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GRAVE MATTERS IN OCEANIA

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*Special issue*

## GRAVE MATTERS IN OCEANIA

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Cover image: Graves with bush material roofs and fencing to keep pigs out. Porgera Valley of highlands Papua New Guinea in western Enga Province. Photograph courtesy of Jerry K. Jacka.

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*Contributors to This Issue*

Philip Gibbs is a New Zealander, who has been working in Papua New Guinea since 1973. He has a post-graduate Diploma in Anthropology from Sydney University and a Doctorate in Theology from the Gregorian University, Rome. He has served as a parish priest, researcher and teacher. At present he is head of the Department of Governance and Leadership at Divine Word University, Madang, Papua New Guinea.

Alan Howard is Emeritus Professor of Anthropology at the University of Hawai'i —Mānoa. He has been conducting research on and writing about Rotuman culture and history for more than 50 years. Alan, together with Jan Rensel (see below), maintain active ties with Rotumans on the home island and in communities around the world, in person as well as through the Rotuma website, developed by Alan, and Facebook.

Jerry K. Jacka is Assistant Professor in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Colorado Boulder. He has worked in western Enga Province since 1998 on the political ecology of resource extraction and indigenous resource management. His recently published book (2015, Duke University Press) is entitled *Alchemy in the Rain Forest: Politics, Ecology, and Resilience in a New Guinea Mining Area*.

Malama Meleisea holds the Samoan chiefly titles Leasiolagi and Meleiseā. He is Professor of Samoan Studies at the National University of Samoa. He was previously Country Director for UNESCO in Afghanistan and Bangladesh, and before that headed Centres of Pacific Studies at the University of Canterbury and the University of Auckland in New Zealand.

Jan Rensel is the Managing Editor at the Center for Pacific Islands Studies, University of Hawai'i—Mānoa. She conducted PhD research in Rotuma. With Alan Howard, Jan has published numerous articles and a book, *Island Legacy: A History of the Rotuman People* (2007), as well as an edited collection, *Pacific Islands Diaspora, Identity, and Incorporation,* a special issue of *Pacific Studies* (2014).

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*A Further Donation from a Life Member of the Society*

Bernard (Bernie) Kernot has been a long-time member and Life Member of the Society, and was its Secretary in the early 1970s. In appreciation of the aims and activities of the Society, he has made an unrestricted gift of $1000 in support of its purposes. The Council has agreed to add his gift to the developing fund designed to support NZ graduate scholars' research in Oceania.

# INTRODUCTION

PENELOPE SCHOEFFEL and MALAMA MELEISEA
*The National University of Samoa*

The idea for this collection of articles on burial practices in Pacific Island cultures first came to us in 2013 when we were invited to Sweden to give a lecture on "an aspect of materiality in Samoa" to the Archaeology Department of the University of Gotland (now the Gotland Campus of Uppsala University). The invitation came from Helene Martinsson-Wallin, Associate Professor of Archaeology there, who had been working with the National University of Samoa for some years to establish the teaching of Archaeology and associated research. As neither of us are archaeologists, our thoughts turned to digging holes in the ground in search of history, and from there to the increasing visibility and variety of graves in Samoa. Thus inspired, we set off with our camera, took pictures of many graves and put together a commentary on what the photographs told us about changing burial practices in Samoa.

Having become very interested in the transformative historical influences on burial and the way in which graves were marked or constructed, we proposed an informal session on "Grave Matters" at the 2014 meeting of the Association of Anthropologists of Oceania (ASAO) in Hawai'i, and on this occasion we had a fine conversation about burial practices and the whys and wherefores of changing styles of graves in Hawai'i, Aotearoa New Zealand, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa and Rotuma. The following year we convened a formal session at the ASAO meeting in Santa Fe, which in turn led to a symposium at the ASAO meeting in San Diego in 2016, and to the five selected papers in this volume on "grave matters" in Rotuma (Fiji), Enga province in Papua New Guinea and Samoa.

Despite the cultural and historical differences between these sites, and what may seem to some to be an odd juxtaposition, a number of overlapping themes have emerged. The first is the historical transformation of belief systems following conversion to Christianity and new notions about the destination and thus the assumed behaviour of spirits of the dead. In Rotuma and Samoa we must rely on historical accounts of pre-Christian beliefs and practices, which are richly detailed for Rotuma by Rensel and Howard. For Samoa, where the eschatological revolution began in 1830, we know considerably less. However, in Enga province as described in the articles by Gibbs and by Jacka, such changes have occurred in living memory. This offers many resonances of practices, such as that between pre-Christian Rotuma where

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great slabs of rock were once moved astonishing distances to press the spirit of the departed into the grave that we can compare with fears in contemporary New Guinea Highlands societies about the intrusion of witches, motivating some mourners to seal graves under layers of steel and concrete. Similarly, among the people of Enga, as with Samoans and Rotumans, old fears about the desires of the dead, the loneliness of their separation and the potentiality of their wish to take those still alive along with them, have been at least somewhat allayed by the certainties about the ultimate destination of souls that is offered by Christianity. These aspects are considered in detail by Gibbs who examines the way that traditional beliefs have been modified by new beliefs in the ways of Sangguma sorcery and new concepts about the malign presence of witches, as well as by Christianity.

Jacka refers to Henri Lefebvre's attempts (*The Production of Space*, 1991) to wed Marx's ideas of historical materialism to social spaces; that "each mode of production has its own particular space, the shift from one mode to another must entail the production of a new space" (p. 46). This proposition, as Jacka puts it, provides fertile ground for examining the implications of capitalist intrusion into pre-capitalist settings around the world. In Enga not only has traditional eschatology been transformed by Christianity over the past 50 years, but so too has the presence of a large gold mine changed the economy: ideas about the value of land, perceptions of kinship rights, and the means of making claims to land and money. In Jacka's case, the study of a blood feud between close relatives over these issues, the style of a grave becomes an emblem of revenge, adorned with menacing representations of axes and machine guns, and establishing a new trend in the design and location of tombs. This trend has resonance with the modern Samoan practices we describe in our article of not only using graves to assert high status, but also to assert ownership of customary land in an environment of deep uncertainly about customary inheritance rights.

Thinking of capitalist forces: whereas once graves in Enga were simple, even unmarked, now those of important persons are increasingly ostentatious, located beside main roads, colourful and richly decorated, and contained within elaborate fences or within edifices featuring flashing lights or flag poles. In Samoa most graves were once anonymous heaps of stones; moderately elaborate drystone graves were constructed only for high chiefs (and even these appear to have been dismantled in time of civil war to avoid their desecration by the enemy). In the colonial period a new mode of interment in mausoleums was reserved for paramount chiefs. Now, to the extent that their resources and pride dictate, families can construct tombs or family mausoleums as elaborately as they wish, facing them with marble, topping them with fancy

head stones, building them into their dwelling houses, or even putting them in little separate houses complete with windows and curtains.

Another link between these papers is the reference to intervention of the colonial state in burial practices in Rotuma and in Samoa. These took effect in Rotuma in 1885 when burials within social spaces was forbidden (no more burials under or beside houses). The edict was in keeping with anxieties about pollution in Europe in the previous decade, as documented by Lacquer (2015), when modern cemeteries were first established, with a view to the replacement of church graveyards which were perceived to be insanitary and productive of infection. In Samoa (as far we were able to find out) this intervention did not occur until the 1920s under New Zealand administration, when village cemeteries were established. But, within a few years of independence in 1962, Samoans returned to locating burials beside—and even below—dwelling houses.

A further dimension of the social transformation of burial practices is provided by Lilomaiava-Doktor in her account of burial site and the issues of *fa'asinomaga*, a term for the spaces of ancestral heritage invoked by the Samoan diaspora in relation to their homeland. Not only do old categories of rank and new ideas about social status determine the way graves are fashioned, as we describe in our paper, but also the remittance-driven elaboration of funerals and the problem of where and how to inter Samoan-born family members: in their land in Samoa where their spirits are thought to belong or in cemeteries in Australia, New Zealand or the United States where their graves can be tended and visited by their descendants and other relatives? A new resolution to this problem is offered by the possibility of cremation and of transportable and divisible ashes. As Lilomaiava-Doktor explains, the idea still shocks many in Samoa, but it likely to incorporated into fa'aSamoa as have been so many other new funerary and burial practices.

These articles are arranged so that the article by Rensel and Howard comes first, offering a complete history of burial practices from pre-contact times to the present. The following articles are paired, the first two on Enga province in which Gibbs emphasises how modifications of the belief system are displayed in the transition from simple or hidden graves to expensive status symbols. Jacka's paper, also on Enga province, examines the impact of the Porgera mine in creating new forms of conflict and inequality that have been expressed in the design and location of tombs. The last two articles are on Samoa. Our article traces changes in burial practices and burial monuments in relation to political transformation since the late 19th century eventually becoming modern expressions of land ownership and social status. Lilomaiava-Doktor's article follows with an overview of the increasing elaboration and cost of

funerals as a result of mass emigration, and the consequent dilemmas of memorialising the dead. In putting this volume together we want particularly to thank Judith Huntsman, whose name really deserves to be on the front cover with ours as she has done far more than we have in sorting out and polishing the products of our ASAO symposium earlier this year.

CITATION AND AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

Schoeffel,[1] Penelope and Meleisea, Malama, 2016. Introduction to "Grave Matters in Oceania". *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 125 (2): 89-92; DOI: http//dx.doi.org/10.15286/jps.125.2.89-92.

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# THE CULTURE OF GRAVES ON ROTUMA

JAN RENSEL and ALAN HOWARD
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The graves that people prepare for their relatives, as well as the ways they interact with the graves over time, say a great deal about their culture. Among other things, graves themselves reflect attitudes towards death and ancestors, towards hierarchy and social position; the location of graves involves spatial conceptions; grave goods reflect notions of material value; and grave visitations are indicative of the nature of social relationships between various categories of persons. In addition, a variety of emotions—including love, fear, and grief—are embedded and symbolised in the forms, decorations, and care of graves.

In this article we look at graves on Rotuma, a volcanic island in the South Pacific. From a historical perspective, we explore the way social and cultural changes have affected how Rotuman graves are produced and maintained, and the ways in which they, in turn, reflect changes that have taken place in Rotuman society.

By way of background, the island of Rotuma is located approximately 465 km north of the rest of the islands in Fiji. Although the island has been politically part of Fiji since 1881, Rotuman culture more closely resembles that of the Polynesian islands to the east, most noticably Tonga, Samoa, Futuna and Uvea. Because of their Polynesian appearance and distinctive language, Rotumans constitute a recognisable minority group within Fiji. The authors of this paper have been conducting ethnographic research among Rotumans both on and off the island since 1987 and 1959, respectively. In addition to our own field work, here we draw on the writings of late Rotuman elder and teacher Elizabeth Inia (2001) as well as of visitors to the Island starting in the early 1800s.[1]

## SOME CULTURAL AND SOCIAL-PSYCHOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Based on field work conducted on Rotuma in 1959-60, Howard concluded that Rotuman attitudes towards death were less fear-ridden than those of people in Western industrialised societies. He and co-author Robert Scott explained Howard's observations by referring to several sociocultural variables that mitigate the dread associated elsewhere with death, including the following:

> Rotumans at the time did not place a high value on mastery of nature and readily accepted death as inevitable rather than obsessively exerting efforts to

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> conquer it, whereas in modern Western societies there is a tendency to regard death as an enemy to fight against to the inevitable end.
>
> Westerners place a comparatively high value on being active, even during leisure time, while Rotumans place more value on resting *(a'u'ua)* following necessary labours. Since death represents a state of inactivity, despite religious notions of an afterlife, Rotumans are less prone than Westerners to regard it fearfully.
>
> And, for Westerners, death is associated with social isolation, as a result of cemeteries that are generally removed from the core venues of social life, whereas in Rotuma, burial grounds are generally located within villages, or, in the past, even within family land or houses. (Howard and Scott 1965)

In addition to these cultural and social-psychological considerations, Howard pointed out that people on the island confronted the death of kin and community members far more often than urbanised Westerners, whose families tend to be dispersed and whose involvement in communities is less intimate. As a result of these factors, Howard reported that in 1959–60, at least, his Rotuman consultants tended to describe death as an almost pleasant state, one that frees the individual from the burdens of obligation and work (Howard and Scott 1965: 168).

This is not to say that Rotumans accepted dying passively. Howard and Scott asserted that, in general, there is a distinction between people's attitudes towards *death* and their attitudes towards *dying:* "Death is a state or condition into which every organism passes. It refers to the complete cessation of all vital functions of the organism. Dying, on the other hand, is a process, the process of life drawing to a close. Hence, dying usually involves the possibility of avoidance or delay, whereas death is final and inevitable" (1965: 162). Howard and Scott further argued that fear of dying seems to be nearly universal, based on an instinctive motive for self-preservation, whereas attitudes towards death are far more variable and are culturally patterned. We should acknowledge, however, that fear of dying can be overcome when the promise of reward in a conceived afterlife is extremely strong or when the pain of living becomes intolerable.

Like attitudes towards death, the ways in which grief is expressed are also culturally patterned. In earlier times in Rotuma, harming or mutilating oneself were common responses to the death of a child, spouse or close relative, or of a revered chief. According to John Boddam-Whetham, who visited Rotuma around 1870, in addition to the size of a gravestone being associated with the intensity of grief, "the louder their lamentations for the departed, and the more painful the injuries they inflict on themselves, the

greater the affection they display towards the friends and relatives they have lost" (1876: 266). Among the practices expressing grief were burning spots on the body, cutting off the first joint of the little finger, repeatedly beating one's head, pummelling one's face and eyes, rubbing one's skin off, cutting one's hair off close to the scalp, and subjecting oneself to painful sunburn (Bennett 1831: 478-79, Boddam-Whetham 1876: 267, Lesson 1829: 436-37, Lucatt 1851: 163-64, Macgregor 1932). While most of these practices were discontinued early in the colonial era, wailing in the presence of a corpse continued well into the 20th century.

*'Atua: Spirits of the Deceased*

The fear of dying was clearly expressed among Rotumans in their relationships with the spirits of deceased individuals in the form of *'atua,* a term that missionary linguist C. Maxwell Churchward defined as "dead person, corpse, ghost". He added that "the last is its commonest meaning, ghosts being very material beings… to the Rotuman mind" (Churchward 1940: 352). Although this definition does not do justice to the use of the concept in Rotuman discourse (see Howard 1996: 122-24), a prominent usage referred to the wandering spirits of dead people who were intent on capturing the souls (*'ata*) of the living and bringing them to their netherworld abode under the sea ('Oroi—the unseen world). The *'atua* of recently deceased loved ones were especially dangerous because of their presumed desire to bring family members with them to the netherworld. *'Atua* were also said to compete for the souls of sick people with healers, who relied on incantations and ritual procedures to keep the sick from succumbing.

According to Elizabeth Inia, in a publication concerning Rotuman ceremonies:

> The 'Oroians seemed to depend largely on human flesh, so the spirits or *'atua* who lived in the 'Oroi around Rotuma went out to steal the souls or lives of human beings and to feast on their bodies. Hungry *'atua* returned to the land at night to waylay and steal the souls of friends from their lifetime who were roaming about. A portion of the *'atua*—a manifestation—entered the body of the victim…. Animated by its false spirit, the bereft man continued his daily activities, but his character was altered and resembled that of the soul-stealer, when he or she had been alive. Sooner or later the victim wasted away and died. After this, he too became an *'atua,* and returned to entrap the souls of yet other people. (Inia 2001: 203-4)

The spirits of recently deceased individuals were said to make their presence known through omens such as the cries of birds, an owl flying by, or other unusual occurrences. They might also appear in dreams. These

indicated that the spirits were restless, leading relatives to go to the graves to implore them to rest in peace. The spirits of newly deceased individuals were considered to linger in the vicinity for five days, after which a ceremony *(teran lima)* was held to send the spirit off and lift the death taboos (see Inia 2001: 85-86 for a description of the ceremony).

Once they had accepted their fate and were no longer considered dangerous, the *'atua* of close relatives, and especially those of prematurely born children, could be called on for support, according the Mesulama Titifanua, who gave this account in Rotuman to Churchward, who translated it into English:

> [Our forefathers] were in the habit of summoning their dead to come to them that they might converse. This they did, at times, [just] because they loved their dead friends so much. They also had great confidence in them when they wanted to know various things, asking their *'atuas* to tell them. Especially did they trust in [the *'atuas* of] their prematurely born children. They said that the *'atua* that had more power to deliver than any other was [that of] a child prematurely born. (Titifanua and Churchward 1995: 124 [editorial insertions in original])

In addition to personal encounters between individuals and *'atua,* humans and spirits communicated with each other through mediums (see Parke 2001: 112-33).

The ambivalence expressed towards *'atua* suggests that they could be either malevolent or benign, depending on circumstances. When sickness was at issue, or in the presence of a dead body, *'atua* were to be feared, but in normal times one could call on the *'atua* of family members or close friends for guidance or support. What the foregoing indicates is that, for Rotumans, the worlds of the living and the dead were not distinct; they were both part of a continuous, interactive existence.

What we have described so far were attitudes and practices that prevailed from ancestral times through much of the 20th century. Since then, as Howard observed in an article based on a return to the field in the late 1980s with Rensel, talk about the *'atua* has significantly diminished, and behaviour predicated on the actions of *'atua* has been much less in evidence. "In 1960 Rotumans were reluctant to go out at night. If out after dark, they walked quickly past cemeteries, and stayed away from localities spirits were said to inhabit. Despite the tropical heat, windows were often closed at night to keep out marauding *'atua*" (Howard 1996: 129). Many people at that time gave personal accounts of encounters with *'atua* and were eager to tell stories of incidents attributed to their antics. In contrast, during our visits to the island in the 1980s and afterwards, we found that people no longer closed their windows at night, and we were given no warnings or prescriptions

for avoiding harmful *'atua.* "They had, in effect, lost much of their social presence" (Howard 1996: 131).

This change in the place of *'atua* in Rotuman social life is relevant to our concerns insofar as it has affected the nature and production of graves and the ways Rotumans have interacted with them over time.

## TRADITIONAL BURIAL PRACTICES

Inia provided a detailed description of traditional procedures associated with burials:

> Whenever a person died, the village chief *(fā 'es ho'aga)* was informed first so that he could assign people to perform tasks that needed immediate attention: a group of men to dig the grave, another to take down the walls of the house where the corpse was laid; others to cut soapstones from the beach and bring them to the grave; men to provide food from their gardens and bake it for the funeral feast; women to prepare kava for the kava ceremony (because kava had to be chewed by young women); others to cut banana leaves to cover the *'umefe* [ceremonial table] for the chiefs in anticipation of the funeral feast….
>
> Before burial, the body was wrapped in fine mats and tied three times—once toward the head, once toward the middle, and once over the legs. If the dead person had been married, the surviving partner and his or her relatives provided the mats for wrapping the body. They had to take the body out through the front door legs first so that his or her eyes faced the direction in which the burial party was headed… the wrapped body was put on a *hata,* a bier of wood (two long poles with cross pieces), and carried by male relatives to the grave….
>
> The pallbearers' bodies were smeared with a mixture of *mena* [turmeric: *Curcuma longa*] and coconut oil, and they wore skirts of fresh *ji* [ti; *Cordyline fruiticosa*] leaves. Dressed alike, the village men who accompanied the pallbearers as they walked toward the cemetery *(tamura)* chanted a *ki* [which] summoned the strong spirits of old in funerals, in war, in wrestling matches *(hula),* and whenever extraordinary strength was needed, for example, when large gravestones were carried from the beaches or when dignitaries arriving by boat were carried on a platform. . . .
>
> The *ki* was sung until the wrapped body or coffin was lowered into the grave. The bier had to be dismantled soon after the burial and left at the burial site to rot….
>
> The grave in the olden days was made of four slabs of soapstone erected like a rectangle *(fiso'a)* and filled with sand. On top of the grave of a child or a young person, a small stone *(lei)* was placed as a tombstone; for an older person, and especially on the grave of a chief or a strong man, a large slab of stone *(makpurou)* was placed on top of the *fiso'a.* (Inia 2001: 55-56, 61-64, 86; see also Lesson 1829 [II]: 436)

## CEMETERIES AND GRAVES: A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

According to Aubrey Parke, an Australian who was a district officer on Rotuma in 1964, cemeteries were "the outstanding features of the… archaeological landscape"; he reported that graves were marked with boulders and large slabs of beach sandstone, which were often carefully shaped, and with "dolmen-like structures with capstone and side stones". People told Parke that it was "important to have a heavy stone on the grave, to press down the spirit of the dead person and prevent it from upsetting living people". Parke expressed amazement that Rotumans could have brought these heavy blocks of volcanic rock over significant distances to the cemeteries. "People explain that the carriers could bear the weight more easily because the spirits of the dead gave them their *ne'ne'i* (or *mana,* [a term] used for spiritual power in both Rotuman and Fijian)" (Parke 2001: 36).

Gordon Macgregor, an American anthropologist sponsored by the Bernice P. Bishop Museum in Honolulu, had visited Rotuma in 1932 and, like Parke, was struck by the ubiquity of graves. In his field notes, he wrote that they were "to be found everywhere, under house sites, alongside most of the roadways, in great village cemeteries now preserved by European law, on tops of the little islands along the reefs, and throughout the bush". Whereas Macgregor also noted the presence of unobtrusive or unmarked burials, the most impressive graves consisted of "double stone vaults of great size built up of thick slabs of conglomerate rock or coral cut from the reef. Important graves had top slabs cut from a quarry of basaltic rock in the western end of the Island". One such slab (in the cemetery of the "kings" [*sau*; see below] atop a hill on the eastern end of the island) measured 17 feet by 7 feet by 1.5 feet (that is, approximately 5 m by 2 m by .5 m). Commenting on the question of how Rotumans were able to transport such heavy stones, Macgregor said he was told that having a priest stand on top while uttering prayers made a stone "lighter" for the group carrying it. In addition, Macgregor reported that stones were carried longer distances down the coast on "great crafts" built by Rotumans (Macgregor 1932).

Macgregor elaborated on other aspects of grave construction. Although some graves were marked just by a capstone or monolith, sometimes second vaults were built atop earlier vaults for chiefs and families. Macgregor commented that in some cemeteries real houses had been built over the graves, and he mentioned that in a graveyard in one district, Noa'tau, there was a full-sized European house complete with veranda for the dead to live in. Correspondingly, he was informed by his Rotuman consultants that "stone graves are constructed with the idea that they are houses for the dead". Rotumans called them *ri hafu* 'stone houses' (Macgregor 1932).

Regarding the construction of graves in earlier times, Macgregor noted:

> The old graves were built in the following fashion: A grave is dug and the four sides lined with stone slabs. The body is laid on the floor which does not have a stone lining, with the head always to the east, so that the body can see the sun come up. A capstone is put on the tops of the walls and the ri hafu is constructed. This is completely covered over with sand and the ends marked with sticks. In five days the pa [enclosure] is built on top. This is set over the ri hafu, the end stones set by the stick markers. This had no cap or table stone. (Macgregor 1932)

*Ri hafu* were made of sandstone slabs consisting of six pieces in the form of a box, with walls 4 to 5 feet high, with a stone top; some also had a stone floor. Tops could be opened and new members of a family interred, but if a favourite child died, they could "tapu the *ri hafu* forever", so subsequent deaths in the family would require a new *ri hafu* (Macgregor 1932).

Describing a cemetery in the district of Oinafa, Macgregor wrote that it was built up of several strata, the lowest being "a large terrace of sand surrounded or edged by a stone wall"; graves in this level were dug and their sides and tops lined by stone slabs. "As these filled up the terrace, later graves were built on top of the first one", with smaller stones used to make the walls instead of the single stone slabs (Macgregor 1932).

The dead were wrapped in mats and buried in sand. The chamber into which bodies were interred was called a *pa*. In former times, according to Macgregor's consultants, it consisted of four slabs that had been filled with sand, but the term had come to be used for various cemetery structures. Later it came to be used for rectangular structures of coral blocks built in the form of an enclosure, then a stone wall without a table stone, and at the time of Macgregor's visit, a small pyramid of limestone or cement built on the sand piled over the grave.

The modern *pa,* Macgregor wrote:

> … is a hollow stepped block of cement, built on the sand that is heaped over the grave proper. The old ri hafu has given place to one of cement, made in wooden forms around the spot where the man is to be laid, the morning before the burial. One side of the forms is the sand in which the grave is dug. Perhaps ten inches from this are set up the wooden walls and the cement is poured in between. In a grave I witnessed a piece of iron roof was but put over as a top stone, and the grave covered with sand. The stepped pa which is built in the center of the grave and which is not as large as the "ri hafu" does not have any prototype as far as can be seen. (Macgregor 1932)

Macgregor noted that the term *pa* was also used for a stepped foundation (usually with triple steps) built over the spot where a man was killed.

The term *sa'aga* was used in reference to a burial pit for all those killed in battle. Such a pit was usually dug not far from the scene of the battle. "The defeated dead were placed on the bottom and the victor's dead were placed on top. The latter were often accorded the honour of being wrapped in mats, but this was not for the loser's" (Macgregor 1932).

A tomb in the cemetery adjacent to the Catholic Church at Sumi is the communal burial place of six "martyrs" who were killed in a war between Catholics and Methodists in 1878. The tomb was spruced up and decorated during the 150th anniversary celebration of the arrival of the first Catholic missionaries in 1846 (see Fig. 1; for an account of the "religious wars", see Howard and Kjellgren 1995).


Figure 1. Tombstone of Catholic martyrs from 1878 war. Sumi cemetery, Rotuma. Photo by Alan Howard, June 1996.

Parke's and Macgregor's descriptions resonate with the accounts of 19th-century visitors to Rotuma. For example, George Bennett, a physician who visited the island in 1830, wrote: "The ordinary places of burial are attached to the villages, and have no unapt resemblance to European churchyards; they are mounds, built round with stones, and the graves are covered by large coral stones, some laid flat over the graves, and others elevated similar to our tomb stones" (1831: 476). In a footnote, Bennett told of a Rotuman chief who returned from Erromanga with a stone to place on the grave of one of his children; he reported that the chief said that Rotumans like to place stones brought from elsewhere on the graves of family and friends (1831: 476).

Inia made a distinction between the treatment of "nobles" and commoners following death. She stated:

> In days gone by, when a noble died, the body was placed in a canoe-shaped wooden trough, called *fugaroto,* on top of which was hung an *apei* (fine white mat) as a canopy. The word *aroagvaka* (canopied canoe) was thus used when referring to the death of a noble. The term *ala* is the common word for death, and when a commoner died, his or her body was placed on a mat, with a wooden pillow under the head, and the lower part of the body covered with a mat. The upper part of the body was painted with turmeric powder mixed with coconut oil. The bodies of nobles and commoners lay in state for a day and a night, exposed to view, before burial. (Inia 2001: 55)

That rank was associated with the size of graves was attested to by Edward Lucatt, who visited Rotuma in 1841. After the bodies have been buried for "three, six, nine, or twelve months", he wrote:

> … a rough, unhewn stone is placed upon the top of them, the size of the stone being regulated by the importance of the party when living. The stone over some of the chiefs cannot weigh less than seven or eight tons…. The placing of these covering stones is the signal for a feast provided by the friends and relations of the deceased; the more massive the block, the greater is the number of hands required to raise it. Thus do they furnish lasting memorials of the rank and wealth once held by those who repose beneath them. (Lucatt 1851: 166)

Two years before Lucatt's visit, the Reverend John Williams visited Rotuma and, after commenting on the crudeness of dwellings in a village he visited, both inside and out, wrote:

> The only thing that attracted our attention in this settlement was their burying-place. Here there was a house rather superior to the others in appearance. It was raised on a bed of sand with stone edging. [His companion] Gray opened two of these trap-doors, when to our surprise we beheld, not only neat clean

> mats spread on the floor, and white cowrie with glittering mother-of-pearl decorating both posts and rafters of the house, but a writing desk, three American chairs varnished yellow, a cup and saucer, tumbler, wine glass, two framed paintings of ships, besides several handkerchiefs, and other articles of European manufacture. On inquiring respecting them, we found that a child belonging to a principal chief had been interred there, and that these things were presented to his manes [spirits of the dead]. (Gutch 1974: 562)

J. Stanley Gardiner, a British naturalist who visited Rotuma in 1896, elaborated on the relevance of rank to the location and size of graves. Whereas graveyards in the bush were scattered everywhere, he wrote, without stones or monuments, in former days chiefs were buried on the highest hills in their districts or on a conspicuous prominence into the sea:

> On the tops of many hills and islets off the coast are platforms, built up at the sides, with graves marked out on the top. On the top of Sol Hof, the highest hill in Oinafa, is one such; the summit is a narrow ridge, on which at one end a platform has been built up about 30 feet long by 20 broad. Its walls vary in height up to 8 feet, and are built simply of the loose rough blocks of lava that are found in the vicinity. On the top, areas are marked out by flat stones, about 2 feet square by 3-4 inches thick. Six placed vertically enclose the grave, two at each side and one at each end, and project for about 8 inches above the general level. In the middle across and resting on them is another similar block, the same size. These are formed of a sand rock, which is only found on the beach between tide marks, and which, while it is at first extremely friable, on exposure to the air gets very dense and hard. (Gardiner 1898: 431)

Gardiner noted that practices had changed during the 19th century and that at the time of his visit most burials of district chiefs were in their own villages:

> In each district is one such enormous more or less rectangular burial ground, a mound of sand walled in by large rectangular blocks of beach sand rock or unshaped pieces of lava; their construction was apparently gradual, and similar to those on the tops of the hills. Their height varies up to as much as 16 feet, while they may be 30 yards or more square; some are terraced. Many are placed on prominent capes into the sea, and most are visible from it; those at Oinafa and Matusa are especially conspicuous. Their number is enormous, and there are very great variations in size and position, but a height of about 6 feet to start with, unless on some prominent raised point, seemed to me general. From these, the whole island of Rotuma was formerly known to sailors as the island of graves. (Gardiner 1898: 432)

Gardiner also noted that the carvings on some of the newer stones were copied from markings on crockery, and that people were, at the time of his visit, being buried "in the English fashion" (1898: 433).

An innovation in grave construction was the use of cannons brought by European vessels during the 19th century. As early as 1839, missionary John Williams reported finding a cannon under a covering of leaves on the beach and was told that there were several scattered around the island that had been purchased from various ships that had called at Rotuma (Gutch 1974: 562). In 1959, Christopher Legge, Fiji's Commissioner Eastern, reported that he found ten cannons on the island, all in cemeteries (Legge [1960]). A cannon was unearthed by Deputy Commissioner Romilly in 1880 at Sisilo (Fig. 2), the burial ground of the *sau* (see next section). Romilly reported in his journal that he exhumed the skeleton of a *sau* who had been buried in 1863, and that "after lifting a stone which it took our whole party to move, two natives dug for about six feet, when we unearthed an iron cannon, which had been put in with the departed Sau, as being his most valuable possession" (Romilly 1893: 103). Legge speculated that in addition to the cannons on the surface "there may be a number buried in the graves of departed Chiefs" (Legge [1960]). Parke (2001: 36) hypothesised that the cannons were used as weights to press down the spirits of dead persons, just as heavy stones were used in earlier times, but we think a more likely interpretation is that they were symbols of potency appropriate to persons of chiefly rank.

Figure 2. Cannon in Sisilo, the graveyard of the *sau* 'kings' of Rotuma. Photo by Alan Howard, July 1988.

## GRAVEYARDS OF THE *SAU* AND *MUA*

Of special significance in the pre-Christian era were the graveyards of the *sau* and *mua.* At the time of European intrusion in the early 19th century, Rotuma was divided into seven districts (see Fig. 3), each relatively autonomous and headed by a *gagaj 'es itu'u* 'district chief'. However, there were also three positions that were pan-Rotuman in scope: the *fakpure, sau* and *mua.* The *fakpure* was referred to primarily in two capacities in the early literature: as convener and presiding officer of the council of district chiefs, and as the person responsible for appointing the *sau* and ensuring that he was cared for properly. The *fakpure* was chief of one of the districts, presumably the one who headed an alliance that was victorious in the last war. The *sau* was an object of veneration and gluttonous indulgence; his basic role was to take part in the ritual cycle, oriented towards ensuring the prosperity of the island. The role of *mua* received less commentary in the early literature than that of *fakpure* and *sau,* but most of what was written refers to the *mua*'s activities in the ritual cycle. A French priest, Fr Joseph Trouillet, wrote in about 1868 that the *sau* appeared to be an appendage of the *fakpure,* while the *mua* appeared to be more associated with spiritual power. The office of *sau* (often translated as "king" by early English commentators, despite the fact that he held no secular authority) was rotated among the districts in time frames ranging from six months (one Rotuman ritual cycle) to several years, depending on the prosperity of the island and the willingness of hosting districts to continue the lavish indulgence of food and kava required (for more extensive discussions of these pan-Rotuman offices, see Gardiner 1898: 460-66, Howard 1985, Howard and Rensel 2007: 59-84, Ladefoged 1993). The institution of *sau*ship, and its associated ritual practices, was terminated in 1873, following the conversion to Christianity of most Rotumans.

### *Sisilo: The* Sau*'s Graveyard*

The burial ground of the *sau* was at Sisilo, on the highest hill at the eastern end of the island, in the district of Noa'tau. The eastern or "sunrise" end of the island is associated with chieftainship by Rotumans, the western or "sunset" side with people of the land (Howard 1986), so the placement of the *sau*'s graveyard can be considered the inevitable product of Rotuman cultural logic. Lesson visited the site during his 1824 stay on the island and described it as "scrupulously maintained and surrounded with beautiful island trees which have been planted with care. At the head of each tomb rises an eight foot stone, at the foot, one of four feet and two long stones mark the sides" (Lesson 1829 [II]: 437 [translated from the French by Ella Wiswell]). Gardiner reported that many of the stones at Sisilo were immense—including

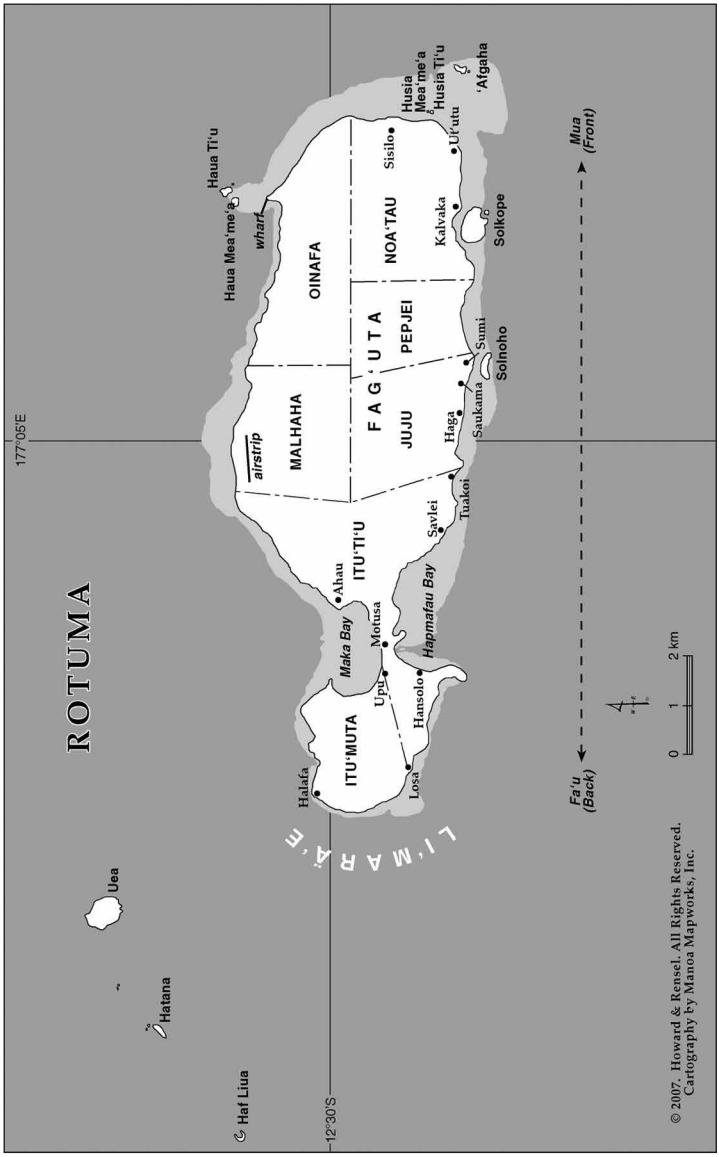


Figure 3. Map of Rotuma showing approximate district boundaries.
Cartography by Manoa Mapworks, Inc.

one about 10 feet long, 5 feet wide, and 5-6 inches thick—while another grave was topped by a small cannon. He observed, "The bodies are recumbent and buried about 6 feet deep" (Gardiner 1898: 464).

Parke visited Sisilo in 1964 accompanied by three Rotuman men, including the district chief of Noa'tau and the owners of the land, who maintained the cemetery. He reported:

> We saw several sorts of graves. In some cases a circular pile of stones with an empty place in the middle marked the grave. In other cases, the markers were side walls with a capstone… or with an upright stone at the end. Remarkable features included enormous slabs of Ran 'Ạvi'i stone; the *päega ne sau* (the throne of the sau), which is a volcanic boulder; the *tano'a* (kava bowl), which is a slab of Ran 'Ạvi'i stone with circular and other hollows; and a large iron cannon….
>
> During our visit, Fakraufon's guide, who was the owner of the cemetery, told us about what happened when a *sau* died. The body of a *sau* was taken to Saurotuma, where the people of Saurotuma waited until a *pepe fisi* (white butterfly) came to lead them to Sisilo. When the butterfly appeared, they picked up the body and followed the butterfly to Sisilo. They buried the body in the part of Sisilo where the butterfly disappeared. The butterfly is the *tu'ura* (bird or animal in which the spirit of a dead person appears) of an *'atua* from Sisilo. (Parke 2001: 78-79)

*Muasolo: The Mua's Graveyard*

The *mua* were buried on Muasolo, a small hill near the village of Lopta, in Oinafa District. According to Gardiner, the *mua* were buried in a sitting position with a pearlshell breastplate around their neck and a stone axe between their legs. He described the graves as simply covered by a mat but with a "native house" over them. (During periodic feasts thereafter, the house was re-thatched, with the old thatch equally divided among the participants to ensure the possessors a fruitful season.) Gardiner was told that when a former *mua* died he had to be buried by the living *mua*. After the burial, a *tanoa* 'bowl' full of *kava* was poured out to the dead *mua*. A great quantity of food was then placed in the house and left there. Only the *mua* could enter the house, so he had to carry all the food in by himself while the old men and women walked in procession around the house, chanting a prayer for a fruitful season (Gardiner 1898: 464-65).

Allardyce was told that if the previous *mua* had died a natural death the *mua* who replaced him was required to bury him at Muasolo, and

> … to unearth the last mua in order to obtain the stone axe, called 'voirou,' which it was customary to bury with the mua—a different axe, however,

> being buried with each mua. If the stone axe was easily found, the opinion was that the new mua would be a very good one. The axe was then wrapped up, carried home, and taken very great care of. (Allardyce 1885–86: 142)

## POST-MISSIONARY AND COLONIAL CHANGES

Whereas family members were often buried in or close to dwellings prior to European intrusion, the practice was frowned on by missionaries and colonial administrators when they arrived in the latter part of the 19th century. At a meeting of the Rotuma Council of Chiefs in 1884, just three years after Rotuma was ceded to Great Britain, Resident Commissioner William Gordon recorded the following exchange with two of the chiefs:

> R.C. "I wish to speak today about the grave-yards in Rotumah. There are many of them quite close to houses in which people are living and in some cases houses are actually built in the graveyard, amongst the graves. I have noticed with the last month one or two newly made graves within two yards from the houses. Now this cannot be healthy. I think it would be much better if you Wesleyans would enclose a space in each District, away from any town, as a burial ground, as the Catholics have already done."
>
> Vasea: "Quite lately, at the town of Ropuri, where there are several houses in a burying ground, there were two persons buried actually inside the houses, the mats being taken up & the graves dug & filled in, & the people continuing to live in the houses all the time. It must be bad."
>
> Horatio: "… according to old custom nearly every family has its own burial-ground, very often close to their houses…". (Handwritten notes from Minutes from the Rotuma Council of Chiefs, obtained in 1959 from Fiji Archives)

Gordon took the initiative to draft [Rotuma] Regulation No. 1 of 1885.—Regarding Graveyards, which read:

1. It shall not be lawful to bury bodies in ground underneath occupied houses.
2. It shall not be lawful to bury bodies in graveyards on which occupied houses are at present existing.
3. It shall not be lawful to erect any dwelling-houses on graveyards in which bodies may be buried,
4. There shall be a penalty of five pounds for each breach of this Regulation.

Passed by the Rotumah Regulation Board the sixteenth day of October, 1884.

And Macgregor's notes concerning graves include the following entry:

> It was quite common in Rotuma to bury the dead in the floor of the house. According to Varomua only a ri hafu was made, with the stone top the

> level of the floor. However, the burial of Chloe Howard in Juju had a large European stone 6' x 4' laid over it and the family used it as a table and bench. Commissioner MacDonald forbade house burials and caused the house of Chloe to be burnt down and the spot left clear. (Macgregor 1932)

The missionaries persuaded people to set aside land for cemeteries where none previously existed, and the Catholic Church at Sumi created a cemetery adjacent to the church (see Fig. 4).

Macgregor described contemporary (as of 1930s) practices in the following notation:

> The grave itself is made of four stone slabs cut or taken from the beach, and set up as a chamber just wide enough and long enough to hold the body. Each slab is set on edge to make a long, thin boxlike chamber. Then a fifth stone is laid over the top to close the grave. This then is covered with sand which is flattened on top. Sometimes the sand will be made into a small terrace and then another pile is put on top leaving a flat foundation of the terrace around it. The top pile is smoothed off. This is tended every day, swept and smoothed off. Flowers, garlands, strings of titi [woven strips of pandanus], are brought to decorate the grave. The strings are often suspended over the graves. The family visits the grave every day. Food is left on it at night for the dead. Stories are told here, dances held on the top of the flat tops, food

Figure 4. Cemetery in the compound of the Catholic Church at Sumi, Rotuma, circa 1920. Photo courtesy of the Marist Archives, Rome.

> eaten here, and lights and food left on top at night for the dead. Graves are gathering places where the relatives come and sit with the dead…. Perfume is poured over the graves and over the attendants and friends at the funeral. Formerly the Rotumans made native perfume. Bottles of perfume are buried today with the dead. (Macgregor 1932)

The sand that is poured over the grave is significant insofar as it is symbolic of the place it comes from. Ordinarily, when a corpse is interred in its home village, the sand from an adjacent beach insures that the spirit of the deceased will be "at home" in the grave. However, as sometimes happens, a wife or husband has come from another part of the island. When they die they may be returned to their home village for burial, but sometimes their children want them to be buried locally, where they can tend to the grave. In such circumstances, it is customary for some sand to be brought from the person's home village and sprinkled on the grave, insuring the spirit's association with its original home so it will not be restless and cause mischief.

In addition to banning burials within and near homes, the colonial administration instituted a rule that burials should occur on the day that deaths occurred, citing health concerns. And whereas in earlier times grave construction was completed as soon as practicality permitted, it became customary at some point to hold a ceremony setting the headstone *(höt'ak hafu)* on approximately the first anniversary of the death. This allows relatives time to have a headstone made (often in Fiji or abroad), for family members off-island to make plans to return for the ceremony, and for such preparations as planting crops and plaiting mats necessary for a proper ceremony. The ceremonial event was described in detail by Inia:

> The *höt'ak hafu* marked the end of the mourning period. Until this event, the immediate family of the deceased visited the grave regularly, bringing flowers and *tefui* [garlands], and fresh sand from the beach. *Höt'ak hafu* were essentially family functions. The family fixed the date, informed close relatives and friends, and bore most of the expenses involved. The villagers helped by donating root-crops, pigs, mats, and money.
>
> In the interim between the *teran lima* and *höt'ak hafu,* family members received messages through the dreams and trances of *tu'ura* (spirit mediums), urging them to compose songs about the deceased. Certain individuals on the island were famous for composing songs and could be approached with information about the messages received in dreams or trances. The composer who was commissioned selected a number of people to sing and dance at the *höt'ak hafu,* and they began to rehearse *(taumaka)* in preparation for the event. Just prior to the day, a shelter *(ri hapa)* was built right outside the back of the house, where the singers and dancers would perform.
>
> On the day of the *höt'ak hafu* a *päega* (seat of mats) was prepared for the chiefs along the front wall. The *päega* was in the middle of the row of

chiefs, occupying the place of honour. The first mats to be put down were the *agrua* (large floor mats); on top of these went the *'eap ma 'on faua* (smaller floor mats); then came the *'eap hapa* (sleeping mats); and finally the *apei.* The immediate family and close relatives of the deceased made all the mats for this *päega*. The seat was covered with a silky cloth on top of which the tombstone was placed face up for all to see.

A second *päega,* placed beside the main one, was prepared for the craftsman *(majau)* who made the *pa* (concrete platform on which the headstone was to be placed). This *päega* was made from mats contributed by friends, neighbours, and more distant relatives. It was constructed in the same way as the first *päega,* with *agrua* at the bottom and *apei* on top.

Just before the start of the ceremony, the male who was next of kin to the deceased (such as the eldest son, brother, or grandson) sat on the first *päega* behind the tombstone. On his lap was a folded *apei* on which he placed the base of the tombstone so that the lettering faced the people in front of him. He braced the tombstone against his chest. The *majau* sat on the second *päega* and the chiefs took their places on either side of these two seats.

Then the *mamiag hafu* was performed. A girl from the family (a sister, wife, or daughter) came forward with two *tefui* (one for the stone, one for the person sitting behind it) wrapped in an *'apea* leaf, a bottle of scented coconut oil, and a cloth with which to wipe the stone. She knelt down and poured a few drops of oil on top of the stone and with the cloth rubbed the oil over the front surface. As with a *mamasa* [welcoming ceremony], anointing with oil is a way of symbolically washing away the salt that comes with travelling over the sea. The girl then tied a *tefui* around the stone; the second *tefui* she put around the man's neck. She withdrew and a second girl came forward to put a *tefui* on the *majau.* (In recent years, after putting a *tefui* on a person or headstone, the girl sprays it with perfume. This is not really necessary because *tefui* are made from sweet-smelling flowers that produce a scented atmosphere that remains until the flowers wither.)

The *mafua* [ceremonial elder], who had been sitting by the back door during these rituals, then announced: "Kalog! Gou täla usia'afua, mamiag hafu te', päegat, agrua saghul, 'eap ma 'on faua ruaghul, 'eap hap limaghul, rer sema siliket, sar het, liuliu het; 'ia', marie', marie', marie'!" (Sirs, I am going to announce, the rinsing of the headstone with oil, päega, 10 agrua, 20 'eap ma 'on faua, 50 'eap hapa, topped by silky material, tefui, oil, thank you, thank you, thank you!)

At this point the man holding the tombstone rose and carried it to the cemetery. A procession of close relatives followed. The tombstone carrier was preceded by the *majau* who, together with a small group of helpers (who had waited at the gravesite while the ceremonies were taking place in the house), prepared to mount the tombstone. The *majau* and his helpers mixed the cement that formed the base for the stone. When the cement was ready, the *tefui* was removed from the tombstone and put aside, and the stone handed over to the *majau* who, with his helpers, put it in place. When they finished mounting the stone, the *majau* and his men stuck four poles in the ground, one off each

> corner of the grave. The women, many of whom had brought *tefui* and baskets of white sand, now strung the *tefui* between the poles and poured the baskets of sand around the grave. The *tefui* worn by the man carrying the tombstone, the *tefui* of the *majau,* and the *tefui* that had decorated the tombstone were now placed on the grave, and the people returned to the house for the *sui putu* (ceremony to end the mourning restrictions). (Inia 2001: 87-90)

* * *

In Rotuma, while the graves of high-ranking officials (*sau* and *mua,* and possibly district chiefs) were traditionally located on the tops of hills or on offshore islands, away from villages, the graves of most people were integrated into social space occupied by close relatives, reflecting a sense of continuity between the living and dead. We suggest that because graves were, and continue to be, very much a part of the social landscape, along with the value placed on resting, a lack of concern for mastering nature, and a familiarity with death that comes with village life and the proximity of numerous kin, that Rotumans do not fear death to the degree that is characteristic among urbanised Westerners.

Whereas in the past grave construction reflected social hierarchy with the tombs of high-ranking individuals involving elaborate stone structures, this is no longer the case. In part this change is the result of a greatly diminished hierarchy, with the roles of *sau* and *mua* eliminated and the authority of district chiefs much reduced (Howard 1966, Howard and Rensel 1997). In part it reflects the policies of missionaries and colonial administrators who favoured European-style cemeteries with headstones as grave markers. While contemporary headstones vary in quality (and hence cost), they are more likely to reflect the wealth of family members than rank.

Although at night cemeteries may still produce a sense of the uncanny or even fear associated with ghosts, during the day they are an integral part of the social sphere of activity in most villages. Children may use them as playgrounds and adults may come to sit by a grave and speak to a deceased relative. Many graves include the bones of ancestors that are dug up when a new body is interred, and it is common for the bones to be handled and regarded with curiosity rather than treated either with reverence or apprehension.

Graves are decorated at the time of burial, but much more elaborately at the *höt'ak hafu* ceremony when the headstone is placed, approximately a year later, with garlands of flowers, colourful ribbons and cloth, and woven strips of pandanus. Especially during the placing of the headstone, the mood tends to be light-hearted, with much conversation and joking accompanying the work of completing the grave. Afterwards, close relatives and good friends may visit the grave from time to time, bringing fresh flowers and the

deceased's favourite foods, weeding and keeping the grave well groomed. In many parts of Rotuma, time is set aside for communal projects to maintain local cemeteries in good order.

Nowadays, far more Rotumans live in urban Fiji than in Rotuma and are buried there as well. Cemeteries are generally separated from residential areas, so the situation is quite different from Rotuma. Nevertheless, burials there still often include many components of burials on the home island, with graves decorated in the customary way following a *höt'ak hafu* ceremony and visited regularly by loving relatives (see Fig. 5).

For individuals who were born and raised on Rotuma but who died in Fiji, the selection of a burial place can become problematic and occasionally contentious. The choice may be between having one's body returned to Rotuma for burial amidst one's relatives in one's ancestral village, or burial in a cemetery in Fiji where one's children and others can visit the grave on a regular basis. We know of at least one case in which an older woman was brought to Fiji from Rotuma during her final illness and, although she expressed a desire to be buried in her home village in Rotuma, her children decided to have her buried in a nearby cemetery where they could visit and care for her grave.

Figure 5. A grave decorated with Rotuman garlands (*tefui*) in a cemetery near Suva. Photo by Alan Howard, June 2003.

## NOTE

1. The first written mention of Rotuma resulted from a brief visit in 1791 by Captain Edward Edwards in H.M.S. *Pandora*, searching for the mutineers of the *Bounty.* Wesleyan and Roman Catholic missionaries first arrived in 1839 and 1846, respectively, and by 1871, most Rotumans had converted to Christianity. The chiefs of Rotuma ceded the island to the British crown in 1881, after which Rotuma was administered as part of the colony of Fiji. Since Fiji's independence in 1970, Rotuma has been part of that country.

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## ABSTRACT

In this article we look at graves on Rotuma, a volcanic island in the South Pacific, from a cultural and historical perspective. We argue that graves reflect attitudes towards death and ancestors, towards hierarchy and social position; that the location of graves involves spatial conceptions; that grave goods reflect notions of material value; and that grave visitations are indicative of the nature of social relationships between various categories of persons. In addition, a variety of emotions—including love, fear and grief—are embedded and symbolised in the forms, decorations and care of graves. We explore the way social and cultural changes have affected how Rotuman graves are produced and maintained, and the ways in which the graves, in turn, reflect changes that have taken place in Rotuman society.

*Keywords:* Rotuma, graves, death, burial practices

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# GRAVE BUSINESS IN ENGA

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The Enga people in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea did not always bury their dead in an identifiable grave.[1] Before Australian control and mission influence that began in the late 1940s, bodies of the dead were buried with few markings in a shallow pit far from houses and gardens. Today in the Enga Province, especially along the Highlands Highway, one sees an ever-increasing number of elaborate graves situated in gardens and near houses.

I first came to Enga Province in 1973, as an Anthropology student researching changes in people's religious beliefs and practices. I served there from 1978 to 1988 as a priest. While working in various parts of Papua New Guinea until today, I continue to make frequent visits to Enga. Over four decades I have witnessed the transition from very simple graves marked by a row of *tanget* plants (*Cordyline fruticosa*), situated far from human habitation, through various developments in position and grave design to the situation today in which grave styles appear as a new form of status symbol and burial is becoming an expensive business. This paper traces aspects of that transition in Central Enga Province.

## DEATH IN ENGA

The Enga understanding, persisting today, is that human beings even before they are born are animated by a spirit (*imambu*, sometimes termed *waiyange*). This same term is also used for a person's shadow. The spirit is like a life force and at death it leaves the body to become a ghost (*timongo*). Ghosts have the ability to perceive people's thoughts and to influence positively or negatively a person's activities (on ghostly abilities see Brennan 1977).

In central Enga after a person dies the clan has a meeting (*kambuingi*) to discuss upcoming activities for the funeral process. They will consider whether the death is a natural one or caused by some form of accident or malpractice, in which case they will look for ways to prove it and to claim compensation. They will also discuss where to bury the deceased, and how best to deal with the deceased's mother's clan (*wane tange*), who often express their sorrow in demanding and violent ways.

Ghosts or spirits of the dead (*timongo*) are thought to roam around at the spot where the person died, whether at home, a hospital, in the bush or on a battlefield. It could be at the roadside if the death is caused by a car accident or at a riverbank where a person drowned while attempting to cross a flooded river. Wherever they might be found, ghosts are generally feared

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as having the power to bring about illness or misfortune or even death to those they had left behind.

There are several usual ways of communicating with the deceased—who are not entirely "dead". Mediums will interpret whistling noises (*yaka yope*) said to come from the spirit of the deceased. Spirits of the deceased are believed to communicate with the living through dreams, which can be interpreted as predicting prosperity but most often misfortune (Meggitt 1962). People will also go to grave of a deceased person known for fighting and lay their weapons on the grave so that the spirit of the deceased will make the weapons effective. Men sometimes communicate with the deceased in divination rituals to discover the spirit responsible for misfortune or death. In a ritual known as *pepe miningi*, a spear is held over the body of the deceased and while a ritual expert calls possible names of the culprit (or his clan) while tapping the spear. If he calls the correct name the spirit of the deceased will cause the spear to move, sometimes violently.[2]

People feel that it is no use burying a body if it is not accompanied by the person's spirit (*imambu*/*waiyenge*). If a person is found dead out of the village, male relatives will go to where the body has been located to check for signs of the spirit's presence such as a sound like a whistle. They will request that the spirit provide some kind of signal and if there is no response they will go to the place where the person died and perform a ritual to recover the spirit and bring it back to the site of the body (Gibbs 2006).

Relatives of the deceased gather for several days or even a week or two to mourn at the *kumanda* (house of the dead). A funeral party hosted by the clan of the deceased is a visible sign of the end of the mourning period. The larger portion of the food, particularly pork, is given to people from the clan of the mother of the deceased.

What I have described in this section are customary beliefs that originated in pre-contact times and continue today. Introduced ideas from Christianity or other sources tend to co-exist with these beliefs. My experience as a priest-anthropologist, participating in countless funerals and listening to people speaking about their understanding of these events, leads me to appreciate how underlying beliefs persist alongside radical change in external practices. For example, in the past contributions at funerals would be mostly firewood or food such as sweet potato, and sugarcane. Nowadays, in addition to those items people also contribute rice, lamb flaps, Coca Cola, betel nut, or money. Those bringing contributions normally expect some form of repayment during the ensuing funeral party and this can place a heavy burden on the family of the deceased. Today a funeral lasting three days, with costs of transport, food and gifts to outsiders and to the mothers clan, might cost K100,000 (USD $40,000). The customary structure of the funeral is the same, but the economic and social consequences of death have significantly changed.

## PAST BURIAL PRACTICES (*MALU PINGI*)

Encounters during a lifetime often generate tensions and these tensions continue to be played out with the deceased. Hence in the past death and burial was a tense and fearful time because of belief in the malevolent spirits of the dead, particularly those of women who were believed to have the power to cause illness and death to those they had left behind. Men (never women or children) would take the body for burial to an unidentified place and all instruments used for burial and the men's hands and feet had to be washed thoroughly before they returned to meet people in public places.

In the distant past in Central Enga, according to stories told by older people, bodies of the dead were buried in shallow pits scooped by digging sticks. The bodies were buried in a crouching position often with vines binding the torso to the legs and sometimes with vines holding the head so it faced downwards. Fearful of spirits of the dead, burials were completed quickly and often pitilessly. Older informants tell of men using their feet to roughly force bodies into the pit, and of women who had borne many children being buried head down to deter them from returning for their children and bringing them along into the afterlife of the deceased. Women's bodies might have wooden stakes driven into their eye sockets to hamper their return. Sometimes bodies of women might be interred along the bank of a river with the expectation that the next flood would carry the remains away. In the past, bodies of children were buried away from their houses because it was thought that their ghostly spirits would come to join with live children while they were playing, causing them to die. Leprosy was greatly feared and those badly affected by the disease were sometimes buried alive in swamps far away from human habitation.

In the past relatives or family members of a deceased took old clothes like aprons, belts, rain capes or anything of value and placed them at the grave. That was done in order that the spirit of deceased persons would not go around causing trouble but stay near the grave because their property was right there.

There were many protective measures taken against the spirits of the deceased depending on the type and capacity of the grudge a person had with someone who has died. When an elderly man died, a pandanus tree or a casuarina tree that he had planted might be chopped down as a sign for him to go. For a woman who died, people might damage part of her garden or hang a net bag with some of her personal possessions outside the house, signalling to the ghostly spirit that it should go away. These acts were signs to the deceased that their ghostly spirits should not come around to their former house or gardens. Rituals were also performed by both men and women so that their dead spouse would not return to take them along to the place of the dead (Gibbs 2006).[3]

## CHANGES IN BURIAL PRACTICES

Burial practices began to change significantly after the coming of the Australian Administration and with mission influence after the Second World War.[4] Religious services and Christian prayers have become part of the funerary practices. Responding to Christian influence, graves are now often positioned so that body of the deceased is facing into the rising sun. Fear of ghosts has lessened. Women and children now participate in burials. Graves are increasingly placed near human habitation, in garden plots and near houses. Once the burial process is completed, during daylight hours, people appear to have little fear of graves, and no hesitation to walk by graves or for children to play near them.

With reduced fear of burial sites, a practice developed whereby a few months after the burial, or up to a year later, immediate relatives of the deceased returned to the grave to build a fence around it. This is called *malu kakopenge*, literally 'around the grave'.[5] (Figure 1 shows such a fence constructed in the 1990s around the grave of a man killed in a tribal fight). A small feast would be held in recognition of this task. The end of this ceremony was a chance for a woman in mourning to remove the bundles of *waku* 'Job's tears' beads around her neck and place them on the grave. This helps remind other people that mourning is over and that the persons

Figure 1. Grave at Kaiap. The deceased was killed in a tribal fight in 1994.

Figure 2. Grave of Hadi Napi at Takowas.

in mourning are now free to work or participate in community activities. In recent times women wear black garments rather than *waku* beads and with changes in burial practices employing cement, the term used is *malu semena miningi*, literally 'cementing the grave'.

Nowadays, bodies are usually buried in a prone position, face upwards, in a box or coffin, though occasionally bodies will be buried face down. In a recent case in the lower Ambum a child died and people began arguing that the death was caused either by the spirit of his deceased father or of a malicious spirit (*sanguma)* associated with his mother, who was still alive. Some people thought that the ghostly spirit of the child might return to cause another family member to die. So they decided to bury the body face downwards to make it more difficult for the spirit to return and engage with the living. People claim that the procedure was successful since no close relative has died in recent times. The grave of that child is shown in Figure 2.

## CHANGES IN GRAVE DESIGN

The practice of fashioning a simple grave in the ground outlined with cordyline plants marking the dimensions of the grave is still found in Enga, particularly in remote places. However, grave design today reflects the

changes in burial practices described in the previous section. In the 1970s I observed an increasing number of graves bounded by a wooden fence. In recent times the fence is constructed from steel rods or iron posts linked by steel chain. In the 1970s, throughout Enga, but particularly in the western part of the province where there is influence from neighbouring Huli practices, graves began to be built with a pandanus leaf or metal roof. By the 1990s in central Enga it became common for people to erect a small house (the size and shape of a dog kennel) over the site of the grave.

Nowadays a Christian cross is common on graves and more recently some have headstones with a message and information about the deceased, their date of birth if known, date of death and sometimes the cause of death particularly if it was from an accident or murder. In some places in Enga, photos of the dead are put on the head stone or under a glass cover over the grave. Flowers (real or plastic) may be left to beautify the grave. Occasionally a personal item will be left at the grave, such as a pack of cards for a person known to have been an avid gambler.

The first decade and a half of the 21st century has seen the development of ornate graves in central Enga. A large cement foundation may be lined with coloured tiles, the house erected over the grave may be large enough for a person to live in and it may have a fan or electric light. The whole construction is painted brightly and surrounded by an elaborate metal fence. Signs of the previous occupation of the deceased adorn the grave, such as the national or provincial flag for a public servant, or marks of prosperity such as coloured tiles or electric light for a businessman.

These developments have not been arbitrary. Rather, I see them as powered by several influences: introduced beliefs, compensation claims, and links to the Enga system of social standing.

## INTRODUCED BELIEFS AND GRAVE DESIGN

### *Christianity*

The majority of Enga people today identify as Christian. People have been introduced to Christian concepts of life and death, body and soul, heaven and hell, but it could be debated to what extent these concepts have influenced customary Enga beliefs associated with death, which are still strongly held. Death is the most un-evangelised dimension of life in Enga. Understandings of the fate of the "soul" vary across different Christian denominations. For example, the Enga language New Testament, promoted principally by the Lutheran and Catholic churches, uses the Enga term *imambu* for the soul (e.g., Matthew 10: 28). The Catholic Church with its understanding of the communion of saints promotes the practice of praying for the souls of the dead, something rejected by other denominations, particularly Evangelical

Protestant and Pentecostal churches. Generally, however, there is support for the belief that the dead should be buried in a dignified way. Religious leaders vary in their support for ideas associated with satanic spirits, the last judgement and the resurrection of the body. There is talk in some circles about housing bodies of the dead as they wait for the second coming of Christ but it is unclear to what extent such ideas have influenced grave design.

While Christian beliefs have been accepted by the majority of people, such beliefs often co-exist with customary belief in malicious intent of spirits of the dead (ghosts). Many Christians today say that because of their faith they are not afraid of the spirit of their dead parents, particularly if the parents were baptised Christians. Yet, particularly in times of stress, customary beliefs in ghosts and the dead having grudges against the living may come to the fore. For example, around 1996 I was presented with a case where a young man was seriously mentally disturbed. The family, all practising Catholics, decided that the disturbance was caused by the ghostly spirit of the young man's grandmother. She had been treated harshly by her son while she was living and people concluded that she wanted to get back at her son by causing illness in his son (her grandson). They dug up the grave of the grandmother and burned the contents in an effort to send her away. Unfortunately the disturbance in the boy continues. Today as in the past, the burial of those killed in tribal fighting is another case that activates customary beliefs. The grave of the dead warrior may be situated near a track used by the enemy clan or overlooking enemy clan territory, and fingers of the deceased folded downwards in the form of a clenched fist as a sign of how many men the spirit of the deceased would cause to die.

*Witchcraft Beliefs and Associated Practices*

By all accounts the central Enga have never believed in or practiced witchcraft or sorcery, but they did have a belief in an occult force called *yama*. *Yama* harms others through jealous thoughts. For example, if a person was seen carrying pork or some desirable food home and does not want to share it, then another person who saw that person and smelled the food might feel jealous or have a strong desire to eat the food, and those jealous feelings could cause harm to the person carrying the food. As a general precaution against *yama*, people carrying food go directly to their houses on paths where they were not likely to meet people. Once home they eat the food with friends and relatives in an open way so as not to arouse jealousy.

In the last decade Enga belief in *yama* has been transformed by ideas about what Enga call *sanguma*,[6] which are prevalent in provinces to the east. *Sanguma* is considered much more dangerous than *yama*, often involving the (spiritual) removal of a person's heart, thus killing the victim of the *sanguma*.

Belief in *sanguma* is behind many of the horrendous torture and brutal killings experienced in Enga in recent years (Gibbs 2015a, 2015b).

*Sanguma* spirits are thought to possess greedy persons and are believed not only to attack and kill the living, but to have an insatiable hunger for human corpses. They are said to come to graves at night in animal form and to magically enter the graves to feast on the corpse. In response armed men watch over a new grave at night for several weeks, killing any animal that approaches the grave. Killing such a creature is believed to also 'kill' (*pyao kumasingi*) the *sanguma* spirit and possibly also to kill or disable the human host of that spirit.

*Sanguma* beliefs have had some influence on the design of graves. In the 1990s construction of a cement block over a grave started to become more common. However, introduced *sanguma* beliefs have contributed to a situation where now some graves are totally lined with concrete reinforced with steel mesh.

Because of belief in *sanguma*, a practice developed in some places in recent years whereby some graves are surrounded by torch batteries set into the ground around the grave (Fig. 3). People recognise that batteries, with their positive and negative terminals are a source of power for torches and other devices. So batteries set into the ground surrounding a grave are said to neutralise or "cool" the power of the *sanguma* spirit, making it less likely to be successful in entering a grave or eating its contents. Positioned in this

Figure 3. Batteries in pairs around grave at Kaiap.

way, batteries are thought to offer protection in the early weeks or months after the burial, until the body has sufficiently decomposed that it appears unattractive even to a hungry *sanguma* spirit.

Another ruse for discouraging *sanguma* spirits is the common practice today of placing a false empty coffin on top of the grave (see Fig. 11 below). The body is actually buried in cement metres below the false coffin, but the intention of having an empty coffin above is that the *sanguma* spirit, finding the coffin above the grave empty, will go away and leave the grave alone.

While the earlier Enga fear of ghostly spirits has subsided, allowing people the freedom to position identifiable graves in places much closer to human habitation, fear is now generated in a new form, in *sanguma*, resulting in new forms of defence around the grave site. Enga had ways (principally spells) of dealing the *yama*, but this new spiritual adversary seems uncontrollable and thus much more difficult to deal with. Modern forms of fortified graves and defensive nocturnal behaviour at grave sites are an attempt to thwart the *sanguma* spirit. Christian belief and practice have apparently had little influence on the impact of *sanguma* beliefs.[7]

## GRAVES AND CLAIMS FOR COMPENSATION

What appear to be graves in Enga today may not contain a body because the body of the deceased is buried elsewhere. These absentee graves function as part of claims for compensation, as memorials to the dead and increasingly as status symbols for the living.

Constructing a grave near a main road can be a way of calling for compensation. This could be in the form of erecting an absentee grave on the roadside where there will be improvements and road widening thus making a claim to the government for compensation for removal of the grave to undertake roadwork. Another occurrence can be after a road accident where those responsible for the accident will drive past the absentee grave and be reminded that they should pay compensation for the death of the one memorialised in the grave. The absentee grave of the late Leo Latu (see Fig. 4) is situated beside the Highlands Highway at the entrance to the Pompobus parish. The deceased died in an auto accident at that spot and this is a sign to the owners of the offending vehicle who will surely notice the grave each time they drive past.

In order to function as a status symbol a grave needs to be seen and thus be positioned near a road or a busy track. But the ideal position to show status may not be ideal in terms of burying a relative in familiar territory; hence the practice of erecting a grave in a public place, but burying the body in a more modest way nearer to the home of relatives.

Figure 4. Grave of Leo Latu at Pompobus.

## GRAVES AND SOCIAL STANDING

An elaborate grave reflects the status of the family or clan of the deceased. People of influence, whether in business or politics reflect their status onto their family and clan. So when they die people feel that they should recognise the status of the deceased in his or her grave. An elaborate grave makes a social statement that the deceased was rich and/or powerful. Their kin and supporters even though they personally may not have much standing at all, still bask in glory of their influential relative—*nogut nem bilong em i lus nating* / 'it is not good that his good reputation be forgotten'. This is quite in accord with Enga longstanding practice whereby special attention is paid to a *komongo* 'bigman' and the various ways that people would show allegiance to him. Two influential political figures from Enga are Sir Tei Abal and Malipu Balakau. Sir Tei Abal was leader of the United Party and Leader of the Opposition in the first National Parliament in 1975. He died in 1994 and he was buried at Keas in Wabag in grave topped by a little house (Fig. 5).

Malipu Balakau was another influential leader in the early days of Enga Province. He was serving as the Communications Minister of the National Government when he was shot dead in Mt Hagen in 1989. His grave (Fig. 6),

Figure 5. Grave of Sir Tei Abal.

Figure 6. Grave of Malipu Balakau in Wabag.

with cement walls and a prominent image of an orchid—symbol of the Enga Province, is situated in the Government compound in the centre of Wabag town, the provincial capital.

These were two of the first people in Enga to have large graves made of permanent materials. The general feeling was that it was fitting to honour their name with a large permanent grave. However, the graves of the two prominent politicians appear small and drab when compared with the graves being constructed today.

A more recent political figure was Kelly Aiyoko, a businessman and politician, who died in 2013. His grave situated beside the Highlands Highway at Kamas, a few kilometres west of Wabag, is one of the most elaborate graves to date (see Fig. 7). The grave comprises a two-story house with windows, curtains and steps leading up to an artificial coffin covered with tiles. The body of the deceased is entombed some metres below this elaborate structure. Its ornamentation features a prominent image of the Enga orchid, his name on one post at the entrance and his clan (Pumane) on the other post. Remains of a cross, carved from stone, tops the gateway. Three metal rod fences and metal gates surround the structure. The principal colours are green and yellow—the colours of the Enga flag. People at the site said that they feel happy that their leader could have such a grave and that it reflects the status of their Pumane clan in the Province.

Figure 7. Grave of Kelly Aiyok at Kamas near Wabag.

Figure 8. Grave of Nicholas Tombiame.

A hundred metres from the Kelly Aiyoko's grave is the grave of Nicholas Tombiame (Fig. 8) who was killed in 2013 in a dispute over a position at Kopen Secondary School. He is also from the Pumane clan and his relatives have constructed a grave intended to bring admiration to him and to the clan. The grave is notable for having electric lights on the corner posts (though the lights have not been linked to the power system as yet).

The grave of Augustia Aku of Kopen (Fig. 9) is notable for having a battery light that illuminates the grave at night. She had gained a high status, working at the Porgera Gold Mine in the west of the Enga Province and marrying Joseph Kiela, a landowner from Panandaka, Porgera. Her high status, which is not common for women in Enga, provided an impetus for burying her in an elaborate grave. After she died in October 2015 her workmates along with her husband constructed her grave at Kopen near the entrance to Kopen Secondary School.

Across the road from Augustia Aku's grave is Joseph Wapan's grave (Fig. 10). Like many graves in Enga there is a photo of the deceased mounted on the headstone. Colours are chosen to be appropriate and since he was a policeman his grave is painted blue and red—the colours of the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary. The cost of modern graves may be covered by the Government or politicians, as was the case with the grave of Otto Napi (Fig. 11) who was the driver and friend of National Capital District Governor Powes Parkop. The Governor arranged for construction of Otto's grave at Takowas near Yampu Hospital at the cost of K12,000.

Figure 9. Grave of Augustia Aku.


Figure 10. Grave of Joseph Wapan.

Figure 11. Grave of Otto Napi at Takowasa with false coffin above the grave.

## GRAVE BUSINESS

Elaborate modern graves are indicative of other changes in Enga; people now crowd to funerals hoping to gain something. Nowadays people calculate the wealth and status of the deceased; if the family is wealthy or of high status, they will expect a generous repayment. Relatives and friends come with gifts of money, pigs and foodstuffs, and often they will name a member of the family when they give their contribution, thus establishing a claim on that person for a return after the funeral. Some families will prolong the funeral and in that way have an opportunity to receive more gifts. Others try to shorten the time of the funeral in order to reduce their obligation to those giving. In addition, the family has to take the mother's clan into account. It is said: *Lain mama i putim sori bilas na kapsait i kam!* / 'People claiming to be members of the mother's clan wearing mourning clay in their faces just pour in!' They come hoping at the end of the mourning to receive food (pork) and drink (Coca Cola). It used to be that rubbing clay on one's face at a funeral was a sign of sorrow. Now it is said that such decoration is more a way of entrance to a funeral party where one will share in food and drink. People admit that funerals have become like a business offering social status to those investing their material and political support.

Elaborate graves are part of that business-like activity. A grave costing K20,000 to K30,000 (USD $8,000 to USD $12,000) is a part of the Enga system of gaining a name through largesse—in this case constructing a grave in a style that demonstrates the perceived status and wealth of the deceased. Graves are part of what appears to be a competition to see who can build the bigger grave.[8] There are grumblings of discontent from some who say that that elaborate graves are a way of 'showing off' (*panasingi*) and that the money could be better used for daily needs such as paying school fees. Voices can be heard saying, "God created us out of clay and our body will go back to the soil. So why waste so much money on rotting soil!" Some complain later, saying that the food they brought could have been sold for a large sum of money at the market and why should they be receiving only a small portion of meat at the final funerary feast.[8]

Grave construction has developed in Marshall Sahlins' (1963) terms, as competitive prestige-enhancing event through which followers "eat the leader's renown" (Sahlins 1963: 293). By constructing an elaborate grave friends and kin demonstrate their loyalty and obligation to the deceased. In doing so they are establishing in their midst a permanent reminder to the deceased's fame in a way that is more enduring than the shifting sands of the competitive bigman system. The deceased becomes a hero cemented into the geographical landscape, visible to the clan and anyone else passing by.

Constructing elaborate and costly graves is not limited to Enga, but is now common in other Highlands cultures as well, indicating that the Enga developments are part of wider trends in the PNG Highlands. Why is this happening now and why in this form? I do not subscribe to any grand theory of social change. I acknowledge that there are many questions and issues to explore in further research. In the interim my opinion as conveyed in this paper is that changes in grave construction are part of a process in which people seek meaningful responses to external influences. There are socioeconomic factors such as mining and other projects feeding the national and local economy. New access to wealth provides opportunities to display the status of a family or clan. This can also favour the competitive interests of powerful groups at the expense of others. Beliefs from Christian evangelisation contribute to reducing fear of ghostly spirits. Ideas about sorcery and witchcraft diffusing from other provinces bring new fears. In the interaction of these and other factors people engage in an interpretive process seeking a meaningful way of achieving their best interest. Grave construction reflects the expression of that interest today, establishing a permanent reminder to the deceased's fame and the clan interest in a way that is more enduring than the instability of the competitive bigman system.

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## NOTES

1. The Enga have been extensively documented in anthropological literature. Brennan (1977), Meggitt (1965a, 1965b) and Westermann (1969) mention death and burial, but there is little description of graves, perhaps because there was little to describe.
2. Nowadays some people claim to have phone numbers to use in communicating with the deceased by cell phone.
3. People also believed that the ghost of a dead could help the living. An example is that in a tribal fight a flying arrow targeting a man's heart can be diverted when he calls out *aiya tata* 'father'. The spirit of his father comes to his aid.
4. The first Westerners into Central Enga were most probably the Leahy brothers in 1934. The first Christian missionaries entered Enga territory in 1947.
5. Fencing the grave is important socially. In a dispute or argument a man might say to his clansman: *Embanya tange malu ongo kakopala naenge silyamo* / 'You have not even fenced your father's grave! (Therefore you are not fit to argue with me).'
6. *Sanguma* is a form of assault sorcery that takes different forms throughout Papua New Guinea. Belief in sanguma in Enga is closely related to *kumo* witchcraft in Simbu Province (Gibbs 2012).
7. There is a body of opinion that Christian (especially Pentecostal) evangelisation as one of many factors implicated in the spread of *sanguma* belief (Jorgenson 2014).
8. A grave recently constructed at Makapumanda for clan leader and businessman, the late Wilson Pes, is estimated to have cost K75,000.

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## ABSTRACT

In Central Enga burial of the dead used to be a means of protecting the living from ghostly malice, however, now burial is becoming an expensive business, and grave styles a new form of status symbol. This paper traces significant aspects of the change from pre-contact burial practices to those of today. Introduced beliefs and new ways of establishing social standing are contributing to the development of elaborate graves. Grave construction has developed as competitive prestige-enhancing events through which followers demonstrate their loyalty and obligation to the deceased. In doing so they are establishing in their midst a permanent reminder to the deceased's fame in a way that is more enduring than the instability of the competitive bigman system.

*Keywords:* Papua New Guinea, Enga, death, graves, burial practices.

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# DEVELOPMENT CONFLICTS AND CHANGING MORTUARY PRACTICES IN A NEW GUINEA MINING AREA

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In the Porgera Valley of highlands Papua New Guinea (PNG) in western Enga Province, mortuary practices have undergone rapid transformations with the coming of Christianity in the 1960s and large-scale mining development in the 1990s. Prior to these events, graves were unadorned and located in remote locations far from public spaces. With new ideas about what happens to the spirits of the deceased introduced by Christianity, Porgerans started to cover graves with simple thatched or metal roofed, open walled structures. Today, however, graves have become brightly painted, multi-tiered concrete edifices placed in highly visible and public spaces. Many of these graves house the remains of clan leaders killed in tribal fights over compensation issues related to mining development. I argue that these changes in mortuary practice are critical examples of new understandings of social space by Porgerans brought about by Christianity and capitalism. I use these examples to address central arguments in Henri Lefebvre's (1991) concept of the production of space. In the sections that follow, I first outline Lefebvre's main thesis about the capitalist production of space. Then, I examine changes in ideas about the *tandini* 'spirit' in Porgera through Christianity. Next, I discuss new ways that graves are being used in an era of resource development conflicts. Finally, I conclude by looking at how capitalist development produces new forms of social space that promise greater mobility, yet paradoxically, spatially incarcerates people through new mortuary practices and ideas about the spirit.

## THE PRODUCTION OF SPACE

In *The Production of Space*, Henri Lefebvre (1991: 11) argues that space is not a milieu—"the passive locus of social relations"—but is instead produced by the social lives that unfold in that space. In this view, every society and its particular mode of production produces its own space. As a Marxist geographer, Lefebvre attempts to wed Marx's ideas of historical materialism—the changing relations that humans have with their natural environments through their mode of production—with geography's concern with spatiality. Thus, since "each mode of production has its own particular space, the shift from one mode to another must entail the production of a new space" (p. 46). This proposition provides fertile ground for examining the implications of capitalist intrusion into pre-capitalist settings around the

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world. For example, Lefebvre makes a distinction between pre-capitalist forms of space ("absolute space") and the "abstract space" of capitalism in which the former is "smashed" (p. 49) and "homogenized" (p. 64) by the latter. Here he draws on Marx's (1973) distinction between concrete labour which produces use value and abstract labour which produces exchange value. In other words, in pre-capitalist (use value) societies, productive activity (labour put towards supplying the material needs of humans and biological reproduction) worked towards the singular goal of social reproduction (Lefebvre 1991: 32). In contrast to this, under capitalism, labour is abstracted from social reproduction in order to create exchange value. Abstract labour produced an "abstract space" which could encompass the novel social relationships that no longer were solely concerned with the interlinking aspects of socioeconomic production and biological reproduction (p. 49).

In the pre-capitalist context of Porgera, people pursued a subsistence-based lifestyle centred upon the production of sweet potato (*Ipomoea batatas*) with surpluses going towards pig rearing. Pigs were (and are) the social currency and used by leaders (bigmen) to further their prestige and renown. The absolute space of this time was produced by the movements of men and women from their homesteads to the gardens, and by the interactions of exchange spheres as men, women and pigs circulated from group to group as society reproduced itself from generation to generation. Despite the movement of people from clan territory to clan territory through marriage, many in Porgera talk about the absolute space of this time as "living in a fence" owing to restricted social mobility arising from inter-group conflict. The production of capitalist space (hereafter called "abstract space") did not so much "smash" or "homogenize" pre-capitalist absolute space in Porgera, rather it gradually reworked social and spatial relations over a couple of generations. Porgera was first contacted by expatriate prospectors and colonial patrol officers in the 1930s (Gammage 1998). Between the Second World War and Independence in 1975, people in Porgera were increasingly incorporated into larger networks of spatial interaction as Christian missionaries, colonial agents and various mining companies brought pockets of social change and economic development to the region. The greatest impact on economic opportunities and social mobility occurred with the 1990 opening of the Porgera Gold Mine. Today, Porgera is a magnet for people across the province (and the highlands) who come to seek jobs and partake in the wealth from royalty payments and business contracts given to local landowners.

In addition to the distinction between pre-capitalist absolute space and capitalist abstract space, Lefebvre (1991: 33) also proposed a conceptual triad of material ("spatial practices"), conceptual ("spaces of representation") and

lived ("representational spaces") spaces to provide a set of analytical tools for understanding the relationships between the natural and built environment, ideas of space and cosmology, and people's daily life patterns, respectively (see also Harvey 2006: Chapter 3). By material space, I am referring to the natural and built environment of Porgera—forests, mountains, rivers, hamlets, houses, gardens, paths, the mine and so forth. Conceptual space is the world as conceived by Porgerans—how they conceptualise heaven, a pre-Christian spiritual underworld, the national capital of Port Moresby, the place of PNG in the global order, Australia, etc. Lived space refers to the various spaces that people traverse in their daily lives—the interiors of their houses, their gardens, the market, the church, the mining site, etc. The crucial point is that, while Porgerans may have mostly shared perceptions (seeing material space) and conceptions of space (an aspect of a shared culture), the lived spaces that Porgerans, as individuals, produce are vastly different. Men, women, children, elderly, elites all have varying opportunities and constraints concerning the material and conceptual spaces available to them. The constraints on individuals' lived spaces undergirds contemporary tensions as I illustrate in the following vignette.

*A Chain of Events*

Beginning in the early 1980s, there were indications that a large gold mine would be developed in the Porgera valley. The road (today called the Enga Highway), which would eventually serve the mine, was located in a mostly uninhabited section of the valley, in high elevation rain forest at the base of 1000-metre high cliffs where maintaining subsistence gardens was difficult owing to the altitude and climate. At that time, many Porgerans figured that land along the highway would someday prove to be lucrative, reasoning that there would be an increase in traffic and an influx of people when the mine was operating, so some people started moving near the road. Around 1985, Leapen, an Ipili-speaking Porgeran man, invited some paternal Engan kin to come live with him along land that his mother's clan held adjacent to the road. They cleared forest, built houses and trade stores, and started raising chickens. In 1990, the Porgera Gold Mine opened and thousands of outsiders poured into the area. Leapen and his Engan kin soon realised vast profits from their business ventures. Leapen's brother's son, Carter, built the largest trade store in the area on Leapen's land, as well. While Leapen himself had no businesses, his kin kept him well supplied with money and other goods in return for allowing them access to the highway land.

After a few years, Leapen's cousin (*aini*—his mother's brother's son), Tundu, came to Leapen and demanded that he purchase the land. Land tenure rules in Porgera are open and flexible, especially in regards to children of

either men or women, so theoretically Tundu had no right to ask Leapen to pay him for the land. Tundu was claiming that, as he was descended through a male (a *tene* of the clan), he had greater rights to the land than Leapen, who was descended through a female (a *wanaini* of the clan). Leapen told me, "Tundu was wrong to ask me to pay for the land as it was unoccupied forest. But, I didn't want any trouble, so I gave him 42 pigs." Tundu's own reputation as a killer obviously helped strengthen his demand for payment. Over the years, Tundu repeatedly asked for *pikmani* (Tok Pisin for pigs and money, the standard payment for compensation in the highlands) and, every time, Leapen and his Engan kin paid pigs and money to him to prevent trouble.

By 1999, Leapen's son, Koa, was working as a machine operator at the Porgera mine—a job he was lucky to get with his Grade 8 education, according to many people. In October 1999, Koa began building a house on Leapen's land along the highway. Tundu told Koa that he needed to pay him K2000 (at that time about USD 700) before he could continue. This was a serious breach of Ipili land tenure rules as the children of resident *wanaini* (which Leapen was) are considered *tene* with full land rights in the group. The men began to argue and then fight. In a few short minutes, Leapen and Koa had beaten Tundu to death. The two rushed back to Leapen's father's clan (the Piango) to enlist the support of their paternal kin. Leapen's brother, Joe, urged other members of the Piango not to support Leapen. Nevertheless, several men joined the two and armed with homemade guns and bows and arrows they went into the forest to *singsing* 'perform a group song' and celebrate the killing.

Meanwhile, back on Leapen's land, the Wapena (Tundu's paternal clan) burned down Leapen's house and looted and destroyed Carter's trade store. During all of this Leapen's Engan kin left, fearing for their lives, and the Wapena burned down their houses and trade stores and killed all their chickens. The next day, Leapen heard a rumour that the Wapena were planning to bury Tundu in the middle of the disputed property. Leapen was distraught for if this happened neither he nor Koa would ever be able to live on the land again for fear of *akali nono*, a term that literally means 'eating the man' and refers to the belief that the *tandini* 'spirit' of a deceased man can attack his killer if he consumes any food or drink near the deceased man's grave.

Leapen asked one of his Wapena uncles to mediate on his behalf. This uncle arrived at Tundu's funeral where he met stiff opposition to Tundu being buried anywhere other than in the centre of Leapen's land. In a moment of foolish bravado, Leapen's uncle claimed that Leapen would come and dig up Tundu's body and dump it in an outhouse unless the Wapena relented and buried the body elsewhere. Obviously, this set back any reconciliation attempts and the Wapena buried Tundu on Leapen's land (Fig. 1). Leapen

Figure 1. Tundu's grave. The axes and red cordyline plants indicate the intentions of Tundu's clan to revenge his death. The ashes behind the grave in the right of the picture are the remains of Leapen's house.

was so enraged by this that he burned his uncle's house down and killed his pig and dog. For the next few months, the Piango and Wapena fought sporadically. Koa had to quit his job at the mine, and both he and his father were confined to Leapen's paternal clan's lands to prevent revenge killings from both Tundu's *tandini* and his kin.

Tundu's grave marked a pivotal moment in Ipili burial practices in Porgera. People were stunned by the monumental aspects of the grave memorial with its bright colours and revenge imagery. This was 2000 and was the first time that such a grave had been built in the eastern Porgera valley. Moreover, its location in a prominent locale adjacent to the highway symbolised a new kind of mourning in Porgera, one that was public and addressed the new forms of inequality and desire that mining development had brought to the region. It was also a new way to think about space, land rights and the actions of deceased people's spirits, which I explore in more detail in the remainder of this article.

## *TANDINI*, DEATH, AND WARFARE

To understand the changes in mortuary practices over the last 60 years in Porgera, it is necessary to first comprehend what happens to a person's life force upon death. All people have a spiritual form that Ipili speakers call a *tandini*. Today, they often translate this into English as soul or spirit (*devil bilong man* in Tok Pisin), yet the English terms do not fully capture the richer notion of *tandini* in Ipili. Upon death a person's *tandini* leaves their body and becomes a *talepa* 'ghost'.

For several years, a *talepa* roams around within the boundaries of the clan's land, although often staying near their grave. Eventually, the *talepa* joins the collective of deceased ancestors known as *yama* 'spirit'. Every clan has a sacred pool in the high-altitude rainforest above the hamlets where the *yama* live after death. The pools are called *ipa ne*, literally 'the water that eats'. In the past these deceased clan ancestors caused (and sometimes still cause) illnesses. Various rituals were performed to "feed" the ancestors as a means of placating them. Feeding was done either by offering them "food" in the form of aromas of cooked meat, the blood of pigs poured into the ground, or the actual delivery of meat to the clan pool.

Both *talepa* and *yama* generally cause misfortune. Mervyn Meggitt, the first ethnographer to work in western and central Enga, wrote the following (1956: 114-15) about spirits of the recently dead and the clan ancestors:

> Like ghosts of the recently dead, clan ancestors are generally regarded as being neutrally disposed towards their descendants until the latter antagonize them. Then they become downright malicious, punishing the clan with crop failures (e.g., of sweet potatoes or pandanus), high mortality among children and pigs, and/or defeats and deaths in fights. I gather they are never benevolent or positively helpful, nor do there seem to be strong moral overtones in the punishments.

Since conversion to Christianity, most Porgerans are less concerned that the *tandini* of their ancestors are attacking them, as they believe that the *tandini* stay in the ground at the location where they were buried. When people are killed in warfare, though, it is a different matter.

As I have already said, after Leapen and Koa killed Tundu they were unable to leave their own clan's land and come near Tundu's clan's land because killers fear for the rest of their lives that their victim's *tandini* can attack them. There are several ways this happens. The first is from *wapu*. *Wapu* is brought on by the killer, or even his kinsmen, sharing food, water or cigarettes with the victim's clan. The ingestion of these substances will call the *tandini* and cause it to attack the killer. Another way *tandini* attacks occur is if the

victim's clan sees the killer and collectively begin to think about their dead kinsman. Their thoughts can awaken the *tandini* of the victim and send him to attack his killer. Both of these situations rule out any sort of fraternising between a killer and his victim's clan. For a killer, speaking or even hearing the name of his victim can cause the *tandini* to come and attack. As a result, many people change their names based on who their kinsmen kill, because if they share the victim's name, their kinsmen will never be able to speak their name or hear someone else say it. Porgerans say that if the killer were to swallow food, saliva or water, or inhale smoke after hearing his victim's name, then the killer would get *akali nono*, literally 'eating the man', and be subject to *tandini* attack. Finally, *akali nono* also occurs when a killer eats or drinks food or water from near where the killer is buried.

Clearly, concern about the abilities of deceased ancestors to harm the living shapes Porgeran understandings of death. Before missionisation, people were buried far from the houses, gardens, water sources and public spaces that the living inhabited. With the exception of senior male members of the clan, people were buried in shallow, unmarked graves in old secondary forest. Important men were buried in covered pits so that their bodies could decompose and their skulls could later be removed and used in healing and curing rituals to placate the *yama* in the *ipa ne*.

Following conversion to Christianity in the 1960s, Porgerans started to re-evaluate the role of *tandini* and *yama* in their lives, subsequently burial practices changed as well.

## CHRISTIANITY AND DEATH

When missionaries arrived in Porgera in 1961 (after the western Enga Province was opened to outsiders by the Australian colonial government), one of the first tasks they undertook was reshaping Porgeran concepts of the afterlife. Missionaries stressed that *yama* were not a collective body of deceased ancestors who could harm the living, but merely "Satan tricking us" as many Porgerans attested. Moreover, the *tandini* were the equivalent of Christian souls and did not have the power to visit dead kinsmen, nor could a *yama* "pull" or "hold" a living person's *tandini* thereby killing them. Porgerans were instructed in the "proper" manner of burial with the deceased lying stretched, face-up in a casket, instead of the flexed, side burials that Porgerans used to practice.

One question that many Porgerans had though was: What did the *tandini* of the deceased do if they did not roam around the clan's land at night, or if they did not go to live in the *ipa ne* as a *yama*? The missionaries responded that they just lay peacefully in their graves waiting for Judgment Day. A group of elder men shared with me their thoughts about this new knowledge:

> We really started to worry about people's *tandini* that we buried. The missionaries said they just stayed there doing nothing. But Porgera is a rainy place [average of 3700+ mm of rain annually]. All we could think about was our ancestors' *tandini* just lying there in the wet, muddy ground. We started to worry that they would get uncomfortable and start to attack us and make our children or pigs sick.

As a response to this concern, Porgerans started to build roofed structures over graves to ensure that the *tandini* would not have to endure the long years of lying in the cold, wet mud until Jesus returned (see Figs 2 and 3).

With the *tandini* of the deceased now lying comfortably in the ground under their roofed grave enclosures, fear of attack also started to lesson. People still refused to go near graves at night, but gardens started to be planted closer to gravesites (Fig. 3). Graves were mostly unadorned. There might be a few cordyline plants or flowers planted next to them, but for the most part a person still could not see a grave from someone's house and certainly not from any public areas. Deceased powerful male leaders received the same burial treatment as everyone else, and their powers in the afterlife were believed to be non-existent. The *tandini* of men killed in conflict were still believed to affect the living and their role has taken on new importance in the mining development era in Porgera. Before I turn to this matter, however, I want to examine the new forms of spatiality that Christianity and colonialism brought to Porgera.

*Pre-contact and Post-contact Space*

Porgerans divide their landscape into three zones based on altitude. The lowest zone, *wapi*, is found below about 1700 metres above sea level (asl). The middle zone, *andakama*, extends from about 1700 m to 2200 m asl. The highest zone, *aiyandaka*, is above 2200 m. Before the Enga Highway was built, people lived exclusively in the *andakama*, a word that is composed of *andaka* 'at the houses' and *ama* 'cleared spaces'. It was the main zone of production and reproduction before contact. The *wapi* and *aiyandaka* by contrast were areas where resource harvesting was common but, because various spirits inhabited these zones, they were not areas where one settled (see Jacka 2015 for more detail). The absolute space of pre-capitalism kept people confined to living within the *andakama*.

With the coming of colonial agents, mining prospectors and missionaries, though, the upper zone, the *aiyandaka*, became dis-enchanted because the spirits no longer had the power to impact people in this zone. When a jeep track was built in the *aiyandaka* with local labour during the colonial era in 1971, many men mentioned their severe trepidation about initially cutting

Figure 2. Graves with bush material roofs and fencing to keep pigs out.

Figure 3. Graves built with metal roofs. Note their proximity to a garden.

down trees and working in this zone. The resources in the *aiyandaka* are "owned" by spirits called *tawe wanda* 'sky women'. Wanton destruction of plants and trees are believed to upset the *tawe wanda* who send mists and rain down to cause the perpetrators to lose their way and potentially fall off cliffs or into ravines. When these punishments did not ensue, a number of men said they lost their fear of this area.

The demise of the bachelor ritual called *omatisia* also led to less concern about the roles of *tawe wanda*. Before the mid-1960s, young men would engage in a series of male purification rites in which they ritually married a *tawe wanda* (Biersack 1982, 1998). The *tawe wanda* helped to "grow" the young men into marriageable adults. The *omatisia* rituals were held in the *aiyandaka* but once airplanes started to fly over the ritual houses built for the *omatisia* interest in the rituals declined. I asked one elder man why airplanes would cause the demise of a ritual, he noted that the houses had been defiled (*kalo*) in the same sense that weapons and tools become defiled by stepping over them. Flying over the houses was the equivalent of stepping over them to many men. At this time, too, people were turning to Christianity and abandoning their former rituals. Finally, *tawe wanda* were re-signified in Christian belief as angels. Consequently, their abode shifted from the *aiyandaka* to heaven. As such, both the material and conceptual spaces associated with the *aiyandaka* were transformed in the 1970s. Materially, men had cut trees and built a jeep track in this space. Conceptually, the space was dis-enchanted as rituals directed towards and concerns about *tawe wanda* lessened with their movement from the *aiyandaka* to heaven. With the development of the mine starting in 1987, the lived space of the *aiyandaka* started to transform as people moved up into the *aiyandaka* to be near the highway and to open the kinds of businesses that Leapen and his kin did. The new modes of production that were associated with mining development thus created new forms of space in Porgera—shifting from the absolute space of life in the *andakama* to abstract space in which new forms of spatiality also initiated new conflicts over space in the mining era.

*Mining and Development Conflicts*

The mining development process in Porgera has generated severe inequalities between the haves and have-nots; the vast majority of Porgerans do not share in mining benefit streams. As a consequence, many young men who feel left out of the socio-economic benefits that mining was supposed to bring to this region engage in conflict with clans who have recently received pay-outs from mining development. Their logic is that by attacking a wealthy clan, some of them may die, but their deaths will have to be compensated by the clan they attacked thus bringing wealth to their own clan.

There is a long-standing association between warfare and economics in Porgera expressed in the Ipili phrase *yanda takame*, which means 'war is wealth'. Marilyn Strathern's research among the Melpa supports this; she wrote that "either exchange or warfare can indeed turn into its alternative" (1985: 124). Fighting today, though, is not about generating the long-term benefits of exchange and alliance captured in a concept like "war is wealth", since much of the fighting is generated from dissatisfaction with uneven development and oriented towards short-term monetary gains. For many young men, exchange is no longer an opportunity; instead capturing benefit streams from mining is the new means to become a bigman. For them, war is their only option. In discussing traditional venues of male accomplishment in Hagen, Strathern wrote that the intertwining of war and exchange "can be attributed to men's desire to be seen as effective in a public arena" (1985: 124). Excluded from regular mining benefit streams, instead of working in the gardens like their parents, occasionally selling some surplus produce at the local market, these young men offer their bodies in a new market based on monetary demands from clans who have recently received mining royalties and compensation payments.

In 2006, one of these conflicts took the life of the councillor of a local-level government ward in Kairik, a village in eastern Porgera on the Enga Highway. Two clans were arguing over compensation that the mining company paid out over a landslide. In the midst of one heated exchange, the councillor was chopped with an axe and died on the spot. Instead of burying the body in a non-prominent location, his clan built a multi-tiered brightly painted grave structure with a metal roof, electrical porch lights, a flagpole flying the PNG flag, and a metal bird of paradise launching into flight from the roof peak, directly adjacent to the Enga Highway (Fig. 4). By placing the grave in such a location, the councillor's clan was making a visible marker of their intention to revenge his killing, plus they intended to prevent his killers from travelling along the highway.

Between 2006 and 2013, fighting raged between several clans over mining compensation payments in the Porgera Valley. In the eastern part of Porgera, nearly every structure was burned to the ground at this time—houses, trade stores, schools and aid posts, and even churches. Dozens of men were killed in the fighting. When I returned to Porgera in early 2016, neither of the two graves in Figure 4 were still there. People noted that members of the killer's clan had sledge-hammered the graves apart in the midst of the conflicts. Their goal in doing so was to re-open the road so that the killer and members of his clan could travel freely without the spatial constraint that the graves posed to their mobility. When I asked why the *tandini* had not attacked the men wielding the sledge hammers, one man just shrugged and commented in

Figure 4. Grave of councillor. Note just to the left of this grave, is another multi-tiered grave of a young man who was killed while fighting. An orange tarp covers the current grave as the concrete is still curing.

Figure 5. John Pewaipi's grave with the two guns of the Olomo clan painted on the side.

Tok Pisin that *olgeta samting i senis* 'everything has changed' with the new abstract space of capitalist mining development in Porgera.

Many things have indeed changed in Porgera with the changes brought by modernisation and development. Guns were introduced into conflicts around 2005 which helped to intensify the conflicts that have dominated the last decade of social life in the valley. Figure 5 shows the grave of John Pewaipi, who was killed by the Olomo clan in eastern Porgera. The Olomo owned two guns—an M16 and a pump-action shotgun—shown here on the side of John's grave. Similar to the axes on Tundu's grave in Figure 1, the guns on John's grave indicate his clan's intention to revenge his death at some time in the future. This grave, too, is in a highly visible spot along the Enga Highway, reminding people of the violence that shaped people's experiences during the time of fighting.

* * *

In this article, I have demonstrated how transformations in the mode of production—from a pre-colonial subsistence-based livelihood to a mixed capitalist-subsistence mode undergirded by large-scale mining development—produced a new kind of space. Consequently, new mortuary customs occupy these new spaces. Social life in Porgera revolves around the Enga Highway (see Jacka 2015: Chapter 7), tying Porgerans into mining development at one end of the road, and to the rest of Papua New Guinea at the other end. The road symbolises more than just modern socioeconomic development, though. It is also a visual reminder to many Porgerans of all that they do not have, despite the presence of a large-scale mine in their midst. The Highway, Christianity and contemporary social life in PNG have greatly expanded the conceptual spaces of Porgerans. Yet few are able to realise these conceptual spaces and most live a subsistence-based lifestyle. The material spaces of Porgera for many are not much different than before colonial and Christian contact. There are a few more metal buildings, but most Porgerans still live in bush material houses (Fig. 6). Lived spaces too are nearly as constrained as before contact. Many Porgerans speak of pre-colonial space as being restricted, as living surrounded by a fence, but that colonialism "opened the roads" and "broke the fence" allowing for greater spatial mobility. The absolute space of pre-capitalist social life in Enga was restricted owing to a confluence of factors, such as inter-group conflicts and the spirits of deceased enemies creating concerns about leaving one's own clan's land. Colonialism, Christianity and Capitalism produced a new abstract space that allowed people to move about the landscape with greater freedom, but others, while aware of the new spaces, are constrained in exploring them.

Figure 6. Bush material houses and prominent grave structures in the eastern Porgera valley.

However, with the rise in conflicts and killings in the last decade, and the burial of men killed in conflicts in public spaces, the *tandini* of these deceased warriors now serve as obstacles along the Enga Highway, preventing members of enemy clans from partaking in the new spaces that development was supposed to open up for Porgerans. Many men talk now of a new form of spatial incarceration that comes from development conflict. The tensions between material, conceptual and lived spaces in Porgera thus provide a compelling case study highlighting the ways that new spaces are produced, yet paradoxically, has also resulted in the shrinking of lived space for many Porgerans.

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## ABSTRACT

In the Porgera valley of highlands Papua New Guinea, burial practices have undergone rapid transformations with the coming of Christianity in the 1960s and large-scale mining development in the 1990s. In this article, I examine the changes in mortuary practices and situate these novel practices in theories about the production of space to explore conflicts over land in an era of resource development. Graves, which shifted from remote rain forest lands to the edges of roads and public spaces, now serve as visual public reminders of past conflicts and killings in the development context. The promises of development were supposed to increase social mobility in Porgera, but conflicts constrain mobility in complex ways highlighting the tensions between development, social space and conflict in Porgera.

*Keywords:* Papua New Guinea, Porgera, space, death, development

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# THE WORK OF THE DEAD IN SAMOA: RANK, STATUS AND PROPERTY

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The selection of a title for this paper, and a number of its insights owe much to Laqueur's cultural history of mortal remains in Western Europe (2015). Samoa was evangelised by both Protestant and Catholic missionaries in the early 19th century so that Samoan eschatology, along with other Samoan cultural institutions, blended pre-Christian beliefs with a variety of Christian doctrines on where the souls (*agaga*) of the dead go and what continuing relationships they have with the living. Graves convey more than sentiment; the selection of burial sites and the type of monuments chosen make visible statements about traditional rank, family status and claims to property, so that the dead continue to work for the living in spirit and by the location of their mortal remains. This paper examines what is known about burial practices, the location of graves and the manner in which they were marked in pre-colonial Samoa, and the changes that have occurred to these practices as a result of conversion to Christianity, 19th-century power struggles, political change, colonial influences and regulations, and 20th-century settlement patterns and practices. Customs have come full circle in Samoa from traditional burials near or under houses, to burials in village cemeteries by colonial decree, to a revival of traditional practices since the 1960s. We examine how the location of graves and their associated edifices reflect changes resulting from mass emigration and monetisation and modernisation of the economy, and how graves have become a means of asserting ownership over portions of customary land by individuals and their immediate relatives.

## TRADITIONAL BURIAL PRACTICES

Burial was evidently of great importance to Samoans in ancient times as, according to missionary accounts, if a body was lost at sea or due to some other mishap, a *tapa* cloth would be prayerfully spread out and the first living thing that alighted upon it was received as a manifestation of the lost corpse (Turner 1848: 151). It was wrapped and interred according to the normal rites for the dead at their ancestral residential site. These sources also record the practice of locating graves close to houses (Krämer 1995: 112, Turner 1848: 146-47), and other accounts of burial practices drawn from historical sources, such as Mead (1969: 99) mention that sometimes there were burials under the stone platforms (*paepae*) that formed the floor and foundations of

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traditional houses. Archaeologists Roger Green and Epifania Suofo'a both told us that they had found human remains in *paepae*. Turner (1848: 146-47) also refers to the practice of mummification in which the corpse of a high chief was preserved within a house which may have served as a place of worship.

There has been debate among geographers and archaeologists about 18th-century settlement patterns, some maintaining that most villages were located inland and that the practice of locating villages on the coast was a post-contact practice (see Davidson 1969). However, the layout of villages and the way houses were built conformed to descriptions recorded as long ago as 1831 (Moyle 1984), and as recently as 1966 (Lockwood 1971). As far back as written records go, Samoan villages of any traditional importance were nucleated settlements located adjacent to a *malae* 'a central open space', which had sacred connotations in pre-Christian Samoa. Villages (the term *nu'u* often translated as 'village' refers to a territory, not a settlement) may have maintained both coastal and inland settlements inhabited seasonally: coastal settlements for cool breezes, fishing grounds and fresh water, and inland settlements for the ancient sport of pigeon hunting and as places of refuge in times of war. The largest houses of the highest ranking chiefs were located close to the *malae* and other houses behind them, arranged in a circular pattern or in lines. Rank was a demonstrated by the stone platform of the *faletele* 'meeting house'; a house built on several stone tiers that was a jealously guarded privilege of the highest *ali'i* (Grattan 1948: 57-58). The height of *paepae* was echoed by the height of the drystone cairns that marked the graves of the highest ranking chiefs; the graves of those of lesser status were marked with a low rectangle of stones (Hiroa 1930: 322). Turner (1984: 142-43), referring practices in the mid-19th century, wrote that "the grave of a chief was neatly built up in an oblong slanting form, about three feet high at the foot, and four at the head".

Long ago, large man-made mounds may have been sites for the houses and burial places of paramount chiefs. There are many of these in Samoa (Freeman 1944, Thomson 1927); some are immense structures of earth or stone (Freeman 1944) and differ from smaller so-called 'star mounds' (*tia seu lupe)*, which are known to have been constructed for the purpose of pigeon snaring (Herdich 1991). While well described, these edifices have only been subject to minor archaeological investigations, and their purpose is unknown because there are no surviving accounts or oral traditions to explain them (Martinsson-Wallin *et al.* 2006, Martinsson-Wallin *et al.* 2007). Their origin and functions have long been a source of speculation. It seems likely that they were once burial sites and important centres of ritual activity and, as pre-Christian Samoans were observed to have offered prayers to ancestral spirits at their grave sites (Turner 1848: 151), perhaps also sites of necromancy. In

warfare, enemies would desecrate conspicuous tombs, so in troubled times the skulls of high chiefs were removed from graves and concealed (Krämer 1995: 112-13). The ritual for re-interring human remains is termed *liutofaga* and is still practiced; it involves opening of the grave, removing the bones, oiling them and, with accompanying prayers, wrapping them in *tapa* cloth for re-interment elsewhere.

Since the late 19th century the edifices (*tia*) marking the graves of *ali'i* have been typically shaped like rectangular pyramids with three stone tiers. For example, the *'āiga Sā* Meleiseā, like few other prominent Samoan

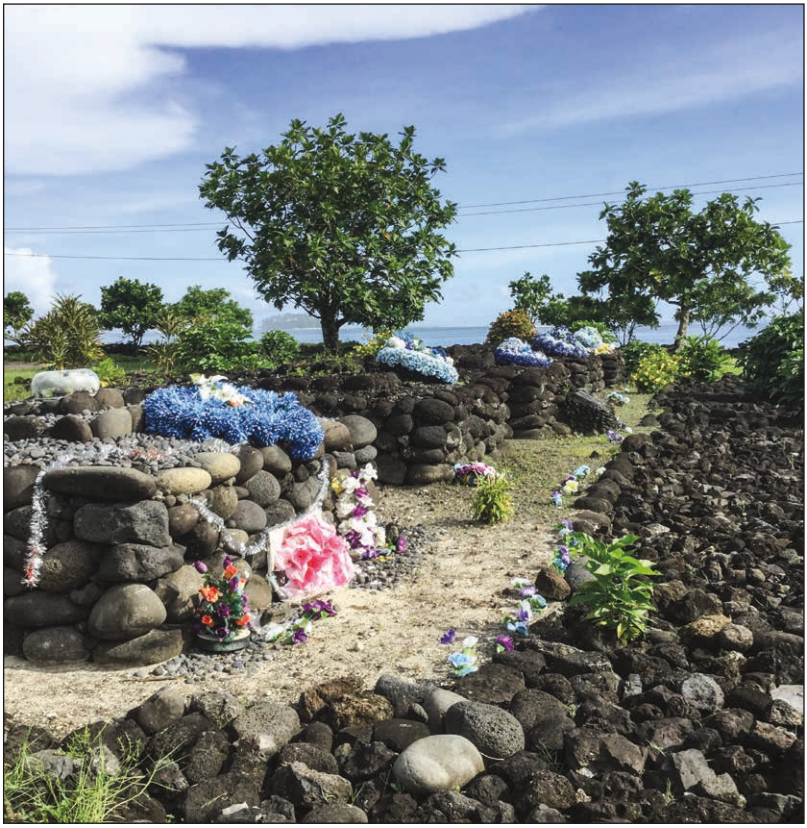

Figure 1. Meleiseā *tia* at Poutasi showing traditional dry-stone construction.

families, has a large raised stone terrace edged with worked stone close to their *maota* 'site associated with a chiefly residence' containing many old anonymous graves (Fig. 1). *Tia* mark the burial places of the five previous holders of the Meleiseā title, the oldest only dating back to the 1940s. The terrace is believed to be hundreds of years old, and the Meleiseā genealogy records that there were ten ancestral title holders who lived and died before those five marked by the *tia*. Several graves on the terrace are marked by large slabs of coral rock. These possibly indicate a different practice for the burial of *ali'i* in the past. As few unaltered graves from centuries past still exist anywhere in Samoa, it is hard to tell whether the styles have changed or whether their graves were concealed because of recurrent wars in the 19th century. Krämer provides an illustration of the *tia* of Malietoa Laupepa at Mulinu'u (1995: 112). While it covers a very large area, like others of the period it has only three tiers, suggesting that there may have been some modern escalation in the height of tombs. For example, the *tia* marking the grave of Malietoa Moli at Malie village is much bigger, with seven tiers, and appears to have been reconstructed since the original burial there in 1860 (Fig. 2). The *tia* of brothers holding the Mataia and Tagaloa titles at Vaitele are now surrounded by urban developments and were elaborately renovated in 2016 when the road was widened (Figs 3 and 4).


Figure 2. *Tia* of Malietoa Moli at Malie with modern elaborations.


Figure 3. Mataia *tia* at Vaitele in its original form.


Figure 4. Mataia *tia* at Vaitele after renovation.

## THE POLITICS OF BURIAL MONUMENTS

The first mausoleums (*loa*) in Samoa appear to have been constructed in the late 19th century following an introduced practice, and the most elaborate of these came to symbolise the transfer of power from the traditional districts to a centralised state. An illustration in Krämer (1995: 113) captioned "the modern tomb of a chief" shows a small *loa* of what appears to be coral limestone cement (a technology introduced by missionaries) and the earliest of these may have been constructed to hold the disinterred bones of a number of important ancestors.

Imposing *loa* were constructed for Samoa's paramount chiefs of the 19th century and through the 20th century. To clarify, from pre-contact time and throughout the 19th century, Samoans regarded four *ao* 'honorific titles' as paramount; any high chief who could secure all four of them was acknowledged as *Tafa'ifā* 'Four in one' and as *tupu* 'king' of Samoa (Gilson 1970: 58-64). These honorifics were the focus of much of the political conflict and warfare that occurred in the 50 years before the Samoa Islands were was annexed and divided by Germany and the United States of America in 1900. Germany, in control of the more populous western islands of Samoa set out to enforce peace by abolishing these titles and establishing a system of government that excluded the orator groups who bestowed these honorifics (Meleisea 1987: 47-48). Since then the four high chiefly titles that are now regarded as paramount in Samoa are those that were involved in the pre-colonial contest to obtain the *Tafa'ifā* and to become *Tupu*. The titles are Malietoa, Mata'afa, Tupua and Tuimaleali'ifano, referred to collectively as *O Tama a 'Āiga* (Tuimaleali'ifano 2006: 14-16). The *Tama a 'Āiga* have been laid in *loa* at Mulinu'u, a location that reflects the shift of paramount rank away from villages and districts to the headquarters of the Samoan National Government.

The first pre-colonial but western-style government of Samoa and the first king of Samoa (in the Western sense of the term "King") was Malietoa Laupepa, recognised by the Samoan factions and foreign powers in 1875. Owing to intrigues among the foreign settlers in Samoa, Laupepa was soon deposed by rivals, later re-instated, and then again deposed in a series of civil wars backed by rival factions among both the Samoans and the foreign settlers. Malietoa Laupepa died in 1898, at a time of great political conflict and so, according to family traditions (Monalisa Saveaali'i Malietoa, pers. comm. August 2015), he was first buried in a grave at his home at Papaloloa near Papauta, which was not a traditional *maota* of his title. Later, to recognise his earlier status as King of Samoa, he was re-interred, not at the *maota* of the Malietoa title, but on the Mulinu'u peninsula. Mulinu'u was the seat of the several abortive pre-colonial national governments of Samoa (Gilson 1970:

268-69) and it eventually became the site of a national *malae* named Tiafau. In the New Zealand colonial period the Legislative Assembly met there, and in 1962 it became the site of the National Parliament of the Independent State of Western Samoa.

The remains of Malietoa Laupepa were moved to Mulinu‘u by the ‘Āiga Sā La‘auli and marked by a new *tia* there after his son Malietoa Tanumafili I had been declared King in 1889 (a position Tanumafili held only briefly, as will be explained further below). Subsequently, Fa‘alata, son of Talavou who had been Laupepa’s rival for the Malietoa title, was also buried at Mulinu‘u, next to Malietoa Laupepa’s *tia* (illustrated in Krämer 1995: 112). This was probably because Fa‘alata had been proposed by some branches of the Sā Malietoa as successor to Malietoa Laupepa (see Gilson 1970: 423) and his supporters wanted him to be given equal recognition by means of his burial place. In 1939, Malietoa Laupepa’s remains were re-interred for the second time, this time they were placed in a *loa* that was built when his son Malietoa Tanumafili I died (Fig. 6). This mausoleum also holds the remains of Samoa’s first Head of State, Malietoa Tanumafili II, who died in 2007.

It is likely that Mata‘afa Iosefo, who died in 1912, was the first of the *O Tama a ‘Āiga* to be interred in a mausoleum at Mulinu‘u (Fig. 5), rather than at the seat of his title at Amaile. He had been recognised as King by all the Samoan factions in 1899 but this unanimity came too late. The Chief Justice of Supreme Court (established in Samoa by the Berlin Act of 1889 under an agreement between Germany, Britain and the USA) appointed Malietoa Tanumafili I as King. When the Samoans refused to recognise him (Tanumafili was then a boy of 19), warfare resumed and, as a result, in 1900 the three powers abandoned attempts to establish a national government under Samoan leadership and agreed to partition the Samoa archipelago between the United States and Germany. After Germany established its administration, Mata‘afa Iosefa was designated Ali‘i Sili ‘paramount chief’ as part of the German strategy to eliminate monarchy as an institution in Samoa, and with it the martial quest among Samoan factions and the “king-making” orator groups Tumua and Pule to secure the four *tafa‘ifa* titles. The Mata‘afa *loa* holds his remains as well as those of subsequent holders of the Mata‘afa title: Mata‘afa Tupuola (died 1915), Mata‘afa Muliufi, (died 1936), Mata‘afa Mulinu‘u I (died 1949), Mata‘afa Mulinu‘u II (died 1975) and Mata‘afa Fa‘asuamaleaui Puela (died 1997) (Fiame Naomi Mata‘afa, pers. comm. September 2015; see also Tuimaleali‘ifano 2006: 24).

The remains of two holders of the Tuimaleali‘ifano title lie in an imposing seven-tier concrete burial monument plastered in white, a design that echoes but greatly magnifies the traditional *tia* (Fig. 7). It was re-built in 1950s for the remains of Tuimaleali‘ifano Fa‘aoloi‘i Si‘ua‘ana who died in 1937.

Figure 5. Mata‘afa *loa* at Mulinu‘u.

Figure 6. Malietoa *loa* at Mulinu‘u.

Figure 7. Tuimaleai‘ifano *loa* at Mulinu‘u.

Figure 8. Tupua Tamasese *loa* at Mulinu‘u.

When Tuimaleali‘ifano Suatipatipa II died in 1974, the top of the structure was opened and a *liutofaga* was performed for the bones of Tuimaleali‘ifano Fa‘aoloi‘i Si‘ua‘ana. These were wrapped and re-interred on top of Suatipatipa II’s coffin. Another modern holder of the title, Tuimaleali‘ifano Si‘ua‘ana II held the title for only nine months before he died in 1939 but was interred at the *maota* of Tuimaleali‘ifano at Matanofo in Falelatai, where according to family traditions other important ancestors of the linage have been re-interred (Morgan Tuimaleali‘ifano, pers. comm. October 2015).

The remains of four holders of the Tupua Tamasese title are contained in a *loa* at Mulinu‘u (Fig. 8). Tupua Tamasese Titimaea was originally buried in 1891 at Lufilufi, but his remains were transferred with a *liutofaga* to the new mausoleum at Mulinu‘u by his son, Tupua Tamasese Lealofi I, who himself died shortly afterwards in 1915, and was also laid within it (Fig. 9). The remains of Tupua Tamasese Meaole, who became co-Head of State with Malietoa in 1962 and died in 1963, are also laid in it, as are those of Tupua Tamasese Lealofioa‘ana IV, who died 1983. Two holders of the title were not interred at Mulinu‘u. Tupua Tamasese Lealofioa‘ana II died of influenza in the 1918 epidemic and, according to his own instructions before he died, was buried at Tafitoala, a village on the south coast of Upolu (Tuia‘ana Tupua Tamasese Efi, pers. comm. October 2015). The grave of Tupua Tamasese Lealofioa‘ana III is located close to the *malae* of the urban village of Lepea, close to where he lived at that time. He was a leader of the Mau Rebellion against New Zealand colonial rule and was shot and killed in 1929 by New Zealand police while leading a peaceful protest march. His huge *tia* is located beside the main road, in front of a number of old graves that are marked only with stones. The original *tia* built after his death was constructed of dry stones in the traditional manner, but it was renovated and enlarged in the late 1960s. The stones were cemented together and a plaque added, bearing his photograph and an epitaph recording the circumstances of his death, and his last words calling upon Samoa not to avenge his death and protest peacefully.

In the 1920s, the New Zealand colonial administration required each village to establish a cemetery some distance inland of the village on the ground of public health and hygiene. In addition to village graveyards, some extended families established their own small cemeteries, also on customary land outside the village. Special permission had to be sought to bury high ranking *ali‘i* in traditional burial places within the village (Grattan 1948: 57). Burial practices changed rapidly after Samoa became independent in 1962. The Independent Government ceased to dictate to village councils where burials should be located, instead imposing requirements under health regulations for the interior of graves to be sealed with concrete. The Constitution of

Figure 9. Tamasese Lealofioa'ana III *tia* at Lepea

Samoa recognises Samoan custom with three provisions relating to land and leadership and the arbitration of customary matters (along with the body of formal laws passed by the Parliament and subject to the Courts). The Village Fono Act (1990) permits the exercise of authority by the village councils of traditional villages in accordance with "custom and usage of their villages". The councils appoint sub-committees for local services such as schools and water supply as they see fit, and may intervene in decisions by families about the location of graves if they are perceived to contravene village traditions.

## GRAVES AND CLAIMS TO LAND

Today, burials in household compounds are signs of affection for departed family members, but they also serve a further purpose of defining claims to property in an environment of uncertainty about customary rights. As Samoans began to migrate in large numbers to New Zealand and the United States in the late 1960s, and later to Australia, they sent money home to their families to build houses of permanent materials. This produced not only a variety of new house styles based on both traditional and foreign designs (see Van der Ryn 2012), but also made way for major changes to the way houses were located. The new economics of housebuilding made it more risky to build

on the traditional house sites appurtenant to high ranking titles. According to traditional practices these sites pass into the possession of each successive senior holder of the title, at times dispossessing the family of the previous titleholder (if someone who was not closely related to them inherits the title). Accordingly, new houses built with remittance money and representing a large investment by the immediate family are built away from the old centre of the village, on what was formerly bush or plantation land, usually beside roads. Today graves are most commonly located in front or at the side of houses, in some cases suggesting the Samoan cultural associations of space and rank (see Duranti 1992). Graves are also often located in the middle of an area of empty land, signalling that the descendants of the person or persons interred there claim ownership of that the land and intend to build on it or cultivate it in the future.

Burial locations in Samoa have changed over the past 50 years as a result of new settlement patterns; most houses in contemporary villages are dispersed along roadsides. Customary land tenure no longer conforms to principles and practices documented in the early 19th century, and modern practices have been described as "customary individualism" by O'Meara (1987). In the past, the highest ranking chiefs of large lineages allocated and re-allocated use rights to land and retained authority over it regardless of who was actually using it. This flexible system both upheld the importance of the high chiefs and made sure everyone had access to resources according to their needs. It was well-suited to a subsistence economy. However, by the 20th century, after nearly a century of Christian and other foreign influences, the principle was established by the Land and Titles Commission (later the Land and Titles Court) that customary land belongs to families (Schultz 1911) and today a 'family' (*'āiga*) is usually more narrowly defined than in the past. In the past, in this context, a family was often a collective comprising a high ranking *ali'i* title, a number of historically related and subordinate *matai* titles, and all those related to and serving these titles. Nowadays with the levelling of rank (see Meleisea 1987) the trend is for all *matai*, irrespective of the rank of their title, to consider themselves independent of the highest title with which they were historically associated and with rights to land that are also independent of the high ancestral title.

Some villages still have tracts of common land under the traditional jurisdiction of the village council, such as inaccessible mountain forests and uncultivable lava fields. Customary land cannot legally be sold or mortgaged, but can be leased under the Alienation of Customary Land Act 1965. Further, non-citizens may not buy freehold land. Recently, with funding from the Asian Development Bank, measures are being put in place to alter the customary land-leasing framework and to set up a database of leased and leasable land,

probably with the aim of developing a registry of all customary land. These measures may allow the possibility of leasing land to non-citizens, and so have triggered anxieties that foreigners are being empowered to acquire customary land by stealth (see Meleisea and Schoeffel 2015).

Although Samoans still describe their customary land tenure as though there had been no historical change, as a system in which land is held on corporate basis by *matai* to be used by the extended family of the *matai* who render service to him, people's actual beliefs and behaviour do not match those principles (O'Meara 1987, 1995, 1990). Most people believe that the customary land they occupy is the property of their immediate family, often nuclear families, and consider that rights to it will be inherited exclusively by the children of the present landholders, regardless of whether or not they are *matai*. Customary land has slowly and informally become divided into small farms and residential compounds owned or claimed by nuclear families. At present, registration of customary land in ways that confirm ownership of it is not widely accepted; to register land would probably provoke competing claims from people living elsewhere, who may consider they also have hereditary rights to it. People are also likely to fear the uncertain outcome of disputes taken to the Lands and Titles Court (see Meleisea and Schoeffel 2015).

Claims to property rights are strengthened by the location of graves. Graves located in front of houses make a statement that the house and the land on which it is built belong to the descendants of the person or persons buried there. When tombs are not located on traditionally recognised *maota*, families can give free rein to their own perceptions of their social status; tombs of lesser ranking *matai* sometimes exceed those of higher ranking *matai* in height. As described above, high chiefly rights to *tia* are related to the rank of a title and if the height of a *tia* marking a grave exceeds the rank of the person interred below it, an appeal to the Land and Titles Court may be made. Some villages only allow the building of two-storey houses by the holders of high *ali'i* titles or for housing the village pastor, so are likely to be vigilant in ensuring that the height of a *tia* matches the rank of the person interred below it. However, appeals to the Land and Titles Court against the families of those who have constructed graves that exceed their rank entitlements are infrequent. This is because ostentatious *tia* or other edifices marking graves are rarely located on traditional *maota*; nowadays huge *loa* or *tia* or modern grave monuments signal the wealth of a family rather than its claims to traditional rank. The size of a grave makes a statement about the importance of the deceased even if the grave is not located at the traditional *maota*. For example, in the 1980s Meleiseā Folitau I was buried below a *tia*, beside the *tia* of his father and grandfather on the *maota* appurtenant to the Meleiseā title they had successively held. Following his death, the

title was split as a result of a decision by the Land and Titles Court. It was bestowed on two claimants to the title, Meleiseā Meafou a half-brother of the deceased, and Meleiseā Fano who, like his father and grandfather before him, had resided with the Meleiseā family but was not of their lineage. When Meleiseā Fano died, his brother and children asserted the right to bury him with a *tia* at the *maota* beside Meleiseā Folitau I, and where Meleiseā Meafou was later buried. The descendants of Meleiseā Folitau I and Meleiseā Meafou refused to allow Meleiseā Fano to be buried at the *maota* of the title on the grounds that he was not of their lineage. After their objection was upheld by the Land and Titles Court, Meleiseā Fano was buried in a *tia* that was considerably larger than those of the other Meleiseā title holders, in the middle of a large section of land appurtenant to the Meleiseā title that they all shared. While this burial site had no traditional importance, it was in a prime location beside the main road, enabling Meleiseā Fano's heirs to both declare his status with large tomb and to lay an unassailable claim to a valuable portion of land.

Many Samoan families treat freehold land as though it were customary land. Since the 1960s, the government has subdivided areas of state-owned peri-urban land, mainly quarter-acre sections, and sold these with freehold title. The Congregational and Catholic churches have also sold subdivided peri-urban land in this manner. Freehold land is now extremely expensive, selling for between SAT 50,000 to 150,000 (approximately USD 20,000 to USD 58,000) per quarter acre, but banks value freehold land with graves on it at less than a quarter of the value it would realise without a grave or graves on it, even though it seems unlikely that a Samoan would sell land without first removing the remains of a family member buried there. Owners of freehold sections purchased since the 1970s appear seldom to make wills that bequeath their property to an individual; instead the land and the house on it (if a house has been built) is considered the property of all his or her descendants. For example, a civil servant who purchased a section of freehold land in a new urban subdivision in the 1970s did not build on it and died intestate. By law, his wife inherited the title deed of ownership. She gave the deed to one of her sons, who used it to secure various bank loans. With one of these loans he built a house on that section of land for his mother, but after a time was unable to make the repayments. The deed was transferred to his younger brother who eventually paid off the mortgage. Regardless of the legalities, the 12 children of the original owner regarded the house and the land as a collectively-owned family property. When their mother died, her children decided to bury her in front of that house, extending the front veranda to accommodate her modern tomb and headstone. They had considered several options before making this decision. One was to locate her grave in her husband's village next to a

family house there. Another option was locate it in her village of origin, thus reinforcing family ties with her kin in that village. Yet another was to bury her in the nearby public cemetery. However, the majority favoured burying her at the house where she had lived. Aside from affection, a consideration in favour of the chosen option was that it would deter the family member who legally owned the house from selling it to recoup money that had been owed to the bank for the building of the house.

The tombs of ministers of religion raise some interesting issues. Although a church minister outranks even the highest ranking *matai*, they are not permitted to hold *matai* titles so they do not have traditional *maota* for their graves. Ministers are usually guests of the village and are not permitted to serve in villages where they have close family connections. Churches in Samoa rarely, if ever, had tombs within them, or graveyards around them in the European manner. In medieval Catholic Europe, spiritual advantage was incurred by those interred close to the remains of saints in tombs within the churches, or encased in reliquaries. The church claimed possession of the dead and determined who might lie in consecrated spaces within or around a church. The Protestant Reformation was supposed to have blown away such superstitious notions, yet we have observed Protestant churchyards still used as burial places in small towns in Denmark and Sweden, as they are said to be throughout Europe. In Samoa most village churches are built on customary land gifted to the church by a high chief of that village. The gift is for the exclusive use of the church, not for the burial of other persons; hence no graveyards or tombs within churches exist. An exception is the late Cardinal Pio Taofinu‘u whose remains lie below the Apia metropolitan Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception. Further exceptions have been made in a number of cases where church ministers have died in office; some have been buried beside or in front of the church where they were serving. However, when a minister dies, having already retired from his parish, his burial place is decided on and provided by his extended family. This may be in front of a family home or elsewhere. For example, Fa‘apusa, a pastor of the Congregational Church of Samoa, was interred in an inconspicuous grave on freehold land belonging to his late brother. This was because the pastor’s own son was a serving pastor (who later died in office, and so was buried next to his church). The father and son had not lived in their own ancestral village for two generations. The extended family of the older deceased pastor interred him on the freehold land because there was some uncertainly about their status in their ancestral village, owing to a dispute over a traditional title. Some years later, when the dispute was settled, he was ritually re-interred on customary land in his ancestral village.

## CONTEMPORARY BURIAL PRACTICES

The custom of locating graves beside houses has been fully revived. Almost every village house, as well as many in town, has a grave or two nearby. A *matai* is more likely to be buried in a conspicuous tomb at the front of the house while other family members may be buried less conspicuously beside or even behind the house. According to old customs (now rarely observed), if a woman died while living in her husband's village she was, if possible, returned for burial in her own village. There is no longer a consensus about what the customary rules are for wives and mothers; each family does as it prefers and common practices are gradually evolving into new customs. Nowadays, families often inter their mother and father side-by-side near the family home. Many graves in rural as well as urban areas are incorporated into the structure of the house. For example, a family living on customary land in American Samoa decided to bury their father, a *matai* of the village, under a marble-faced tomb on the front veranda of their house. When their mother died, she was buried beside him below a matching tomb. Later, the children of this couple extended the house and the tombs are now side-by-side in the air-conditioned and furnished front room of the house where the family meets for evening prayers. In another case known to us, a family who lost their son

Figure 10. Family grave houses at Vailima.

in a car accident decided to inter him under the house, his tomb is constructed within what had once been his bedroom. Graves beside or in front of houses are built in many styles; they may be enclosed by decorative wrought iron fences or, in an increasingly common practice, enclosed in small houses. The latter may be open-sided under a roof or completely enclosed with walls and with curtained glass windows. Roofs over tombs allow the preservation of gold lettered epitaphs and elaborate colourful silk and plastic flower wreaths that are given by relatives and friends at funerals. Once imported, headstones can now be commissioned locally; many are elaborate, featuring photographs of the deceased, decorative urns and statues of angels.

A newly borrowed and nowadays common practice is to hold ceremonies to unveil headstones at the first anniversary of a death, with prayer services, distribution of gifts and sharing of food. It is also increasingly common for families to construct family *loa* at their home or village *maota*. For example, the remains of several members of the Vaʻai family were disinterred with a *liutofaga* from their graves in a town cemetery and relocated to a family *loa* that had been built in 2001 at the family home at Vaisala in Savaiʻi for the remains of Vaʻai Kolone, a former Prime Minister of Samoa (Silafau Sina Vaʻai, pers. comm. October 2015). As the number of graves around houses increases, the practicality of a shared family *loa* is becoming increasingly recognised, and there are many imposing examples in villages throughout the country.

## SAMOAN ESCHATOLOGY AND THE LOCATION OF GRAVES

Graves located around or adjoining houses affirm the affection in which those buried within are held and enable the living to preserve the memory of the dead. The graves of close family members are usually treated with affectionate familiarity as well as with respect; they may be used as a place to dry laundry, and youths and children may take naps on the cool surfaces of modern cement tombs with tiled or marble facing under roofs. At Christmas time, families often decorate tombs with fairy lights and other Yuletide decorations. Yet Samoans believe that ghosts (*aitu*) are ever-present among the living and many ghosts, who are well known in folklore, are thought to have been originated from someone who had once lived. However, the graves of close relatives built beside homes seldom cause concern about supernatural forces. Occasionally traditional healers may attribute misfortune or illness to the spirit of a deceased family member and there have been instances in which boiling water has been poured into a burial site to lay the offending spirit.

As well as the work of the dead in asserting property rights and status or rank, they exercise moral authority over the living. According to Turner (1984):

> The Samoans believed in a soul or disembodied spirit which they called the anganga [*agaga*] … which at death was supposed to go away from the body and proceed to the hadean regions under the sea which they call Pulotu. (1894: 18)

Since the 1830s Samoan eschatology has been reshaped by the predominant Congregational or Methodist churches; today most believe that the souls of the dead go to heaven, where they rest in the company of their relatives. About one quarter of Samoans are Catholics, who believe it is necessary to pray for the dead, whose souls may be in purgatory, as only the most saintly go directly to heaven. Some smaller sects believe that the souls of the dead sleep in peace, awaiting the Day of Judgement before they reach heaven or hell. Despite various Christian doctrines, old beliefs are still widely held that the spirits of the dead—perhaps those from the so-called 'time of darkness' (*aso o le pouliuli* ) as the pre-Christian era is termed—may stay around on Earth in malevolent forms. Many illnesses are believed to be of ghostly origin and illness may be explained as the result of being struck by an offended spirit. Measures to avoid being struck by ghosts include covering mirrors with curtains to avoid attracting them, holding babies or small children so that they face forward, and not walking alone in the dark.

Another task of the presumably more righteous dead is to uphold moral values. Ghosts such as the legendary Sauma'iafe and Telesā are thought to punish young women for public vanity, such as wearing their hair loose or dressing immodestly, and ghostly attack may also punish misconduct among the living. For example, a young woman's mysterious illness was diagnosed by a traditional healer as a ghost sickness (*ma'i aitu*) caused by a ghost who struck her while the girl was walking from the inland plantation to her village. The angry ghost was identified by the healer as that of her grandfather, whose grave lay untended and forgotten among other graves in the old village cemetery. To make matters worse, people often behaved disrespectfully when they walked past the burial area. To put things right, the village council decided to disinter the bones of those buried in the old cemetery with *liutofaga* and to re-inter them in family tombs close to the village (Macpherson and Macpherson 1990: 99).

The dead sometimes need to remind the living about their mortal remains. Ghostly attacks have been associated with the discovery of previously unknown human remains. In one such instance, we were informed that a family had been troubled by strange noises at night, such as stones hitting the roof of their house, eventually discovered the cause. An unmarked grave containing the remains of several people was discovered near their house; possibly they were remains of people from the village who had died in the

1918 Influenza Pandemic and who had been buried and forgotten. Such hasty burials were common because of the magnitude of mortality—one in every five Samoans died. Once the grave was opened and a *liutofaga* performed with a respectful reburial, the disturbances ceased.

## CEMETERIES

The town of Apia has five public cemeteries which are managed by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment as part of its responsibilities for land management. The oldest is at Tufuiopa, close to the old Beach Road centre of Apia Township. Most of the tombs are those of European settlers. In 1879, the consuls of German, Great Britain and the United States established a self-governing municipal enclave in Apia, and the Tufuiopa cemetery appears to have been established around that time. Some Samoan families with European ancestors buried in this cemetery still maintain plots and bury family members there. The Magiagi cemetery has been in existence since the 1918 Influenza Pandemic. The cemetery was originally divided into two sections, one for Europeans and part-Europeans and the other for native Samoans from the nearby villages, including Magiagi. In the section for Samoan villages, some of the graves are marked only with low piles of stones without an identifying memorial plaque or headstone. It is likely that many people from these villages now bury family members near their houses rather than in the cemetery. Some families continue to use burial sections there, in small fenced areas or roofed structures and a few *loa* but, as mentioned previously, some families have disinterred deceased relatives from the cemetery and placed their remains in *loa*. The "European" section of the cemetery contains several small family mausoleums and many family burial places with rows of matching headstones or other memorial edifices, as well as graves within small open or enclosed houses in various styles.

The cemetery at Tafaigata is the location of the recently established crematorium (see Lilomaiava-Doktor, this volume), and has a memorial for the victims of the 2009 Tsunami and a mass grave for some of them. The Government invited the families whose relatives died in the tsunami to inter them there; however, many preferred to inter them in graves beside their houses following the widespread contemporary practice.

## THE WORK OF THE DEAD

As Lilomaiava-Doktor (this volume) explains, the dead reunite the living at Samoan funeral services. Not only do they bring scattered families together from town and village and from far away cities, but the increasing scale and expense of funeral rites and burials make a very significant contribution to

Samoa's economy. The beneficiaries include fabric printers and dress-makers who make the family funeral uniforms, sign-makers who supply memorial photographic badges, printers who produce the illustrated funeral service brochures, suppliers of plastic dinner-ware and caterers, who provide the boxes of food to be handed out at funerals. Others are the hire companies that rent marquees for shelter and refrigerated trucks in which to keep the food; the wholesalers that supply food and drinks for prestations; the undertakers, the coffin makers, the clergy (who preside, and receive the largest funerary gifts) and the masons who build the tombs and mausoleums.

Lying in their graves, the dead safeguard rights to property in times of changing land tenure norms and uncertainty about traditional inheritance rules. Lying under conspicuous tombs and mausoleums, some of the dead make assertions about the status, wealth, rank or historical importance of the living. And finally, even if their burial places have been long forgotten, the dead are present within the living as providers of personal and family identity, recalled in ancestral narratives, genealogies, myths, legends, history; their work captured in Albert Wendt's poem *Inside us the Dead* (1976) of which the opening lines are:

Inside us the dead,
like sweet-honeyed tamarind pods
That will burst in tomorrow's sun,
or plankton fossils in coral alive at full moon
dragging virile tides over coy reefs
into yesterday's lagoons.

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ABSTRACT

In Samoa the selection of burial sites and the type of monuments chosen to mark them not only signify affection and memorialisation, but also make visible statements about traditional rank, and nowadays about family status and claims to property. We examine what is known about burial practices and locations in pre-colonial Samoa and trace the changes that have occurred as a result of 19th-century power struggles, political change, colonial influences and regulations, and new settlement patterns and house-building practices.

*Keywords:* Samoa, graves, burials, mausoleums, tombs, re-interment

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# CHANGING MORPHOLOGY OF GRAVES AND BURIALS IN SAMOA

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In this article, I investigate Samoan custom and the factors that influence decisions about graves, the location of grave sites, and the more recent option of cremation, in the context of migration and social change. I examine their impacts on Samoan understandings of *fanuaoti* and *tu'ugamau* 'grave, tomb', *fanuatanu* 'cemetery, graveyard', and *liutofaga* 'reinterred' and *fa'aliuefuefu* 'cremation', and I argue that the cultural modifications of burial and funeral rituals have been changed, but also reinvigorated, by the territorial redistribution of people in the Samoan diaspora. I argue that place as heritage/identity as in *fa'asinomaga* as well as the hegemony of place are brought to high relief on the occasion of the funeral, and elaborated in the diaspora. There is a Samoan saying *o le tagata ma lona fa'asinomaga* 'a person and his or her heritage and identity', which refers to the rights of all Samoans in their ancestral villages, land and kindred, as well as carefully observed norms of respect, duty and obligation. It is this context that I situate my discussion of cultural, social, political and economic changing morphology of graves, burials and funerary customs. I argue that place as identity is intimately bound up with conceptions of kinship that define where *'āiga* (forebears and other kin) are buried, *fa'asinomaga* and *fanua* (land). Whether overseas or in Samoa, decisions about where to bury the dead are not easy, given the cultural and geographical centripetal and centrifugal factors, referring to both cultural ideas—Samoan and foreign—and geographical locations—in the homeland or overseas, that influence people's choices. Cremating the dead is a recent practice, available overseas but new to Samoa. It is a practice that Samoans at home and abroad are uncertain about and in Samoa it can be a contentious choice.

## CHANGING FUNERARY AND BURIAL PRACTICES

One of the most important ritual events among Samoans is the *fa'alavelave*, which literally means a 'disruption or interruption'. Of these, funerals are often the most elaborate. Samoan death and mourning rituals have many functions: helping individuals and families recover and return to regular life after their loss, reuniting kin, and sometimes demonstrating the wealth and high status of an extended family. Families make journeys to funerals of relatives to pay their respects, show their love and help with the funeral,

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bringing fine mats, pigs or cattle and cash to build up a store of reciprocal gifts that are central to the ceremonies. Relatives have special rights and duties at funerals, depending on whether they are related by blood or by marriage, and important relationships are marked by gifts of fine mats (*'ie*). These are named and given for the passing of a spouse (*'ie o le mavaega*) or a parent and children (*'ie o le measulu)*, and to commemorate the duty of a deceased woman to her husband and his family (*'ie o le fa'amagaloga*), the fine mat which connotes a request for forgiveness and pardon for any of her wrongdoings to them during her life. Another, the *'ie o le 'amiga*, is given to mark the return of a surviving spouse to his or her own kin. According to Fofo Sunia (1997) Samoan protocol prescribes that these fine mats should not be kept, but politely returned; only the '*ie o le mavaega* should be kept by those to whom it has been presented, because this is the farewell fine mat of a woman's family to her husband's family.[1] Another important gift, given to deceased persons of high rank, is the *'ie o le afuelo*, a fine mat to cover the coffin. Nowadays this is laid on the coffin when it is taken from the morgue. The decision as to who provides this mat is negotiated between the bereaved families, and is usually the gift of those related to the deceased by marriage. At the funeral rites, the same fine mat is presented to the *se'e*, a person of high rank who represents the branch of the ancestral family related through a brother and sister pair and has the traditional obligation to guard the body of the deceased until the burial (Simanu 2002, Sunia 1997).[2] The *se'e* traditionally brought an *ufimata* 'shroud', scented coconut oil and a fan as part of their role. Nowadays, *ufimata* includes bolts of expensive white cloth, satin or lace, symbolising shrouds and is presented by kinswomen of the deceased and the women of the village.

As the possibilities for large family gatherings and expensive ceremonies have increased owing to migration, funerals have become more elaborate both in Samoa and among overseas Samoans. In Samoa, until the early 1980s, the dead were buried immediately because there were no funeral homes with morgues to allow funerals to be prolonged. Funeral announcements were made on the radio and relatives throughout Samoa would collect up their gifts and come immediately to the village of the deceased to pay their respects. High chiefs' *(ali'i*) funerals are termed *lagi* and, as a sign of respect, *tu'ilauniu* 'cut branches of green coconut leaf" are stuck in the ground alongside the village road all the way to the deceased *faletalimalō* 'guest house' where the funeral is held. Church choirs and their ministers, who come to offer hymns and prayers to the bereaved family, attend most funerals. If the village has several churches, a number of choirs may attend, one following the other, and each choir is given food to thank them. When I

was a young person living in Samoa and attending a funeral with my choir, the family gave us big kettles of tea, cartons of biscuits, a block of butter and a bottle of jam.[3]

Everyone in the extended family has a duty to perform: there is the bookkeeper usually a sister or daughter of resident *matai* chosen because she is knowledgeable about kinship relations of the *'āiga* 'extended families' and must account for what comes in and goes out. The women of the family prepare food; the daughters and sisters of the family sort the fine mats, bark cloths (*tapa*) and mats to be given as reciprocal gifts and also present the fine mats and special gifts that accompany them; the young men butcher and prepare pigs and cattle, and carry forward and distribute heavy gifts such as meat and cartons of canned fish and meat; the elders and the titled heads of families (*matai*), and the sisters of the deceased receive and return gifts, acknowledging them with appropriate oratory.

In Samoan villages only the chiefs of a village are buried in tombs at the sides the once sacred space at the centre of the village (*malae)* adjacent to their traditional house sites (*maota*). The term for a traditional chiefly grave monument is *tia*, which Aumua Mata'itusi (pers. comm., 7 October 2015) explained comes from the word *atutia* that in dignified Samoan speech refers to a mountain range. The term for a mausoleum is *loa,* which comes from the word *va'aloa*, the term for the ghost canoe in which souls were once believed to be ferried to another world, and in the old days was specially designed to carry a deceased chief to his grave. These terms signify reverence for high rank village hierarchy; ordinary graves are termed *fanuaoti* and *tu'ugamau* (see Fig. 1).[4] In some villages, members of the clergy may also be buried on the *malae*, or adjacent to a church. In the colonial period other people were buried in village cemeteries or family graveyards (see Meleisea and Schoeffel, this volume). Graves are cared for and decorated during the year of mourning, and in that year at the annual White Sunday service, which is dedicated to children, families commemorate their dead with songs or plays in their memory. Today, many families hold an 'unveiling' ceremony (*talagāteu*) to a mark the first anniversary of a funeral. Sometimes a headstone is also installed during this time (see Fig. 2).[5] Over the years these ceremonies have become more elaborate, with ceremonially presented gifts of fine mats and cash exchanged between families and their church ministers, as well as food for everybody who attends. Like the change in the style and location of graves and funerary customs, tombstones, which for most people were once modest cement or stone rectangles, have become increasingly elaborate (see Meleisea and Schoeffel, this volume).

Figure 1a. Grave site of *ali'i* in *malae* from late 19th century at Foua, Salelologa 2013.

Figure 1b. Same grave site of *ali'i* at Foua, Salelologa (photo taken in 1973).

Figure 2. Modern grave with headstone 2005.

## THE SAMOAN DIASPORA AND FUNERARY CUSTOMS

In Samoa today not only do people in the country try to attend funerals of their relatives, but relatives come from American Samoa and overseas as well, all bringing their contributions. Accordingly, funerals have become much more elaborate since the 1970s. The practice of keeping bodies refrigerated in morgues began in the 1970s when relatives who had gone overseas insisted on coming home to pay their last farewell. There were no direct flights to Samoa then as there are today (Simanu-Klutz 2001). At that time, only the main hospital in Apia had a small morgue (Lei'ataua Ala'ilima, 'Aumua Mata'itusi Simanu and Fa'alenu'u Lilomaiava pers. comms, July 2014).

In the early years of migration (1950s–1970s), younger people were sent overseas, mainly to earn money to raise the status of the *'āiga* at home (Meleisea 1989). It was not thought of as an individual enterprise in which people migrated to improve their own lives. Those sent aboard worked in factories and sent money home to their parents to help build a modern house of permanent materials, or to rebuild a *faletalimalō* 'guest house', or to start a village shop, or to enable their families to contribute to community projects, such as school buildings and churches. In most cases, the parents of immigrants never thought of leaving Samoa. When those left behind died,

their children and grandchildren, their siblings and cousins overseas asked for the funeral to be delayed so they could travel to bid final farewell.

Despite the ideal that *fa'asinomaga* determines a burial place, the power of the ties established in the new lands of Samoans in New Zealand, Australia and the United States has increasingly influenced decisions made by Samoan families. Children living overseas increasingly make the decisions about funerals of their parents in Samoa. In my conversations with overseas Samoans about their decision on where their parents were buried it was apparent that from the early years of the 1970s and into the 80s, when there was a larger outflow of migrants, funerals were more likely to be held in Samoa. However, as the years passed, overseas Samoan communities grew and became established, funerals were increasingly held overseas, with a reverse movement of kin travelling from Samoa to attend funerals overseas. However, indigenous notions of place and *fa'asinomaga* continue to play a role in decisions about funerals and burial places. This can create a dilemma depending where people die. Those who pass away in New Zealand may hope that their graves will be located close to where their children and other close relatives live (Fig. 3), or they may wish to be buried in their home village. For example in my own family, my aunt Tapu'itea lived with her children in American Samoa. She died in 1978 and had asked to be returned to Samoa when she died, to the village where her brother (my father) lived and was *matai* of her *'āiga*. In another instance a *matai*, Luamanuvae Milo, who died in 1991 after living for more than 30 years in Los Angeles, asked for his remains to be to be returned to Samoa to be buried, as did my relative Fa'aga Pauli who died in California in 1993. In these instances, the longing of these elders to be returned to their birth place were deciding factors, despite the presence of children overseas and the years they had lived overseas. In contrast, a Samoan elder who died 1983, who had been a respected deacon and pioneer of his church community in Auckland, was buried in Waikumete Cemetery in Auckland, New Zealand. This decision was influenced by the consideration that his first wife was buried that cemetery and that his three children were born in New Zealand. Yet despite the distance and location, the funeral ceremony was conducted as it would have been in Samoa. The only difference was that his immediate family and his parish church played the role of a village to support his *'āiga*, and the magnitude of the feast and the associated ceremonies were greater. When my cousin Lifa Leilua died in 1984, she too was buried in an Auckland cemetery and my mother travelled to her funeral from Samoa.

In recent times, a traditional funeral has become so expensive in Samoa that some death notices broadcast on radio or TV (using carefully chosen polite words) say that no Samoan customs are to be observed, evidently to


Figure 3. Grandchildren visiting grandparents' graves in Auckland.

reduce the expense. To hold an expensive traditional funeral may depend on the willingness of family members overseas to pay for it. However, expensive funerals continue to be the norm; demonstrating a family's wealth and, in some instances, raising the status of the family in the village. A well-managed funeral can reduce the risk of the family going into debt. An *'āiga* decides how much to spend depending on the status of the deceased in the family and village, and often whether they want to make a statement about the status of their family. Although a funeral demonstrates love for the deceased, the economics of the funeral are important, the social and political power measured in the esteem that a family receives when the guests, relatives and

the village return happy and replete with food, cash and fine mats from the funeral, and discuss among themselves how well everything was done. This is an example of Bourdieu's notion (1984) of symbolic capital and demonstrates how in Samoan eyes the rewards of symbolic capital can outweigh the cost of economic capital. The funeral and its execution is key to maintaining and enhancing *ʻāiga* status. Now that funerals can no longer be provided from a subsistence economic base, families typically incur large debts by opening accounts with stores, which expect enough money will be received from *siʻi alofa* (referring to gifts received from those attending the funeral) so that after all the expenses and reciprocations—cash, goods and fine mats—have been accounted for, there will still be sufficient money to pay what is owed. If these funds are not sufficient, the extended family is expected to pay off the outstanding debts, an obligation that in practice usually falls on the children of the deceased. For this they win high esteem by showing *lima malosi* 'strong hands' and *lima foaʻi* 'giving hands'. Debt sometimes provokes tensions in families about the accountability and transparency of *matai,* chiefs and orators of *ʻāiga*, and of the family member entrusted as the funeral bookkeeper.

## FUNERAL BUSINESSES IN SAMOA

Funerals have become times for the multi-national assembly of *ʻāiga*, which has greatly influenced the extent, and magnitude, of funeral *faʻalavelave*. Nowadays in Samoa, when most people die their bodies are embalmed to await the arrival and the participation of overseas relatives in the funeral. As previously noted, until the 1970s in Samoa all aspects of attendance upon the dead was done by the family and until late in that decade the only option to delay burial was to pay a small fee to the morgue at the main government hospital in Apia. Initially it could keep only six bodies, but by the 1980s had it increased its capacity to 20. At that time the hospital was short of resources and there were many complaints about the quality of preservation and, as the demand grew, the hospital became less able to cope (Andrea Williams, Motoʻotua, Apia, pers. comm. 23 August 2015). In 1985, Letoa Paʻu Sefo and Ana Paʻu established the first morgue, Sefo Paʻu Funeral Services, in Samoa to meet the growing need, beyond that available at the hospital, to embalm bodies and refrigerate them, awaiting the arrival of family members from overseas (pers. comm. 24 August 2015). Letoa said that better morgues were needed to provide this service, and that:

> Up to early 1980 most people who died were buried immediately, especially in Savaiʻi Island. Since we had *faleoti* [morgues], whenever there's a death, the *ʻāiga* tell the children overseas and they will always call, not to bury their mother or father until they arrive… [they would] call crying on the phone,

> Samoan love is strong. We have been busy since we opening there is not a day that we haven't had a body in there.

Letoa explained that he and another funeral service provider, Fesili Funeral Services, began their services in premises opposite the hospital but had no room there to expand as demand for services grew. Initially his business was just the morgue, and then they added a small foyer as a waiting area. He then moved to another location in Apia so he could offer more services. He explained:

> The next minute the pastor was there and families just say prayers, a hymn, so [chapel services were] demanded of us. You see now, there is invariably a family service at the morgue before the body is taken to the home village where more church and cultural protocols of funeral are conducted. This new location, the buildings are spacious, has more shelves, and we have a viewing room, a chapel and seating area, and space to park vehicles.

During the interview with Letoa it became evident that his services are in high demand, with people coming in to change the dates of funerals and to extend the period that their deceased relative would remain in the morgue and to get certificates so they could take time off work.

There are now three funeral service providers: Sefo Funeral Services established in 1985, Fesili Funeral Transportation in 1986, and Ligaliga Funeral Services established in 1994. Letoa said that for a time his business provided a small selection of basic caskets, but these are now supplied by other businesses, which also supply wreaths and bouquets made from artificial flowers. He commented that in the last 20 years the basic kinds of caskets available were black or white, or the American laminated type with an open lid, remarking that families spend a lot of money on those caskets.

## CREMATION AND SAMOAN RESPONSES

From a practical perspective, given the cost and organisation required to preserve a body for burial in another country, cremation offers a solution. The option of cremation became available in Samoa in 2013 when Letoa Sefo Pa'u built the first Samoa Crematorium (*Samoa Observer*, December 2013). In the context of Samoan notions of *fa'asinomaga*, traditional burial practices and Christian religious beliefs, many considered cremation a shocking choice, because of the belief that a body must be buried intact to await the Resurrection. Those people I interviewed, both young and old people, opposed the practice of cremation, saying it was a foreign influence, a business idea and an alien practice for Christian as well as Samoan proprieties or *fa'aSamoa*. Many considered it disrespectful and contrary to Samoan customs, which

dictate that a person should be buried in their customary land of their village. However some of my respondents, those who have lived overseas and were familiar with practice of cremation, thought it was an acceptable option. In Samoa the more educated people from among the urban elite were able to talk more openly about cremation. But when I asked my 85 year old mother's opinion, she replied, *"Oka, e pei o le lē alofa lena i se matua, le susunu* / 'Wow, it seems it's not loving one's parents if you burn them'." When talking with people about their views on cremation, like my mother, many used the word *susunu* 'to burn'—they were unaware of the polite term *fa'aliuefuefu* 'to cremate (lit. 'to turn to dust/ashes)'. However, after the practice was explained my mother said she was open to anything, joking "whether thrown in the open sea or cremated, it doesn't matter, as long as [I] am taken back to Samoa". She recognised that whatever was done with her mortal remains had to take account of her geographically scattered family.

Letoa told me it was the 2009 Tsunami that hit Samoa in September, which gave him the incentive to establish a crematorium. He said a number of foreigners had died in this tragedy and their families wanted their remains cremated and their ashes sent home, but this was not possible at the time. He subsequently planned the design and construction of his crematorium and sought a loan of around 1.5 million *talā* (USD 625,000) to finance it. (*Samoa Observer*, November 2013).[6] He obtained government approval and applied to the Minister of Natural Resources and Environment for land and was given three acres to lease in 2012 next to the new cemetery at Taifa'igata (Fig. 4).


Figure 4. First Samoan crematorium at Tafa'igata.

Speaking of the reaction by the public in Samoa, Letoa and Ana said that their first clients were foreigners who had died in Samoa, as well as some part-Samoans. They explained:

> When we first opened there was resistance from the community saying 'this is not Samoan, what have we come to?' But we have had some Samoans, mainly those who have been overseas, for example a parent who returned to stay then died while here. The children came to cremate their parent and took the ashes with them to New Zealand, despite what the *'āiga* here said. We [also] had a Tongan lady who died here, she was cremated and then the ashes were taken to Tonga.
>
> We have had a case where the mother, who was Indian, married to a Samoan [her husband passed away a few years before her] and she wished to be cremated, but the children who live overseas did not want her to be cremated. They were adamant about it because they are part Samoan and they didn't feel it was right. They asked about the cost of embalming and air ticket to take the corpse to New Zealand, it was almost $20,000 *talā*, compared to $8,000 *talā* if cremated. After some reflection they went with their mother's wishes and they scattered her ashes at Aleipata [village]. They had a beautiful funeral for their mother with a reception and all the friends and relatives came to it.
>
> We had cases with bank repossession of… freehold land… where a family buried a parent or sibling on the property, then they fall behind with their loan payments and the bank took the property back and had to sell. We have done exhumations for people overseas and we reinterred them wherever they tell us to. Now that we cremate we can send the ashes too if they wish. [We have done cremations for] for about 20 people… especially for those who had lived overseas.

While I was in Samoa, a funeral was announced, to be followed by a cremation. The announcement, after expressions of sadness, said that the deceased person, the wife of a chief, was to be taken from Sefo's funeral home and to the crematorium at Tafa'igata for her final service with "modern practice of burial". This was polite way of describing cremation, and the announcement also said "*Taofi le malō*" (meaning there would be no *si'i alofa* 'traditional gifts'). Ana Pa'u explained that in this case:

> The couple had moved to Los Angeles in the 1970s and have lived and worked there, and the children were born there and have families. The father decided to move back to Falefā his home where he is *matai*, when he retired a few years ago. His wife, mother of the kids, goes back and forth between their Los Angeles home and Samoa where her husband lives. During this trip she became sick and sadly died. The families in Samoa had a meeting and her (own natal) family agreed to have her buried at her husband's place at Falefā. However, when the children arrived from America, they wanted to have a piece of their mother and convinced the father and related families to

> cremate their mother, that way each of the three children can take a quarter of her ashes and leave the other quarter for the father in Samoa!

This and other cases, as described by Letoa and Ana, reveal how decisions about cremation are beginning to be modified. Some people feel that Samoan beliefs and religious attitudes to death share very similar views about the sanctity of the body. Some perceive cremation as the secularisation of death and as an insult to sacredness of the person in death. To speak of a person's death carries with it a "sense of *tapu* (forbidden), *sā* (protected), or *mamalu* (dignified) as a protective boundary that acts as its unseen guardian" (Seiuli 2013: 2). However, it is evident that some Samoans are pragmatic about change. Shortly after the opening of the crematorium, a relative of mine reported that the Government had agreed in Parliament on a policy to disallow interference with the cremation of a body, in recognition that it is an individual decision, and not a group or *'āiga* decision.[7] The Prime Minister also noted in a speech given at the opening of the Crematorium, that cremation was a good solution given the shortage of land for burying the dead.[8]

Over the last two decades among New Zealand Samoans cremation is has become an increasingly frequent choice for families who are geographically separated in Samoa and several other countries. For example, a senior and respected educator retired and moved to be with his children in Wellington, New Zealand. When he died aged 89 he was cremated. Another instance was more problematic. In July 2015 I interviewed Ta'efu, an orator who had travelled to New Zealand with the Samoan Rugby Team to perform the proper *fa'aSamoa* protocols. During his stay he attended the funeral of a *matai* 'titled person' of his *'āiga* as an orator representing this family resident in Samoa. He told me that he was shocked when a spokesman for the *'āiga* of the deceased living in New Zealand announced at the funeral that a *matai* of Ta'efu's own *'āiga* was to be cremated instead of buried. Nonetheless, he accepted the decision of the New Zealand family.

I turn now to my own recent experience to demonstrate how these decisions are made. I live in Hawai'i and have close relatives including a sister and an older brother in Wellington, and other close relatives in Auckland. In 28 December 2015 our mother passed away, 35 years after our father passed away. She had moved there to seek medical treatment and had been living with one of my sisters in near Wellington for nearly two years. I was close to my mother and visited her in Samoa and later in New Zealand every year. I knew, as did others in the family, that her deepest ties and connection were to her village home in Samoa. But, like many people in Samoa, she did not have a will. Yet we all knew she would like to be taken back. The family had gathered for her 85th birthday in Wellington. Before our arrival she had been in hospital for a week and the doctors thought she did not have

long to live, but she recovered briefly during the time we were there. But in her final days, no family-wide decision could be made because we were so geographically dispersed (Hawai'i, Mainland United States, Australia, New Zealand, New Caledonia, American Samoa and Samoa). The decision was made for cremation because it was the most rational thing to do, to both delay the funeral so we could assemble in New Zealand and to allow her remains to be taken home to Salelologa, as her final resting place. She was a devout Catholic who wholeheartedly believed in the redemption and eternal life that come as a reward for ones actions and deeds in life, and not necessarily through interventions on one's behalf through prayers and masses during one's funeral. Discussions with the priests and one of my sisters, a Catholic nun, provided words of comfort. They explained that the Church has long gone beyond doctrines opposing cremation, and that the Church now allows people to donate organs if they wish upon death. Her soul and spirit were what was important and her remains, whether reduced to ashes or buried in the ground, were a manifestation of our physical bonds.

We spent our last five days with her at Te Mangungu Marae when she was brought there and laid in state, allowing our *fa'aSamoa* mourning rites to be observed there. On the last day of her funeral mass, we invited everyone who attended her Requiem Mass to come to the *marae* for a luncheon buffet in her honour. We showed slide presentations of her life and *'āiga*, and the grandchildren danced as part of the afternoon activities. At the *marae* we stayed together: cooking, eating, praying, sleeping, and practicing songs, dances and eulogies for her funeral, cementing the bonds of family. The farewell rites we had for her in New Zealand allowed us to visit her for two weeks at the funeral home—saying our prayers and singing our family's favourite inter-denominational hymns.

The decision for cremation allowed us to plan a ceremony to return her ashes to Salelologa in 2017 when a memorial service would allow our relatives and *'āiga* to gather in Samoa to honour her and her wishes to be buried with our father. Moreover, the second memorial service planned in Samoa will celebrate her life and will honour both our parents with all their children and grandchildren and other relatives in families in attendance, so that it will also be a family reunion. Despite these practical considerations, some family members felt that a full Samoan funeral should have been held, befitting her rank, family connections, career and other life achievements, and that we had not fully considered cultural and religious imperatives. Others pointed out that her remains are still present in an urn, which can still be buried in the soil of her home place.

* * *

My recent personal experiences have helped me illustrate how funeral *fa'alavelave* have adapted to changes in the cultural, social, economic and political life of Samoans, particularly in relation to the diaspora. I have shown that there has been a blending of indigenous concepts of caring for the dead and modern practices in relation to the remains of the dead. Today they push the boundaries of social hierarchy that structure Samoan life, as in the saying, "*O Samoa o le atunu'u ua 'uma 'ona tofi* /'the foundations and positions of Samoa have been apportioned'", referring to the expectation that people know their place and social position, which includes their anticipation of their eventual burial and gravesites. This saying refers to the privileges of chiefs described in this paper (see also Meleisea and Schoeffel in this volume) that have been in a sense democratised by modern and Christian notions that families may choose to honour the dead with rites once reserved for the highest chiefs. Funerals rituals have become more complex with ongoing processes to ensure that the dead are not separated from the living and despite the economic costs they impose, they are also a means to build social capital. I predict that most people will come round to the practice of cremation and that acceptance will not mean secularisation or weakening of Samoan customs. However it is an interesting topic for further research to find out what the attitudes are in other mainstream churches such as the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa, the Church of the Latter Day Saints (Mormon) and the Methodist Church in Samoa. Cremation will not mean secularisation or attenuation of Samoan customs. If these churches allow it, it is likely to become an increasing adaptation of *fa'aSamoa* as has been the case with other aspects of funeral practices, and as Samoan families continue to expand transnationally.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My paper draws on research conducted in July 2014, December 2014, November to Dec 2015 and January 2016 in Hawai'i, Auckland and Wellington, and in March 2015 and August-September 2015 in Samoa. Fieldwork strategies included interviews, participant observation and focussed interviews conducted in Apia and Salelologa, as well as in Auckland and Wellington and Honolulu. In explaining the changes in shape and form of *fanuaoti* or *tu'ugamau* 'graves', burials and funerals, I draw also on my personal experience of funerals and their transformation both as a participant deeply involved in the process as well as an observer in the field.

NOTES

1. Sunia notes that the *'ie o le mavaega* is not meant to be reciprocated, or returned to the in-laws who brought these to pay respect, but the *'ie o le amiga* 'finemat for fetching the widow/widower' and the *'ie o le fa'amagaloga* 'finemat for forgiveness' should be returned. The orator at the staff, like master of ceremony, must explain there is no need for a pardon and forgiveness fine mat, for the wife (or husband) has more than paid and worked hard in serving her husband (or his wife) and family. Likewise, in the *'ie o le amiga* there is no need for fetching the mother of the children back to her natal famil, she is family now. This is true especially if they have children.
2. The *se'e* is similar to *tamasā* which is synonymous with *feagaiga* 'sacred covenant between brother and sister'. In Tutuila and Manu'a they use the word *tamasā*.
3. Sunia (1997) explained the difference between *faigāleo* in old times; it was to chase away demons and bad spirit, whereas *faigāleo* today is to console and make the journey of the deceased spirit safe to that resting place/paradise in the Christian sense. With the morgue, the pastor and choir of the deceased would attend the service at the morgue, or the prayer service at the home if the corpse is there overnight. This is done several times: at arrival, in the evening and in the morning before the body is taken to a church for the final service, and finally at the burial site. At reciprocation, this group should get more of the *meaalofa* 'gifts'.
4. Most villages in Samoa have *ali'i* gravesites in *paepae* 'platform of stones', nowadays most *tia* and graves are made with cement. Aumua and most elders say in precolonial Samoa, people were buried near their own houses because those living there wanted to have them nearby. But then the missionaries and colonial governments arrived and urged having cemeteries for each village on its outskirts for health reasons, which the New Zealand Administration also enforced. Most villages have a cemetery but whether this rule is enforced is another question. Lepea Village is one village where this rule is strictly adhered to this day.
5. Generally, it is believed that it was something popularised by Samoans in Tutuila, American Samoa, during unveilings. It is usually a form of expressing love for the deceased, but the excesses of it have been blamed for burdening families; the same can be said of almost any *fa'alavelave* taking place in American Samoa, which gradually made its way to independent Samoa.
6. This was the first crematorium in Samoa.
7. This was probably enacted to protect individuals from village interference, since there was a lot of criticism from the village *matai* councils when it first opened.
8. The first modern mass grave was dug in Tafa'igata. This mass grave was used to bury all the unidentified people who died in the 2009 Tsunami. It was also where the new public cemetery was located. It is also the same land where Sefo Pa'u's crematorium is located. Another instance of a mass grave was during the Great Influenza Epidemic of 1918, during the New Zealand Administration of Samoa as a Mandated Territory, which is said to have killed one-third of Samoa's population.

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## ABSTRACT

Of the most important ritual events among Samoans, referred to as *fa'alavelave*, funerals are often the most elaborate. In this article, I examine the factors that influence decisions about graves and the location of grave sites, and the most recent option of cremation, rather than burial, in the context of migration and social change. I also argue that place as identity is intimately bound up with conceptions of kinship that define where the *'āiga* (extended family, kindred) are buried, *fa'asinomaga* (identity, belonging) and *fanua* (land).

*Keywords:* burial practices, cremation, diaspora, place, Samoa

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# REVIEWS

Ballantyne, Tony: *Entanglements of Empire: Missionaries, Maori, and the Question of the Body*. Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2015. xii + 360 pp. NZ$39.99.

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There is always a danger, when reviewing a book, to review the book you wish had been written rather than the one in front of you. With Tony Ballantyne's new work there is an additional danger—expecting the title to reflect the book's contents. "The body" is sexy; it figures in the subtitle of *Entanglements of Empire*. The Introduction also promises a tome that will "examine the cross-cultural debates and entanglements set in motion by the establishment of Protestant missions in New Zealand in 1814, especially those arguments and engagements that turned on the ways in which the human body was understood and organized" (p. 2). The promise is reiterated a few pages later: "My particular concern in this book is the place of the body in the exchanges between Protestant missionaries and Maori" (p. 6). Ballantyne does not want to restrict this to a discussion of sexuality, nor does he want to read imperial history through Foucault. Rather, he is offering a "reading of the struggles over the body that developed as missionaries sought to transform Maori culture" (p. 13).

Entanglements is a good word to use when your focus is the body; it conjures up liaisons and entrapment, affairs and intrigue. It also echoes Ballantyne's earlier work on imperial webs. It is a more active word than "meeting", which some have used when writing about missionaries and Māori, and is less abrasive than "encounter", which has also been employed by others.

However, anyone who picks up *Entanglements of Empire* expecting a book about missionary attempts to "tame the savage body", or Māori attempts to transform the bodies of the evangelicals, will be puzzled. Ballantyne does touch on some of the areas of bodies in contact that the reader might expect: *tā moko* (tatooing), interpersonal violence, self-harming after the death of a *rangatira* (chief). He even devotes a chapter to sex, where "poor Mr Yate" is, once again, the subject of historical investigation. But although Ballantyne asserts that "the body was mobile and polysemic" (p. 6), there is a very real risk here that in "thinking through the body" (p. 9) we have left the corporeal behind. The body does, of course, have more than one meaning (although the book's subtitle does not ask questions of the body, let alone bodies), but too often in *Entanglements of Empire* the body is immaterial to the discussions about exploration, place, space, time, the organisation of work, commerce and the economy. That is, in large parts of the book, the material body is nowhere to be found. Instead, the reader is left with a more traditional history of New Zealand, 1814–1840, than they might have expected.

Ballantyne's strength lies in the archive. Many of the overarching ideas in this book are not new—Marsden and the first generation of missionaries thought "civilisation"

had to precede Christianity; by the 1830s there were growing tensions between the missionaries who wanted to protect Māori from colonisation and save them, and those who wanted to exploit New Zealand as a land for settlers. But Ballantyne's deft handling of the archival sources means that he fleshes out the story. Marsden, for example, becomes more than the flogging parson of Parramatta. We see how he used the Governor of New South Wales to further his missionary endeavours, how entwined he was in imperial webs, how important his relationship with Kawiti Tiitua was to the establishment of the New Zealand mission. The underlying story is familiar but Ballantyne has given us new layers.

Māori figure in Ballantyne's archive, but they had very little control over how missionaries and others represented them in letters, publications and official communiqués. So although Ballantyne reads the archive with great skill, the archive tells us far more about missionary desires than Māori realities. In the conclusion to the chapter on cultures of death, for example, we are reminded that three points have been made therein—sometimes the book reads like a lecture. All of these points centre on the missionaries' understandings of death and burial practices. Māori are present as subjects for the missionaries to study and as a force that prevented missionaries staking out cemeteries where they wished. But the archive's silences means the reader is often left knowing far less about Māori beliefs and practices than about those of the missionaries. The net result of this is that missionaries seem far more entangled in the Empire and in the particular imperial outpost that was New Zealand than Māori do. This is reflected in the final sentence of the book, where Ballantyne muses on the missionaries' legacies and concludes that "the figure of the missionary remains ambiguous two hundred years after that first sermon at Rangihoua" (p. 259). The figure of the Māori is invisible.

Duke University Press first published *Entanglements of Empire*. This AUP imprint bears some of the marks of that American history: labor, color and program might be a small price to pay, but the numerous copy-editing oversights in the text and bibliography are an irritant. For a local audience, familiar with the work of James Belich, Judith Binney, Anne Salmond, Keith Sinclair *et al*., there is little here that will surprise. For others there is probably not enough historiographical discussion to make it clear when Ballantyne is building on the works of others and when he is putting forward a new interpretation. Others still, on reading the book's title, will think it is not for them, given their interest in 19th-century economics or notions of time. They would be wrong. There is much to admire in *Entanglements of Empire* but it is hard to know who its audience is. If the individual chapters had been published as journal articles this would be much clearer. It is striking that, in a book about entanglements, there is very little direct connection between the chapters. They stand alone rather than together, which is perhaps a reflection of the book's long gestation.

*Entanglements of Empire* was not the book I expected to read. Its scope is much bigger than its subtitle allows. Ballantyne's archival prowess and mastery of imperial historiography mean that this important period in New Zealand's history has been brought before a new audience, even if the missionary and the Māori remain ambiguous figures.

Petrie, Hazel: *Outcasts of the Gods: The Struggle over Slavery in Māori New Zealand*. Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2015. 384 pp., illustrations, bibliography, index. NZ$45.00 (soft cover).

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This book explores the topic of slavery from the late-18th and throughout 19th-century Māori society. Petrie correctly identifies that there are problems with defining what exactly constituted slavery in the Māori context. Essentially, slavery involved involuntary confinement and removal from one's own native home (p. 329). But common modern day perceptions of slavery, derived from its practice in the southern states of the United States before the American Civil War, are out of place in the New Zealand setting.

Throughout the book, it becomes apparent that Māori slavery involved war captives or prisoners of war. It also included Māori outcasts or exiles from their own communities and therefore subject to bondage when living within other tribal communities. Petrie's argument is most convincing when she compares Māori slaves to French, British and American captives during the American Revolutionary War and Napoleonic Wars. These European and American war captives were subject to forced manual labour and harsh confinement, but their actual conditions depended upon their rank and usefulness to their captors.

Petrie provides example upon example of war captives, including young children and the aged, and their treatment within the Māori communities in which they were captive. Her coverage is comprehensive, citing instances from all around the North and South Islands, and including the Chatham Islands. Petrie emphasises that the treatment of slaves depended on their social status as well as their economic worth. Of particular interest is her explanation that the elite in Māori communities were freed from activities, such as manual labour and food preparation, as that would compromise their sacredness (*tapu*). The common slaves were ones that could perform those types of activities.

The sources for information in the book involved an impressive search of primary 19th-century sources from the usual recorders—missionaries, travellers and other observers. Petrie acknowledges that European commentators would have found it difficult to identify whether people were the aged, infirmed or indeed war captives, and that commonly the term "slave" was used by all these observers. Of note, is Petrie's acknowledgement that even Māori sources used language that changed over time such as *taurekareka*, *pononga* or *mokai*, all of which have primary dictionary definitions 'slave, captive' (H.W. Williams 1971), and consequently she is very cautious about labelling and carefully distinguishes between captives and slaves or servants. Nonetheless, Petrie makes a compelling argument that, whether war captive or slave or whatever term is used, their hold on human dignity was very tenuous. They could be killed, eaten, treated quite cruelly or subjected to other indignities at the whim of their captors (despite there being some general rules of conduct regarding the treatment of captives or slaves). However, it is axiomatic that what happens in

practice is often different from the stated principle; there was "no one reality" (p. 77) in the treatment of captives or slaves. There were, indeed, cases of benevolence as well as utmost cruelty.

Petrie's book is organised into 11 chapters. Chapter 1 addresses the issue of skin colour in considerations about slavery. It makes the reader ponder whether certain basic colours such as red, black and white are influential in racial perspectives. Chapter 2 examines Māori society concepts of *mana* and *tapu* and their role in defining slavery. In Chapter 3, Petrie addresses an important idea for the whole book. This is whether Māori "slaves" should rightly be viewed as Māori war captives instead of slaves. Chapters 4 and 5 develop the idea of slaves as important economic units. This is in terms of them being manual workers or involved with other entrepreneurial ventures such as travel guides or the sex trade. The general themes of Chapters 6 to 8 examine such issues as the abolition of slave practices, British ideas of liberty and freedom, the missionaries' role in encouraging the emancipation of slaves, as well as what was to happen to slaves once they were released. Chapters 9 to 11 cover such diverse topics as the offensiveness of the institution of slavery to the English, whether Māori were enslaved by the British, and the changing vocabulary of slavery.

In considering the structure of the book, it seemed odd to me that the topic of Chapter 11, "The Language of Slavery", was not an earlier chapter of the book, given that the terms used in referring to "slaves" is such a central issue of Petrie's thesis. Also the book takes a different direction in Chapter 10. The theme of that chapter is the argument that all Māori became slaves of the British as colonisation progressed from 1840. This chapter seemed out of place in the book, in which the other chapters fully focussed on Māori slaves or war captives or whatever they actually were.

The most challenging part of the book is Chapter 8. It addressed the big historical question of why slaves were eventually emancipated from their captors circa 1830s. This is the finest chapter of them all. Petrie argues her point well in debunking the old general impression in New Zealand historiography that missionary conversions among Māori led them to free their slaves. Petrie points out that, to the contrary, Māori were freeing their slaves before Christianity had any influence.

The increased and increasing large numbers of Māori slaves/war captives was making the whole institution untenable anyway. The increasing numbers were brought about by the acquisition of muskets and burgeoning musket warfare, and by the economic benefits that could be gained by the use of slave labour through trading with Europeans. Forced labour among Māori in bringing land into production was initially economically advantageous for some tribal groups. But boom and bust cycles are characteristic of most economies. Once the initial early 19th-century European demand for food and other raw materials, such as flax and timber, was met, an increased or sustained forced labour made no economic sense. Slaves needed to be managed and it was easier to let them go free rather than to maintain them during economic depressed periods throughout the 1820s and 1830s.

But then, there was the irony of this action. Once slaves were freed, they could not necessarily go back to their original homes. Some had been placed in servitude from a young age and therefore knew no other existence. Some wanted to stay with

their captors, some turned to missionary work, while others did return to their original kin. It is obvious that these emancipated Māori slaves experienced what international slave scholar Orlando Patterson (1982) coined "social death", a concept that scholars might explore and examine further.

All in all, it was about time a scholar examined this unsavoury subject in New Zealand history. Petrie's solid work on the subject will stand the test of time, and it will serve as the first reference for any scholar further pursuing the topic of slavery in Māori New Zealand.

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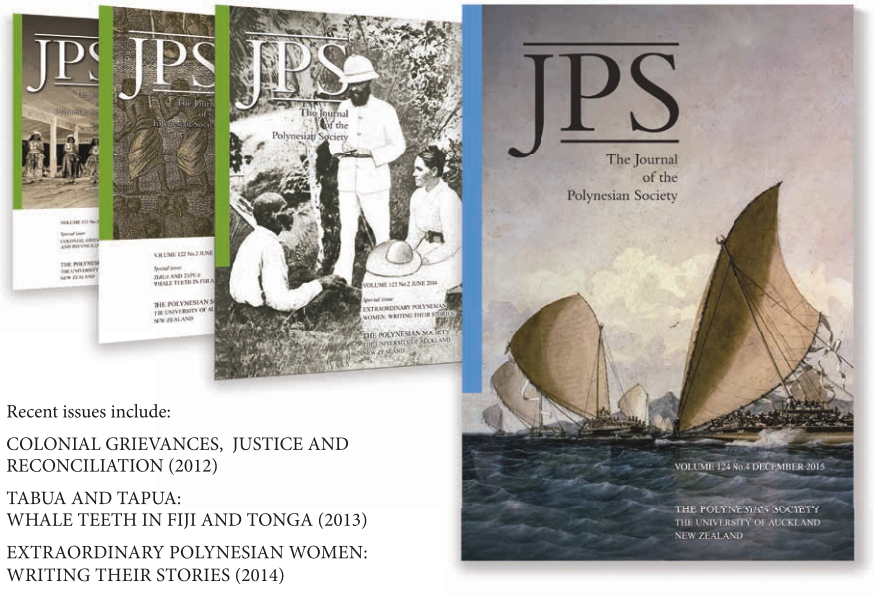


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Camus, Guigone: *Tabiteuea Kiribati*. Geneva: Foundation Culturelle, Musée Barbier-Mueller, 2014. 183 pp., appendix, bibliography. €20 (softcover).

Ellis, Ngarino: *A Whakapapa Tradition, 100 Years of Ngati Porou Carving, 1830–1930*. Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2016. 312 pp., bibliography, illustrations, index, notes. NZ$69.99 (hardcover).

Moon, Paul: *Ka Ngaro Te Reo Māori Language Under Siege in the Nineteenth Century.* Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2016. 335 pp., bibliography, index. NZ$39.95 (soft cover).

Stevenson, Karen: *Filipe Tohi: Journey to the Present: Makahoko Mei Lotokafa*. Suva: University of South Pacific Press, 2015. 100 pp. n.p. (softcover).

* The inclusion of a publication in this list neither assumes nor precludes its subsequent review.

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