Affines (*kana*) are expected to observe avoidance relations; including teknonymic name avoidance, and refraining from swearing, fighting, ribald joking or offensive behaviour within sight or earshot of an affine. Further one should not enter the land or yard of an affine without permission. In the past, these avoidances were much stricter, for example a man should refrain from asking affines repeatedly for food, and resources and they would avoid eating together.

Like Wagner (1986a:28) I approach kinship attitudes and behaviours as elicited in accord with an abiding “ethos”; which he defines as “how, when and under what circumstances one should (or should not) act.” I define ‘respect’ as due regard for the feelings, needs and desires of others, which involves not just norms and rules, but practical reason or judgement. It is

crucial to a practice-based “ordinary ethics” (Lambek 2010; Das 2012), that guides interaction and intersubjective experience between people through language, gestures and bodily comportment, transactional modes, and observance of spatial boundaries. In this sense, it is the dominant value from the perspective of the ‘domestic moral economy’, and the grounds for living together well (Sayer 2011:8).

Wagner (1986a:45, 72) described the object of efforts to ‘elicit’ social relations was a self-conscious ethos of ‘respectful’ kinship relations based on moral standards as to interpersonal relationships, and clan and lineage constitution. But, in this regard, Melanesians tend to make distinctions in the degree and forms of respect due according to the kin relationships, which are reproduced or “elicited” in their performance. Similarly, for Stasch (2003a:317), these avoidances embody a more general social and moral philosophy, similar to Wagner’s ‘ethos’, of affinity as “a relation of contingent accommodation and obligation”. Transactional forms and spatial separation are also iconic expressions of degrees of inter-personal and inter-corporal impingement (2003a:324).

Relations of respect can be seen as standards of value by which actions are evaluated or judged. As, Stasch (2011:116) later suggested, the degree to which avoidance relations are observed or manipulated can express something of the qualitative evaluation of the relationship by one or both actors:

Most prominent is avoidance’s indexical enactment of a restrained quality of relational engagement, on the part of an avoider, toward the avoided term’s referent, all creatively signifying attributes of the actor (“careful”),

attributes of the other (“valued”), and attributes of the action (“focused on the other’s well-being, value, power, etc.”).

Avoidance relations can be seen to confer differentiated degrees and qualities of value on certain categories of kin, and particularly affines, through the exaggeration of the principle of respect. Drawing on Munn, Stasch (2011) has argued that avoidance acts to produce and intensify relations, and their value. He (2011:103) argued that that acts of avoidance can be understood as a spatiotemporal extension in that they exert an influence or effect beyond the actor’s immediate body, and involve negotiation of often contradictory values across “territories of the self” (after Goffman 1971). By observing avoidance relations, the actor is extending the spatiotemporal value of the other across space and time, and affirming the autonomy of the other, which acts to strengthen and intensify the kin relation. These acts of avoidance may take a range of different forms, including kin terminologies and naming, spatial categories, and differentiated transactions.

One way in which Li-Lamenu people produce social domains of value in practice is through linguistic “enregisterment”, or the creation of linguistic registers indexing social relationships, and these can be strategies of ‘containment’, or boundary-making (Fleming and Lempert 2011:8). There are two different language registers in Lamenu Lewo for affines (*kana*) and men that are non-affines, as I show in Table 2. My informant termed the former “respect language”, and it involve the replacement of certain ordinary words and phrases (particularly those that refer to eating and drinking, body parts and relationships with the opposite sex) with

euphemised versions (cf. Haviland 1979). Notably, possessives for avoidance relations tend to take alienable (and non-edible/non-drinkable) form, whilst those for non-avoidance relations assume the inalienable possessor form (also used for kin terms).

<i>Pamerasava/ Puruvi</i>	Clan & Fraternal allies/ non- avoidance	<i>Kana/Puna</i>	Affinal clans /avoidance (Lit. translation)
<i>Okinana pang?</i>	Have you eaten already?	<i>Omlamla Pang? / Opopal Pang?</i>	[Respect]
<i>Omina wii pisusun?</i>	Will you drink a hot drink?	<i>Oparpa wii pisusun?</i>	[Respect]
<i>Osisano</i>	Sit down (imperative)	<i>Owako</i>	[Respect]
<i>Omemalio pe?</i>	Where do you sleep?	<i>Opako pe?</i>	[Respect]
<i>O pēre sira ri pe?</i>	You ‘pulled’ a woman from where? (Informal expression for marriage – m.s.)	<i>Ko opiyo sira ri pe?</i>	You ‘called over’ a woman from where? (Respectful expression for marriage - m.s.)
<i>Meralwema</i>	Your tooth (inalienable poss.)	<i>Som Suwe</i>	Your clamshell (of a type used to grate plantain) (alienable poss.)
<i>Viluma</i>	Your hair (on head) (inalienable poss.)	<i>Som Lumapiriyi</i>	Your wild cane leaves (thatch) (alienable poss.)
<i>Paruma</i>	Your head (inalienable poss.)	<i>Som Viyomava</i>	Your high place (alienable poss.)

Table 2 Example phrases in regular and ‘respect’ language for non-avoidance and avoidance kin respectively (source: field notes)

Acts of avoidance and respect work to produce intersubjective value through the intensification and extension of relations, and keeping open paths for future reproduction and living together “across their differences” (Stasch 2015:525). Respect between affines must be constantly maintained through everyday avoidance behaviours, which involves a certain sacrificial logic in acts of renunciation or self-denial in order to convey

respect and avoid shame (Stasch 2011:115). In the next section, I describe how Li-Lamenu people enact performances of sacrifice when everyday expectations of respect are breached, in order to restore relations of respect and roads for marriage.

Restoring ‘Good Face’ and Keeping Roads Open

Affinal alliances between groups are considered enduring and permanent, and are characterised by on-going relations or “roads” of marriage and ritual prestations over generations. Often when people are criticised for going in the ‘wrong direction’, or not acting in a useful and productive way but rather selfishly and disregarding their relationships, people say they mestem rod (‘missed the road’, ‘lost their way’). Illegitimate or illicit relations, and sorcery practices, are associated with deviance and danger; expressed in imagery of ‘hiding’ and ‘darkness’, ‘crookedness’ and ‘dirtiness’. And when relations are restored, they often use the idiom of ‘straightening’ (stretem) or ‘clearing’ (kliarem) these ‘roads’ or ‘paths’ (cf. Rasmussen 2015:32), acknowledging that these ‘roads’ require constant attention and maintenance (Demian 2006:522).

Often in order to ‘clear’ roads, and restore ‘cleanliness’ and respect, ‘good face’ (*merawo*) ceremonies are performed. *Merawo* may be performed on the initiative of the offending families, often in the context of restoring good relations for marriage and other life cycle events. The term ‘good face’⁵⁷

⁵⁷ There are similar idioms to be found across Vanuatu, e.g. ‘to straighten the face’ in Banks (Hess 2009:91), ‘clean face’ (Rousseau 2008:21; Forsyth 2009:106).

evokes the capacity of the sacrifice to restore moral personhood (Mauss and Hubert 1964:13), virtue and the value of life (Lambek 2008:150). The idiom describes the removal of shame, and restoral of proper relations between the offender and their family, and the community at large. Given that the word for door and household, *merasava*, and for clan (*pamerasava*)⁵⁸ derive from the root Austronesian word for 'eye' or face, *mera* or 'mata' (cf. Fox 2006:16), it may also be about clearing the passages and restoring the relations between family and clan groups.

The role of the pig-killing, whilst once was associated with ancestral spirits; it is now talked about in Christian terms of forgiveness of sin, and being freed from shame. The sacrifice of the pig was likened to the Biblical notion of Jesus' blood being shed for our sins. In the context of discussing a bridewealth ceremony⁵⁹, the Chief of his *pamerasava* told me:

He killed this pig because, in the past people didn't know Jesus, God.

When God sent his son to come he was killed because of all the things in this world, but at first all the people didn't know. So they killed a pig so that its blood ran... It became good, like there is peace now. A pig is something that has value that is really huge for the 'black man'.

The other gifts transacted also each have a symbolic role; the recipients should gather together on the mats, drink kava together (cf. Young 1995 Appendix), and feast on the pig and root vegetables, and so the transaction

⁵⁸ Foster (1995:73) notes that in New Ireland the word for lineage translates as 'eye of the men's house', though he attributed this to cognate meanings of clusters, or perhaps the cooking ovens.

⁵⁹ The same bridewealth ceremony is discussed in Chapter Seven.

affirms relations between the receiving clan as a collective, even whilst it differentiates the giving and receiving clans.

Such ceremonies are crucial in managing and maintaining not only interpersonal relationships, but also enduring alliances between clans, and peace in the community. As with these other symbolic exchanges, they are crucial in keeping the 'roads' open for future marriage and exchanges, and thus to secure social reproduction (Gregory 1982:90). For example, Chief Tom had arranged a betrothal for his son, Jack, with an unmarried girl called Nelly. But when Jack told his father that he had changed his mind about a relationship with Nelly, Tom realised he had misled Nelly's family, and felt he had to put things right and arranged a *merawo* for Nelly's father Donald, and his clan.

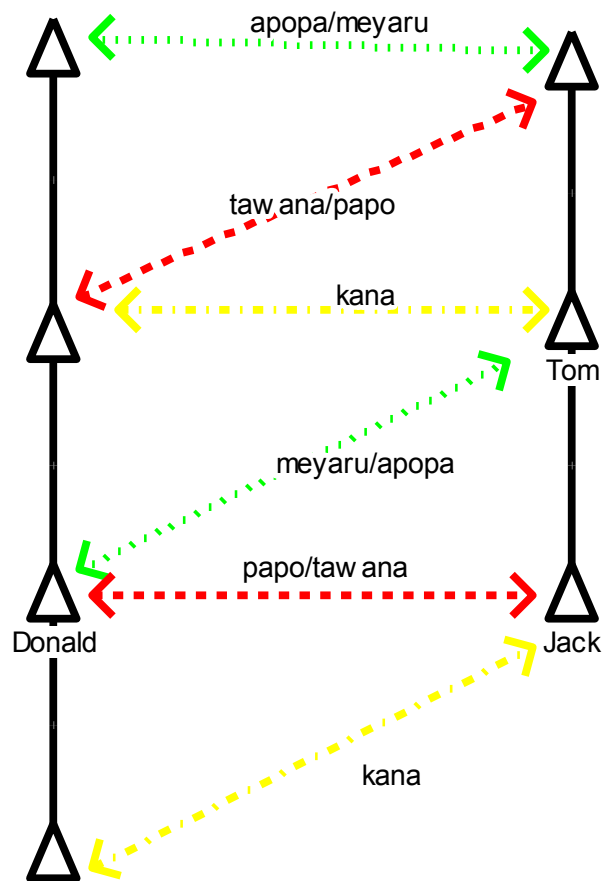


Figure 37 Diagram showing on-going relations between Tom and Donald's affinally allied *pamerasava* from male perspective. Men related as *kana* may exchange sisters.

Tom told me his main rationale for the *merawo* was that good relations remain between the two affinally related *pamerasava*, to support further marriages, perhaps between one of Jack's brothers and Nelly or her sisters. Tom, whose clan has many single young men, said that he does not want to 'spoil the road' for any of them;

I had to go and say sorry because of [Jack's] brothers, because of this 'road'. If I did not make it good, all her family would think badly of us, saying, 'Before, they already asked for one, and didn't want her. And now they want to come and ask for another one'. I went to say sorry to him so that he will remember that all Jack's brothers are still here. One day, they can follow the same road... I did it because this road is for all of us.

However, there was a general concern that youth were increasingly not observing the respect and avoidance behaviours and sexual prohibitions that were seen as crucial to maintaining roads between clans, and social reproduction.

Straying from the Correct Roads: Walking Around, Wasting Time

When you ignore the small things it builds a big weakness. Now the community will always be in a mess. The power of our culture has been declining every year, since 1989. Now all the children act as if everywhere is a 'free zone'.

Father, gardener

If you have respect you will have a good life. The youths are strong headed; they don't know how to make a garden and they always disobey. They don't have respect. When we die, it will be even worse. Lamen won't be like it is today.

Church Elder, grandfather

Before, in the 1970s and 1980s life was totally different.... We no longer have the 'good life' of before.

Father, school cook

As the quotes above illustrate, it is common for people to lament a decline in respect, and a 'good life' of the past. Rather than being taken at face value as descriptions of a former way of behaving, Li-Lamenu statements about kastom and 'good' past legitimate present and future-oriented activities, and evaluations of those actions as more or less compatible with achieving a good life together. Li-Lamenu people are finding themselves in

a moral and temporal paradox, in which not only is there uncertainty about the possibility of a 'good future', but even questions about the 'goodness' of the past. Past, presents and futures can all be imagined as 'good' or 'bad', 'for better or worse', according to the particular context and values in question. As is seen in the Elder's talk and the Chiefs' Day speech in Chapter Five, the Christian moral history of a conversion from a "time of darkness" to an enlightened Christianity is now coming up against a kastom temporality, in which respect was at its height in the precolonial past. Like LiPuma (2001:78–79) has suggested, statements about kastom project values onto a spatiotemporal template, a "moral history", and a "moral geography" in order to conduct "a social conversation on the merits of the past for the future". These conversations revolve around the importance of 'respect', which is seen as crucial to living together well in the future.

The Elder's speech at Children's Day is also typical of Li-Lamenu people's attempt to incorporate what is 'good' from outside, whilst seeking to uphold what is 'good' about indigenous practises and relations for a good life and collective flourishing. But this envisioning of the 'good life' and good divelopmen as some configuration or combination of indigenous kastom, and material and social 'goods' from the 'outside' is open to deliberation and contestation (cf. Smith 1994). People often say that disapproved-of behaviours are exacerbated by exposure to behaviour in town, and foreign things. In exposure to foreign goods and knowledge, youth are frequently said to be losing 'respect', not only for their Elders and Chiefs, but also customary avoidance behaviours. Young women

especially were often berated for not dressing appropriately, and ignoring the Chiefs who ordered them to wear skirts, or ideally island dresses, not shorts or jeans. Mobile phones were seen to facilitate these problems, allowing young people to arrange to meet whilst remaining invisible from their Elders, and this is frequently associated with illicit sexual relationships.

There were concerns that bored young men were often creeping into affines' yards at night to elicit sex without their partner's parents' knowledge or permission. But in addition to the more literal discussions of youth 'walking around' and 'wasting time' in terms of lack of productive work and occupation (as in section 3.3), these idioms are often also used in terms of sexual immorality, and premarital or illicit sexual relations that are seen as counter to the reproductive 'roads' of marriage between clans that underpin social reproduction as replacement of clans and kin relations (cf. Robbins 2004:228; Kraemer 2013:156; Martin 2013:167). 'Walking around too much' and 'wasting time' both often operate as euphemisms for extramarital or premarital sex that does not correspond with socially approved 'roads', and thus is not conducive to social reproduction (cf. Foster 1995:176).

Youth is associated with wilfulness, a characteristic that can be admirable, but this is dangerous when it is not directed at 'straight' and socially (re-) productive activities. As Robbins (2004:292) noted for the Urapmin, and is characteristic of Melanesia in general;

When the will is destructive of relationships—as when it pushes people to eat without sharing (to “eat nothing,” without putting food to use in

producing relationships) or to have adulterous sexual encounters that do not lead to the establishment of recognized social bonds—traditional Urapmin morality condemns it.

This contrasts with the positive value on directional and purposeful movement, and productive and reproductive reciprocal relationships. This valuation of different kinds of movement or mobility resonates with wider tropes; “certain kinds of mobility are devalued. Mere wandering or floating is deplored; enforced movement at marriage or in warfare is devalued, but strategic or motivated mobility on the part of men is highly valued” (Jolly 1999:284).

These issues became the subject of more direct criticism at a village court meeting I attended. A young man, Andy and a classificatory sister⁶⁰, Irene, were brought to the court accused of sexual relations, which are prohibited between a classificatory brother and sister. They admitted to having intercourse one time. Categorical incest and especially that between classificatory brother and sister, is subject to disapproval because rather than sisters marrying out and reaffirming roads between clans, it is tantamount to selfish consumption that cannot create value through spatiotemporal extension (cf. Wagner 2001:112).

⁶⁰ Irene was described to me as being a ‘straight’ or consanguinal sister of Andy- in fact she is his FFFBSSD. However they are seen as closely related as they belong to the same family within the *pamerasava*, who as a collective tend to use the same family name, that of their Andy and Irene’s FFFF.

The fines imposed by the Chiefs after the court case were considerably lower for Andy and Irene than for extramarital affairs, as it was considered that they are young and unmarried, and it is the first time that they had done such a thing. But the youths were given ‘encouragement’ about changing their behaviour in order to achieve a better future. Both Andy and Irene were told that young people should think seriously about their future over the long-term, and not chase fleeting desires, which “waste time”. Andy was told that he ‘walks around’ too much and drinks kava, behaviours not appropriate for a young man of his age. The Chiefs appealed to adults not to let youths from different families enter their yards. A classificatory father of Andy said he would give him work to keep him occupied.

Similarly, Irene was told she has no rispek for kastom and culture. Irene carried a *karo* when Andy was a *paviyu* (initiated, see 6.1.), a ritual practice intended to affirm that she is a sister and it is prohibited to form a sexual relationship. Irene was told she should have listened to her family members when they suggested suitable men for her. Her parents must teach her ‘respect’, i.e. appropriate avoidance behaviour and observance of obligations following her terms of address.

Children born of a relationship between a classificatory brother and sister are considered especially problematic, because the woman and children should ordinarily reside with the husband and father, and the children should be allocated rights to land through their father, as is illustrated in the case of a *merawo* I attended in December 2011 (Figure 38), performed by

David, who had fathered a child with Esther. The birth of the child was especially problematic, as not only was David married (to a woman from Ambrym island), but also Esther and David are classificatory brother and sister.



Figure 38 David performs the *merawo*

It is considered that any child should reside virilocally, and follows the terms of address of the father. But often in a situation such as this the father's wife is not willing to adopt their husband's child from an extra-marital relationship. Fortunately, in this case the wife of the father was willing to take the child into their household⁶¹. An undisclosed amount of

⁶¹ Though several months later, David's long-term partner from Ambrym island was found to have been having an affair with a man from nearby Moriu village whilst David was working in New Zealand. When the family found out, she ran off back to Ambrym. But David too was later called to

money was transacted with the *merawo*, as a gift from the child's fathers to the uncles to facilitate the transfer of the child, and repay them for the costs incurred in caring for the baby.

In terms of marriage and sexual relations, 'roads' should lead to the production and reproduction of the household, and children born of adulterous, incestuous or casual relationships could cause problems. Concerns with sexual morality are also tied up with concerns for social reproduction, and land. As elsewhere in Melanesia (Foster 1995:176), illegitimate children are termed pikinini blong rod ('children of the road'). This is a common idiom derived from the Melanesian association of wandering and aimless movement with promiscuity and pre- or extra-marital sexual sex, when the father rejects the child born of such a relationship. Extramarital affairs and illegitimate children are said to have increased in the context of the absence of spouses through overseas seasonal work, as I discuss in the next section.

6.3. Broken Homes and Displaced Children

There is a bad side to the scheme, especially for the family (extramarital affairs), which happen a lot.

Seasonal worker

a second *kolauwo* court where he was accused of carrying on sexual relations with Esther, even after he had been betrothed to a new partner.

Now, the problem with New Zealand is [affairs]. It makes “broken homes”, and the work of the church can’t become good.

Chief

Like youth exposed to town, seasonal workers are often said to be too concerned with foreign things, losing respect and forgetting avoidance relations and matters of sexual morality when they are outside the community, as expressed in the quote in the chapter introduction. This is leading to concerns that they are undermining the possibilities of living together well in the community, and even within the households they should be cementing. There are fears that living apart may lead to ‘broken homes’ particularly through extramarital affairs in the spouse’s absence.

Seasonal Affairs

It would be good if the Chiefs were to make a strong stand against ‘problems’. At the moment, the Chiefs also have problems at their own ‘door’, meaning they don’t deal with them. But now people are making problems, going to church and they are ashamed. They want to ‘straighten’ them. There’s no courts, no *merawo*, no Nakamal meetings. When they don’t straighten these problems it doesn’t look good.

Seasonal worker’s wife

Exposure to opportunities for extramarital affairs in the migration process seems to undermine that which seasonal workers claim they are seeking to protect and provision: the security and welfare of the household. ‘Broken homes’ not only threaten to fragment the family, but also threaten the relations between clans that are understood as crucial to ‘living together well’. Illicit sexual relations are not considered private matters but threaten

the alliances that mesh the community together, and prevent possibilities for further marriages (cf. Sykes 2002). In this section, I will explore how perceived escalations in extramarital affairs and disputes between affines are taken particularly seriously as affinal alliances between clans are considered crucial to social reproduction.

Seasonal migration provided an opportunity for young people to meet prospective partners, and escape the watchful eye of older kin, and generally accepted or tolerated as a way for eligible single people to meet partners from other villages or islands, and I even knew of a couple of Epi women who married New Zealand men they met overseas. However, extramarital affairs and disapproved-of relationships forming during New Zealand migration and by seasonal workers' partners whilst the seasonal worker is overseas –and illegitimate children- were seen as a major problem.

Group leaders and elders in New Zealand and Australia were vigilant in looking out for illicit relations. As a result of several problems regarding sexual relations between seasonal workers, the four female leaders at the camp where most of the incidents had taken place ruled that one leader would be in each room, all women must return to the room at a reasonable hour, and if they wished to go anywhere they should not go alone. Another leader said that she thought it would be best if there were gender segregation with all the accommodation in New Zealand. She felt even women and men sharing a kitchen should be avoided, in order to prevent relationships, and because some kin are considered tabu, and thus you

should not prepare food and eat in the same area. News would travel fast via kin when gossip broke out, and I lost count of allegations of illicit relationships, which surpassed those formally adjudicated in village courts.

When an extramarital affair took place between two people from different areas, Chiefs from each area requested a room from the company in which to hold an island style court, as it would have been hard to resolve when they return to their respective islands. Chiefs were unhappy about instances when seasonal workers and their employers collude to keep misdeeds secret from the local community leaders that remain at home.

Chief Waiwo said:

Something that is really bad is this thing they call the 'New Zealand system'. They go, and any problem they say, 'Let's deal with it here, and they don't come to tell the Chief....' they deal with it 'outside', away from here. ... 'A problem for New Zealand is for New Zealand'. This phrase must stop. If you do it like that, it means you keep hiding, hiding... And then when the time comes that it 'explodes', then you will all need us.

Chief Waiwo added that if workers tried to 'hide' such problems, it would lead to further problems: "One day, you will just be shocked when the woman just leaves her husband, and runs away with a man she met in New Zealand.... We want it so that this "New Zealand system" must stop here." Rather, Chiefs argued that allegations of an affair or sexual immorality must be taken seriously, and should "go to the Nakamal", and be dealt with in a village court, in cases known as *kolauwo*.

***Kolauwo* Courts: Restoring Roads and Respect**

Kolauwo courts are held for cases dealing with sexual immorality –typically either extramarital relationships or cases of categorical incest, such as relations between classificatory brothers and sisters (as in the case of Andy and Irene above). *Kolauwo* cases have their own protocol and conventions, including regulating the bodily comportment of the accused. The accused couple must sit down on a coconut frond mat (*song*) in front of everyone, facing the judges. The man should sit with his knees raised, and head hung down, whilst the woman must sit with her legs folded to one side and her head hung down, symbolising shame and subordination to the senior men presiding over the case.

In the several *kolauwo* I observed, it was common that the accused were told that they do not listen, they have no respect, and that their actions are shameful and sinful. Senior men of the families of the accused, and their Chiefs, would stand up to face them directly, and shout. It is the women that seem to bear the harshest denigration, and often their father's or senior male relatives slap them and pull on their hair to make them face them directly. The purpose of *Kolauwo* courts is usually in repairing the relationship between married partners, returning errant partners to the marital home, but also restoring and reaffirming 'roads' between clans. Typically both the clans of both parties will pay fines to the court and each have to make a *merawo* prestation to each other, and any other affected clans.

The power of the Chiefs to enforce court orders or decisions is limited as they are considered 'civil' matters and not recognised by the state. This is illustrated in a *kolauwo* case I observed in Ngaloparua, concerning accusations of extramarital relations. John Kalo's wife Salome had run away from him to take up with a man from Tongoa Island. A few days before the court case, Salome's father Maite and some members of his family heard that Salome and her new partner had come to stay in South Epi, and they went to South Epi to fetch her. Salome tried to resist, but her family told the people in South Epi that the family on Lamén were very angry and may become violent if she did not return. Salome eventually returned with them to Lamén Bay, where she stayed with her father.

There was some sympathy for Salome prior to the case as her husband John Kalo was rumoured to have had extramarital affairs, and sometimes been violent towards her. These cases had never gone to court, so it was decided all should be dealt with at one time. Two women were called to attend who were both rumoured to have children fathered by John Kalo following his marriage. Although in court, John Kalo and Salome agreed to live together once again, this was not to be. Around a week after the court case, Salome told the family on Lamén that she wanted to go to the hospital. There she boarded a truck that took her south, and from there she took a speedboat to join her Tongoan lover. This caused much consternation on Lamén but it was unsure what would happen, as they said the expense of taking another boat to try and fetch her again would be an additional 20,000 vatu. In the end they decided not to pursue her again.

The Children of Apples and Children of the Road

Children resulting from both legitimate and illegitimate love affairs in New Zealand were sometimes jokingly referred to as pikinini blong apol ('children of the apples'). This would seem a play on the well known phrase for illegitimate children, pikinini blong rod, and likewise the term 'children of apples' usually alludes to undesirable promiscuity in the context of what should be productive mobility directed at the future of the household. In one such case, Opiyu, a young widow⁶², travelled to New Zealand in 2010 and became pregnant by a man from Santo, who was already married. This caused some consternation amongst Li-Lamenu people, who were cross she had left her children and "run away" to Vila to have the baby. Opiyu was in Vila for several months, during which time her children lived with related families. Opiyu returned to Lamenu Bay in 2012 with her baby boy and was living with her father when I visited her. She told me that the boy would be adopted, but she was not sure whether the boy's father from Santo would take him, or her eldest sister who lives in Port Vila. Her sister said that Opiyu should return to the family of her late husband, after all they paid bridewealth for her.

There were also cases of children born of illicit relationships between partners that remained at home during a spouse's seasonal absence. James, a married man with several children was said to have had an affair with a woman, Edna, whilst her fiancé, George was working in New Zealand. George and Edna had two daughters, were due to be married

⁶² Opiyu's husband Valia died in 2008 whilst working in New Zealand.

soon after George returned from New Zealand. George had already paid brideprice⁶³ for Edna, and saved his earnings in New Zealand to pay for their imminent marriage. But when George returned from overseas, Edna said she was sick and they went for a hospital check-up in Port Vila where it was revealed that Edna was pregnant. At first, Edna tried to convince George that it was his baby, but George became more suspicious as more than nine months passed since he departed for overseas, and the child was not yet born. After much interrogation, Edna finally admitted that James fathered the child. George was distraught and told Edna to take her things and return to her natal family home. There was strong feeling that the case should be dealt with in court without further delay, to 'straighten' the problem and restore divisions within Ngaloparua community, and between them and George's and James' wife's *pamerasava* in Ngalovasoro.

There was considerable public consternation against James and Edna's actions, and sympathy for James' wife and Edna's fiancé, who were both deeply upset but chose to work overseas in New Zealand and were not present at court. The Chiefs imposed a strong fine of 10,000 vatu as James was married, and Edna was due to be married imminently when the affair was exposed. They also recommended that George and Edna each look

⁶³ I asked if the brideprice should be returned, one of the judges told me following the case that this would probably not happen, as it seemed George had decided to forgo the payment, and 'forget' the relationship. Had the couple already married there would be strong encouragement to stay together, divorce and separation is commonly frowned upon following marriage. However, the judge told me George should receive one of the daughters of the relationship, perhaps seen as a kind of replacement for his wife.

after one of their two daughters. Edna had expressed her desire to take both daughters, but the Chiefs thought it was fairer if they share the expense of bringing up the two children, including their future school fees. Because it was Edna that chose to enter the adulterous relationship and was said to have been the one that invited James, she was barred from claiming any child maintenance payments from George. After a boy was born in November 2012, James' younger brother and his wife, who had recently lost a baby, agreed to adopt the baby. This meant that the boy would grow up in his father's yard, and could inherit clan land.

6. Summary: Broken Homes and Crooked Roads

The moral critique of seasonal worker households is often similar to those at younger people; they are uncontrolled and selfish, and that they no longer have 'respect', and they chase a desire for money and outside goods. Their lack of deference and avoidance, uncontrolled movements, particularly away from the watchful eye of family members, and their exposure and attraction to 'outside' are associated with a perceived rise in sexual misconduct. That is not to say that complaints about lack of respect are evidence of the abandonment of the importance of affinal relations. As Stasch (2003a:333) suggests, it is the very voluntary character of acts of avoidance as elicitation of affinal relations, and the need for their constant restaging to afford reciprocal recognition that draws attention to the wider contingency and uncertainty surrounding social connections, and the requirements for constant vigilance.

Under conditions of socio-economic change, there appears to be an increasing cleavage between productive and reproductive relations, and

this is intensifying tensions between the house and the Nakamal as the site of social reproduction, with a shift in emphasis from clan replacement toward the prosperity of a nucleated household in the cash economy. In the next chapter, I outline the continued importance of ritual exchanges and feasting in eliciting kin relations, but also how the changing content of these prestations is giving rise to contested interpretations of their meaning and value.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Door to Door: Marital Homes and Cross-Sibling Ties

The household may appear as a unit, composed of a man, woman and their children, but it is a nexus of crosscutting kin ties and obligations. Just as the Lamenu Lewo term for household is *merasava*, meaning ‘door’, the term for the primary kin groupings is *pamerasava*, also from the same root, and thus connoting ‘gateway, or ‘doorway’⁶⁴, evoking ideas of ‘passing’ and ‘flux’ (Patterson 2001:45; 2005:104; 2006:330–331; Eriksen 2008:22; Jolly 1994:100). The ‘door’ idiom emphasises relations with others, beyond the four walls, and implies constant processes of boundary-making and crossing (Simmel 1994).

As I discussed in the previous chapter, in contrast to the Nakamal, the house is the site for often-contradictory perspectives and obligations. In this chapter, I return to the ‘door’ of the house and the clan as a site not only for the constitution of the household, but also the negotiation of different and often-competing kinship obligations and expectations. In the Li-Lamenu idioms of house and door, the emphasis is on the passage of women in and out, creating relations between affinally-related groups but these relations can be tense:

⁶⁴ The kinship idiom of ‘doorways’, entrances and thresholds are common, e.g. Evans Pritchard (1940:195, 247; cf. McKinnon 2000:47) on Nuer, Myrhe (2014) on Kilimanjaro.

The conjugal couple that establishes a house unites the wife-giving and wife-taking groups that provided each spouse, and produces children who express certain relationships to both paternal and maternal kinsmen as well as affines. The house therefore projects an outward facade of unity, one that masks these underlying tensions and conflicting loyalties (Gillespie 2000a:8).

In this chapter, I reveal how the house is constructed not only through a conjugal tie, but also through ties between clans that give up a sister and those that receive a wife. Shifts in the expression of these relationships in the marriage feasts both reveal the on-going importance of, even a greater emphasis on, affective ties between the bride and her natal kin, but at the same time the increasing evaluation of marriage exchanges in quantitative terms, and the prominence in the material goods contained within the marital home appear to suggest a shift in prominence from respect for indebtedness between interdependent affinal clans, towards the material constitution of the household. I examine how the perspective of the house both uncovers how people, and especially women, negotiate conflicting obligations to kin, but also contradictions and tensions emerging in the process.

Firstly, I discuss bridewealth as a contested transaction, in which the terms of the transaction and the ways it is evaluated can differ according to perspective. Whilst wife-takers may make comparisons with commodity transactions to make claims on the woman and her assets, wife givers also often retain strong expectations of continuity of relations, and this double bind raises dilemmas and tensions for women caught between different

expectations and obligations. In the second section I explain how ritual exchanges at the wedding feast reveal how women's bonds with their natal kin and especially their brothers remain crucially important throughout their lives.

Attention to this cross-sibling relation, and its ritual expression not only reveals the principles behind Li-Lamenu social reproduction, but also how reproductive relations are changing in the context of wider political economic context. As Toren and Pauwels (2015:5) recently argued of the Pacific, "to know about kinship and sisters and brothers is to know about political economy, and that to know about political economy is to know about kinship and sisters and brothers". But whilst changes in the marriage feast seem to emphasise the brother-sister bond, the on-going substitutions in ritual transactions from symbolic textiles and allocation of land to household goods reveals a shift in the importance of marriage away from relations between clans towards the emphasis on the establishment of the house and the household through marriage.

7.1. Brothers and Bridewealth

Brother-Sister Bonds

Clansmen may describe their sisters and daughters as *pilakup*, a throwing stick, perhaps used to knock fruit from a tree. Bolton (1999:49, 54) describes similar analogies across Vanuatu, and argues that it is not intended to devalue women but to emphasise how a woman takes root and grows in a new place, and opens a way for others. As in the idiom of *piya-paravi*, the analogy of taking root and new growth is important in understandings of marriage between clans, though the context in which I was introduced the

pilakup analogy was in emphasising rules of exogamy and inevitable separation or detachment, i.e. an object to be propelled a distance, and not to be retrieved or returned, and thus was somewhat more ambivalent.

In practice, however, there are often strong and close emotional bonds between brother and sister at and beyond marriage. The direct brother-sister relation is crucially symbolised in the boy's initiation, and the marriage rituals is reaffirmed at a woman's death. Indeed, it is a woman's brothers, or their male descendants, who are principally responsible for carrying the mats and blankets, which they use to wrap her body before burying her.

On Lamel, there are no avoidance practices between brother and sister during childhood, but as I discussed in 6.2, rather sexual taboos between classificatory brother and sister are ritualised in the *A Par Karo* ceremony. Following a woman's marriage, the exchange relationship between her marital household and that of her brother is maintained, but becomes more mediated and predicated on her children. The mother's brother and sister's son relationship is crucial; it is a classificatory mother's brother (*apopa*) that gives the child their name, and sees them through all the life-cycle rituals until they are married. As we saw in the last chapter, ideal marriage in Lamel entails a preference for marriage between the opposite sex children of an *apopa* (classificatory MB) and *meyaru* (classificatory ZC), and this is often seen as a way to finally affirm the relationship between the two, although a marriage between their children entails more strict relations of avoidance and respect between them. When a man dies it is his mother's

brothers or their descendants who will wrap and bury his body, but the brother-sister relation is reaffirmed at the woman's death, as it is her brothers and their children that will prepare her body for burial.

Bridewealth: A Contested Transaction

Bridewealth payments are a common reason given for urban migrants' remittances in Vanuatu (Haberkorn 1989:114; Jolly 1994:138; 1987; 2015:66) and now those of the seasonal workers (cf. Bailey 2009:58). The engagement of young men in wage labour often accompanies the monetisation of bridewealth, and social reproduction can increasingly become dependent on this dialectical process (Polier 2000:208; White in Comaroff and Comaroff 2001:58). The more young men migrated, the more monetised and inflated bridewealth became, and this spurred the need for further labour mobility (Petrou 2015:64).

Li-Lamenu bridewealth transactions, as elsewhere, have become monetised (Polier 2000:209; Jolly 2015:69), but for marriage within Lamenu, people tend to follow the cap on the monetary brideprice of 80,000 vatu recommended by *Malvatumauri*, Vanuatu's National Council of Chiefs. Thus the cost is not seen to be inflating at the same rate as other ceremonial exchanges. Sometimes the full bridewealth (80,000 vatu + pig and foodstuffs) is given at once and it is considered a further wedding feast is not required; this is called *Pil Roa Sira*. Other *pamerasava* prefer to pay half the money up-front (usually 40,000) with a pig and kava, and then provide a wedding feast for the bride's family with the remainder. However, it is thought that bridewealth traditionally could be paid with a pig alone.

There is a long history in anthropology of contesting ethnocentric perspectives on bridewealth transactions, and distinguishing them from commodity exchange (Evans-Pritchard 1931; Comaroff 1980; Valeri 1994:3; Graeber 2011a:131–132, 180). Levi-Strauss (1969:65) famously argued that exogamy is the positive injunction for men to exchange sisters as the “supreme gift”, and that bridewealth should not be seen as an equivalent ‘payment’ for a woman, in the manner of a commodity transaction, but a symbol of indebtedness that could only be fulfilled when a woman was returned (Valeri 1994:3).

In Vanuatu, bridewealth is a part of a lifelong flow of gifts from sister’s husband to wife’s brothers, which will continue until the marriage of the sister’s husband’s sons, after which they will continue to make transactions to their mother’s brothers (cf. Rio 2007a:189). Marriage, bridewealth and child growth payments should not simply be understood in terms of reciprocal exchange, but as part of a system of social reproduction (cf. Weiner 1980; Gregory 1982). The nurture and care of the household and clan in the production of people is materialised in the bridewealth transaction, and is followed by a series of transactions in the life of the offspring of the marriage, such as first tooth, and circumcision, in which growth and reproduction are also symbolised and valorised (Strathern 1984:50).

The meaning and intentions of bridewealth transactions, as to what is ‘transacted’ in terms of material objects, as well as rights, obligations and alliances (cf. Comaroff 1980:20), who the transactors should be, and the

consequences for the woman behind the exchange is subject to moral contestation (Filer 1985:163). Conflicts over bridewealth may intensify in the context of increasing monetisation of the economy (cf. Wardlow 2006:25), and the material transformations and ideological influences of the colonial era have resulted in a situation in which bridewealth transactions are increasingly monetised, negotiated, finalised, and even expressed in similar terms to commodity transactions by the men that perform them. Like the Bislama term for bridewealth, Pem Woman (“Buying the Woman”), the Lamel Lewo vernacular term *Pul Sira*, is ambiguous, as the verb *pul* has taken on the meaning of ‘buying’ a commodity⁶⁵ (cf. Thomas 1992). As Jolly (2015) also highlights, contradictions and contested meanings can be brought about in the equivalences drawn through these cross-translations, which come to be reflected in the contestations over the meanings of the transactions themselves (Valeri 1994; Hess 2009:91; Rio 2007a:195–196).

Sometimes, bridewealth payments can be argued to legitimate violence against women, and thus seem to treat her almost like an object, or item of property, seeking to deny women’s agency and claims of her natal kin

⁶⁵ This may be influenced by early missionaries, who often expressed disapproval of bridewealth practices, which they perceived as the ‘buying’ and ‘selling’ of young women, often to older men. Missionaries often sought to manage the transactions that could take place, or in some cases ban them altogether (Jolly 2015:66–71). Frater, the missionary for Paama and Epi, sought to limit the number of pigs required in order that young men need not participate in labour mobility (Petrou 2015:64).

(Jolly 2015:64, 72; cf. Hess 2009:97; Wardlow 2006:23, 106). Some Li-Lamenu men use the fact that they paid brideprice to assert rights in women, in property or commodity terms, particularly by husbands wishing to claim rights over his wife (Strathern 1996:517–518; Jolly 2015). At one workshop- organised by American Peacecorps volunteers- on domestic and sexual violence, one of the few men in attendance said that it was a common statement, for men to say they had ‘bought’ the woman for a high price, and could do what they liked with her.



Figure 39 Returned seasonal worker makes a bridewealth prestation to the bride's parents (Lamen, December 2012)

Nevertheless, bridewealth transactions are far from self-interested commodity transactions. The family of the bride do not bargain for a higher ‘price’ for their daughter and tend to accept the 80,000 cap on

bridewealth transactions, which may help reduce friction and conflict over bridewealth transactions, and also prevent their escalation in cost, at least for marriages between Li-Lamenu clans. Nor do a woman's family see the receipt of bridewealth, or subsequent exchanges as a means to accumulate money or material wealth, unlike in Papua New Guinea Highlands where the role of women in creating roads for competitive exchange and bridewealth have seen them been likened to a 'trade store' (Strathern 1972:99; cf. Wardlow 2006:4). In fact, if anything the bride's family are likely to spend a greater sum than they receive on counter gifts at the marriage feast, as I explain later in this chapter. In this sense, Li-Lamenu ambiguities surrounding bridewealth can be compared to the way in which Huaulu were understood by Valeri (1994) to be engaged in "buying women but not selling them". Whilst I heard of instances of husbands and their kin referring to bridewealth to assert rights or claims over the woman, I never heard of her natal kin discussing the receipt of bridewealth in terms of material gain, but rather respect.

During my time in Epi, I only heard one Li-Lamenu woman – a professional secondary education teacher- say explicitly that she 'did not believe' in bridewealth, because it allowed the husband's kin to make claims over a woman's property and income (cf. MacIntyre 2011:108; Wardlow 2006:229). A wealthy and highly educated woman, she herself had faced repeated complaints from her husband's kin, also at Lamenu, that the couple was not generous enough with contributions when it came to her husband's younger brother's wedding. But the woman's brother gave a different perspective, saying he felt the cost of bridewealth was good for

women, in that it made sure a man demonstrated he was 'serious' about his commitment before marrying her, as too many young men would start a relationship with a girl, only to abandon her.

If a woman's family has not received bridewealth they may take offence and remove her. Although couples commonly live together before a bridewealth prestation, until a bridewealth payment has been paid, the woman's natal kin are entitled to take her from her spouse's clan and break off the relationship with her spouse. Although this is was generally said to be in accordance with the woman's interests, in some cases, the wishes of a married couple can be in tension with those of the woman's natal clan. I did hear of a case of a couple on Epi whose kin were threatening to separate her from her partner, even though she wished to remain with him. The couple, from Nivenwe village, came to visit Mary⁶⁶, the local recruiter for Appleseed, with a mat to ask Mary if the husband could work in New Zealand the following season. They wished to raise the money for him to pay her bridewealth, as there was lots of 'talk' from the woman's family and the couple wanted to stay together.

Conflicting Claims: Women in a Double Bind

Bridewealth can often be an ambivalent for prospective brides; on one hand it may provide security in a desirable marriage, but where it has not been paid the woman may exercise more freedom from claims on her by

⁶⁶ Mary is *anti* (classificatory FZ) to the woman. Anti are traditional go-to for women who have a problem, and are also meant to assist them in their marriage.

her husband and his kin. For instance, Jemima, whom we met in Chapters One and Three, told me Pulpē had not yet paid bridewealth, and this meant she could leave the relationship, an option she was seriously considering because Pulpē was making no effort to take care of the family. Jemima had a difficult relationship with Pulpē, and was never even really accepted by Pulpē's family. Pulpē's father, Alick, had been openly hostile to the relationship, he tried to suggest that Pulpē did not father Jemima's latest son, but Pulpē says that he was. Jemima has heard through female relatives that he is against her moving in, "because he did not ask her".

Jemima had remained as a single mother, residing in the yard of her natal family, for around five years until after the birth of her second son. She decided to take action and was the first (and only) woman on Lamén Island to request a child maintenance case. It went to the island court around 2006, and Jemima won the case when Pulpē admitted that he had fathered both sons. But as Pulpē said he was unable to make the payments, the court ordered that Jemima move in with Pulpē and he take care of the family. Jemima's brothers brought her to Pulpē's family's yard, to assert her right to live there, when Jemima became pregnant with his third child by him.

The interpretation of events concerning Jemima's situation is open to contestation. Another man in Pulpē's clan told me that Pulpē had 'stolen' Jemima, implying Pulpē's failure to pay bridewealth, and assume responsibility for his children is threatening to the alliance between the

affines, and experienced by Jemima as lack of recognition, which denies her dignity and worth (cf. Wardlow 2006:16). Jemima's eldest two sons had moved out to live with Jemima's mother, complaining that Pulpē beats them too much. She said Pulpē has never contributed any money towards the upbringing of the three children, and it is only her that finds money for necessities for the children. She felt very troubled, and said, "I don't know how the next year is going to be".

Continued obligations to natal kin, and those of the husband often create predicaments and dilemmas for women as they are expected to retrace the paths between the 'doors'. This position of women "in between" their husband's and their natal kin (Strathern 1972; cf. Patterson 2001:40), does not necessarily affect the woman alone, but the ways in which decisions are negotiated within a household. Once bridewealth has been paid, a woman or married couple may be subject to conflicting claims and obligations from the husband's clan, and the wife's natal kin.

Access to education and wage work may give women more power in these negotiations, but can also give rise to new tensions, and claims over her capacities and income. For instance, Linda, a professional and educated woman obtained a bank loan to buy a truck as a taxi business. Linda decided to pay her brother of her natal clan at Lamen to drive the truck, but her husband's brothers were very unhappy at this arrangement. Her husband's elder brother wished his son to drive the truck. The arguments escalated and the issue eventually went to a village court case, where Linda's husband's elder brother, Derek claimed that he and his *pamerasava*

paid bridewealth for Linda, so Linda is obliged to give them first priority when distributing income, or including them in business ventures. A bold and outspoken woman, Linda claimed that it is 'her business' and that Derek was being 'childish' saying that his view of bridewealth is from the past. She told me that her decision to make her brother the driver was quite deliberate; he is tabu to them so the affinal relationship should help maintain respect. Linda complained that Derek's family had already been making demands on truck use without repaying the petrol. Linda's brother Eric argued in court, "She has right to make decisions on the truck which she paid for". Linda and her brother both blamed the dispute on envy, and said this prevented 'development'. Linda said it is difficult to try to start such businesses; "In our culture there is too much jealousy over material things".

The Chiefs presiding over the court were more concerned with restoring the relations between the affines. They ordered the two clans to eat together and make peace. The primary concern of the judges was to restore "respect" into the family. In addition to a court fee, and exchange of identical fines, the Chiefs ordered Linda's and Derek's families to organise a meal together with the rest of their clan, to "communicate together as a family, as a clan", so the children will recognise that they all belong to one *pamerasava*. Linda told me they ate together, and the men drank kava, but she felt that her in-laws were still reluctant to accept the situation, and the relationship had not been fully restored. This case is also illustrative of a tension between household decision-making, and assertions regarding obligations to others, often made in terms of respect and the meanings of

exchanges between clans. In the next chapter, I will discuss how these shifts and tensions are also evident in the marriage feast; the type of ritual that has long been thought of as exemplary in reproducing relations between clans, and roads for further marriages.

7.2. Through the Doors: Brother-Sister Exchanges

The house is iconic of adulthood, marriage, parenthood and socialisation of children (cf. Munn 1992:35). It is the location for a mother to be sequestered with a newborn child, the venue for many life-cycle rituals, and where the family of the dead wrap up the body of their household member for burial. A man's first house, and household set apart from his parents is traditionally supposed to be built at the time of his marriage, on customary land and has an intimate association with getting married and having establishing a household (cf. Taylor 2008:174). Although many single men have built their own houses, and many couples live together long before marriage, it is considered that a man should have his own house complete with a kitchen and a toilet in time before his marriage, and it is a church stipulation too⁶⁷.

At marriage, the house is a central site for performance of the passage of women, through the removal of the bride from her natal home, and installation into the marital one in the rituals following the marriage feast. In the past, it was the responsibility of the groom's family to provide everything required for the marital home. The father and mother of the

⁶⁷ There should also be a garden ready for the couple, and- in the past, also a canoe.

bride would simply prepare a bed for the new wife. Changes in these practices reveal the on-going importance of the tie between a woman and her natal family, particularly her brothers.

Song sa Yorumēne (“**Bed for the Man**”)

The marriage feast is the occasion for the symbolic and material constitution of the household, but far from being simply about a couple being celebrated as forming a new economic and reproductive ‘unit’, the marriage feast symbolises the key brother/sister relationship. The transition of the bride from her natal family to that of her husband is performed during two stages of the ritual. The bride’s natal family, and especially her family, will lead her out of her natal home and present her with gifts in a ceremony called *Song sa Sira* (‘bed for the woman’). Meanwhile, the sisters of the groom furnish and decorate the marital home and the actual bed in *Song sa Yorumēne* (“bed for the man”), and lead the couple in a second procession to enter the house. I suggest that changes in brother/sister exchanges at marriage rituals reflect the increasing emphasis of the establishment of an economically viable household, vis-a-vis the indebtedness between clans created by the passage of women.

In the context of historical political and economic transformations, the brother-sister bond seems to be even more emphasised in life-cycle rituals. This bond is emphasised in the marriage ceremony, not only between the bride and her brothers, but also the groom and his sisters. In addition to the provision of a feast for the bride’s natal clan and their allies, the groom must also provide a separate feast and gifts of mat and cloth for his classificatory sisters. Indeed, even the relation between the father of the

bride and his sisters is reaffirmed, when the women masquerade in a ceremony in which they dress in rags and lie in the ground oven, covered in ashes, as if ignored and neglected, until their brothers present them with gifts.



Figure 40 The bride, Leimas, in multiple dresses sits on a bed of new pillows and blankets, part of the gifts placed in the marital home by her husband's sisters.

The vital cross-sibling relation is also expressed in ritual transactions in which the cross-siblings of each marriage partner will furnish and decorate the new household. Following their feast near the Nakamal, the sisters of the groom will enter the new marital home and decorate the house, and make the bed with new sheets and blankets in a return ceremony called,

Song sa Yorumēne ("bed for the man"). They fill the house with household gifts, such as mats, and kitchen utensils, and decorate its walls with colourful cloth, ready for the couple's arrival. That evening, they will dress the couple in several layers of new clothes, and lead them to enter the marital house, with much singing and whooping. In so-doing the groom's sisters symbolise their role in the procreative and reproductive future of the household in preparing the 'beds' for the married couples. The brother-sister is emphasised even whilst the separation of the bride from her natal family is simultaneously performed.

***Song sa Sira* ("Bed/Mats for the Woman")**

There is no initiation ceremony for girls or women on Lamén, but a woman's marriage is seen to be her equivalent. There are similarities between the gift giving and decoration by the *apopa* when a *paviyu* returns to his house, and that of a bride as given by her brothers at her wedding feast⁶⁸. After they have eaten the feast paid for by the groom's family, The bride's 'separation' is symbolised in the display of emotion of the bride in 'leaving' her natal home, even when the ritual takes place years after her actual move. The brides will cry, and her sisters look solemn, despite all the dancing and smiling of married female kin (especially her father's sisters) who lead the procession, celebrating the bride following in their footsteps, sometimes along the same 'path' that they themselves followed.

⁶⁸ In fact on two occasions, I saw combined feasting and gift giving, for both the woman's marriage and her sons' circumcision. When the boys were old enough, the women and their kin saw fit to combine the ceremonies, a strategy well received on both sides as it saves costs, and effort.



Figure 41 Classificatory mother of Leimas preparing a bokis; inside was a large number of wrapped gifts such as bowls, trays and island dresses, as well as 10,000 vatu in cash in an envelope.

The procession leads her to outside the Nakamal, where she and her closest clan sisters will sit on a 'bed' of mats and cloth, surrounded by gifts from their classificatory fathers and brothers, in a ritual called *Song sa Sira* ("bed/mats for the woman"). The mats and cloth that form the 'bed', and the other gifts of household utensils, which are redistributed between the sisters of the bride, and those who contributed to the bridewealth.

However, the classificatory fathers and brothers of the bride also give a suitcase or wooden trunk (bokis) to the bride, the contents of which is intended for her to keep, and not to be shared (Figure 41). The bokis and other gifts that had been carried in the procession are placed alongside each 'bed', the pile of mats. The brothers of the bride come forward with

the key for each box to present to the bride. They each embrace them emotionally, as the rest of the brides' families lined up behind them



Figure 42 A bride and her brother embrace after he hands her the key to her bokis

The box is intended to be held by the woman herself, and is kept locked and hidden from the sight of others. The gift is a token of deeply felt sentiments between a bride and her natal family, and she is expected to continue to have a close relationship with them after marriage, although it is marked by more respectful terms of address. My *apopa* who gave me an account of the life-cycle ceremonies suggested that these days the father of the girl feels he should make a gift to the girl to thank her for all the duties she has made at home, and start her in her new life, a gift of love. In the

remainder of this chapter, I discuss how the emergence of these cross-sibling marriage exchanges reflect processes of socio-economic change, including more inter-island mobility and marriage, and the increasing emphasis on the establishment of the household.

Mobility, Money and Marriage

The incorporation of new aspects of ritual- especially those that come at cost, is not without contestation. In the case of the marriage feast of Leimas, the bride of Philip, in the double wedding I described, Leimas' father had tried to protest that he did not want to pay for a bokis, as it was not kastom but a new practice only recently adopted. But he said he changed his mind when an elderly relative produced an old wedding photograph (perhaps 1970s) showing a Lamenu bride and her sisters sitting on a huge pile of mats. He laughed as he told me, saying it must be kastom after all. Meanwhile his younger brother had insisted on buying a box. He reminded his brother that Leimas' marriage feast was part of a combined ceremony, and it would be shameful if other bride received a bokis, and they did not get one for Leimas.

The incorporation of money and commodities into Melanesia is linked to the efflorescence and elaboration of many ritual ceremonies, as I explore further in Chapter Eight, and it seems that for bridewealth and marriage this process was influenced by historic patterns of circular migration. Indeed, the boxes used for Li-Lamenu ceremonies bear a striking resemblance, size and dimensions to the "trade boxes" full of trade goods worth up to £500, such as rifles, household utensils and tools, and cloth, that were the main rewards for nineteenth century labour migrants in

Queensland, Fiji, and other locations. In some cases, they are even painted red as the Queensland ones were, to resemble cedar chests (Graves 1983; Beck 2009:46, 96). Trade boxes were incorporated into local trade networks and reciprocal kin exchanges networks in the islands and may have contributed to the escalation of marriage prestations across the region (Graves 1983:90, 103; Bonnemaïson 1985:75–76).

This particular gift giving to the bride from her brothers is a relatively new tradition, which has spread across Vanuatu and has come about through increasing inter-island mobility and marriage. Eriksen (2008:77–79) suggests that a similar ceremony, amongst urban Ambrymese that they term sakem presen (“throwing gifts”) can be understood to uphold the continued importance of the relationship between a woman and her natal family, especially her brothers, across an extended geographical and social distance. My *apopa* said that he believed the practice originated when Paamese urban migrants would send gifts to their sisters from Vila, and at the time of his marriage they would return presents to him. But whilst Eriksen links sakem presen amongst urban-based Ambrymese to the rise of female mobility, on Lamel this ceremony was incorporated in 1960s into the island performance of marriage ceremonies, together with *Song sa Yorumēne*, and were first performed when a Li-Lamenu man married a woman from Paama⁶⁹.

⁶⁹ Lind (2006) mentions such a ceremony is regularly performed on Paama.

For Eriksen (2008:76), the present giving amongst urban Ambrymese also represents a restructuring of the cross-sex sibling relation, which in the past would have been mediated by gifts between wife's brother and sister's husband, in respect to their children, that is as an affirmation of the bond of mother's brother / sister's son. But on Lamén there was a precedent for direct gift exchanges between brothers and sisters in the *A Par Karo* ceremony at *Paviyuyana*. Indeed, my informants themselves suggested the *A Par Karo* ceremony appeared to 'point to' the exchange of gifts between brother and sister at marriage. Nevertheless, it seems that the present giving from the bride's natal family to the bride and her new household are beginning to surpass bridewealth in scale and cost.

7.3. Establishing a Viable Household

From Bridewealth to Dowry?

Marriage exchanges appear to reflect a shift in emphasis from the replacement of clans and their reproductive dependence on one another, towards the establishment of a viable productive household in the cash economy. The anthropological literature has long emphasised the life-long indebtedness of the wife-receivers, at least until they are able to return another woman (Strathern 1984:49), but there appears to be a shift in direction from the emphasis on payment of the wife-givers in favour of the wife-receivers. At the bridewealth ceremony pictured in Figure 39, the prospective bride's mother told me that the woman's family seem to 'lose' more money than the man's family these days. She said that the woman's family give the couple gifts with lasting benefit such as dishes, but because the woman's family receive mainly food from the man's side, it is quickly

consumed: “We don’t get any ‘good thing’ that we benefit from.
Tomorrow, you go to the toilet and it’s finished.”

Indeed, it raises the question over the distinction between bridewealth and dowry societies and the conditions for each to flourish. Melanesia has long been characterised in anthropology as a region of bridewealth, and the predominance of the brother-sister relation, in contrast to dowry societies, where the husband-wife relation is supreme. However, for Eriksen (2008:74–77), the fact that the Ni-Vanuatu bokis is comprised of household goods that are primarily intended as a gift from a woman’s brothers and fathers to be retained by her makes it comparable with a dowry.

As distinct from some forms of dowry which is often redistributed amongst the husband’s kin, the bokis denotes wealth items intended for the bride to keep (McCreery 1976:169), or to mark the establishment of a new household. In these respects, the bokis resembles the common practice often referred to as ‘trousseau’, which is found across different historical and geographic contexts, in which a bundle of household goods is taken by the wife into the new marital household. Whilst in some descriptions of ‘trousseau’, the bride prepares this bundle herself, in other cases a gift of textiles, clothes, furniture and other household goods are given by the bride’s family in reciprocation for bridewealth (James 2015:101). In the remainder of this chapter, I will discuss the emergence of these ritual innovations in the context of economic change and increasing land scarcity, before discussing a broader shift from principles of social

reproduction based on clan replacement, towards a household-oriented future.

Household-Oriented Gifts

Whilst dowry usually operates as a form of private wealth under conditions of land scarcity, bridewealth is most often found where land is relatively plentiful but labour is scarce, and the receiving of productive and reproductive capacities of women is of the utmost value (Graeber 2011a:179). And whilst the recipients will disperse bridewealth as a societal fund, dowry is ordinarily seen as a familial fund, to be held in possession by the woman, or sometimes her husband (in Goody and Tambiah 1973:6). Further, Gregory (1982:106) suggests that whereas bridewealth is part of gift exchange, dowry can be better understood in commodity terms, as a form of inheritance.

Eriksen (2008:80) suggests that the emergency of a dowry-like exchange reflects the tendency of, especially more elite, urban households to direct resources more inwardly toward the nuclear family, rather than the generalised reciprocity that pertains between wider kin networks in the rural village, reflecting a shift from a ceremonial-oriented economy, to one that is more commodity-oriented:

In Port Vila the focus is to a lesser extent on the kinship network based on generalised reciprocity, and to a greater extent on the needs of the nuclear family. The new present ceremony might be symptomatic of economic changes: from a distributive economy based primarily on generalized exchange developing into an economy based on an increasing degree of familial funds. (Eriksen 2008:79).

Eriksen (2008:80) observes that emerging dowry-like forms of marriage exchange may indicate the increasing prominence of household wealth vis-a-vis ritual (and non-ritual) obligations to redistribute to wider kin networks and limiting the extent to which they are expected to share. This has been associated mainly with an incipient form of class formation amongst urban elites who put resources into new lifestyles (Gewertz and Errington 1999:8; Martin 2010; 2013), though similar complaints were beginning to arise in rural areas also (Gewertz and Errington 1998:346). However it appears from my fieldwork in Lamén and Lamén Bay that this process can be fostered in rural areas under conditions of increasing land scarcity and dependence on commodity economy, in which transactions of wealth take precedence over the symbolic value of gift items in representing reproduction and replacement of clans.

Eriksen (2008:72) explains that in North Ambrym (where it seems people would marry between more dispersed hamlets), it was said a woman would be given a live pig and a yam to plant, which should grow and thrive, symbolising reproduction and continuity. But, the Ambrymese pointed out, that unlike these traditional gifts “do not grow”. I did not hear of a similar exchange between a bride and her natal family prior to *Song sa Sira*. However, in the past, there was a customary practice of a woman’s natal clan giving her the use of an area of their land on her marriage. This was known as *Apère Karo*, meaning “bottom of the (woman’s food) basket”. It was usual that this land would be situated on their edge of the woman’s natal family’s land, closest to that of her new husband, and thus was a way of her maintaining her relationships with her natal family.

Land scarcity and the prevalence of intermarriage means that *Apēre Karo* are no longer generally provided to daughters and sisters on their marriage⁷⁰. Increased numbers of interisland marriages may have also contributed to this process as, arguably, people are less likely to offer land to in-married women from elsewhere. Meanwhile, their daughters are increasingly likely to marry out, and their family may wish to dispatch them with some portable and durable goods to establish them in the new household far away. In the next section, I will discuss some of the implications of this shift for women in different marital situations.

No Place for Single Mothers

Although much is made in Melanesian anthropology in an emphasis on alliance over descent, and Rio (2007b; cf. Wagner 1967) suggests child growth payments to the mother's brothers are a way of warding off continued claims by matrilineal kin, the fact is that in Li-Lamenu society there is a moral expectation that a child should reside on their father's land, and sons should inherit land from their father and his clan. Following the norms of exogamy and virilocal residence, groups of classificatory fathers and brothers should live alongside one another, with their wives and unmarried daughters, whilst sisters move to their husband's land at marriage. Li-Lamenu people facing land scarcity are often resistant to the possibility of a sister and her children remaining on her natal clan land.

⁷⁰ As I discuss further in Chapter Nine.

Children that remain permanently with their mothers on the woman's natal clan land can cause considerable tension between her and her natal clan, as the children of this union may put undue pressure on their mother's brothers' land. Thus, single mothers, widows and divorced women often face dilemmas due to insecurity of land tenure, for which they are dependent on their husbands' or natal kin. For instance, Tina had married a man from another island but he was abusive and violent. When she decided to leave her husband, her two sons and daughter wished to return with her to her family home in Lamén Bay. When I met her, Tina was residing with her younger son and daughter in a house on her natal clan land that had been recently vacated by her elderly parents, who were to be cared for by Tina's brother. Tina's immediate family had been supportive, but she said she had faced a lot of 'talk' from other members of the *pamerasava*, especially her clan brothers, making her feel that she and her children no longer belonged in Lamén Bay.

Tina thanked God that she and her family had seasonal work opportunities, which allowed her to plan a different life in town. Tina, together with her two sons, had bought land in Vila and was building a house for the elder one. She said she thought there would be enough land left on which to build a business⁷¹, perhaps a store and a rental house. Tina's concern was for her sons' future: "I am nothing, I am nothing, but

⁷¹ She said the family could never start a business in Lamén Bay, as the children's father is not from there.

this is for the two boys". She said that the 'Big Man' (God) had been very good to them, and without the chance to work overseas she did not know what they would have done.

7. Summary: Paths Between Houses

In this chapter, I have shown how historical transformations monetised and escalated marriage exchanges between affines, but also gave rise to contestations over the meaning and implications of bridewealth transactions. Whilst a husband and his kin may refer to a bridewealth payment in order to make exclusive claims over the wife and her wealth, it is clear from life-cycle rituals that the brother-sister bond is maintained in life-long obligations and affective ties.

Indeed, in the marriage rituals the brother-sister bond seems to be becoming even more emphasised in lavish gift giving between cross-siblings. But the monetisation of these prestations and people's comments over these changes suggests that there is a shift in emphasis from the indebtedness of wife taking clans to wife giving clans- expressed in bridewealth and life cycle feasts, towards a flow of gifts towards the household, and increasing conjugal funds. In the next chapter I suggest that the symbolic value of ritual transactions for clan replacement is increasingly contested against the use of money for durable goods, and household-oriented reproduction.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Gifts or Goods: Ritual Costs and Eating Money

Much of the income from overseas seasonal work is channelled into rituals and is seen as causing their 'efflorescence' in scale and monetary expenditure. People complain that the costs of major life-cycle ceremonies such as marriage and incision have escalated due to increase in population and increased spending by seasonal workers, and the expense is increasingly borne by households and closer networks of kin. This chapter examines how ritual is efflorescing in the context of seasonal work, but also how this is giving rise to critiques of ritual expenditure, as people are increasingly assessing ritual transactions in terms of the quantitative value in terms of monetary cost, and not just the symbolic value of the gifts.

Firstly, I show how bridewealth transactions are undergoing a shift from being funded by reciprocal contributions between kin and fraternal allies towards being funded by the close family of the groom, or even the couple alone. In the second section, I will discuss how the cost and scale of life-cycle rituals appears to be escalating, and this is met by efforts to limit and reduce their costs. In the final section, I discuss the significance of their critiques of the rising costs of ritual in terms of 'eating money' and 'wasting time'.

8.1. Reciprocal Contributions, and Mutual Help

Brotherly Support and Reciprocal Contributions

When a man wishes to marry, it is customarily the man's father's responsibility to assemble the bridewealth. But close kin, and those that are members of fraternally allied 'brother' clans termed *puruvi*, would be expected to come forward with contributions of money, commodities such as rice, livestock, even trips on a boat or truck to help support the arrangements for the ritual. The term *puruvi*, which is generally translated as 'brother' clans may derive from the Lewo word for "banana plant" trunk or stem (Early 1994:129). Bananas are cultivated asexually from an offshoot or sucker of the main stem and the symbolism of being 'like' or substitutable may make it an apt metaphor, particularly in contrast to the idiom for marriageability in *paravi*, or breadfruit trees. As Gregory (2013) has argued, anthropologists' preoccupation with affinal alliances has often led to 'fraternal alliances', or bonds of 'brotherhood' between men, being overlooked. In the Li-Lamenu context, these alliances endure over generations and are enacted and affirmed through ritual and exchange.

Indeed, the system of reciprocal contributions at ritual events seems to be the principle reason for and basis of Li-Lamenu fraternal clan alliance as there is often no given genealogical connection and intermarriage is prohibited. Members of *Puruvi* clans are addressed in the same classificatory kin terms as one's natal clan (i.e. fathers, brothers, sons), and women born to these clans are 'sisters' and 'daughters'. Thus sexual relations and marriage are prohibited with members of these clans, but classificatory children in *puruvi* clans are suitable candidates for adoption.

“Brotherhood” seems to be graded along terms of social distance; whilst one’s brothers are distinguished by birth order, *puruvi* are not. When it comes to contributing to life-cycle rituals, one’s clan brothers are at the more generalised reciprocity scale and freely contribute to each other’s ritual prestations. Meanwhile, *puruvi* tend towards more balanced exchange, with recorded and reciprocated reciprocal contributions, called *baa*. Li-Lamenu people make a distinction between the mutual financial ‘help’ expected from close kin and *baa*, a more formal agreement of delayed like-for-like exchange (cf. Gregory 1980:641). Whilst ‘help’ corresponds more to the ‘generalised reciprocity’ pole of Sahlins’ (1965; 1972) model of kinship distance (cf. Schram 2010:453) where one should spare what one can, *baa* tends more towards ‘balanced reciprocity’, which Sahlins (1972:220–221) sees as the “classic vehicle” of peace and alliance contracts and fraternal solidarity.

The term *baa* was often translated into Bislama as kaon (debt/ ‘account’), and operates as a credit/ debit system that passes between generations. *Baa* should never be repaid directly to the lender; it should always pass ‘behind’ to a succeeding generation. If Tom was to give Jim money, say 5000 vatu, for Jim’s elder son’s bridewealth, Jim will return the 5000 vatu when Tom was arranging a ceremonial event. Jim may add a further *baa* payment, and request that it be repaid on the occasion of his younger son’s marriage. Even if Jim did not add a further *baa*, he will likely repay the money with an increment and say that the extra is given as ‘help’. *Baa* contributions should be repaid in kind and some preferred - for example -

to contribute a 25 kg bag of rice, or flour, than the 4000 vatu it would cost in the store, as this was a strategy that would not be affected by price inflations and deductions for transport.

Baa must be carefully recorded⁷², and the return can be requested at an appropriate interval. Chief Tom, on Lamén Island, likened the expected increment to ‘interest’ (cf. Hess 2009:88):

Sometimes we do it as if it has a little interest, if it looks as if you have enough money. But if one didn’t have enough money, he can say, “Okay I will give you the exact amount”. Normally, he would add extra. If he returned 6000, the 1000 extra is just to ‘help’. Then, he can say he wants to give a further *baa*, for his remaining young son. And then he can combine them.

But the principle behind *baa* is not one of personal financial gain. Unlike the interest that accrues on a commodity-debt, the fact that a further *baa* credit, or increment is added means that even as a debt is cancelled out, a further obligation or gift-debt is created (cf. Gregory 1981: 640). Although the increment should be voluntarily offered, there is a moral expectation of egalitarian continuity.

Unlike the direct exchange of equivalents, which is “inherently unstable” because the debt can be cancelled out and the relationship broken-off (Sahlins 1972:223; cf. Graeber 2011a:102–108), in *baa* the conditions are set

⁷² A similar system is described by Hess (2009:88) for Vanua Lava, though it seems it had largely fallen out of use.

for the continuity of relations in that the return should anticipate the next generation of marriages. Failure to add this increment may be interpreted as a deliberate social distancing; one woman expressed her distress to me that when her younger son was marrying, the relatively wealthy wife of her elder son returned the exact amount they had given towards her bridewealth, without any increment. She took this as a snub towards their already strained relationship.

Li-Lamenu people also have more socially distant and diffuse 'brothers' spread far afield in north and west Epi and even on other islands such as Paama. Often such relations are so longstanding people are unable to explain why they address these people as 'brothers', but it is thought to be due to a long history of trade and alliance. It is *puruvi*, and not affinal alliances that are associated with trade partnerships. In the pre-colonial past Li-Lamenu people would regularly trade fish and oranges for root crops with people on the mainland who would meet them in certain 'neutral' areas on the boundaries between lands. In fact this trade with trusted partners on the mainland continues in a fashion. For instance, if Li-Lamenu men need a pig or bullock for a ceremony or payment, they usually go to 'brothers' on the mainland to pay for one.

Whilst these transactions may have resembled forms of barter in the past, today they tend to involve immediate monetary exchanges. Perhaps this tendency towards immediate monetary transactions is because these more distant brothers are not so integrated into long-term cycles of reciprocal contributions (i.e. *baa*). Economic differentiation means Lamenu is

increasingly seen as a place where cash is plentiful and resources are few, whilst south and west Epi are cash poorer, but land and resource-rich.

Paying Bridewealth: From Reciprocal Dependence to Reciprocal Independence

Seasonal workers are increasingly avoiding the norm of reciprocal contributions to bridewealth between *puruvi*, preferring to accumulate their savings and pay outright. The process whereby seasonal workers and their households are footing the bill for their bridewealth and marriage costs entails both a shift away from bridewealth being considered the father's duty to arrange on behalf of his son, as well as a shift away from relying on reciprocal contributions between fraternal allies to fund these transactions independently. For instance, Orah, a middle aged father, had spent every season in New Zealand since 2008 saving for a life cycle ritual on behalf of one or more of his five sons and only begun building a new house for him and his wife in 2012, as this timeline of his expenditures shows:

- 2009: Pem Woman and marriage feast for Son 1 at Mafilau village.
- 2010: Pem Woman for sons 2&3 at Lamén, and joint marriage feast
- 2011: Pem Woman for son 5 at Lamén Bay. Orah originally gave 80000 vatu, but the girl's family returned 40000 vatu saying they would prefer that Orah use half to make their food at a future marriage feast.
- 2012: Pem Woman: James (son 4) at Paama

Orah, his son James, and other relatives travelled to James' partners' village in Paama to pay bridewealth to her family but, contrary to

tradition, Orah relied little on other extended family for contributions of *baa*. In fact, he did not even tell many people that they were planning to do it this year, “They shook in the morning when I left already, and others were surprised when they saw us boarding the ship to go to Paama”. Orah said it was fine that the family alone covered the cost, as it meant they would no longer need to think about paying it back in future. Orah added, “Money from New Zealand did this work, if there was no New Zealand it would be hard. But New Zealand enabled us to do it ourselves.”

It is traditionally considered the duty of the father to pay his son’s bridewealth and his wedding, but increasingly if the bridegroom has more money than his father, the son and even his prospective wife will assume the bulk of the costs. This is more likely when it comes to seasonal work, which has an upper age limit. Nancy, who had been migrating to New Zealand together with her husband every season since 2008 told me that her husband paid the bridewealth himself, without informing those around:

My husband paid [bridewealth] himself. The others just helped with mats... and food. When he did it, he just said, “Today, we will go.” When the others found out they ‘shook’ with surprise, but he had gone already. It made it so they just started coming along when we preparing the marriage feast... But for the bridewealth, they all ‘shook’, but he was gone.

Unlike Petrou (2015:107), I did not hear that people were avoiding bridewealth contributions so as not to burden their kin. After all, in Lamel at least, you would be expected to reciprocate the contribution when a close family member of the donor was married. Rather, by paying the bridewealth outright, a prospective groom can avoid these long-term

obligations; for they do not know what financial position they may be in in the future.

Chief Waiwo told me that he did not agree with the emerging practice of young men paying for bridewealth and marriage feasts for themselves because bridewealth and the marriage feast was considered the groom's father's duty to give on behalf of his son:

Before, a father he had to look after his child, and it is his 'job' to make sure he must go to be circumcised, married and it is only after the father's death that the children do it. But today, many fathers leave it to the children to find a way ('road') to make their marriage... It is the duty of the fathers and mothers to do it; the parents to do it. If the [son] does it by himself it means his father no longer has the responsibility. It's the father's responsibility. It means that one day, the son can 'talk' about his father, and say "You didn't do anything for me." See? It's shameful. He will see it as shameful. If it was I, if my eldest son paid for his own marriage, then I would feel ashamed, because everyone would say I am a lazy man. I must not love my son.

The payment of bridewealth by a man on behalf of his son may also be seen as an affirmation of the highly valued relationship between mother's brother (*apopa*) and sister's son (*meyaru*). As I explained in Chapter Six, the ideal marriage, *piya paravi*, is between the children of two men in this avuncular relationship. If the father of the groom defers the bridewealth payment to his son, this could potentially be seen as a decline in respect for this relation.

Anticipating the Future: *Baa* as Investment or Liability

Although households may avoid receiving reciprocal contributions entailing indebtedness to others by assuming the ritual costs themselves, that does not mean they reject the practice of *baa* altogether. Giving *baa* to others can be a wise 'investment' strategy, because when the time comes that one's own family member wishes to marry, you may expect contributions from all those to whom you have previously lent *baa*. This was true of Nancy, who told me that she and her husband were not withdrawing from reciprocal contributions entirely. She was still keen to give *baa* contributions on behalf of her young son, Bobby:

We are still 'helping', because of the next generation coming up. Bobby is here. For example, when Andrew went [to perform a ceremony], I said to Bobby, "Go and take a mat for you to give to Andrew." That kind of thing, eh? We do something, and another comes along. And when it is Bobby's turn, we will help him too. Because we're all family.

However, the shift away from reciprocal contributions is raising questions as to the meaning of transactions and the kinship roles they are supposed to signify, as well as uncertainty about whether or not the practice of *baa* should continue in the context of growing economic differentiation. The AOG Pastor, who had also recently become a seasonal worker, expressed a fear that the tendency for the household or close family to assume the costs of marriage exchanges, rather than rely on reciprocal contributions, was undermining solidary relations, and this would have implications for the future:

Marriage has changed. If a man wants to do a marriage ceremony he does it by himself, especially with money from New Zealand. You just 'shake'

[with surprise] when he goes. Before you would help. It has change a lot. A man comes from New Zealand, he pays bridewealth, and we don't even realise. We can only help with food. It's not good; we should help one another, stay together. We all have children. If the [migration] 'scheme' ends, then we'll have a problem. Should we continue like that, or not?

There is a contradiction in that whilst *baa* reaffirms similarity between transactors in an egalitarian relationship, the emergence of 'haves' and 'have-nots' raises dilemmas over the morality of indebting people who may not find it easy to repay. The Pastor implicitly recognised that such a system of bilateral, balanced, reciprocal transfers may not be suitable for a society that is becoming increasingly economically differentiated. Rather, it might be better for the better off to contribute to the costs borne by kin relations in need, as a form of unilateral 'help' without expectation of return. He added:

I do [ritual contributions] differently. I tell people they don't need to pay me back. We don't know the future; what if he doesn't have the money? We should 'forget it'. Before everything was cheap, that's why our forebears did it. But now, if a man is not the same as you, he will find it very hard.

8.2. Shifting Priorities: Gifts to Goods

Ritual and Reproduction: Clans and Complementarity

While in competitive gift exchange societies exchange is premised on control of wealth in order to achieve status and prestige, non-competitive Melanesian gift exchange has been understood as more premised on the "exchange of identities" (Foster 1990:55). People project these identities

and relations onto the material objects of exchange, which come to be seen to embody, and even create, these relations (Strathern 1984:50; Godelier 1999:169). Delayed exchanges of identities between clans related as affines tend to affirm overall equality over generations and differentiates them as unlike but complementary. As Foster (1990:58) has argued, “it is necessary to specify how the circulation of culturally defined objects engenders relations of significant difference between their transactors”. Thus, like avoidance behaviours (Stasch 2003a) and kinship terms (Gregory 1982:67), the objects in such exchanges of identities have value in the extent to which they serve to embody and intensify “significant difference” between mutually dependent affines.

On Lamel, the gifts given from wife takers to wife givers are primarily foodstuffs, symbolising group interrelations, through their immediate use, or consumption. Gifts from wife takers to wife givers are invariably pork and food. Transactions of meat and garden foods are intended for immediate consumption by the receiving clans and are typically apportioned to each household or clan group in heaps, called *sawa*. These are usually displayed in front of the Nakamal, and on such occasions all affinal clans - not only those that have rendered the transaction necessary - should receive a share. They are displayed in a strict order with the affinal or matrilineal clan that are most closely related at the head of the line, followed by other affines according to frequency and temporal proximity of marriages. Those recipients most closely related receive a certain cut of pig with the head and one foreleg, whilst other clans will be accorded other cuts according to their kinship distance. Each *sawa* is to be collected

by the respective clan, who may prepare it immediately in ground ovens (*p̄ili*), or (as is often the case for clan members who reside across the channel dividing Lamén and Lamén Bay) divide it further for each household to take away their allocation to eat at home.

Foster (1990; 1995:177, 266 n.19) has argued that foodstuffs signify 'consumability', an apt symbol of the nurture and life-giving qualities of lineage replacement. 'Consumability' is a quality conveyed in Lamén Lewo, in which a possessor *ka*, marks objects associated with edibility or consumability. This seems to connote a particular quality of limited alienability, in that the foodstuffs transferred cannot circulate but will be incorporated into the body of the other. Further, even the live pigs transacted in Li-Lamenu exchange are castrated males, and thus non-reproductive, and killed and apportioned for the prestation reinforce this idea that they are intended for consumption, rather than production or circulation.

Gregory (1982:43) argued that in areas where gift exchanges function primarily to bring about the reproduction or replacement of clans, the items exchanged are very often food. Gregory (1982:77–79) suggested that foodstuffs have iconic value in symbolising sexual and marriage relations, and thus apt for conveying processes of biological and social reproduction:

... in a class-based commodity economy the methods of production predominate, while in a clan-based gift economy the methods of consumption predominate. In other words, commodity exchange relations are to be explained with reference to the methods of production, while gift

exchange relations are to be explained with reference to methods of consumption (Gregory 1982:70)

Thus, in contrast with the objectification of social relations in commodity fetishism, in gift exchange the objects of exchange are personified as an expression for the conditions of the production of people, through the transfer of substance and nurture, nourishment and sexuality (Gregory 1982:33). And, as Strathern (1984:50) has indicated, ritual exchanges in Melanesia typically reveal how persons are the products of their relationships and composites of the labour and substance of others, “Exchanges which center on child growth payments to maternal kin, initiation and mortuary payments, as well as bridewealth, deal with the manner in which differentiated substances combine and flow”.

In contrast to consumability, the return gifts from wife givers are typically mats, textiles and, increasingly, household goods such as washing basins. Woven textiles and baskets are traditionally associated with women, who are their producers, just as the house is also symbolic of women in contradistinction to the Nakamal. Mats, clothes and textiles, like the house are marked with the possessor for liquids. All these objects are associated with women or ‘femaleness’, and like the idioms for household and clan, appear to be idiomatic of ‘flow’ and ‘flux’, and convey the passage of women, as Patterson (2006:330–331) suggested for North Ambrym. Franjeh (2012:377–378), a linguist who worked in North Ambrym, suggests that the common extension here lies in the classification of these things in relation to ‘containment’, as the root of the word for house is also that for ‘inside’. Likewise mats and textiles can be seen as ‘containers for bodies’ - they are commonly used as coverings in ritual, and to wrap the

dead. This notion of 'containment' recalls Wagner's (1986a; 2012) description of one of the key properties of social relations for Barok, but in the patrilineal context of Lamenu, it is evocative of gestation, and flows of blood and maternal milk, associated with matrilateral nurture and identity rather than matrilineal membership. The notion of 'flow' and 'containment' appears to convey a complementarity and difference vis-a-vis the consumability and corporality connoted by the foodstuffs given from wife takers to wife givers, and each appears as a vital aspect of gendered reproductive capacities.

It is precisely these notions of composite personhood and flows of substance that inspired Strathern (1988:135–136) to warn anthropologists against analysing Melanesian exchange in terms of Western commodity metaphors and assumptions of persons as self-proprietors. But rather than take these symbolic meanings as given and unchanging, such tropes may be contested or revised in the context of processes of socioeconomic and political change, for example changing conceptions of property and exchange relations (Foster 1987:154). Indeed, as I explain in the remainder of this chapter, commodity metaphors such as "time is money" alongside substitutions of money and store-bought commodities for homegrown gifts that are giving rise to ambiguities and contested evaluations of gift exchanges.

Household Reproduction and Costs of Marriage

It has long been observed that ritual spending is on the increase as a consequence of market engagements. As the Carriers (1989:237–238) demonstrated, patterns of migration and mobility can contribute to a

“pervasive shift in the structure, practices, and function of kinship and exchange”, as contemporary indigenous responses and adaptations to wider processes of political and socio-economic change. In this section, I discuss how shifts in the forms and practices of ritual exchanges are raising anxieties and tensions over the meaning and values underlying the exchanges and the type of social reproduction or visions of the future that they appear to support or undermine.

Gregory’s ‘Gifts and Commodities’ (1982:115–117; 1997:45–46) was structured around the paradox that, in Papua New Guinea, the introduction of commodity production and wage-labour led to an “efflorescence” in gift exchange, and the labour-time that was expended in it, rather than destroying the non-capitalist economy, as many had predicted. Indeed, gift exchange was not a ‘survival’, but a “contemporary response to contemporary conditions” in an economy which is intrinsically ambiguous, and where things can be seen as either gifts or commodities according to the place and time. Thus for Gregory (1982:115–116) the meaning of exchanges, “must be understood with reference to the social relationships between people in historically specific settings”. In many cases, the money and commodities became encompassed within indigenous modes of gift-circulation, creating and extending these into an “expansive social reproduction” (Foster 1995:247). For instance, in North Vanuatu, it has been argued that whilst missionary and market engagements undermined the spiritual efficacy and value accrued in the grade system, kinship-based exchanges have not only persisted, but have been elaborated and extended (Patterson 2001:46; Rio 2014:182).

Whilst it was normal for Li-Lamenu people to postpone the feasts that accompany life cycle rituals indefinitely until they had the money and resources, income from seasonal work was welcomed in allowing people to discharge their ritual obligations to others in a timely fashion. Li-Lamenu people told me that there was on-going inflation in the costs of life cycle ceremonies. One might think that the apparent efflorescence of Li-Lamenu life-cycle rituals in the context of money flows from overseas work would be positively valued for demonstrating commitment to on-going kin relationships, but many people told me the costs were too high, often blaming seasonal workers for spending too lavishly and competitively.

The Presbyterian Pastor thought it would be good if the Presbyterian Church encourages people to bring the costs of marriage down. He said there is a risk inherent in the high cost that young couples will delay marriage for a long time, and this may lead to a greater likelihood that one partner will leave the other, perhaps even after they already had children. Increasingly, churches were trying to persuade couples to go ahead with a church “blessing marriage”, and postpone the kastom feasting elements, which were seen as very expensive. The Pastor of the United Pentecostal Church also echoed the same sentiment, saying that a big feast “wastes too much money”. When one of his sons was married, the Pastor killed five bullocks and four pigs. But a younger son wanted to arrange his marriage that year, and he planned to just kill one bullock and buy a bag of rice to feed those that attend the ‘blessing marriage’ at church. Likewise, a leader

in the AOG church told me their Lamen congregation had already guided six couples to simply pay for one small bullock (e.g. 15,000 vatu) and a large bag of rice, enough to feed the people that came to the church following the blessing.

Many families seek to cut costs by combining ceremonies, a measure often approved by both 'sides' of the exchanges as they could discharge their obligations at once, and minimise time and money spent. This is the case in the 'double' marriage of two brothers, Philip and James. Atis, their father, said cost was the main factor in their decision to hold a joint celebration for the two couples, saying "it wouldn't make too much of a heavy burden on me", as it would not involve the same level of expense. Atis admitted that a long time had passed during which he had never felt able to arrange the marriage celebrations of his two sons, although both had several children with their de-facto wives. When James decided to engage in overseas work in New Zealand his father Atis felt that it was an opportunity to fund the marriage feast. Atis wished to host the marriage as soon as possible after James returned from New Zealand the following September, because he feared if they waited too long James would spend all his New Zealand savings. Atis told me that in order to prepare for a marriage, you must feel you have enough money to do so. It is only when you begin the preparations that other relatives and *puruvi* will look, and then come forward to offer help. Chief Tom, a close classificatory brother of the grooms, told me that 'to take out two at one time' made it easier; they would only need to arrange everything one time, and agreed it should help cut costs.

As I discuss in the remainder of this chapter, Li-Lamenu people increasingly complain of the escalating cost of ritual, often blaming population increase, which is making it increasingly difficult to fulfil obligations to all one's affines. More than once I heard Li-Lamenu people say – perhaps in a joking way - that they should adopt the strategy of the 'white man', and introduce a guest list and invitations. Lambek (2013:153–154) has explained that in Madagascar, the 'efflorescence' of ritual can also lead to a counter-reaction, in which people increasingly try to limit the circulation of commodity-values in circulation:

Today some rituals acts remain governed by equivalence while others have been opened to both inflation and a more selective guest list, thereby shifting from a systemic circulation and enhancement of value toward an individualized scarcity-based exchange.

Similar critiques about ritual expenditure as a 'waste' were commonly heard amongst Li-Lamenu people. The AOG leader said that one wedding feast may involve making sixteen *sawa*, let alone the costs of mats and cooked food, and may cost more than 300,000 vatu. He told me this money would be spent in one day, and there would be nothing to show for it. But if the money was used to build a well, perhaps ten or twenty families could draw water from it for a period of up to twenty years. In the remainder of this chapter, I discuss Li-Lamenu strategies to limit the costs of rituals, and their critiques that the money is better spent on durable goods.

Death and Wasting

Although anthropologists in Melanesia have long suggested that mortuary rituals are the most important occasions for social reproduction, it seems that there are profound processes of change occurring across Melanesia (e.g. Schram 2007; Demian 2006:519). Marriage in Vanuatu has grown in size and significance, to become one of the most central ceremonial occasions to be hosted by any family or clan (Bolton 2005:19), and has come to “overshadow other forms of rituals and life-cycle ceremonies” (Rio 2014:178). By contrast to the expansion of marriage ceremonies, it seems that rituals following death (*marena*) have been truncated.

Increasingly, Li-Lamenu families are calling mourning to an end after a period of five days, or even on the day of burial itself, rather than the customary month. At the burial of two old women, they presented the food distribution in *sawa* to the woman’s brothers and other affines immediately following the burial. Douglas, the representative of the *pamerasava* into which the woman was married, said that was “all they could give”. Douglas even chose to make this customary mortuary prestation to his mother’s brothers whilst his very elderly mother was still alive, as he was ready with the pig and resources. He feared he would be working overseas when she died, although he did say it was likely they would make a further *sawa* on the day of his mother’s burial. Douglas said if a younger person had died, a five-day interval would be required but old people like his mother are of a different ‘grade’, like ‘outcasts’, and because everything is so expensive now, it was no longer required. It is likely, as elsewhere in Vanuatu, that in the past the cycle of death feasts

would customarily continue for longer, at particular intervals, often at multiples of five or ten days, continuing up to 100 days or a year.

It seems true in other Melanesian locations that mortuary rituals may not be as elaborate as they once were, and are becoming detached from values of social reproduction. As Schram (2007) found for the Auhelawa people of Papua New Guinea, it seems that funerary rights no longer have the level of importance for social reproduction they had in the past. Schram (2007:187) suggested that mortuary rituals should be seen as; “contingent phenomena, that is to say, it is better to see them as being expressions of certain ideas about social relationships and contextualize these ideas in terms of how Auhelawa people organize and attach value to them.” Even in the matrilineal area in which Foster (1995:101) worked where mortuary rituals became a central site of social reproduction amidst processes of commoditisation and socio-economic change, he noted that sometimes lineages could choose to ‘rubbish’ the dead; that is, to bury the deceased without the usual mortuary feasting, and this was often an economic decision, taken for lack of resources required to host the relatives.

For death (*marena*) in particular, Chiefs have sought to place limits on gifts to affines, as relatives of the deceased ‘cannot prepare’. According to Ngalovasoro council, one pig and one bullock should be the correct amount for a *marena*, and those exceeding this amount can be subject to a fine. *Baa* is typically used for marriage ceremonies, and is occasionally used for death, but I was told this is not stret (‘straight’, “correct”), death cannot be prepared for, but *baa* should be something, which is pre-

arranged. If *baa* is offered in the case of a family who were not prepared to meet the costs of a death, it is usually in anticipation of the marriage of the creditor's son or younger brother, never for another death.

A Li-Lamenu Chief told me that the length and scale of the death rituals have been reduced over time because people are 'more educated' now, and that the death ritual 'does less' for society than the other ceremonies. He said it was good to limit time and money spent on funerals, saying it "doesn't achieve anything". The Chief added that he thought it was a "waste" to bury a body in too many mats and blankets, after all they were expensive and they were just going to rot in the ground. As I discussed in terms of marriages, there is an increasing evaluation of exchange objects in quantitative monetary terms and more positive evaluations on the acquisition of durable goods, rather than expenditure on perishable or consumable items. In the next section, I will further discuss statements about ritual transactions as a waste of time and money.

8.3. Enduring Relations or Durable Goods

Money and Re-evaluation

As Parry and Bloch (1989:6) argued, money is not necessarily a solvent or acid that breaks up and depersonalises kinship relations: "Like the gift in kind it contains and transmits the moral qualities of those who transact it" (Parry and Bloch 1989:8). As for the incorporation of money into Melanesian gift exchanges, Gregory (1982) pointed out for Papua New Guinea (PNG) that a wad of cash or a Toyota truck may perform the same role in a gift exchange as does shell money, or a pig. It is not the object

transacted but the interpretation of the transactors' actions within the social context that dictates how transactions are evaluated:

The essence of the PNG economy today is ambiguity. A thing is now a gift, now a commodity, depending on the social context of the transaction... The colonisation of PNG has not produced a one-way transformation from 'traditional goods' to 'modern goods', but complicated a situation where things assume different social forms at different times and in different places. (1982:116)

However, this ambiguity can lead to a certain amount of moral confusion, and may be interpreted differently by people with different perspectives of the same transaction (cf. Martin 2010).

Just as ritual valuables are icons signifying particular values pertaining to social relationships, so too are they also elements in the on-going construction and differentiation of their social contexts. Changing or substituting conventional or customary valuables can mean losing their power to differentiate these contexts and relationships in the eyes of the transactors (Parmentier 1994:69). Whilst money or store-bought goods might initially be chosen as straightforward substitutes for scarce ritual objects in transactions, their inclusion may have unintended effects (Parmentier 1994:66–69). The fact that the gifts given may have been bought with money, or otherwise sold on the market, means they have the potential for different or competing kinds of value conversions.

I contend that the incorporation of general-purpose currency into Li-Lamenu ritualised exchanges make it more likely that such exchanges can also be evaluated in quantitative terms, and also raises dilemmas over how

much money is put towards ritual vis-a-vis other uses. Whilst the meanings of money should not be fetishised or abstracted by the anthropologist from its social context, I agree with Hart (2009:155) that neither should its properties as a medium of exchange with almost infinite potential be ignored, as it retains this significance for the people that use it. Money's function as a general-purpose medium of exchange, gives it certain properties that lend it to converting distinct and incommensurable symbolic or use values into a commensurable exchange value, and back again. The fact that money itself is so resistant to 'singularisation' and itself so iconic of 'exchangeability' or 'substitution' (Akin and Robbins 1999:6, 12) means that the commodity-value of the objects remains contestable against other uses to which the money could be put.

Quantitative evaluations in terms of price may compete with an object's significance as iconic of differentiated relational and symbolic values (cf. Thomas 1992:325). Like Rutz (1978:794) found in Fiji, costs of ceremonial exchanges were increasingly seen to compete with other uses for cash, such as housing and transport, putting into question the value of customary obligations and social standing against material standards of living, and associated kinds of prestige. The fact that store-bought goods retain a memory of exchange value, even as they are given symbolically as gifts representing relations reminds people of the number of alternative uses to which the money that bought the gift could have been used, and thus opens up a range of alternative pasts, presents and futures. As I discussed in 8.1, in Li-Lamenu ritual exchange, the qualisign of 'consumability', has been central to the symbolic intensification or

amplification of enduring relations of mutuality and kinship within clans who share food, and the significant difference, equality and reciprocal dependence of affinal relations (Foster 1990:58; cf. Godelier 1999:105). But in the next section, I will discuss how tendencies towards household acquisition of durable goods and associated critiques of 'eating money' are being used to contest values of consumption and ritual exchanges.

Eating Money and Wasting Time

People often said they felt that obligations to conduct life-cycle rituals were a drain on their savings from overseas work. Like everyday expenditure on foods, the fact that the bulk of expense on ritual is on purchasing foods means that they can be perceived as 'eating money'. Recall the statement of the mother of the bride at the bridewealth ceremony I discussed in Chapter Seven: "We don't get any 'good thing' that we benefit from. Tomorrow, you go to the toilet and it's finished". Whilst prestations of food, such as those received by the bride's natal family, are immediately 'used up' at the subsequent feast, recipients of household goods, in this case the bride's new household, receive durable items for which they can retain the use. Like the mother of the bride, it is common for people to comment when harvesting, preparing or eating the food that much of it will go to waste, or end up as 'food for the pigs', 'food for the dogs', or 'into the belly and down the toilet'. Such evaluative statements seems paradoxical, because as I noted in Chapter One, statements about 'eating money' have more often been coined in Melanesia to critique short-term personal consumption vis-a-vis sharing and ritual gifting, which were seen as "the prototypical act of value-creation" (Foster 1995:167).

The objects transacted can increasingly be valued in terms of their quantitative cost against other possible uses of money and resources. In the context of socioeconomic change and the increasing positive moral evaluations on the acquisition of a good house and durable goods, evaluations of 'consumability', and its potential to create value, has become more ambiguous and contested. As Foster (1995:91) argued, inequality between households "...heightens further the culturally defined ambiguities of consumption and non-consumption". The 'eating money' critique as applied to ritual expenditure could be interpreted in part as a critique of "differentiation through consumption" (Stirrat 1989:104), in which greater and greater ritual expenditure places the recipients in a gift-debt that they may struggle to reciprocate. These ambiguities raise questions over the symbolic meanings of the transactions and the relationships they should uphold.

I argue that idioms such as 'eating money' and 'wasting time' have now been extended in such a way that they appear to invert their initial meanings. This is evocative of the process that Wagner (1978) terms 'obviation', in which contradictions are resolved. Merlan and Rumsey (1991:366 n.24; cf. Josephides 1991:156) point out that Wagner tends to focus on 'stereotypic' forms such as myth. However, I suggest that Wagner's approach, being action based rather than structural, can be used to explore historical processes of change through on-going dialectical contradictions, which are not resolved but lead to further change. Further, Wagner elsewhere implies this process may contribute to a progressive dialectical process whereby the distinctions continually re-created through

such exchanges could give way to a more lineal form of reckoning kinship (Wagner 1977:641; cf. 1986b:31).

The impetus to produce food in order to gift it and ensure the reproduction of relations between clans has historically been behind the negative evaluation on 'eating' (Munn 1992:13). As Munn (1992:51) argued the negative value on eating can be seen as a directive to share or exchange one's food, and thus bring about an extension of 'intersubjective spacetime', that produces relations between clans. However, I suggest that the substitution of money for garden production has introduced other possible substitutions. The contrast eating money vis-a-vis the acquisition of durable goods that I outline in Chapter One, competes with the contrast of eating versus giving food. Given that the metaphor 'eating money' can be 'obviated' as an injunction against spending on food in favour of household durables, it has also now been extended to spending money on food for consumption in ritual (Figure 43).



Figure 43 Obviation (and change) sequence, "eating money" (after Wagner 1978:47)

The substitution of money and commodities for ritual symbolic wealth is leading to a process by which gift exchange as the grounds of value is increasingly contested against the possibility of putting money and store-bought commodities towards the development of a durable house and household goods. And this is true even of strong advocates of kastom, such as Chief Waiwo who told me that young men spending all their savings from work overseas were wasting their money and time:

If you see a man is 'getting cold' just to make a marriage, you see he is 'wasting time'. If he carried something that benefitted him, that is better. ... With marriage, when you're married it's done with and you have nothing to show for it; you need to go to work again to bring some money so you can make something.... There's no need.

Further, the proliferation of the idea that money spent on lasting goods is better than money spent on food, which is money 'down the toilet' is both symptomatic of and contributes to a shift away from an emphasis on social reproduction as clan replacement towards more household-oriented acquisition.

Domesticating Money

For Bloch and Parry (1989:18), the extent of ambivalence or moral confusion surrounding money and the market, "depends... on the nature of the system they confront and on the mechanisms it is able to develop for 'taming' and 'domesticating' them". By 'domesticating' money, the authors (1989:1) note a common tendency across different cultures to subordinate short-term acquisition to the long-term principles of social reproduction, in which, "the totality of transactions form a general pattern which is part of the reproduction of social and ideological systems concerned with a time-scale far longer than the individual life". But although inclusion of money and commodities in ritual exchange can be a strategy for 'domesticating' them, and subordinating them to the existing reproductive order (Parry and Bloch 1989; Akin and Robbins 1999:26), paradoxically attempts may end up threatening to destabilise the very reproductive orders they are meant to uphold (Akin and Robbins 1999:22).

Many of the moral confusions and contestations surrounding the performance of Li-Lamenu life-cycle rituals derive from the increasing incorporation and inflation of money and store-bought items in ritual exchange. Even items associated with domestic manufacture were increasingly purchased with money. Many relied on procuring large

quantities of vegetables and livestock from 'brothers' on Epi mainland, and often turn to widows and mothers in the community to purchase mats and *karo*. Indeed, for many unable to take part in seasonal work programmes, providing items for ritual was a welcome source of cash income, and arguably an important source of redistribution; part of the shift to 'circulation' over sharing and delayed reciprocity. It is clearly also a factor that now the majority of households no longer feed pigs, or at least not enough to sustain the demand. Thus, they must pay for pigs and bullocks. The latter are more economical in terms of meat quantity to money cost, although the 'head of the bullock' is no substitute for the 'head of the pig' in symbolic terms. The head of the pig remains a sign of respect and esteem as well as conferring a debt of continued obligation, and thus all the feasts I observed included at least two pigs.

In contrast to the Li-Lamenu incorporation of money and imported items into ritual exchanges, Akin and Robbins (1999:24) describe strategies of some Melanesian societies to limit the uses of money in ways they term 'enclaving'- barring the use of money and commodities in certain contexts, or 'singularisation' that is defining certain items a role as unique non-commodities. For instance, Foster (1995) described how Tangans in New Ireland successfully insulated mortuary rituals as the site of the reproduction of 'replacement' of matrilineages through barring monetary transactions, whilst market engagements were largely conducted at household level. Whilst the household tended towards restricted consumption of consumables, money was not necessary for Tangan ritual feasting that was intended to extend relations and reproduce relations

between clans. Unlike Foster's descriptions of Tangans, for whom matrilineage replacement was kept non-monetised, and distinct from household engagements in the market, Li-Lamenu exchanges are ambiguous. The inclusion of money and commodities originally intended to substitute for iconic ritual gift items is leading to an increasing ambiguity and contestation over desirable social reproduction, and the direction of wealth and actions towards household commodity wealth, or the reproduction of inter-clan relations.

Li-Lamenu people often characterise certain ritual practices and transactions as kastom, or not kastom, as a means of morally evaluating transactors, and the implications of their actions for others (cf. Thomas 1992:325; Martin 2015:267). In my survey, though all household members said it was important to retain kastom and ceremonial rituals, what they often critiqued was the inclusion of large sums of money and store-bought goods in such exchanges, which, for some, did not represent true kastom. Many Li-Lamenu people advocated limits on ritual costs, and said that locally produced exchange objects should be used, rather than money and imported goods. Even people who contest the cost of rituals appear to uphold the values of kastom by pointing out that in the past, money or store-bought goods had no role to play in such prestations, and thus the expenditure is not necessary, as it is opposed to real kastom (cf. Faugère 2000).

Rather than abandoning ritual exchanges altogether, Li-Lamenu people seek to ensure their symbolic continuities and affinal alliances, whilst

limiting the costs precisely in order so they can be reciprocated, with the aim of enabling social reproduction. But the strategy of 'enclaving' or 'singularising' certain modes and media of exchange is difficult to implement as Li-Lamenu people are becoming increasingly dependent on money and wage labour for making a living (Akin and Robbins 1999:24). At a time when cash incomes are on the increase but time and labour devoted to gardening and livestock production are decreasing, fully 'enclaving' or limiting ritual transactions to items of domestic manufacture seems a very unlikely outcome.

8. Summary: Durable relations and durable goods

In this chapter, I have demonstrated that the inclusion of money and durable goods in Li-Lamenu life-cycle rituals has several important implications. The introduction of money and imported goods into Li-Lamenu ritual can be characterised as evidence of the 'efflorescence' and elaboration of Li-Lamenu ritual exchanges, and thus could be seen as an effort to 'domesticate' money by directing it towards the reproduction of inter-clan relations. However, in the context of on-going economic differentiation and a shift away from domestic manufacture towards market engagements and a reliance on money across different domains of life and in aspirations for a 'good future', the escalation of ritual costs has also given rise to internal critiques that such transactions are wasteful. The same critiques of consumption as 'eating money' that were once intended to uphold the values of reciprocity and redistribution for the production of kinship relations are increasingly being used to critique monetary expenditure on the performance of life cycle rituals. The monetary cost is increasingly seen as a diversion of funds from other future-oriented

projects associated with divelopmen such as material for building the 'good house'.

The emergence of the household as the primary site for consumption as well as production means that the grounds for social reproduction are increasingly ambiguous and contested. The increasing role of money and commoditised wealth items for ritual exchanges is making them susceptible to evaluations in terms of commodity-value, and not only symbolic gift-value. However, I do not intend to argue that Li-Lamenu people are submitting to an inevitable tide of commoditisation and a 'Great Transformation', in which land, labour and money are all disguised as fictitious commodities (cf. Polanyi 1944). Not only are there contests and conscious critiques over the value and limits on money and commoditised labour, but there also remains a strong moral critique against the commoditisation of land, as I outline in the next chapter.

CHAPTER NINE

Moving Apart or Securing a Future? Land disputes and transactions between kin

Although the permanent house is generally described as ‘good’, it can become an object of social conflict and moral disapproval when the land identified for its foundations is disputed. The desire for a ‘good house’ is leading to a spatial dispersal of households, as seasonal workers are increasingly looking for larger areas of land outside the tightly packed yards of the Lamén villages on which to build a larger house. The process of residential change has raised the stakes in long-running land disputes and the rise and inflation of monetised transactions in land between kin as returning migrants are seeking plots of land on which to build ‘good houses’. Conflicting claims to particular areas of land are rife and perhaps the most major cause of rifts and disputes between kin and neighbours, which can perpetuate through generations.

My aim in this chapter is to focus on the changing and contested dynamics of lived space as it is negotiated ‘on the ground’, and particularly how land is secured on which to build ‘good houses’. I examine case studies of land disputes and transactions and ask whether this entails an increasing individualisation and withdrawal into the household over wider kinship and community relations. In the first section, I will describe how processes of residential change appear to be igniting land disputes that threaten kin relations and the possibility of living together well. I give an account of a

land dispute that took place during my fieldwork, triggered by a returned seasonal worker who began to build a 'good house' on a disputed plot of land. In the second section, I will describe how land scarcity and desire for a good house is associated with increasingly monetised and formalised transactions that involve a large amount of cash and written deeds. Finally, I will show that there are moral limits to the extent of commodification and formalisation of land. The continued assertion of customary forms of land tenure and transactions, and resistance to outside leasing represents a continued commitment to the place (ples) and a desire for collective autonomy as the grounds for "living together well".

9.1. Land: An Inalienable Possession or a Contested Good?

To ni-Vanuatu land is everything; it embodies their link to their past, present and future... Land is not seen as a mere commodity that can be used and then dispensed with when it is no longer needed. Not only do Melanesian beliefs affirm the sanctity of land, but they also totally contradict the imported notion of "ownership" of land. Land is held rather than owned by the people, who are entrusted by their society to be the custodians of the land in the interests of their children and future generations.

Joel Simo (2010:40–41)

Anthropologists and Ni-Vanuatu scholars have often recorded how land is considered inalienable and crucial to local identities (Rodman 1984; Bolton 1999:46; Naupa 2004; Simo 2010). The principle of inalienability of land was extended to the national constitution following Independence in 1980, when land was returned to customary owners (Rodman 1998:120).

Gregory (1997:79) argues land is the "supreme good" in agrarian societies,

a good in his terms being a 'priceless non-commodity' and an 'inalienable possession', the value of which can only be explained in reference to cultural notions of scarcity held by valuers embedded in concrete kinship relations. Land scarcity is a social and cultural phenomenon, not simply a function of the ratio of population to arable land (Gregory 1997:79; Ward and Kingdom 1995a:7).

Cash cropping and other ways of profiting for land may have historically encouraged the individualisation of land tenure, and motivated the maximisation of landholdings (Bonnemaïson 1984a:5; Rodman 1987; Rodman 1984). Despite the value placed on customary land tenure, historical political and economic processes have contributed not only to changing patterns of residence and horticulture, and changes to notions of land tenure, which are becoming increasingly subject to more scarcity based notions of land tenure as household property. In this section, I suggest that processes of customary land tenure are becoming increasingly household-oriented, and this is giving activating land disputes between kin.

Moving Apart: Private Properties?

New spatial arrangements emerging through the founding of 'good houses' appear as a process of privatisation of land and space and a transition from communal shared 'yards' (*rove*) towards private properties (cf. Lopez 2010:49). Although many people continue to live alongside fellow clan members in tightly packed yards, increasingly, some households are clearing land in the interior of the small island on which to build a house. A decline in copra prices means much plantation land lies

neglected and people are increasingly clearing garden, bush and plantation land on which to build houses, often creating secluded private yards with lawns and flower gardens. The desire for a cleared piece of private land big enough to build a 'good house', desire for proximity to roads and amenities, and the increasing quest for higher ground due to anxieties over climate change and natural disasters are all contributing to the increasing turnover of land used for gardens or collecting wild foods to residential land.

If a moral life is about 'living together well' (Gregory 2011:180; 2013:137; Mauss 2007:156), what does this 'moving apart' mean for social and moral relations? Sahlins (1972:96) described political structures, such as extended kinship systems and chiefly power, as counteracting the 'centrifugal forces' that would otherwise propel individual households towards spatial dispersion and economic autonomy. This suggests the spatial dispersal may also reflect a spatialisation of the increasing priority of household privacy and independence vis-à-vis the clan and extended kinship obligations.

It does appear that spatial reconfigurations are mapping changing kin relations and a shift from clan to household as the locus of economic concern, and a shift away from generalised reciprocity and sharing. Jolly (1989:230) reported that in Pentecost island, richer Christian cash-cropping families tended to build isolated homesteads outside the village, and suggested such a move could be in imitation of the missionaries, or perhaps a withdrawal of the richer household from the kin networks of

generalised reciprocity “The puzzle remains how far such privatization of the family is a response to missionary encouragements, and how far an attempt to close off possible leaks of capital flowing outside the household to other kin.” Likewise, Ward and Kingdon (1995b:2) suggested that settlement patterns change as people’s efforts became more directed at self-interest and the contracted nucleated family group, over extended kin and the wider community. The authors (1995b:1; 1995a:6–7; 1995c:45–47, 55–57) noted a general tendency for economic change in the Pacific to lead to a greater individualisation of land tenure, or perhaps this is better expressed as a tendency towards privatisation of land by smaller nuclear family groups, and commodification of land through cash cropping and land sales which led to economic differentiation. They argued this is part of a wider process whereby economic relations previously organized through reciprocal obligations become increasingly mediated through money.

A Fixed Investment

Building a durable concrete house is a way to assert proprietary rights on the land on which it stands and maintain these claims even when the house owner is absent (Rodman 1985a:275). Perhaps the fact that the houses represent fixed investments that stake a long-term claim on the land means that they are more objectionable and contested than the more mobile and temporary houses of home-grown materials that could easily shift according to different circumstances (Rodman 1985b), or shifting plots of garden land that were more shareable and short-term. Use-rights to land for making a garden or building a thatched house could be allocated to clan or kin members according to need, and stages in the life

cycle (Rodman 1985b:276), whereas the building of a permanent house entails a fixity in landholdings for a nucleated household (cf. Morton 2002:200).

A house built on customary land is not to be bought and sold, it materialises on-going connections to kin, and to place (ples). In claiming plots of land, people make reference to how the land was used by their forebears, and the desire for a 'permanent house' is also a vision of long-term connection to land and place for those that occupy it, and perhaps also generations that succeed them (cf. Morton 2002:27). Like other 'inalienable possessions' in Melanesia, land is often associated with heaviness and sitting in place (Foster 1995:176). Land is often 'owned' by Chiefs or big men who may be likened or associated with the stones or trees that mark the land. These tendencies are also reflected in gendered vernacular idioms, and where patrilineal succession and virilocal residence predominate, men are often connected with 'rootedness' in the land, whilst women are associated with flight, lightness and movement (e.g. Bonnemaïson 1984b; Jolly 1994).

However, in practice there was often a great deal of flexibility in the allocation of use rights to the land. Li-Lamenu informants insisted that even in the precolonial era, individual men had a degree of control over their particular plots within a wider area of clan land, and they held the right to allocate the land to chosen successors. Amongst Li-Lamenu people, the oral histories and genealogies of the present population attest to the fact that it was common for local men to accommodate incomers,

inviting them to share their land and dwelling spaces. These incomers would become addressed as kin, intermarry, and be incorporated into ritual 'gift' relations, and today most Li-Lamenu people claim ancestral origins on Epi mainland, or refugees or incomers from other islands.

Across Vanuatu, some combination of matrilineal and patrilineal principles of transfer of land can be found (Rodman 1995:69). On Lamenu customarily a woman's natal family would have allocated use rights to a plot of land called an *Aḗpere Karo* for the duration of her lifetime, as mentioned in 7.3. *Aḗpere Karo*, meaning "bottom of the (woman's food) basket" refers to the historic practice of a woman's natal clan giving her the use of an area of their land on her marriage⁷³, and was meant to ensure ongoing relation between a married woman and her natal kin. The land should be used to plant garden vegetables and root crops, not usually fruit trees, or to build a house, which would stake more of a permanent claim on the ground.

On the woman's death the land would normally be returned to her natal clan or *pamerasava*. In the event that the woman's children wished to retain the use of the land after her death, they would be expected to make a customary transaction to their mother's brothers (*apopa*). If the woman's

⁷³ This seems to be a process that is similar in other parts of Epi (Stefanova et al 2010: 5), and perhaps in other areas of Vanuatu. In Tanna and Aneityum in far south of the archipelago, women were also given a piece of land known as 'the basket' (Naupa and Simo 2008:82). Similar arrangements on other islands such as Ambae are suggested to have precluded using the land as a site for a house (Kenneth and Silas 1986:71).

sons wished to continue to make use of the land, they would have to make a transaction to their mother's brothers. Ordinarily, if someone wishes to take food or resources from the land of their mother's natal kin, they would be expected to ask permission, whilst they could take from the land of their paternal grandparents (*apua merua*) without asking. Further, classificatory mother's brother (*apopa*) and sister's son (*meyaru*) have the right to put prohibitions on the property of their counterpart on certain occasions, particularly following their death, which must be 'paid off' by the fellow clan members of the owner.

According to my informants, land scarcity means that *Aṗere Karo* are no longer generally provided to daughters and sisters on their marriage⁷⁴, although I know of a few examples of women and their families residing on or cultivating land belonging to her natal clan. I suspect that the prevalence of inter-regional and inter-island marriage may also have contributed to its demise, and perhaps also colonial and missionary influence, which often emphasised the superiority of patrilineal inheritance of land. The decline in the practise of *Aṗere Karo* may suggest an increasing emphasis on patrilineal inheritance of land and fewer overlapping rights to land and obligations to other kin⁷⁵. Women are generally not seen as

⁷⁴ Rather, a woman's natal clan- and their 'brother clans'- will present her with a large gift-giving at her wedding feast, as I described in Chapter Seven.

⁷⁵ In matrilineal areas of Melanesia, it seems common that there is more competition between a man's sisters' sons (i.e. his own clan members) and his own children for land, and this often seems to entail a great emphasis on contributions in mortuary rituals to secure these rights. And competition for land with patrilineal kin may be a reason why matrilineal areas such as Pentecost

owners of the land outright, and tend to be dependent on the goodwill of their natal kin, or that of their husband for access to land⁷⁶ (Kenneth and Silas 1986:71).

Non-Constructive Conflicts: A land dispute case study

Just as we have seen that generational and gender shifts in ritual and work seem to entail increasing value of household funds over wider networks of 'generalised reciprocity', so too it seems that customary land tenure is becoming more about fixed inheritance and less about overlapping and interlocking rights of different kin. Whilst this development is clearly related to direct interventions such as state land law, and market value, it is intensified by perceptions of land scarcity and fear of land disputes. Li-Lamenu people would often tell me that land is increasingly scarce: virtually all the whole area is cultivated or developed land (*meramāin*) and there is almost no wild 'bush' areas (*dak bus*, *nopona*) remaining. The pressure on land could be a reason why Epi islanders see Lamenu Bay as a place where land disputes between kin are especially common. The conversion of horticultural gardens and bush to residential land and the fact that the homes being built were more permanent entailed fixing more long-term claims to plots of land, which in the past were subject to shifting allocations of use rights. These processes appeared to be raising the stakes

and Ambae (Rodman 1992:652), as well as elsewhere in Melanesia such as New Britain and New Ireland, have more elaborate mortuary rituals (cf. Bolyanatz 2000:142 re: Papua New Guinea).

⁷⁶ This can make divorced and separated women and widows especially vulnerable as I discussed in 7.3.

in land claims, and intensifying existing conflicts and tensions within the community.

Here I introduce a land dispute that arose over a very small area of land on which two families both wished to build a permanent house. This case study reveals how people seeking to build a good house are undertaking social and financial risk by sinking resources and relationships into the foundations, without knowing if the plans will hold up. This plot of land was situated atop *Mava Parua* plateau, the highest land on the island. Low-lying Ngalovasoro village sits on a flat sandy stretch of shoreline at the foot of this escarpment and Ngalovasoro villagers often told me that the sea was eroding the shoreline. Many of those seeking higher ground cite concerns about rising sea levels from climate change, and the risk of flooding from cyclones and tsunamis.

The plateau was the historic site of residence for several of the clans that relocated to the shoreline at Ngalovasoro village when they converted to Christianity. The decentralisation occurring through the relocation of houses back to historic residence sites appears to reactivate historic residence sites. In the process of making claims over land, people must draw on narratives of history and kinship ties, thus helping to perpetuate these links by reciting them anew again and again. But unlike Taylor (2008:138) who saw residential change in North Pentecost as a reversal of the process of the centralisation and relocation to coastal areas that took place in the missionisation period, I see this as a dispersal of residence which is more household-oriented, rather than the tight clan groupings of

the precolonial period. It is not so much whole clans, but certain households or families that are making the move. So it seems that households are unearthing clan histories to make claims to land, but the previous more solidary and intense relationships are becoming more diffuse.

Many of the land disputes on Lamén today stem from the dramatic depopulation that took place in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, and the subsequent influx of incomers from Epi mainland, many of whom were escaping land alienation and inter-ethnic conflicts, as well as refugees from volcanic eruptions on nearby islands. These processes have left much of the land open to competing claims based on often-contradictory narratives pertaining to different kinship links, or historic transactions. Thus this case illustrates the kinds of historic narratives through which different families make competing claims to the same land.

In this case, both parties agreed that the disputed land had once been the customary land of a clan called Kumarove that died out. Ngalovasoro was the last of the three villages to accept Christianity, and maintained a fierce reputation well into the twentieth century, including violent conflict between different clans. It was agreed that Kumarove had been involved in a violent conflict with Leyava in the precolonial period, some were killed and others fled, some to Ngalokumal village (where they purchased land), some to Lamén Bay and a few remained with allies in Ngalovasoro. Due to the extensive depopulation, by the early twentieth century there were no

living descendants or clan members in Kumarove following the patrilineal preferred inheritance.

The land was disputed between Walter and Tasso's families. Walter and his family in Leyava clan claimed the right to the land through 'live blood' (laevblad), or genealogical connection, from a woman said to be of the original land-owning clan. A few years before this court case, Walter had begun to clear the land to prepare to build a house but was stopped by Mamben and his father, Tasso, who said Walter had no right to build on the land. Tasso claimed he was the rightful heir through his adoption and thus identifies as being of 'Kumarove' clan, although he was born in Vamol clan, in Ngaloparua village.

In 2012, during my fieldwork Mamben, Tasso's son, started to clear the land on which to build a new house, with savings from work in New Zealand. Walter and his clan were unhappy with this and requested a village court. The judges ruled in favour of Walter, believing that he was a descendent of the sister of the last remaining man of Kumarove. The judges believed that Tasso had been adopted by a member of another extinct clan that neighboured the one that was associated with the disputed land. The chairman said that "one party are glad, one party feel bad", and that the losing party (Mepiluva and Tasso's family) had 21 days to appeal the decision to the Area Council of Chiefs. The Pastor of AOG church closed the session with a prayer, saying that all land belongs to God and we are just 'managers' before we die and join him in heaven. He prayed that peace would be restored to the community, who are 'all

family', and the row that had been in the 'middle' of the community had been dealt with.



Figure 44 Disputed house site with sawn-off posts

But the conflict did not end there. Tasso's son, Mamben decided to go ahead with building his new house, despite the village court ruling. In response, someone went to the building site and sawed off the posts to the house, which had already been set in the concrete floor (Figure 44). Mamben filed a police report, naming most of the men of Walter's family in Leyava as suspects for the damage. He also wrote a letter to Department of Labour to ban these men and their wives from travelling to New Zealand. The ban only worked in the short term, but it angered the Leyava family, and the judges of the case. This is typical of the way in which Chiefs feel frustrated that their judgements are often difficult to enforce, and that often they escalate, being appealed in the island court, where it is

taken out of their control. The difficulty of resolving land disputes means they have a tendency to run on and on.

Disputed land is a shaky foundation on which to construct a 'good house', and one risks sinking (literally) hundreds or thousands of dollars into the cement foundations and timber posts only for work to be halted by threats or vandalism. It also means that people that wish to build houses often face a financial and social risk when identifying a plot of land, in that several houses remain half-built or not started due to on-going land disputes. Frequently, land comes under dispute whilst the house is being built, especially where that house is being built on land previously used for cultivation of gardens or cash crops. Perhaps the fact that a more permanent structure is going up makes it more objectionable to counter-claimants than crops, which leave the lay of the land relatively intact.

9.2. Private Properties: Commodification of Land?

Formalising and Monetising Land Transactions

Land transactions customarily take the form of a symbolic act of pig slaughter, where the blood of the pig should run on the ground and stones may be buried, or trees planted to mark the boundaries. Land transactions continue today but include increasingly large sums of cash in addition to the customary pig killing and gift of garden vegetables and kava. These transactions appear to be influenced by historical land sales and legal transfers, even whilst they take the form of kastom transactions between kin. The transfer of land between Ni-Vanuatu kin and neighbours for cash, and with written documentation is widespread and has been on-going for decades. Vutilolo (1984:10) wrote that on Malo island land transactions in

cash or pigs were frequently recorded in written documents and witnessed by others and that this tended to offer a reasonably secure way to obtain land. People on Epi were engaged in formalised transactions of land with Europeans in exchange for cash or trade goods from the mid-late nineteenth century. Although many of those transactions claimed by French and British planters and commercial interests were often fraudulent and highly contested, the land acquired in 1890s by the first missionary at Lamenu Island, Thomas Smaill, was agreed in exchange for cash, documented and witnessed by local people⁷⁷.

Li-Lamenu people seeking plots of land on which to build a 'good house' increasingly seek documentation of their transaction in the hope that a more formal record of their transaction will help to secure the land against further disputes in the future. In the next section, I present two examples of such transactions that took place during my fieldwork, both with the transactors' intention of building a 'good house' on the land. I discuss whether transactions like these imply that land is becoming increasingly formalised and commoditised.

Linking past, present and future: Sealing *Ap̃ere Karo*

The case study that follows pertains to a plot of land close to that of the dispute I just described, and it has similar historical roots. This plot of land was claimed by a family who say they are descended from a different Kumarove man who fled to Ngalokumal village during the tribal war with

⁷⁷ The deeds can be found in the Presbyterian archives in Dunedin (Smaill 1899).

Leyava. They say this man was without male children, and the(Smaill 1899) right to the land passed to his daughter. Then his daughter had only daughters survive so the rights to the land passed to them. At the time of my fieldwork, three of these daughters remained on Lamén (Figure 45). Two married husbands from Ngaloparua village, whilst one remained in Ngalokumal with her husband, the son of a couple of refugees from a volcanic eruption on Ambrym island in 1913.

Rather than relocate to the land in Ngalovasoro village, the three sisters and their children decided many years ago to transfer it to one of their daughters, Vera, as an *Āpere Karo*. Vera already lived in Ngalovasoro village, with her husband John of Iolo clan, as is usual following virilocal residence. The affinal ties between John's family and Vera's are especially strong, because one of Vera's brothers married John's younger sister, an instance of 'sister exchange'. Although (as I discussed in Chapter Seven) *Āpere Karo* are no longer a general feature of marriage arrangements or transactions, here is an example of how the practice can still be invoked by the natal family of a woman when they decide to grant her rights over some of their land. Vera's husband John confirmed that the transfer of the land was primarily the thinking of Vera's family in Ngalokumal, and he was happy to accept it.

In 2000, when John and Vera's family began to clear the land on which to build a house for their firstborn son, it was not long before Tasso's family and Mepiluva began to dispute the claim saying they were the rightful heirs to Kumarove land. At this time, John's late father and two of his brothers told John they thought it would be best if he made an agreement over the land with Vera's mother's two Lamen-based sisters and not just Vera's mother. John gave each of the three sisters 15,000 vatu (around £100). Before his death, John's father advised John that he should make a kastom ceremony to 'seal' the land transfer.

It was only in 2012 that John performed the customary ceremony to Vera's mother and her sisters and their families. When John was ready to make the transaction, he spoke to each of the three sisters and told them of his intention to make the ceremony, so long as they and all their family members who may have a concern in the land agreed. Vera's brother agreed and went to see a lawyer brother in Vila who prepared papers detailing the transaction. John presented a pig, at least ten mats, a head of kava and some garden foods. As is customary, he ceremonially killed the pig beside a stone and then the stone was buried to provide a memorial to the transaction, marking the land. John told me that no money changed hands in this recent transaction, unlike the money he gave out in 2000; this transaction was to fulfil the customary obligation. Chiefs were invited to attend to witness the transaction, but few did so. John said they didn't attend because they knew the land was disputed.

John told me that he hopes that his two sons currently living in Vila can build their houses on this land. Iolo is perhaps the clan most affected by a rise in the sea level and coastal erosion, meaning that a large area of the coastal land on which the clan had built their houses was being lost to the sea. Further, the yard in which John lives is a small area on which he and another son have already built large houses. There is no longer much space for the other sons to build homes. Despite John's investment in the transaction, there is no guarantee he will be able to proceed with building the house undisturbed. John says he realises that it may have to go to court if there is a dispute when they begin to build on the land. Even if a court was to rule in his favour, sometimes disputes make it difficult to develop the land, as the previous dispute shows.

Securing Good Land for a Good House, and a Good Future

Documentation for transactions not only provides 'proof' for the transaction, it also prevents 'talk' (cf. Martin 2013:68). The introduction of written deeds documenting land transactions between kin exemplify common processes of "informal formalisation" (Benjaminsen and Lund 2003:6). This process is common but can vary from an exaggeration of a gift-like customary transaction that may conceal 'non-customary' elements, toward more elaborate documents that may be witnessed by formal institutions (Benjaminsen and Lund 2003:6; Peters 2009:1319). Li-Lamenu transactions tend to combine the customary display and a level of formalisation that includes written documents, and witnessed, ideally by recognised Chiefs as in the second case study I introduce here.

A young couple, David and Rita, with two children performed a transaction in 2012 to pay for a piece of land on which they were building a new house. Like the quotes in Chapter One, Rita told me they desired a large house because it allowed them to host visiting family and friends, including David's family members visiting from town, and friends from South Epi who may wish to stop at the house before boarding a ship or a plane at Lamén Bay. Rita also said they preferred to build on higher ground, as it was safe from tidal waves. They had begun to construct their new house on the site in 2010, after the husband, David, returned from New Zealand for the first time.

The new house site was located up a steep hill, directly behind Purke, where David's widowed mother and siblings and Rita's widowed mother and siblings also live. David has two brothers residing at Purke and there was not enough space for all of them to build new houses in that area. Rita said that David's family should have lots of land, but his fathers "moved around too much", and others moved in to take over the land. David's father was employed as a 'dresser' at a hospital on Malekula Island, but died in Malekula when his children were young. The family, including David's widowed mother who is from Malekula, were told to leave and came back to live at Lamén Bay. They have some land on Lamén Island but as David grew up in Malekula they find the prospect of life on a small island too hard; he doesn't know how to carve a canoe and boats are expensive.

David and Rita approached Maite, another resident of Purke, as customary owner of the land to ask his permission to build. Maite is the Secretary of the Area Council of Chiefs, who himself assumes Chief status of Mesawo clan claiming he is of chiefly 'blood'. David addresses Maite as *ata* (classificatory father), as David's father's father was the adopted brother of Maite's father. Rita said Maite initially agreed to let them occupy the land for free, but Maite's sons began to 'talk', and were resistant of the fact they were building a durable house on the land. So Rita and David decided they should pay for the land to legitimise their residence. Rita said Maite told them it was 'up to them' how much they wished to pay, as he believed that following kastom, land "cannot be valued". Thus it was David and Rita who decided on the amount of cash for the transaction. The couple decided 200,000 vatu (of which they paid 40,000 vatu up-front), a large pig (bought for 30,000 vatu), ten *mendaibe* mats, a large kava plant, and garden produce, such as plantain, and yams. The transaction was witnessed, including by the Chief of Lamén Bay, conferring legitimacy and helping to secure the land in the future. Maite presented David and Rita with deeds for the land, which he himself had drafted, stating that the land was now officially theirs. The 160,000 vatu outstanding was due to be paid when David returned from New Zealand the following September, completing the transaction.

Rita told me their primary motivation for making the transaction was to help safeguard the future of her children, and to prevent them being pushed off the land due to a dispute. She said she worries about her children's future, especially if they had no land, although perhaps if they

were well educated and managed to obtain 'good' jobs in town it would be all right. Rita said that, in the past, the ancestors were 'good' and would give land to friends or family that needed it. She suggested that, perhaps due to influence of the 'waetman', (white people) Li-Lamenu people now expect cash payment.

Like Epstein (1969:132–133) before him, Martin (2013:62–64) notes that land transactions amongst the Tolai have become partially commodified, in that they involve cash transactions, however they argue that this does not extend to impersonal 'buying' and 'selling' of land as a 'pure' commodity (cf. Bloch 1989:175). Rather, land transactions should take place between people related as kin, and there were moral limits on the stated 'price' of land between kin, which does not near market price. Although the partial commodification of land transactions between kin took place long before the current wave of Li-Lamenu migration, it is possible the flows of monetary income may be leading to an escalation of the amount of cash in those transactions, which may have consequences for accessibility of land in future. David's brother and another clan brother both were also building houses on land nearby, and planning to make similar transactions to Maite and his sons in the year following David's transaction⁷⁸.

⁷⁸ In the case of the latter, they had already nearly completed a new house on higher land close to that of David and Rita. I do not have a record if these transactions have taken place at the time of writing, or how much was transacted, but I expect that, given the similarity of location and kin relations between the transactors, David's and Rita's payment of 200,000 is likely to set a precedent. As we can see from the previous case study, John paid a total of 45,000 vatu to his in-laws for the

Martin (2013:66, 71) found that the relations between transactors seem to be becoming increasingly ambiguous and often there are little or no on-going obligations between them following the transaction, and that prices may be rising, which may also imply increasing finality. Martin (2013:62, 72–73; 2007b:49–50) drawing on Gregory (1982) noted that the partial commodification of land transactions may reflect a shift from relations of ‘reciprocal interdependence’ typical of gift exchange and interlocking kin obligations, towards relations of ‘reciprocal independence’ in which people tried to protect their familial interests from the demands of wider kin, although the extent to which the transaction was seen as ‘customary’ or not was ambiguous, and subject to moral contestation.

Lamen Island land in 2000. Another transaction I have a record of another transaction of Lamen Bay land that took place in 1996 between two men of different clans where 48,000 vatu was paid.



Figure 46 House belonging to a classificatory brother of David, on a neighbouring plot of land.

In this section, I have suggested that anxieties over land scarcity and disputes is motivating an increased formalisation of customary land tenure, as well as increasing - in terms of frequency and magnitude - monetary transactions between kin in exchange for land rights. It is significant, however, that the payments continue to take the form of a customary prestation and a public one. Whilst land is being transacted between kin and Li-Lamenu people increasingly for cash and documentation, these are still considered non-alienated and aligned with customary obligations and values and transactions should take place between people related as kin. As I explain further in the next section, there are moral limits to the extent of commodification and formalisation

of land tenure in the domestic moral economy of Li-Lamenu people, although this is increasingly tested and contested.

9.3. Land, Kastom and Divelopmen

At the Community Council meeting I attended a few days after I arrived in my field-site, and which I mentioned in Chapter Four, Chief Waiwo appealed to the local people to resist registering their land. Waiwo said that the registration of land under state law (loa) would make it vulnerable to leasing by outside 'investors'. He urged people that land should be left for Chiefs to manage according to kastom. Even though state law prevents the sale of freehold title to customary land and only allows leases, local discourse tends to prevail against even the leasing of land to outsiders. At the time of this Council meeting, two major land disputes put the majority of Lamenu Bay land under contention, one of which I outline below. Both cases involved attempts by local residents to register and lease large areas of land to outsiders, and such actions have been subject to much disapproval in the community, and active efforts by the local Council of Chiefs to prevent them. Like Chief Waiwo, many people see exclusionary processes as facilitated by legal title and state regulation, which they continue to associate with imported and imposed European legal definitions and the continuation of colonial rule, failing to represent indigenous practices and principles in the postcolonial era.

Leasing and Loa Blong Waetmen

As elsewhere in Melanesia (e.g. Filer 2006; McDougall 2005), political and moral discourses about land are often articulated in terms of kastom and loa, or loa blong waetman ('white people's law'). In Vanuatu, people often say loa, whether relating to land, criminal or civil cases creates 'winners'

and ‘losers’ (cf. Forsyth 2009:195), whereas the principle behind kastom courts is to restore peaceful and ordered social relations. People on Epi associate loa (law) with imported and imposed European legal definitions and procedures, recalling the historical enforcement of processes of exclusion from land by foreign interests.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Epi was at the centre of “one of the biggest land grabs in the history of the South Pacific” (Van Trease 1987:26). Processes of state formation and the development of a legal apparatus served mainly to protect rival territorial claims between the two colonial powers, and so loa blong waetman became synonymous with exclusion for Ni-Vanuatu people. In the anticolonial movements that mobilised to contest exclusions from land, kastom was deployed as a salient symbol of opposition, and it retains undertones of resistance to exclusion today. Many people associate rich white investors seeking to acquire land with plantation owners of the past, and remember with pride when indigenous people, including a prominent role for Li-Lamenu men, ‘chased’ them away in the build up to Independence.

Disputed Lease

I now outline a case of a land dispute over a large area of land in Lamenu Bay that had been registered with the state and put up for lease, without the knowledge of people resident on the land. In 2009, Parakuluwo, and other people at the village of Wenia, close to Lamenu Bay, received a letter stating:

Our client instructs us that you and your immediate family members have been living on the land without knowledge and/or consent of our client

who is the registered legal owner of the land. As such, you are hereby given **Notice** to vacate the land within **twenty eight (28) days** upon the date of the receiving of this letter.

This came as news to Wenia villagers, who were unaware that the land had been registered at all.

The letter was issued from a lawyer representing John, originally from Lamén Island but resident in Port Vila. John had leased an area of land known as Merakup (Figure 4) from his own father and brother. John was a close work associate of an expatriate businessman based in Port Vila who is associated with a number of other land leases in Vanuatu. It was rumoured that John's family wished to subdivide the land for tourism in partnership with this businessman (cf. Farran 2011:261; Porter and Nixon 2010:60–61). As with many disputed leases in Vanuatu, this claim followed the boundaries of a colonial plantation and John had used the colonial title number to register the land. Although formally land was returned to customary owners at Independence, in practice claims to this land are often highly contested. People often use claims to colonial titles to pursue their own financial interests, and land boundaries created in the colonial era continue to be redrawn.

As representative for Epi at National Council of Chiefs, Parakuluwo was well connected in terms of legal and political support and well situated to navigate the complexities of loa and kastom to succeed in regaining control over the land. Parakuluwo took the case to the Supreme Court in 2010, on the grounds that the land “had been registered by fraud or mistake”. He argued that John's family had registered the land without the knowledge

of other residents, and had ignored the ruling of a 2007 Area Court judgment that indicated Parakuluwo was in charge of the land. On this basis, the judge ordered a stay, and that the case be transferred to a Customary Lands Tribunal.⁷⁹

Kastom and Land

In relation to major land claims on Epi, kastom is usually framed in terms of 'chiefly title', by which rival claims are judged. Although kastom, and state loa have a long and complex history of entanglement, they can still act as salient conceptual oppositions, deployed by Ni-Vanuatu people to represent contrasting and conflicting political and moral principles. As discussed above, Li-Lamenu people often contrast the 'inclusive' principle of kastom to ensure everyone some access to some land (whilst putting everyone in their proper place), as against the private property regimes of state law which uphold the 'exclusive' rights of a recognised landholder whilst denying the claims of others altogether (cf. Lea 1997:12). The Council of Chief's version of the ideology of chieftainship takes this form of a layered model of overlapping land rights where the 'Big Chief' maintains administrative control, alongside an inclusive ethic that all have rights to use some land.

⁷⁹ The Customary Land Tribunal process was introduced in 2001 through recognition that state courts were not a legitimate location for the resolution of land disputes, which required local knowledge (Rousseau 2004:76). However, it drew criticisms from Chiefs and others asserting that it contravened customary norms, such as the right of Chiefs to take charge of decision-making (Farran 2008:97–98; Regenvanu 2008:65)(Farran 2008:97–98; Regenvanu 2008:65). The World Bank research team (Porter and Nixon 2010:20 n.14) found that Epi Chiefs had initially resisted to the idea of a Tribunal, but then in 2009 had formally requested one for Epi to address major disputes. Initially refused, their request was eventually granted.

In distinction to Western legal notions of exclusive private property rights, it is usual in areas of subsistence agriculture that rights to land are often overlapping, and use rights may be commonly allocated within and between kinship groups. Gluckman (1963b:90–98) argued that unlike individualised private property regimes, land tenure systems in areas of shifting agriculture were likely to take the form of layers of different rights administered through a status hierarchy, and those rights depended on the fulfilment of obligations to others. Epstein (1969:114–116) refined this concept to better fit the kinds of systems found in Melanesia such as Tolai, whereby various overlapping interests in land may apply according to one's descent group but also ties of kinship with other groups, as well as attainment of rights through transactions.

Parakuluwo argued successfully in court that, when it came to a land dispute, the claimant should not only demonstrate knowledge of genealogical connections, customary landmarks and boundaries, but also prove where on a 'chiefly structure' that Chief is properly located.

Parakuluwo told me that a big Chief's role is to 'manage' the land and everything within it. He argued that Epi kastom does not permit exclusive legal claims and it is the Chief's responsibility to ensure all the clans using the land and their descendants have enough land on which to subsist:

Today, many people do not want to do what 'kastom' tells them. They say, "The land is mine", but no, kastom does not say that ground belongs to you. Kastom says that land is for all of us, but that you, the Chief, must make sure that you manage the land well so that my children can eat from the land, and when they die their children will still eat from the land. It's simple.

Whilst it remains true that “...human beings do not own land: what they own is rights to land, that is, rights vis-a-vis other human beings” (Crocombe in Ward 2013:19), assertions of rights to land are always intertwined with political and economic relations, and are always contested and changing. Changing political and economic circumstances may be leading to a greater emphasis on exclusivity, at the expense of wider obligations and “interlocking reciprocal claims”, as Martin (2013:35) observed amongst the Tolai. Although Li-Lamenu people continue to assert historical and genealogical narratives in order to make claims to land, they increasingly are fixing more permanent stakes in this land in the form of durable houses, which are likely to intensify processes of household nucleation and individualisation of land tenure in favour of intergenerational transfers.

9. Summary: Making a Home and Living Together Well

Good houses can be seen as a long-term investment in remaining part of the community, and one that people may undergo financial risk in order to achieve. New residential patterns appear to be exacerbating land disputes and scarcity. In an effort to avoid disputes, some people try to secure land through formal transactions, which although they take a customary form, involve increasing sums of money and written deeds. But there are moral limits to the commodification and formalisation of land tenure, and there remains resistance to expatriate owned businesses and leasing to outsiders. The fact that people prioritise the building of a ‘permanent’ house on their land means they believe they have a continued stake in the place and the life of the community and intend to ‘live together well’ with their kin, for

generations to come. Despite internal rifts, these conflicts can still serve to assert collective autonomy vis-a-vis appropriation of land by 'outsiders'.

CHAPTER TEN: CONCLUSIONS

The Good House and Living Together Well

The Li-Lamenu desire for a ‘good house’ must be understood in the context of changing moral and material standards of living. But whilst its construction materialises household-oriented aspirations for a good future, the pursuit of these goals gives rise to a range of dilemmas and contradictions regarding how householders should continue to meet their obligations and live together well with kin and community. In this conclusion, I summarise and bring together some of the main themes and arguments from across the ethnographic chapters and discuss them in the light of the objectives of the DME project, as well as long-standing and recent debates.

I begin by discussing how my arguments and approach contribute to moral economy debates. Secondly, I discuss the implications of my research for anthropological theories of kinship and exchange, and particularly how my data contribute to the kinship debates that have for so long defined the anthropology of Melanesia. Finally, I will discuss how my findings can contribute to migration and development policy.

10.1. The Li-Lamenu Domestic Moral Economy

The anthropology of Melanesia has very much been preoccupied with notions of reciprocity and gift exchange between clans. Whilst sophisticated and important analyses and models of relations and personhood have emerged from these on-going debates (e.g. Wagner 1967;

Gregory 1982; Strathern 1988), I suggest that this preoccupation with exchange and reciprocity means that other dimensions of the moral economy in Melanesia, such as the importance of the household and community, have often been overlooked. In this section, I first discuss the house and householding as an entry point for considering how people negotiate their obligations to others. Secondly, I will argue that the household is gaining greater prominence amidst rapid socioeconomic change. Finally, I will address conflicts over expectations of sharing, cooperation and redistribution, and an emerging ethic of circulation.

Countering Reciprocity: Householding in Melanesia

At the intersection of kinship and economy, attention to the perspective of the house has provided a useful stance from which to address problems and debates in the anthropological corpus, and link areas which have previously been addressed as separate domains or spheres (Carsten and Hugh-Jones 1995:2). This is also true of 'householding' as a non-instituted economic process, within which household members wish to achieve a degree of self-reliance, and autonomy (Polanyi 1944:55; Sahlins 1972; Gudeman and Hann 2015a; 2015b:12). However, these arguments have mostly developed in studies of peasant or agrarian societies, whilst anthropologists in Melanesia have been preoccupied with exchange and reciprocity between kin and clans.

Formed in the congruence of different relations of consanguinity and descent, affinity and contiguity (Gregory 1997:8), the house presents a locus of often competing obligations and claims. As Hann and Hart (2011:35) articulated so well:

If coping with the world at large requires each of us to be highly self-reliant, we enter it as members of households and base our most intimate and long-term strategies for life on them. The idea that social structures are reproduced through ordinary human outcomes of birth, copulation and death reinforces a focus on the 'householding' dimension of economic order.

However, the house also represents a node of collective action or agency (Gell 1998:252), that can be seen to sit in tension with that of the clan, and community, which represent assertions of unity and autonomy at other scales.

The autonomy of the house, its tension with the Nakamal, and the role of women in household negotiations are reflected in Li-Lamenu kinship terminologies and ritual activities. The ways in which people negotiate often-conflicting obligations and desires within and beyond the household situates the house at the centre of “productive tension” or “value polarity” between autonomy and relatedness, unity and self-reliance. As Stasch (2010:53) has argued, these “productive tensions” are not only identifiable in the exchange relations that have long drawn attention of ethnographers, but the questions of where and how people live together concretely on an everyday basis are, “... a major site where these value commitments are concretely realised and at stake” (Stasch 2010:53).

Changing Standards of Living: The Growing Prominence of the Household

Not only has the importance of the household often been overlooked in Melanesia, its place within wider shifts in processes of production,

circulation and consumption has also been discounted. The history of how Li-Lamenu ideas of the 'good house' have changed over 150 years and under current conditions of wage labour engagements has also revealed how the nucleated household has become increasingly more prominent as a site for production and consumption. Melanesians have long tended to engage with the market and economic decision making as members of households (Rodman 1993; Foster 1995), but the construction of the good house indicates not only that the household is prioritised in terms of investment of money and resources, but also may reflect a desire to limit the extent to which money and resources must be shared.

The durability of the good house makes it apt for materialising household aspirations and hopes for a good future. This entails shifts in emphasis of spatiotemporal value transformations from redistribution and reciprocal exchanges between extended kin to more household-focussed activities and expenditures and intergenerational transfers, particularly in the form of school fees (cf. Lambek 2013:154). Securing land on which to build a good house has revealed an increasing tendency towards a fixity and privatisation of land tenure for the household, although the land and the house are considered inalienable goods.

Community Demands

Some Li-Lamenu people understood the increasing use of general-purpose money in transactions between kin as reflecting a moral decline in social relations. However, others emphasised 'money flows' and circulation as positive, in that they allow others the opportunity to access cash and create development in the form of small businesses. What both these positions

shared was the emphasis on the importance of community ethos, unity and autonomy. Although the emphasis on bilateral exchange in Melanesian anthropology has countered the assumption of prior social 'groups', the ideal of community and collective unity has also emerged as a counterpoint to household nucleation. There are on-going tensions between household autonomy and assertions of obligations to the community, as seen in repeated demands and complaints regarding cooperation and sharing.

10.2. From Gifts to Goods: Kinship and Ritual

On-going processes of social change and economic differentiation are giving rise to contestations over the values and meanings expressed in ritual and kinship behaviours. In this section, I first discuss debates about the importance of respect and avoidance between kin, to ensure social reproduction. Secondly, I discuss how economic differentiation may lead to changing values on indebtedness and obligation. I explore how changing values about consumption and its associated value conversions have also changed critiques of 'eating money', which have conventionally functioned to channel food and money into ritual exchange, and are now becoming injunctions against ritual expenditure. Finally, I discuss how changes in housing and residence are associated with land disputes and transactions, but these paradoxically serve to confirm people's commitment to living together in the future.

Respect and Reproduction

Li-Lamenu kinship terminology and idioms stress the household and clan as a conduits or 'doors' for the passage of women, reproducing exchange relationships, alliances, and 'roads' for future marriage. However, Li-

Lamenu people frequently complain of a decline in respect, which glosses both deference to authority and observance of avoidance behaviours and sexual prohibitions. The perceived rise in extramarital affairs and sexual immorality that has accompanied this process leads to fears not only of 'broken homes' and illegitimate children, but also the corrosion of the relational roads of marriage and exchange that underpin the reproduction of clans.

Although there appears to have been a decline in everyday avoidance behaviours between kin, the values of classificatory kin relations are still asserted in ritual contexts, which appear to have expanded and been elaborated in the context of wage labour and market engagements. Access to incomes from overseas seasonal work allow Li-Lamenu people to discharge ritual obligations to kin in a timely fashion, and are said to have led to the expansion of Li-Lamenu life-cycle rituals, which have risen in cost. Rather than reliance on reciprocal contributions between close kin and fraternal allies, costs of ritual are increasingly borne by the household, entailing gendered, generational and kinship roles in fulfilling obligations. These changes have resulted in uncertainty about how a system of reciprocal contributions could continue in the context of increasing economic differentiation.

Bridewealth and other ritual transactions have often been interpreted as a form of indebtedness for the life-giving substances or actions of affinal kin, but their monetisation has sometimes led to transactions being interpreted in increasingly quantitative language, or in commodity terms. There are

often conflicts over the meaning and value of bridewealth exchanges, particularly over how the husband and his clan may make claims over the wife and her property or income. Further, the woman's kin appear to be expanding the value of gifts given to the bride on her marriage such that it appears these gifts outweigh those received by the wife givers, and thus interpretations of the gifts in terms of indebtedness. This is intensified by the fact that the gifts given to a bride and her marital household tend to be in the form of durable goods, whilst the groom's clan gives gifts of consumable foodstuffs that are quickly used up. In the next section, I will discuss how changing evaluations of consumability are giving rise to contradictions over the value of ritual exchange.

From Gifts to Goods: Eating Money and Value Conversions

Although the incorporation of money and imported commodities into ritual exchange may appear to 'domesticate' and harness them for social reproduction in the form of clan replacement or replication, the substitution of money and commodities for ritual wealth is paradoxically leading to contestation of the value of these transactions. The presence of money in an exchange does not necessarily mean the commoditisation of the transaction but, rather, can be transformed into a gift designed to express and reproduce social relationships of interdependence. However, money's properties of substitutability and conversion mean that its use in ritual can be contested against other potential conversions.

It was common to hear people critique the spending of large amounts of money on ritual costs and, particularly expenditure on the food that has been seen as crucial in signifying the reproductive interdependence

between affines. Increasingly, moral evaluations of 'eating money' and 'wasting time', which conventionally critiqued the immediate consumption of food, drink, and sexual capacities for selfish rather than reproductive ends, are being applied to ritual expenditure. The extension of these critiques appear to invert anthropological interpretations of critiques of 'eating' and 'eating money' as injunctions to give, and the characterisation of gift exchanges themselves as the ultimate expression of value in Melanesia. Rather, the moral injunction against 'eating money' is increasingly being used instead to legitimate household spending on durable goods and intergenerational transfers.

Many people contest the incorporation of money and store-bought goods incorporated in ritual, both in being a poor substitute for the symbolic meanings and qualisigns embodied in exchange valuables. Shifts in the content and form of ritual exchanges appear to be undermining the signification of indebtedness and elicitation of significant difference between affinal clans. Rather, households and close kin networks are increasingly choosing to fund the rituals rather than rely on gift-credit from extended kin and fraternal allies. Furthermore, the gifts themselves also appear to be increasingly valued as conducive to the material constitution of the recipient household, over and above the significance of perpetual indebtedness between affinal clans. And, as inequalities emerge between households with differential access to markets and wage labour, it becomes apparent that some households will struggle to reciprocate (cf. Foster 1995:90), and may be placed under undue stress, giving rise to the anxieties over the sustainability of ritual practices.

Living Together Well on the Land

The durability of the ‘good house’ appears to be contributing to a shift from flexible and overlapping clan rights to garden land and residence in tightly packed clan yards on Lamén Island towards more residential land or business ventures. This is also indicative of a concomitant shift towards more fixed and private claims to land and the expectation of intergenerational transfers. Land disputes are reportedly intensifying as people seek out plots of land on which to build a ‘good house’. Li-Lamenu people are increasingly transacting larger sums of cash and more formalised documentation in the effort to secure a space on which to build.

However, rather than entailing a ‘commoditisation’ of land, I have shown that these efforts still require the iteration of land histories and genealogies, thus reaffirming kin ties. Furthermore, I have shown how their remains strong popular moral limits to the commodification and formalisation of customary land tenure, and land remains seen as an inalienable non-commodity. Sharing a ‘place’ and fostering collective autonomy remain crucial to both personal and social identities and ideas of good development, as I discuss below.

10.3. Productive Roads: Seasonal Worker Programmes and Development

The 2000s saw the revival of what has been termed the “migration development mantra” (Glick Schiller and Faist 2010; Wise and Covarrubias 2009), in which seasonal work programmes are promoted as conducive to economic development. Within this discourse, New Zealand’s Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) programme has been widely reported as a ‘best

practice' example for other countries to follow, bringing 'triple-win' benefits for employers, sending states and migrants themselves (Gibson and McKenzie 2013b). In this section, I first discuss the contribution of my research to the understanding of seasonal work programmes. Secondly, I discuss my contribution to understandings of land tenure. Finally, I will discuss what kinds of development Li-Lamenu people hope to realise.

Seasonal Work Programmes and Relational Roads

Temporary foreign worker programmes have been subject to much criticism from political philosophers and critical theorists. Many have argued that such programmes are unjust because they exploit workers economically, and marginalise them politically whilst withholding the rights that would be accessible to domestic workers (Walzer 1983; Hahamovitch 2003). Others have argued that such programmes distort the labour market and artificially lower wages, or argued such programmes have the tendency to foster dependency, both in terms of employers' dependence on a compliant and reliable labour force, and the growing reliance of workers on wage labour engagements to make a living (Martin, Abella, and Kuptsch 2006). Similar concerns have been reflected in ethnographies of seasonal workers in temporary foreign worker programmes, which have tended to focus on economic exploitation, political subordination and the gendered and racialised aspects to such programmes (e.g. Basok 2002; Hennebry and Preibisch 2010; Binford 2013; Holmes 2007; 2013). As I summarise below, my case study of Li-Lamenu participation in the programme has revealed aspects of all these arguments remain true but entirely partial.

There have been a number of Masters studies of participation in New Zealand's RSE Programme (Bailey 2009; Ericsson 2009; Cameron 2011; Kumar 2012; Craven 2015), primarily based either on working conditions in New Zealand or on sustainable development outcomes. Of these Kumar and Craven carried out interviews and focus groups in Lamenu Bay. Kumar, a development economist, preceded my fieldwork and recorded development outcomes. His (2012) Masters thesis was completed during my fieldwork. Craven (2015) conducted his Masters research after I completed my fieldwork and focussed on implications for climate change adaptation. Neither is based on long-term fieldwork, or anthropological analysis.

More recently, an anthropology PhD thesis (Bailey 2014a) has been completed based on North Ambrymese participation in RSE Programme. My study is different from Bailey's in two significant ways: the characteristics of seasonal work engagements and primary research questions. Whilst North Ambrym was part of the RSE pilot, and work engagements are spatially dispersed and exclusively male, Li-Lamenu participation has emerged through prior social networks and over a quarter of workers recruited by the two main employers are women. Furthermore, whilst Bailey focussed on development outcomes and policy implications, my study gives primacy to the often-contradictory effects of seasonal engagements and economic change on kinship and social relations in a single community.

My research has revealed how, in terms of Li-Lamenu seasonal work engagements, employers and employees alike had become morally and materially invested in the continuation of the programme and its development outcomes on Epi. Anthropological concepts of reciprocity, gift exchange and hospitality have been useful in revealing the moralised and enduring characteristics of these employment relations. Indeed, Li-Lamenu people often describe their connections with potential and existing employers as finding 'roads', along which travel flows of people, money and resources; implying, like roads of marriage and exchange, that obligations should extend in both directions. Meanwhile employers and workers alike often deploy terms of hospitality, and expectations of 'good hosts' or 'good guests' in their mutual evaluations. But personalised and moralised relations between seasonal employers and Li-Lamenu workers depend on improving economic outcomes, which mean they can often be characterised by ambivalence, tension and mutual mistrust.

The Value of Land

Li-Lamenu people value the opportunities to work overseas and understand it has the potential to bring about 'development', but their development goals are quite different from those espoused by many development economists. Helen Hughes (2004) contended that, in order to develop, Melanesian countries must replace customary land tenure with individualised freehold land registration. Hughes and Sodhi (2006) argued against the introduction of a Pacific Seasonal Work programme for Melanesia because it would encourage people to retain their customary land tenure rather than giving it up in favour of individualised private property regimes. They contended private property would lead to

investment and economic growth: “Pacific remittances are overwhelmingly used for consumption because the absence of private property rights reduces investment opportunities and also results in remittances being claimed by extended families and clans” (Hughes and Sodhi 2006:22).

Despite an on-going shift towards production mediated via the market and wage labour, most Li-Lamenu people wish to retain customary land tenure and resist the lease or sale of land to outsiders. Land is intimately tied up with Li-Lamenu identities and is a precondition for collective autonomy and living together well. When land is leased or sold, the transaction should take place between kin and involve on-going relations of respect and exchange. Ideals and claims of customary land tenure remain strong, even if in practice these claims are highly contested and fraught.

Development: Valuing the Kastom Economy

Li-Lamenu people consider ‘good development’ to be the melding of good knowledge, skills and material things from ‘outside’ with what is good from kastom and Christianity. As in other Melanesian communities, Li-Lamenu people, “...do not seek wholesale change of indigenous values and social institutions, but rather want to shape their own modernity and pursue their own culturally defined goals” (Curry and Koczberski 2013:341). People on Epi often stress the autonomy they have from customary land tenure and how they can live for free, and control their time in contrast to countries where people are fully reliant on wage labour in order to make a living. In these respects, they affirm the importance of the traditional economy (kastom ekonomi) as a critique of measures based

only on quantitative data on economic 'growth' and the kinds of development proposed by proponents of trade liberalisation. Indeed, the traditional economy (kastom ekonomi) has recently been the subject of renewed attention and policy in Vanuatu (Regenvanu 2009; Regenvanu and Geismar 2011; Rousseau and Taylor 2012).

Although the term 'development' tends to have a positive valence for the Li-Lamenu, there is contestation about how to proceed. On the one hand, people often deploy narratives of achieving development in order to limit the extent to which they have to share, by saying others are jealous or too dependent on hand-outs (cf. Martin 2010). Others stress the importance of unity and cooperation in order to achieve development. Furthermore, worries over land scarcity and changing climactic and economic conditions mean that parents are increasingly investing in the education of children to secure a viable future. The increasing education of children to final years of secondary schooling and even into tertiary education suggests that the future of Lamenu may be one that is increasingly economically differentiated and based on urban-rural flows.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Notes on Language

Words from Lamenu Lewo are *italicised*.

Words from Bislama are underlined.

A1.1 Orthography

In terms of orthography, I have largely drawn from Early (1994; 2002)

Vowels are a, e, i, o, u,

Consonants are d, g, k, l, m, m̄, n, p, p̄, r, s, v, w, y

In terms of pronunciation, most phonemes would be familiar to an English speaker, with the exception of:

d = nd, as in English ‘end’

g = ng, as in English ‘skiing’

m̄ = mw (labio-velar)

p̄ = pw (labio-velar)

v = wh (as in Scottish ‘when’)

Although Early does not list consonant ‘b’ in the orthography, my informants often used it when spelling words, indeed some pronunciations sounded closer to English ‘b’, or ‘mb’, as in *poga* (‘good, fine’), which sounds like ‘bonga’.

A1.2. Lamenu Lewo Glossary

<i>Āpere Karo</i>	Land customarily given to a woman by her natal family for the duration of her marriage
<i>Apopa</i>	Classificatory mother's brother
<i>Apua</i>	Classificatory grandparent, ancestor
<i>Apua Lou</i>	Classificatory WF / WM (m.s.), HF / HM (w.s.)
<i>Apua Merua</i>	Classificatory FF / FM (lit. 'old grandparents')
<i>Ata</i>	Classificatory father
<i>Awia</i>	Classificatory mother
<i>Awia Simemi</i>	Classificatory father's sister
<i>Kana</i>	Classificatory WB / ZH (m.s.)
<i>Kanayumā</i>	Precolonial thatch house
<i>Kapi Lou</i>	Former Grade taking system ('tabu fire')
<i>Karo</i>	Women's food basket
<i>Kas</i>	Year
<i>Kolau</i>	Adultery, sexual immorality
<i>Kolauwo</i>	Court settlement for sexual immorality
<i>Kopario</i>	Moon / month
<i>Kilavaru</i>	Money ("stones")
<i>Kimi</i>	'Poison' (sorcery)
<i>Kinanena</i>	Food
<i>Kolauwo</i>	Village court cases pertaining to sexual immorality
<i>Kondosano</i>	Land, ground
<i>Korena</i>	Marriage
<i>Kowaayana</i>	Respect / avoidance

<i>Kumali</i>	(Traditionally men's) Meeting house, village
<i>Kupa</i>	Feeling of weakness in the absence of a loved one
<i>Lokove</i>	Garden
<i>Marena</i>	Death (rites)
<i>Masig</i>	Love magic
<i>Mendaïpe</i>	Pandanus mat
<i>Mera</i>	White people / European descent
<i>Merae</i>	Sun, hours of the day
<i>Meram̃in</i>	Land under cultivation
<i>Merasava</i>	Door, household
<i>Merawo</i>	Reconciliation ceremony ('good face')
<i>Meyaru</i>	Class. sister's child (m.s.), brother's child (w.s.)
<i>Miyau</i>	Kava
<i>Nopona</i>	Wild bush
<i>Nunu vanua</i>	Lamen Island ('small island')
<i>Nunu yuñā</i>	Drop toilet ('small house')
<i>O</i>	Wife / husband, classificatory marriage partner
<i>Pamerasava</i>	Clan (from 'doorway')
<i>Papo</i>	Classificatory father's sister's child
<i>Paviyu</i>	Male initiate in incision rites
<i>Paviyuyana</i>	Male initiation / incision rites
<i>Pilakup</i>	'Throwing stick'; idiom for sisters / daughters
<i>Pili</i>	Ground oven
<i>Piya-paravi</i>	Preferred marriage ("roots of the breadfruit")

<i>Piyo ko kumali</i>	Preferred patrilateral marriage (“calling of the <u>Nakamal</u> ”)
<i>Piyo ko uña</i>	Alternative matrilateral marriage (“calling of the house”)
<i>Pui</i>	Pig
<i>Pul/Wul</i>	To buy
<i>Pul lari yu ma sisi</i>	“Buying the breast” adoption prestation
<i>Pul sira</i>	Bridewealth (“buying the woman”)
<i>Pul Roa Sira</i>	Pay bridewealth in one stage
<i>Puruvi</i>	Fraternal allies / ‘brother’ clan
<i>Rove</i>	Yard (clan residential grounds)
<i>Sawa</i>	Ceremonial food allocations by clan (heaps)
<i>Sira</i>	Woman
<i>Song</i>	Coconut leaf mat, bed
<i>Sumare</i>	Church / school
<i>Suṕe</i>	Chief, Lord God
<i>Suwe</i>	Half bivalve shell
<i>Tawana</i>	Classificatory mother’s brother’s child
<i>Uma</i>	Home
<i>Ura</i>	Mainland (Lamen Bay)
<i>Vanua</i>	Place, island
<i>Wa</i>	Canoe
<i>Yorumene</i>	Man
<i>Yuña</i>	House
<i>Yumana</i>	Work (n.)
<i>Yuwi</i>	Yam

Appendix 2. Historical Background: Migration and Wage Labour

As mentioned in the Introduction, part of the reason I was drawn to Epi, and Lamén, as a field site was islanders' historical engagements with wage labour. Drawing on literature, archival materials and oral histories collected in the field, here I give a brief summary account of different phases of temporary and circular migration from Vanuatu. I will discuss three main phases of migration from Epi prior to the launch of RSE Programme. Firstly, the nineteenth century labour trade, followed by circular migration patterns from World War II to 1970s, and finally a shift towards more long-term urban migration.

A2.1. Nineteenth Century Labour Migration: The View from Epi

Epi had more islanders travel to work in the nineteenth century Queensland labour trade than any other island of Vanuatu, second only to Malaita for the region, and island many times its size and population, and many more went to Fiji, New Caledonia and Samoa (Price and Baker 1976:114). Thus, of all the islands in the Western Pacific that were involved in the nineteenth century labour trade, Epi must have been one of the most affected. Of course it is difficult to obtain accurate figures for the numbers involved, and these figures are hard to calculate from conflicting records; e.g. the authors mention disparities between recruiter's account, and the agent's record. Only 32 are specified as originating from Lamén, as compared to 5084 for Epi as a whole, but Wawn (1893:96) mentions recruiting 12 in just one trip to Lamén, and says it would have been more had he had more muskets with which to "pay" for them. Cromar

(1935:105) wrote that he filled the *Madeline* to capacity at Lamén, and still more wanted to recruit. There were other indentured labourers transported to Fiji, Samoa and New Caledonia⁸⁰. There were 389 documented recruitments from Epi to Fiji in the period 1864-1911, 370 of those were prior to 1888 after which the Solomon Islands and Northern New Hebrides became the main recruiting grounds (Siegel 1985:48). It is estimated between 10,000 and 13,000 New Hebrideans were indentured labourers in New Caledonia between 1867 and 1922 (Winslow 1990), but it is difficult to know how many of these were from Epi⁸¹.

Epi became a notorious site for reprisals against kidnapping and unwanted recruiting (Cromar 1935:41).⁸² Lamén Island had gained a particularly dubious reputation amongst recruiters and other vessels for being dangerous. Docker (1970:135) mentions Lamén as a well-known destination where; “little groups of returned Queenslanders, joined by

⁸⁰ I do not have figures for Samoa by island of origin, but oral history today says that the popular man’s name ‘Apia’ on Lamén today originated from a labourer who travelled to Samoa.

Descendants of Epi labourers from this period of labour indenture are said to live in Fiji (Narawa-Daurewa 2012; Halapua 2001) and New Caledonia today (Shineberg 1995:21 n. 76).

⁸¹ Shineberg’s (n.d.) database returns 277 results specifically from Epi, but most of these were recorded because they had died,⁸¹ or been involved in some other incident.

⁸² Fatal attacks by Epi islanders on recruiting ships or their crews include; *Edith* in Fiji in 1871 (Davidson and Scarr 1970:170), *Zephyr* in 1874-5 (Stevens 1950:402), *Janet Stewart* in 1878 (Stevens 1950:388; Davidson and Scarr 1970:241), *Dauntless* (1880) (Harrison 1937:207; Wilson 1881; Davidson and Scarr 1970:240–241; Thomas 1887:212); *Lavinia* in 1883 - perhaps because of low wages and deaths in Queensland, or previous unwanted recruiting (Cromar 1935:122; Scarr 1967a:172) and in many others, the crews escaped with their lives.

various other refugees and outcasts, led a bandit existence, robbing and firing villages, abducting women and stealing children". Nevertheless, it seems that recruitment was to become desired by some, especially young men, for whom it might have been a means to escape the authority of elders, and gain access to knowledge and experiences, which would give them status, back home. Wawn (1893:96) talks of recruiting a number of young men who escaped the clutches of island elders.⁸³

We have the account of one Li-Lamenu man⁸⁴ who opted to remain in Queensland after 1906, and lived to be one of the last surviving of the original recruits. He was originally recruited as a youth,⁸⁵ part of a group of at least eight, including an older man. After a period of work, he returned for a year to Lamenu before re-recruiting (Dutton n.d.; 1980). Lammon's narrative, amongst others, suggests that at least by the mid-late 1870s, Li-Lamenu people were recruiting voluntarily. Others recruited to escape authority or flee conflict, such as one documented account of a north Epi man running away after an affair (Gundert-Hock 1991:100). Oral

⁸³ Other sources mention efforts of Epi Chiefs to prevent recruiting; trying to stem the depopulation (Johnston 1980).

⁸⁴ Lammon gives his home island as Epi, and then when asked to specify says Lamenu. The examples of language he gives are in Lamenu Lewo, and his surname refers to the island, as was common in recruiting (Dutton 1980:18).

⁸⁵ Dutton (1980) suggests this was likely in 1880s but the 'Index to (Coloured Labour and Asiatic Aliens in Queensland 1913 (Item ID 862496) n.d.)' gives his date of arrival as 1878, and his age at around 50, which would make him over 100 at the time of Dutton's interview (and around 15 at the time of recruitment).

and archival histories often tell of Epi islanders desire for goods such as clothes (Gundert-Hock 1991:101; Morning Bulletin: Kanakas on the Spree 1881).



Figure 47 Tom Lammon and family (photo courtesy: Debbie Nielsen)

From at least as early as 1868, Melanesian workers were given trade boxes to fill with truck (rather than cash wages). Sometimes goods were sold at inflated prices, offering further profits for planters and traders. Returnees could gain social status through the distribution of the goods as gifts when they returned, boxes and goods were incorporated into life-cycle rituals⁸⁶ (Graves 1983; Beck 2009:46–55). Members of the 1874 Challenger expedition spotted several returned labourers from both Queensland and

⁸⁶ It seems likely that similar boxes (perhaps via domestic labour trade) were the origin of the large wooden boxes now presented to women on their marriage at Lamén as part of *Song Sa Sira* (see Chapter Seven)

Fiji amongst the Epi islanders they met⁸⁷, they could speak English and some said they wished to return. The returnees hung the keys to their trade boxes on their waist-cloths⁸⁸ (Moseley 1879:345; Campbell 1881:178), which may have been a sign of status (Graves 1983:90). Later, Snider rifles in particular became highly sought after, and rifle cartridges were reportedly used as a currency by Epi islanders, in exchange for garden vegetables and fruits, each household amassing hundreds of rounds (Wilson 1881:2).

As time went on recruiting became a 'rite of passage'⁸⁹ for young men (Johnston 1980:50; Saunders 1982:33–34), and trade goods were a source of prestige (cf. Gregory 1982:185 on PNG). As late as 1903, resident missionary Thomas Riddle (1903) wrote of Lamén Island; "Almost every boy here wants to go to Queensland. To have been there means pretty well that one has come of age." On Lamén, the long-term absences of young men who returned with wealth allowing them to bypass the ritual wealth

⁸⁷ The expedition also returned to Epi some labourers from Fiji. They were dressed in red shirts, red fisherman's caps and black trousers. They were 'paid off' with old muskets and ammunition, trade boxes, bottles of gin and other small items of trade. Another recent returnee from Queensland was still dressed in a shirt, trousers and a felt hat, but the others all had nothing but a waist cloth (Moseley 1879:342; Campbell 1881:164–165, 178–180)

⁸⁸ Moseley believed this to mean they held onto the goods as private property, but Campbell predicted the new returnees would be 'pillaged' of all their trade by the local Chiefs.

⁸⁹ As I discuss below, this 'rite of passage' aspect to circular migration is commonly observed, around the world and over generations.

systems, may have contributed to the demise of the 'grade system'.⁹⁰ There is also evidence that labourers were receiving requests for community projects and family demands; an 1895 request was published in Brisbane Courier from an Epi village for a water tank for a new school, amongst other items, suggesting that migration may have become part of a collective strategy for material improvements, and not just individual status (A Voice from Bundaberg 1895).

Returned migrants had a major impact on social and political relations back home (Scarr 1967b:23) and labour migration may have provided access to new kinds of wealth and knowledge (and weaponry), which undermined the control of traditional forms of authority and status. I was told that the first men to try to introduce Christianity to Lamén were Queensland returnees. One returnee tried to start Salvation Army in Ngalovasoro village, though it was not to last. When the first missionary to North Epi, Thomas Smaill visited Lamén in 1892, he mentioned that the Li-Lamenu people delighted in being 'singular' in their resistance to Christian influences, refusing to attend 'school' in Queensland, unlike other Epi islanders⁹¹.

⁹⁰ Compare Lewis' (1980:205) evidence of some of the processes that were displacing Gnau rituals, as labour migration came to substitute for traditional Tambin rites for mature young men in accordance with 'new priorities' (cf. Bateson 1958:135 on impact of out-migration).

⁹¹ Smaill in 'The New Zealand Presbyterian', May 1892:203

West Epi was a primary location for French-owned plantations during the early 20th century, but labour was difficult to obtain⁹² from the island on which plantations were located, Li-Lamenu people were making a good sum from selling copra, and even poorer inland villages were able to command more reasonable wages from local planters suffering labour shortages. Speiser (1913:Ch. XI) observed the preferences of Epi islanders as they traded copra for trade goods at Ringdove Plantations;

The native of the coast districts to-day goes beyond needs to luxuries; he buys costly silks, such as he may once have seen in Queensland, and he samples sewing-machines or whatever else tempts him.... as a rule, they spend it for any nonsense they may fancy, to the joy of the trader, who makes an average profit of 50 per cent on all commodities...

A2.2. Circular Migration

WW2, Cargo Cults and Cons

World War II represented another great shift in islander mobility, especially to more urbanised destinations (Bedford 1973b:38). The heavy US Military presence led to the rapid expansion of the capital, Port Vila, and the practically overnight creation of a town at Luganville on Santo. For many islanders, including Li-Lamenu men, compulsory conscription of

⁹² Eventually, French planters began to import Indo-Chinese labourers to work on the plantations, after the first group were brought in by Epi planter Lancon in 1921, and by 1929 there were around 5400 in the archipelago, many of those on Epi (Harrison 1937:328–329). After 1929, the labour recruiting of Ni-Vanuatu for work on Epi plantations virtually dried up, with the decline in commodity prices following the depression (Bedford 1973b:36–37)(Bedford 1973b:36–37).

adult males in 1942 led to many of them experiencing town life for the first time, and many were staggered by the amount of people, goods and equipment on display (Haberkorn 1990:155). After the initial conscription, others were attracted by relatively high wages and other benefits, including access to clothes, new foods, and equipment (Bedford 1973b:38). However, many of them died before the end of the war, some of dysentery and other illnesses. However, the predominant account of older people is that those that died perished not because of sickness but because they were carrying 'poison' and accoutrements of sorcery (*kimi*):

Those that took poison, all of them died in Vila. My father came back. He told others, they went. My uncle... who gave me my name, he died from poison. All the men prayed on them, and those carrying poison they all died. My uncle told me, if he stayed on he would teach me poison. But he didn't teach me, he went to Vila and he died! It was God's work. There were lots, lots from Lamén. They carried poison, people prayed and they died. Around six or so. When World War 2 came, all the men heard from the Americans they would go and work, and make money. They were all glad to go, and they died!

Throughout the 1950s and early 1960s saw most able bodied Lamén men doing circular migration to Santo island, through Donald Gubbay⁹³, the

⁹³ Gubbay, had been approached by two men from Malekula regarded as leaders of a cargo-cult-like cooperative movement in 1949, and came to take charge of a movement named Malekula Native Company (Worsley 1970:172). He started out buying copra, and also recruited labourers from a range of locations including Malakula, Pentecost, Ambrym and Epi. On Epi, the bulk of the recruits were from Lamén Island and Ponkovia village on the west coast, and did a variety of tasks on copra

son of a Santo-based businessman from Israel. The missionary resident at Lamenu Island, Graham Horwell (2006:21) noted that when it came to building the District School on the Island, nearly all the able-bodied men were away working at Palikula, and so it was the women and children that did the brunt of the work. Like other missionaries, Presbyterian and Catholic alike, Horwell was suspicious of Gubbay and his role in the “Native Company” movements, which seemed to make utopian promises and saw it as a dangerous and insidious sort of ‘communism’ that undermined the kind of ethics and order the church was trying to instil (Hassall 1989:144–145; Worsley 1970:173). The following entries from Horwell’s annual reports reveal his view:

During the last year, there have been large groups of men away from Lamenu and Epi to work for Donald Gubbay in Santo. Whatever suspicions one may have of the business motives of the company, it is definitely a serious menace to the village communities which are left for many months of the year without men to assist in the support of local works. The village of Bonkovia on Epi was left with one man over the age of 15 for a period of three months. It seems to me that it is the womenfolk of the villages who are paying Mr. Gubbay for the questionable advantages of his Eldorado. (Horwell 1953)

production and clearing the World War Two sites. When Gubbay established the South Pacific Fishing Company (SPFC) at Palikula Bay on Santo around 1956, the majority of Li-Lamenu recruits worked there, in the cold storage rooms, on fishing boats and doing a variety of other tasks.

During the past year the infiltration tactics of Gubbay and associates have claimed more and more people to their movement and many aspects of the whole movement force one to recognise in it the presence of communism in the New Hebrides. The methods of inducing the men to join the labour gangs, the high sounding promises of Utopia, the promise of release from all restrictions and discipline, and the secrecy of everything connected with the movement give one cause for concern.

(Horwell 1954)

Each worker was issued with a small brass token stamped with MALNATCO, or in the case of Li-Lamenu workers AMBNATCO⁹⁴ and an identification number⁹⁵. Gubbay was known for military-like order, and the Company was seen by contemporary observers as having cargo cult-like characteristics, which they saw as encouraged by Gubbay (Worsley 1970:172–173; Guiart 1951a:244). ‘Cargo cult’ is a controversial term, derogatorily implying, “the ‘natives’ wanted to obtain Western consumption goods (‘cargo’) by the wrong means (‘cult’).” (Otto 2009:88).

⁹⁴ At the request of the British Administration, Gubbay ‘decentralised’ by splitting the company into three; MALNATCO (Malakula Native Company), AMBNATCO (Ambrym Native Company) and PENNATCO (Pentecost Native Company), nominally at least (Guiart and Maude 1953 App. 2:2).

⁹⁵ Over time, the movement lost much of its more subversive political and religious associations, which were previously deemed threatening by the administration (Worsley 1970:173; Guiart 1951b:88; Guiart and Maude 1953 App. B). The British Administration even approved of the establishment of Palikula, seen as an advance for the British business interests and attracted the workers away from French-owned plantations, where economic activity were dominated by the French (Bresnihan and Woodward 2002:234).

Otto (2009:90) suggests this was a response to dramatic political economic change; a combination of the influx of new and old wealth items and foreign goods, and a shift to political and economic control from the older to younger generation, that led to a moral and social crisis.

One now-aged Li-Lamenu informant, John, who worked for Gubbay for several years, showed me a token he had kept for over fifty years. Guiart (1951a:245) writes that on Malekula these tokens had taken on almost fetishistic powers, and Li-Lamenu people said they were told to keep their token, as one day they would receive fortunes. John was a character whose house was full of old mementoes; an old wireless, an antique shotgun, tools. Magazine images of curvaceous white women adorned the walls. He told me:

He said this is your number. When it's time to give you your money, you will need your number. Big money, you can buy a ship, or you can marry a white woman. They lied so much! He gave one to each of us" (laughs).... He said you keep it safe; you will have a big reward to come. You will get BIG money, 'loads of money. He said you can take a buy one of our ships, you can have a plane, and you can buy a cinema. You can marry a white woman" (Recorded interview).

Despite this duplicity, my informant described Gubbay as 'a good man', telling me, Gubbay would tell them they must not swear.



Figure 48 Photo of John as a young temporary migrant worker

Just as in the nineteenth century labour migrations, new generations in Melanesia have often come to see migration as a 'rite of passage'⁹⁶ (cf.

⁹⁶ This 'rite of passage' aspect of circular and return migrations is very widespread globally (Castles and Delgado Wise 2008:275; Bedford, Bedford, and Ho 2009a:50; Lipton 1980:6)

Connell 1987:110; Friesen 1994:232; Ward 1998:522; Curry and Koczberski 1998:37; Moore 2007:218). Doubtless, some of the adventure and curiosity motivated young men, as well as knowledge and goods gained from travel that would bring new status. But as the novelty of plantation labour wore off, the 'bright lights' of fast-growing urban centres were to become the main draw

A2.3. Bright Lights: Rural-Urban Shifts and Overseas Travel

The late 1960s and early 1970s saw a rise in urban job opportunities with the rapid expansion of Port Vila, especially after Vanuatu was declared a tax haven. This initially appeared to be a continuation of temporary circular mobility patterns, and the employers' convenient assumption that workers had limited 'targets' for cash, after which they would want to return home, and residence restrictions both contributed to the prevalence of circular migration patterns (Bedford 1973b:45, 55). Bedford (1973b:94–95) saw circular migration as a way for islanders to minimise risk and 'keep their options open', in a context where commodity prices fluctuated and cash was increasingly required. From 1968, Ni-Vanuatu labourers were recruited in increasing numbers, and by 1971 around 3500 were travelling to work there on contracts of between three and six months, attracted by wages around four to five times that available at home. But following the economic decline in 1970s, many Ni-Vanuatu were left with few opportunities for wage labour (Bedford 1973b:48; Haberkorn 1990:156–157; Aldrich 1993:207).

From the 1970s migration patterns changed towards more permanent rural-urban movement, particularly for smaller islands, where land was

relatively scarce. Haberkorn (1990; 1992) later confirmed an increasing permanence in rural-urban migration facilitated by a shift in wages from low wages and accommodation designed for a single, temporary worker to higher wages allowing family co-residence in town and a rise in employment opportunities for women. Haberkorn (1990:157) suggested this implies a reduction in the rural subsidisation of urban workers, as they no longer bore the 'double costs' of both reproducing the urban labour force, and supporting them through their old age. A relatively low percentage of Epi islanders moved to town, compared with some other islands.

The same period saw a labour shortage in New Caledonia, especially after the departure of Vietnamese labourers, and the expansion in nickel mining. From 1968, Ni-Vanuatu labourers were recruited in increasing numbers, and by 1971 around 3500 were travelling to work there on contracts of between three and six months, attracted by wages around four to five times that available at home. Just as at Palikula, Epi workers tended to be housed together. During this period, remittances became the third most important source of national income, after fish and copra, until the economic decline in the mid-late 1970s, after which many Ni-Vanuatu were left with few opportunities for wage labour (Bedford 1973b:48; Haberkorn 1990:156–157; Aldrich 1993:207).

Since the 1970s there has been little opportunity to migrate internationally, except on fishing vessels. Typically Taiwanese boats, a handful of Li-Lamenu men have crewed on these vessels, travelling far afield. When the

possibility to participate in these overseas seasonal migration programmes arose, people seized the opportunity. These programmes are seen as a way for people without a good education to accumulate the money required to achieve desired goals for their household, but this was not without costs.

Appendix 3. Kinship Terminology and Idioms

A3.1. List of abbreviations for kinship referents

F = father

M = mother

Z = sister

B = brother

eB= elder brother

yB= younger brother

H= husband

W= wife

C = child

S = son

D = daughter

m.s. = male speaker

w.s. = woman speaker

These abbreviations are used in compounds, such as:

MB = mother's brother





FZ = father's sister

FZS = father's sister's son

A3.2. Classificatory kin terms in Lamenu Lewo

Term	Gen	Reciprocal	Gen
<i>Apua Merua</i> (FF, FM, MF, MM)	[+2]	<i>Mapu</i> (SS, SD), <i>Omapu</i> (DS, DD)	[-2]
<i>Apua Lou</i> (FMB, FMBW, HF, HM)	[+2]	<i>Map</i> (SW)	[-2]
<i>Ata</i> (F, FB), <i>Awia</i> (M, MZ)	[+1]	<i>Onaru</i> (S), <i>Onenau</i> (D)	[-1]
<i>Apopa</i> (MB, FZH), <i>Awia</i> Simemi/Meravevin (FZ, MBW)	[+1]	<i>Meyaru</i> [m.s] ZS [m.s], ZD [m.s], WBD, WBS, [Onunmene [w.s] (BS, BD, HZS, HZD)]	[-1]
<i>O</i> [m.s] (W, BW, WZ, FZSD, FZDD)	[+1]	<i>O</i> [w.s] (H, HB, ZH, FMBS, MMBS)	[-1]
<i>Kana</i> [m.s] (WB, ZH, FMBS, MMBS)	[+1]	<i>Kana</i> [m.s] (WB, ZH, FZSS, FMBS, MMBS)	[-1]
<i>Ovena</i> [w.s] (HZ)	[+1]	<i>Ovena</i> [w.s] (BW)	[-1]
<i>Omenau</i> [w.s] (B)	[0]	<i>Ovinau</i> [m.s] (Z)	[0]
<i>Oruwau</i> [m.s] (eB, yB)	[0]	<i>Oruwau</i> [m.s] (yB, eB)	[0]
<i>Olweiau</i> [w.s] (eZ, yZ)	[0]	<i>Olweiau</i> [w.s] (yZ, eZ)	[0]
<i>Tawana</i> (MBC), [Tawiana] (archaic MBD)	[0]	<i>Papo</i> (FZC), [Marua] (archaic FZS, WF)	[0]

A3.3. Classificatory kin terms by gender, generation and cross kin

	Parallel 	Parallel 	Cross 	Cross 
+2	<i>Apua Merua</i>	<i>Apua Merua</i>	<i>Apua Lou</i>	<i>Apua Lou</i>
+1	<i>Ata</i>	<i>Awia</i>	<i>Awia Simemi/ Meravevin</i>	<i>Apopa</i>
0	<i>Oruwau [m.s], Omenau [w.s]</i>	<i>Olweiau [w.s], Ovinau [m.s]</i>	<i>Tawana (MBD) Papo (FZD)</i>	<i>Tawana (MBS), Papo (FZS)</i>
-1	<i>Onaru</i>	<i>Onenau</i>	<i>Meyaru [m.s]. Onunmenau [w.s]</i>	<i>Meyaru [m.s]. Onunmenau [w.s]</i>
-2	<i>Mapu</i>	<i>Mapu</i>	<i>Map</i>	<i>Map</i>

Appendix 4. Methods and Ethical Considerations

4.1. Participant Information Sheet

INFOMESAN LONG RISEJ BLONG MI

Mi wantem invaitem yu blong joinem stadi blong mi. Plis yu fil welkam blong askem sam kwestin mo bae mi glad blong ansarem. Sapos eni samting i no klia tumas, plis yu no fraet blong askem mi.

INFOMESAN LONG PROJEK BLONG UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER

Mi wan doktoral studen long Universiti blong Manchester long England, Dipatmen blong Social Anthropology. 'Social Anthropology' i minim nomo stadi blong andestandem ol difren kastom, fasin, bilif mo wei blong laef blong ol difren pipol long wol. Stadi blong mi hemi pat long wan bigfala projek, nem blong projek ia, "Domestic Moral Economy: A Study of Value in the Asia-Pacific Region". I gat ol difren riseja i stap mekem stadi; long Fiji, Solomon Aelan, India, PNG, mo ol Aborijines long Ostrelia.

Mifala i intres long ol problem we ol famili i stap fesem tede, from mane hemi had blong fainem;

- *Praes blong kakae, fuel, mo fulap samting we yu mas pem i go antap.*
- *Skul fi problem i kam moa antap*
- *Samtaem i had blong one famili i save help long maret, kastom seremoni mo fulap nara nid.*

Difren famili i gat ol difdifren wei blong fainem mane. Plante pipol mas fainem wok long town, o go wok long wan difren kantri. Plante famili i save salem sam samting blong karem smol mane. Sam i save askem help long famili, be sam i mas go long bank blong tekem loan. Ol gavmen mo NGO i gat smol save long ol problem ia, be tru long stadi ia mo help blong yu, mi hop se bae I save helpem olgeta blong mekem wok blong olgeta i kam mo gud.

INFOMESAN LONG STADI LONG EPI MO LAMEN AELAN

Mi wantem fainemaot ol kastom mo fasin, mo ol relesensip wetem ol nara famili, ol nasara mo komuniti. Mi intres long kastom ekonomi blong yufala; olsem hao nao yufala i mekem garen, go long rif mo ol difdifren kaen kastom seremoni we yufala i stap mekem. I gat plante ol difren kaen jenis mo developmen we i stap kam antap long ples ia, olsem tourism, ol difdifren kaen bisnis (sam blong aotsaed investa, sam blong manples) mo fulap man mo woman we oli bin wok long Niu Silan tru long RSE skim. Plante ol developmen i helpem ol famili long komuniti, be mi harem se i gat sam problem from sam jenis we i stap hapen long Vanuatu, olsem ol raorao long graon, sam kastom we i stap lus, mo problem wetem envaeromen. Mi bin ridim long wan ripot blong gavman blong Niu Silan se Lamien Bay wetem Lamien Aelan i wan 'model komuniti' long saed blong RSE skim, from plante mane blong ol man mo woman we oli wok long skim i kambak insaed long ol family mo komuniti long ples ia. Mi hop se mi save lukim yufala we iko wok long Niu Silan mo harem moa tingting lo saed blo wok, mo wanem nao yufala i mekem long mane blong yufala. Bae mi serem repot ia long ol organisa blong skim, mo mi hop se wanem informesen we bae yufala i givim lo mi bae i save helpem olgeta blong mekem skim i kam moa gud long fiuja i kam.

WANEM BAE MI ASKEM LONG YUFALA

Decisen hemi blo yu from informesen we bae yu givem long mi, bae hemi fri nomo mo bae mi save askem sam kwestin lo saed blo famili blo yu mo abaot laef blo yu, olsem;

- *Wea ples yu bon lo hem?*
- *Yu maret finis o no yet?*
- *Uu gat hamas pikinini?*
- *Yu gat sam famili we oli stap long wan difren aelan o kantri?*

Tru long ol infomesen long saed blong ol kaen wok we bae famili blong yu i mekem (olsem katem kopra, salem mat, smol lokal bisnis we i setemap o go wok lo Niu Silan) bae i givhan long mi bigwan. Mi intres tu long ol nid blong yu long saed blong pem kakae, mekem maret, skul fi problem mo fulap moa we yu save nemem olgeta. Mo tu mi nidim moa blong save long saed blong kastom mo kalja mo ol difren development we i stap kam antap naeia, mo wanem plan blong yufala long fiuja. Mi wantem yu i fil fri blong talemaot eni tingting blong yu, olsem eni problem we yu stap fesem long saed blong wok o relebensip, o wan persenel storian blong yu, so mi save jenisem nem blong yu long repot. O sapos yu agri wetem mi festaem, mi save putum nem blong yu long repot blong mi.

SAPOS YU GLAD BLONG HELPEN MI

Mi wantem invaitem sam moa famili blong kontiniu blong helpem mi wetem stadi blong mi. Sapos yu soem interes, mo yu ting se yu gat smol taem enaf blong mekem, yu save telemaot long mi. Mi hop se mi save fainem 5 to 10 famili we oli glad blong helpem mi moa wetem stadi blong mi. Sapos yu glad bae mi kambak bakegen long famili blong yu blong fainemaot moa long saed blong;

- *Relebensip blong yu wetem famili we i klosap long yu mo hemia we i stap long taon, difren aelan o nara kantri.*
- *Everidei wok olsem go lo garen, wivim mat mo ol pacel we yufala i sendem i go lo Vila o Santo olsem putum lokal kakae i go long ship long ol famili we i stap long taon*
- *Blong wan kastom seremoni bae i tekem ples, hao nao yufala i redi long kakae, mat, animol o mane blong yusum long seremoni ia.*
- *Pem skul fi, o samting long stoa*

Sapos i posibol bae mi traem oganaistem wan woksop we ol famili i save toktok long ol difren tingting blong famili, long saed blong mane, graon, kastom mo wok. Mi save pem mobile credit, transpot mo kakae we yu nidim blong helpem risej blong mi.

MOA INFOMESEN

University of Manchester i organaistem projek ia, wetem Queens University Belfast mo Australian National University. Mane blong risej ia i kamaot long Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) long United Kingdom. Wan independen grup, Manchester Research Ethics Committee i apruvum plan blong projek ia. Sapos yu wantem askem sam kwestin, or yu wantem komplek, yu save kontaktem organisa blong projek; Professor Karen Sykes, Dept. Social Anthropology, University of Manchester, Arthur Lewis Building, Manchester M13 9PL, UK. Tel: 0044 161 275 3992. Vanuatu Nasenol Kaljoral Kaonsel i givim permisen long mi blong mekem risej ia long Epi mo Lamen Aelan.

Tankyu tumas,
Rachel Smith

Date: __/__/2012

Lamen Bay/Island

Village:

Yard:

House:

4.2 Household Survey Haoshol Senses 2012

INFORMESEN LONG OL ADULT MO YUT (BITIM 15 YIA) WE I STAP LONG FAMILI O HAOS BLONG YU

INFORMESEN	Adult 1 (we i givim ansa)	Adult/yut 2	Adult/yut 3	Adult/yut 4	Adult/yut 5
Famili nem					
Fes nem					
Ples we yu bon long hem					
Yia we yu bon long hem					
Nasara (<i>parmerasava</i>) we yu bon long hem					
Nem blong stret papa					
Nasara/vilej we papa i bon long hem					
Nem blong stret mama					
Nasara/vilej we mama i bon long hem					
Maret steitas (maret finis /singol/wido/divos/patna)					
Wanem kaen wok (o edukesen) i stap mekem?					
Skul kasem wanem yia?					
Relesensip wetem adult 1 (hem i singaoten wanem?)					

Date: __/__/2012

Lamen Bay/Island

Village:

Yard:

House:

INFORMESEN LONG WOK MO MANE

Wok long aelan

Kakae blong yufala i kam long wea?

Long wan wik yu tekem kakae long garen hamas taem?

Hamas taem yu go lo stoa mo spendem lo stoa long wan wik?

Hamas mane yu spendem blong pem kakae long maket long wan wik?

Hamas taem yu go fishing, daeva, o go long rif long wan wik?

Date: __/__/2012

Lamen Bay/Island

Village:

Yard:

House:

Mane blong yufala i kam long wea?

- ☐ Yu holem wan wok we oli pem yu long everi manis?
- ☐ Ol famili o fren blo yu lo defren aelan o kantri oli stap sanem mane long yu?
- ☐ Yu selaot kopra?
- ☐ Yu mekem maket, o salem sam kakae blong garen?
- ☐ Yu salem kava? Stampa o redi-made?
- ☐ Yu salem fis?
- ☐ Wivim mat blong salem, o somap ol klos?
- ☐ Yu gat wan bisnis? Wanem kaen bisnis?.....

Yufala i stap mekem ol samting ia evri wik, o yu mekem nomo taem we yu nidim mane olsem skul fi?

Wanem kaen nid nao we famili i nidim mane everi taem from?

Mane hemi had blong fainem? Yu ting se naoia i mo isi o mo had blong fainem mane bitim faev yia bifo (2007)?

Date: __/__/2012

Lamen Bay/Island

Village:

Yard:

House:

Wok long Vanuatu

I gat sam man o woman long haashol we i bin wok long wan employa long Vanuatu (we oli pen yu everi manis)?

Nem blong hem	I bin wok long wanem aelan/ples?	I bin go long wanem yia?	I bin stap hamas taem?	Wanem kaen wok

Yufala i gat sam famili o fren we i stap long taon?

Sapos yes;

Hamas taem long yia?

- ☐ Yufala i stap visitim olgeta long taon?
- ☐ Olgeta i stap visitem yu long aelan?
- ☐ Yufala i stap sendem aelan kakae long olgeta long taon we oli save kakae?
- ☐ Oli stap sendem kakae blong stoa, o mane long yufala?
- ☐ Oli helpem yu salem kakae o mat we yu sendem long taon?

Date: __/__/2012

Lamen Bay/Island

Village:

Yard:

House:

Wok long Ovasi

I gat eni man o woman long haoshol we i bin wok long Niu Silan tru long RSE skim?

Nem blong hem	I bin go hamas taem?	I bin go long wanem yia?	Nem blong employa	Wanem kaen wok (e.g pikem apol, pakhaos)

Sapos yes, yufala i bin spendem mane we i kam long Niu Silan olsem wanem?

I gat sam man o woman long haoshol we i bin mekem wan difren wok long wan kantri ovasi?

Nem blong hem	I bin wok long wanem kantri?	I bin go long wanem yia?	I bin stap hamas taem?	Wanem kaen wok

Date: __/__/2012

Lamen Bay/Island

Village:

Yard:

House:

INFORMESEN LONG HAOS MO GAREN

Yufala i gat hamas haos?

Ol narafala haos i stap wea?

Yufala stap long ples ia oltaem, o yu bin muv i kam long ples ia? (Yu muv i kam long wanem yia? Yu stap we bifo?)

Yufala i bildim haos blong yu long wanem yia?

Yufala i bildim haos ia long wanem (olsen kapa, konkrit, timba, bamboo, waelken)?

Wall:

Ruf:

Floor:

Hu I bildim?

Haos blong yu i gat hamas rum? Hamas rum blong siip?

Yufala i gat wanem kaen laet mo paoa insaed long haos?

- ☐ solar antap long haos
- ☐ elektrik jenareta
- ☐ hariken laet, kerosin laet o kandol
- ☐ bateri laet o smol solar laet

Wota blong dring i kam long wea?

Wota blong swim mo was i kam long wea?

Date: __/__/2012

Lamen Bay/Island

Village:

Yard:

House:

Yufala i gat inaf graon blong planem kakae?

Yu planem kakae nomo, o yu planem sam samting blong salem?

Yufala i gat hamas animol;

Ol pig?

Ol faol?

Ol bulok?

Ol nani?

Yufala i gat hamas ol samting ia?

Bot

Gas stove

Mobile

Laptop

Kenu

Oven

Camera

Chainsaw

Trak/motorbike

Icebox

DVD player

Lawnmower

Bicycle

Radio

Music player

Screen

Date: __/__/2012

Lamen Bay/Island

Village:

Yard:

House:

INFORMESEN LONG OL JIOJ MO KOMUNITI

Yufala i go long wanem jioj? I gat samwan long haoshol we hemi gat wan rol o responsibility long jioj olsem elda, lida long sande skul?

I gat sam long haoshol we hemi memba long wan kaonsel o komuniti grup, olsem grup blong ol mama, grup blong yut?

Wanem tingting blong yu long saed blong komuniti wok (olsem dei blong jif, dei blong jioj)? Yu ting se i gat tumas, o no inaf?

Wanem tingting blong yu long saed blong ol kastom seremoni we i stap mekem long ples ia? I had blong fainem taem blong mekem? I had blong fainem enaf mane o kakae blong mekem? Yu ting se i impoten blong holem taet ol kastom?

Long las yia, yufala I bin oganaisem sam kastom seremoni? Yufala I stap plan blong mekem sam kastom long yia ia?

Date: __/__/2012

Lamen Bay/Island

Village:

Yard:

House:

Wanem tingting blong yu long saed blong ol jenis we i stap gohed long komuniti mo ol famili tede?

Wanem tingting blong yu long saed blong ol problem we ol famili mo komuniti long Lamen Bay mo Lamen Aelan i stap fesem tede?

Wanem hop blong yu long fiuja blong famili blong yu, mo komuniti long Lamen Bay mo Lamen Aelan?