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TAMARAŌŌŌ

- 103 Kō te tangata te ra nana i tēnīhanga a Nīnē-mui te po.
Māi kōna te tēnīhanga tō e Māui tikitiki, kore e
te tangata, ake, ake, ake.
- 104 Kī ta te pakaha tēhanga. no te tēhakaaro kore o tēi rā.
Kīhai i māhara, kua hanga rana kī te te orcone a
naua ora e te tēhakaaro na rōto atu i te putā o tōia tē
tēhakaaro i tēhanga i ana rakan kōroa, kō
kōmanawānūtanga kī te kōroa, te rōkanga kī te
105 Tēna i te putanga māi o tēhakaaro i te ahua o tē
ana rana kī ana kōroa. a kī noa iho rana

UNEAPA ISLAND SOCIETY IN THE 19TH CENTURY: A RECONSTRUCTION

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This is what used to happen before. You didn't just make anyone the leader of a community. The path from the ancestors was marked. Their name in our language is *tumbuku*. If you call the genealogies you will find them. In the old system everyone in the community had their place, but now we have elections and make our selection in terms of ability. (Robert Bate, Penata, Uneapa, 1986)

The Vitu (Witu) Islands lie 60km northwest of the Willaumez Peninsula, West New Britain, Papua New Guinea. Five of the eight largest islands are inhabited. Uneapa, also called Bali or Unea, is the southernmost of the group. Almost circular and 30 km² in area, it is the second-largest but most populous of the islands. The purpose of this paper is to reconstruct Uneapa society as it existed at the end of the 19th century before intensive European contact. I argue that in pre-contact times Uneapa was a ranked society with hereditary chiefs, but that 120 years of internal and external change have transformed it. I describe the historical society, including a war involving the whole island that illustrates its dynamics, discuss transformations that occurred following intensive European contact and briefly note the significance of a hierarchical society in the island's location.

Although Sahlins (1963: 287) admitted that not all Melanesian societies were "constrained and truncated in their evolution" and that chiefly systems existed in the region, his analytical model identifying big-men with Melanesia and chiefs with Polynesia has often been accepted as definitive. Authoritative studies of Melanesian societies led by big-men encouraged researchers to expect big-men and to characterise leaders as such even if they did not entirely fit Sahlins's model. Latterly, more attention has been paid to the apportionment of ascription and achievement in Melanesian and Polynesian societies as, in varying degrees, all societies include both. As Marcus (1989: 176) explained, even Polynesian chiefs had to satisfy their subjects' expectations as exemplary as well as sacred beings. In Melanesian societies, hereditary leaders of local descent groups, experts such as warriors and ritual specialists, and the children of big-men made use of their positions to achieve big-man status. Even Siuai *mumi*, the prototype for Sahlins's big-man, required membership of a powerful matrilineage and high-ranking sponsors to achieve success (Oliver [1955] 1967: 441).

It has been argued, based on linguistic reconstruction and ethnography, that when Austronesian speakers arrived in Melanesia their societies were ranked and were led by chiefs (Pawley 1982; Scaglione 1996). Although Chowning (1991: 63) and Lichtenberk (1986) expressed reservations about whether chiefs existed in this early period, many societies certainly possessed them at a later date. Ethnographic and archaeological evidence for religious sites, horticultural intensification, fortifications and regional trading suggests that complex societies were common (Sand 2002). Hierarchies appeared most developed in Vanuatu and New Caledonia where Austronesians were the first settlers (Stevenson and Dodson 1995), and Bellwood (1996) suggested that these evolved further during migration to Polynesia. In contrast, migrants remaining in Western Melanesia created societies that emphasised achievement due to the “strong influence and even cultural take-over of social networks by Papuan-speakers” (Bellwood 1996: 23). An alternative argument is that originally, neither Austronesian nor non-Austronesian speakers lived in societies led by big-men, and the big-man role developed later when ambitious men took advantage of new opportunities and resources brought by outsiders and consolidated sufficient power to replace traditional leaders.

There is considerable disagreement about how indigenous societies were influenced by innovations introduced by Austronesian speakers at first settlement (Specht *et al.* 2014), but two later stimuli encouraging achieved leadership have been proposed. In both cases, new resources and knowledge moved through local networks even before intensive contact (Spriggs 2008). When the sweet potato arrived in the New Guinea Highlands from Indonesia in the 18th century, Strathern (1987, 1993) suggested that exploitation of this new resource led to the emergence of big-men who displaced great men, leaders with ritual or martial expertise. Referring to coastal and island Melanesia, Keesing (1992: 187) argued that “processes that produced the Melanesian big-man had in fact been operating through the millennium preceding European invasion, as an older system of hereditary chiefdoms”.

In the 19th and 20th centuries, blackbirding and introduced diseases led to depopulation in these regions, opening communities to radical political change. Later, colonial governments both hindered traditional routes to power and created new ones that favoured non-traditional leaders (Sand 2002; Spriggs 2008). Thurnwald (1951) personally observed a decrease in social differentiation in Buin between 1907 and 1934. Keesing (1992) demonstrated how one 19th-century Malaita big-man, Kwaisulia, had exploited both his traditional status and new opportunities to achieve prominence. Besides human agency, it is likely that over the centuries, tsunamis and volcanism, typical of this area, have precipitated social change favouring innovative leaders. Due to these various processes, emphases on

ascription and achievement in some Melanesian societies now differ more or less radically from the past (Douglas 1979: 5).

While some hierarchical societies were transformed, others, both Austronesian- and non-Austronesian-speaking, persisted in Northwest New Guinea, including the Sepik, offshore islands such as Manam and the Schoutens, the south-central and southeastern coastal regions of Papua, including the Trobriands, the Bismarck Archipelago and the Solomon Islands (Allen 1984; Hau'ofa 1971; Lutkehaus 1990; Malinowski [1922] 1961; H.M. Ross 2005). Even where big-men came to dominate, positions supported by ascription continued (e.g., Blythe 1979; Epstein 1969; H.M. Ross 2005).

CLUES TO THE PAST

Historical accounts, recent archaeological research and oral history collected during fieldwork in 1975 and 1986 provide clues to Uneapa's past. Abel Tasman discovered the Vitu Islands for Europe in 1643 and D'Entrecasteaux visited in 1793, but neither landed (Bodrogi 1971: 47). Captain John Hayes of the British East India Company may have passed the islands in 1793 (Griffin 1990: 165). In 1830, Captain Benjamin Morrell abducted a young man from Uneapa, Dako, after his canoe capsized during an offshore engagement of cannons against slingshots (Fairhead 2015: 7; Keeler 1828–31: Log No. 339; A.J. Morrell 1833: 205; B. Morrell 1832: 466). Dako and a captive from Ninigo were taken to the USA and displayed as cannibals in popular shows. An early ethnographer, Theodore Dwight, who wrote two short articles (Dwight 1834, 1835) based on conversations with Dako, reported that Uneapa was composed of chiefdoms that warred within the island but traded peacefully with the other Vitu Islands and mainland New Britain. He identified Dako as the son of a chief living on one of Uneapa's three mountains.

Morrell, who had visions of establishing an American colony in the Vitu Islands, took Dako home in 1834 (Fairhead 2015: 160). Selim Woodworth (1834–35) and Thomas Jefferson Jacobs (1844), who served on Morrell's ship, the *Margaret Oakley*, described their exploration of the Vitu Islands, the New Britain coast, the Vitiaz Strait and Northeast New Guinea. Jacobs's (1844) report included fantasy elements such as ruined cities and a snarling panther and erroneously reported that Dako became king of Uneapa. However, local accounts do confirm that Dako succeeded to his father's chiefdom in the south of the island. Jacobs describes how Dako led him through "a handsome garden with walks of coral sand and fences of bamboo worked with the form of diamond lattices and then into his palace where he introduced me to his two wives" (Jacobs 1844: 272). Discounting the royal terminology, it appears that Dako had a superior house and sufficient status to practice polygyny. Later literature gives minimal information about Uneapa social structure.

Parkinson ([1907] 1999) described material culture, and German records briefly document land alienation, development of commercial plantations and the establishment of government administration. Among more recent writers, Blythe (1992, 1995) discussed mythology, Lattas (2001, 2005) described the local cargo cult and Fairhead (2015) and Blythe and Fairhead (2017), first contact with Europeans.

Archaeological surveys (Torrence *et al.* 2002; Torrence and Neall 2004) revealed several defensive works and re-examined the anthropomorphic stone carvings in Malangai Village previously described by Riebe (1967). These could be considered signs of social differentiation, but during further archaeological investigation Byrne (2008) suggested that pre-contact Uneapa was egalitarian. She disagreed with “the social evolutionary perspectives that monument-building equates with chiefdoms” and noted that “Uneapa’s monumental landscape could have been built up over time by a non-hierarchical, egalitarian society” (p. 279). Nevertheless, she pointed out that archaeological evidence did not support Sahlins’s (1963: 287) contention that big-man systems were made up of “small, separate and equal political blocs” or that “the tribal plan is one of politically unintegrated segments” (Byrne 2008: 243). She argued that since locale patterning was unique within each clan, clans might have different roles, and that while big-man status is not usually inherited, control of meeting places “was perhaps inherited from ancestors, as suggested by named [stone] seats associated with lineages” (p. 245). The implications were that ascription did play a significant role in Uneapa society and that there were more inclusive political units than the clan.

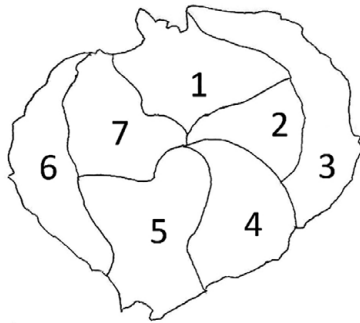
UNEAPA SOCIETY

During fieldwork in 1975 and 1986, my doubts about whether Uneapa society had been egalitarian were aroused because some people were excellent genealogists who had learned *nanata* ‘stories of families’ from their parents and were knowledgeable about traditional culture and island history while others knew very little about their forebears. The experts proved to be men and women with high rank in their descent groups. They described a society led by *tumbuku*,¹ who were hereditary chiefs rather than big-men. Good genealogists could recall 8 to 22 generations of hereditary leaders. In Tok Pisin, they often called these leaders big-men, the generic term for anyone with high social status, but referred to senior *tumbuku* as kings and queens. Their information revealed that three major elements factored into Uneapa social organisation: locality, descent and rank. Each was relevant to the political strategies pursued by individuals and groups.

Location

Uneapa was well populated in the 19th century, but it is hard to estimate numbers. The death toll from disease, including the 1897 smallpox epidemic that devastated Garove and Mundua, the largest and third-largest of the Vitu Islands (Groves 1925: ch. 13 p. 5; Parkinson [1907] 1999: 49), is unknown. A 1901 Malaria Patrol placed the population of Uneapa between 1,000 and 3,000 (Bodrogi 1971: 49). Given the complexity of Uneapa social organisation and the number of settlements named, the population was perhaps over 1,500.

Uneapa's encircling crater wall and the three mountains that rise within—Kumbu, Tamongone and Kumburi—form natural boundaries that likely influenced the formation of local groups. The building blocks of Uneapa society were the territories of the descent groups that Byrne (2008) called clans. These were subdivided into sub-clan or lineage territories, and within these, extended families lived in scattered hamlets. Several clans, considered descendants of common ancestors, united in regional alliances named for their combined fighting forces (Fig. 1). Modern Uneapa oral historians described them as armies or police forces. The seven alliances included inland and coastal areas, and landlocked clans had access to the sea, with permission, through the territory of allies.



1. Vundakumbu (north face of Mt Kumbu)
2. Tanekare (Mt Tamongone)
3. Vundapenata (north and east crater wall and Mt Kumburi)
4. Tsinegaro (east face of Mt Kumbu)
5. Magarogaro (south face of Mt Kumbu)
6. Givololo (western crater wall)
7. Nalokaloka (west slope of Mt Kumbu and valley floor).

Figure 1. Regional alliances.

Conventionally, West and East Uneapa were considered rivals with Vundakumbu, Vundapenata and Tanekare opposing Givololo, Tsinegaro, Magarogaro and Nalokaloka. In practice, island politics were more complex. In modern Uneapa, a division into West and East Uneapa remains, but alliances no longer exist. The administration recognises 13 communities. These usually consist of a large nucleated village and several hamlets. The Seventh Day Adventist villages of Nidoko and Nigilani and the Kalt Misin (Cult Mission) village at Nikalava are associated administratively with Rukaboroko, Penata and Monopo respectively.² Table 1 lists the modern villages included in the old alliance territories.

Table 1. Alliances and modern villages.

Alliance	Modern villages
Vundakumbu (north face of Mt Kumbu)	Makiri, Rukaboroko, Nibonde, Nidoko
Tanekare (Mt Tamongone and land to the north)	Tamongone
Vundapenata (north and east crater wall, east face of Mt Kumburi)	Kumburi 2, Navandau (aka Paliankumburi or Matapupuro), Penataketinerave
Tsinegaro (east face of Mt Kumburi)	Malangai
Magarogaro (south/southeast face of Mt Kumbu)	Penatabotong, Kumburi 1, Nalagaro
Givololo	Penata, Monopo, Nigilani, Nikalava
Nalokaloka (The Airfield; west slope of Mt Kumbu and valley floor)	There are no major settlements. The majority of the land was alienated for the Bali plantation.

A problem in reconstructing the past is that modern villages only partly replicate alliances. As Byrne (2008) noted, at least seven clans were displaced by the Bali plantation, forcing resident members to relocate. Modern nucleated villages are usually composed of members of clans that would previously

have belonged to the same alliance, but sometimes clans that supported different alliances moved in together.³ As well, some modern villages have shifted their locations since they were first established. The ancestors of Tamongone residents were allies in Tanekare but the modern village is in Vundakumbu territory. Today, unless prompted, islanders casually use the names of modern villages rather than those of alliances or local clans when discussing historical events.

Descent

Regional and clan territories were owned by kin groups thought to be descended from powerful pre-humans called *vuvumu*. Regional founders were usually beyond the range of genealogical memory, but their stories structured social geography, including hierarchy at the most inclusive level. Vundakumbu, the alliance located on the north face of Mt Kumbu, had precedence. Its founders, Puruele and his wife Gilime, who resided at Vunakambiri, a settlement in Niparaha, literally ‘The Place of the Big-Men’, were considered to have originated Uneapa society because they divided the island among their children. Bito Rave explained, “It [Niparaha] is the father of all Bali because the ancestors spread from there and filled the island.”

Within regions, clans and sometimes sub-clans were considered to have supernatural origins. Pulata, “the king of everyone”, Puruele’s firstborn in some accounts, is said to have assigned his children to various parts of Mt Kumbu, directing his firstborn, also called Pulata, to remain at Vunakambiri as *tumbuku vindika* ‘chief of the family’. A younger son, the snake *vuvumu*, Mataluangi, whose story is central to the Kalt Misin, Uneapa’s cargo cult, originated the Tanekulu clan (Blythe 1995). Neighbouring Lovanua was the territory of Puruele’s daughter Baru, who took the form of a bird. Other children settled elsewhere on the mountain. Later, dynasties were founded through the marriages of Puruele’s descendants and *vuvumu* migrants from Northwest New Britain, the Willaumez Peninsula and other Vitu islands. Some sub-clans also had origins in human–supernatural marriages. For example, a major sub-clan within Tanekulu was reputedly founded when a high-ranking human, Vagelo Niduru, abducted and married a *vuvumu* woman called Mangu who lived beneath Koa Bay.

Uneapa descent groups (*habu turanga*) were ramage or conical clans. Individuals claimed descent from founders through any combination of male and/or female links. They belonged to the descent group of both parents and other lineal kin as far back as they could remember. Descent groups were not exogamous, and second-cousin marriage was permitted, allowing some women to marry locally. However, groups residing on ancestral land resembled localised patrilineages because men usually remained on their fathers’ land and women, who were not considered to own land, moved to

their husbands' residences. Women and the minority of men who married away remained descent-group members, as did their descendants. Women could return after failed marriages and refugee kin were welcomed. Non-residents preserved relations with ancestral groups by attending their rituals, supporting them in warfare and sending female descendants back in marriage. The integrity of dispersed clans was key to Uneapa social dynamics.

Ranking

In Uneapa, ranking was based on the birth order of siblings, with the firstborn having precedence irrespective of gender. At each segmentary level groups were led by a *tumbuku* descended from the group founder through a line of firstborn children. An expert genealogist placed individuals in a *habu turanga* by starting with the founder and establishing a series of firstborn descendants including the current *tumbuku*. He or she then called the descendants of the founder's other children in birth order. The closer descendants were genealogically to the founder, the higher their status and the better remembered the links.

As firstborn children matured, their childhood achievements were publicly celebrated. The higher their status, the more it was validated through ceremony and the more respect they received.

I would sit down. I wouldn't be able to walk around in front of him. He is a big-man. He walks around due to pigs. If you contradicted what he said, people would tell you, "You aren't honouring this man. Haven't you seen that everyone's pigs have been exhausted for him? Why are you behaving toward him like this?" They would be angry with him and strike him. This is the meaning of the firstborn child. ... If he came to you and said, "Sister, I want your child to marry", you couldn't object. He is our leader. He has had pigs killed for him. He might say, "I would like this pig." One, two, the pig would be his. He is a big-man. He has had pigs killed for him. (Bambala, Makiri)⁴

Firstborns grew up expecting to lead. Boys lived in young men's houses with hamlet-mates. Girls slept in their parents' houses until marriage. Nevertheless, young men's houses were named for high-ranking firstborns of either gender.

Important *tumbuku* enjoyed certain privileges based on their status. For example, Laupu, who ruled Vundakumbu in the mid-19th century, and his highborn wife, Mangu Turanga, did not work.

Mangu just sat at home and the [other] women that Laupu married looked after her. They would bring everything she needed to the village and give it to her. She did not walk about collecting things from the bush, like coconuts or firewood or water. All the women would go and get things for her, bring

them to her, put them in her hand. If she wanted to chew betel nut they would take the skin and throw it away, and if she wanted to eat the meat with pepper and lime she did not take it in her hand and eat. The women would prepare it and put it in her mouth and she would eat. She would not hold it in her hand. They would put the lime stick into the lime and put it into her mouth for her to eat. She did not hold out her hand. They would cut her drinking coconut and she would drink. She was an important person. ... She was a queen like Queen Elizabeth. (Pengetsi, Tamongone)

Within alliances, the highest-ranking descent group specialised in government. Those led by little *tumbuku* descended from younger siblings of founders took orders from them but also had specialties.⁵ For example, in the Vundakumbu alliance, the Lovanua clan were peace-keepers/facilitators, Makiri Bakanaralo were *bambabamba* 'warriors', and Tanekulu knew the magic for crop fertility.

To profit from connections throughout and beyond the island and to preserve their social status, high-ranking individuals ensured that their children learned about their ancestry. Kavulio of Kumbu Village recalled that when his parents

told their stories they would encompass Bali, and I thought that I originated from all over Bali. But afterwards I was surprised again. My mother varied her story so that I originated from the mainland and my father told me how his family came from Point Bulu, from Nalave.

This knowledge was vital because occasionally, an incompetent *tumbuku* was usurped by a kinsman with more knowledge or greater ability to leverage connections. Marriages between high-ranking men and women consolidated power, reconciled enemies and created new alliances and trade relations. For example, Pulata of Niparaha (Vundakumbu) consolidated ties with Vundapenata when he married Kondo, a high-ranking woman from Kumburi (Vundapenata). The marriage is memorialised in a large stone, Vatukemango, which Kondo brought to Vunakambiri.

Important marriages sometimes generated new descent groups:

The firstborn child of Tambato, founder of Davalivali [Penataketinerave, Vundapenata alliance], was Rave and he was the father of Baule and Vakale and we are descended from them. His [Baule's] sister originated Vangavaralei at Penata [Goloki clan, Givololo alliance] and we are Davalivali here. For Vakale married and is the ancestor of everyone there and Baule married and is the ancestor of everyone in Davalivali. They are called Vangavaralei because Vokale and Baule took their canoe and poled round the coast. ... They came to the beach and his sister married at Penata and he married here. (Takaili, Penataketinerave)

Vundapenata and Givololo belonged respectively to the traditionally hostile east and west divisions of Uneapa, but such marriages ensured that enmity was never absolute. Since descent was cognatic, *tumbuku* headed both their local descent group and descent group members in other communities. Inter-marriage among high-ranking members of Uneapa society led to the emergence of an elite with common interests. A class system did not develop as in some Polynesian societies, but the elite collaborated when it was to their mutual advantage. For example, they worked together to ensure that minor conflicts did not escalate.

WAR AND PEACE

War

Hostilities occurred most frequently between West Uneapa and East Uneapa, and in 1986, this division still marked village football team rivalries. Boundaries between these two areas were indicated by defensive ditches, including those identified by Byrne (2008: 517, 525) and Torrence *et al.* (2002). There were also designated battlegrounds.⁶

An alliance's army was formally commanded by the *tumbuku*, and his permission was required for major undertakings. However, in practice, the decision to fight depended on consensus among clan leaders. The *tumbuku* "shouldn't talk but stand there while his group surrounds him and all the seniors advise him" (Robert Bate, Penata). Pengetsi, of Tamongone Village, noted that a *tumbuku* himself did not bear arms or attend battles "but would sit there like a government [ruler]. He just stayed there and only his police went to war." As well, care was taken to keep the elite safe. Kavulio of Kumbu related that when his ancestor, Galiki, was queen in Givololo, warriors would surround the seniors "so that they would not be troubled by the fighting".⁷

Tumbuku found other ways than fighting to be feared. Tatau of Rukaboroko said that his Kumbu ancestors were called *Vuhuku* Kumbu and his immediate ancestor, the *tumbuku* Laupu was called Tanepuka *Vohuku*.⁸

If the ancestors killed a man and brought him back and he [Laupu] heard them carry him to the community he would run down because he wanted to drink his blood. He carried a coconut shell. He made a spoon and he would shovel up the blood and pour it into the coconut shell and drink. He would drink the blood of the man they had killed. He was a man for drinking blood! He was a man for eating people, this man they called the first of them all!

In a fight, the main combatants could expect support from relatives in other regions, and oral history suggests that young warriors took advantage of these opportunities for combat. If allies killed an enemy, they would present the body to the main combatants and receive a reward. However, there were

constraints on violence. As well as dynastic marriages between high-ranking people in different regions, ordinary marriages occurred across boundaries, and consequently borderlands were settled by people with dual loyalties. Kin should not harm one another and, theoretically, were able to visit one another even when their communities were at war. Rules of engagement recognised that many people had kin among the enemy. So, for example,

If someone from Kumbu attacked a man and he said “*Pulata Vunakambiri au*”, “I descend from Pulata of Vunakambiri”, we would stop fighting him. In Penata, someone might say “*Ulevuvu au*”, “I descend from Ulevuvu”, and the lineage of Ulevuvu would not attack him. (Kavulio, Kumbu)

The closer the relationship among opponents, the less extreme the conflict. Clans on the Tanekare-Vundapenata border supported their respective alliances but being *wanpissin* ‘kin’ only engaged in minor skirmishes at their battleground, Naputa, on their common boundary. Vundapenata and Tanekare were likewise intermarried across their boundaries with Vundakumbu. On occasions, all three allied against Givololo and Tsinegaro.

Intra-regional boundaries were relatively peaceful. For example, in Vundapenata, “There was a boundary between Palianikumburi and Penataketinerave, but it wasn’t a hostile boundary. ... People went as far as their own boundaries. It wasn’t for fighting—just we lived here and they lived there” (Nate, Navandau).

Small-scale fights and feuds were more common than wars. Strategies to prevent the escalation of violence ideally involved the death of the perpetrator. Vambura of Makiri maintained,

If you broke the law no one else would suffer in your place. They would punish you by killing you. There was no other way. It wasn’t like today. ... If we do wrong, the government says, “We will punish you. Then you will learn and understand and behave in a different way.” Before it wasn’t like that. If you did something wrong, then you would be speared. ... There would be no more anger or fighting and everyone would be content.

Frequently, abduction of women led to feuds. Serial revenge killing could best be contained if a relative could be persuaded to exact justice. For example,

Devoko, a warrior, had a brother called Labongi who abducted the wife of a man called Kamboro. The two of them went to Kumbu. ... On one occasion he [Labongi] left Kuendi [the abductee] on Kumbu and came down to hear the news. His brother said, “You people kill Labongi. We don’t want him alive. The women’s people will come and kill us.” They got their spears and began to fight, but he was a strong, tall man. They threw their spears but he dodged them and had his spear to pay them back. He chased them away. They told

his brother, “We will give you two bundles of *tambu* [‘cassowary bone and quill money’] if you help us.” “Where did he go?” His brother walked by. ... [Devoko] came up behind him and cast his spear and it lodged in his back. He took his spear and killed him. [Devoko] went up the hill. “You people take this man and bury him. I have killed him.” So now the relatives of the couple stopped being angry. (Vunga Lingei, Penataketinerave)

Alternatively, a *bamba* ‘warrior’ from another group could be hired for cassowary bone money to avenge a death. However, this strategy did not always prevent retaliation.

Tumbuku attempted to contain conflict. If they felt that one of their own people had behaved badly, they could sanction a death to avoid retaliation and the deaths of innocent people. *Tumbuku* from different regions sometimes collaborated to prevent feuds from escalating.

If the people of the short posts [i.e., low-ranking groups] were fighting they would come and talk to us [*tumbuku*]. We would sanction revenge. If they [i.e., Vundakumbu] fought with Penata [Givololo] and someone was killed they would appeal to the big-man there, and then they would go and kill someone in Penata. They couldn’t stop them or object. It was our blood, and the fights would stop. (Bambala, Makiri)

Possibly the *tumbuku* of Vundakumbu had special privileges since:

All the big-men of Vunakambiri just stayed there. All the young men would go and fight either at Penata [Givololo] or Palianikumbu [Magarogaro]. ... If they killed someone from here or someone from Palianikumbu they would go to Vunakambiri so that the big-men could avenge it. It was the most important place on Bali. All the big-men lived there and all their police went round Bali. (Bambala, Makiri)

Peace

Byrne (2005, 2008) surveyed gathering places throughout the island. She noted public meeting places varying in size, function and the scale of ceremonies enacted. Oral history confirms that sub-clans, clans and regions had increasingly bigger, more organised spaces where *rogomo* ‘spirit houses’ were built, dances performed and guests from all over Uneapa received. Other spaces included shrines, where magic was performed and offerings made to *vuvumu*, and bush or beach areas, off-limits to women, where men constructed canoes, prepared artwork, initiated young men, practised performances and carried out preliminary rituals before public ceremonies.

War ceremonies were more spontaneous and less elaborate than peace ceremonies. They included making offerings to ancestors for victory and

celebrations after killing enemies. Typically, victims were brought by singing and dancing men to a butchering table situated away from the centre of a major meeting place.⁹ Opinions differ as to whether women cooked human flesh, but it was agreed that they were banned from observing the butchering process.

Rogomo and large decorated canoes were constructed in peacetime. They involved the production of additional pigs and other food and extensive collaboration. Major ceremonies were held at designated sites sponsored by a senior *tumbuku* and authorised by a holder of a drum with a name.¹⁰ Only about a half dozen of these drums existed, so even a major *tumbuku* might pay an owner to “prepare his drum so that people would behave in an orderly way” (Bito Rave, Kumbu). For example, Laupu made use of the drum associated with Nabuo in Lovanua clan territory. I was told,

If a big-man wanted to make ready a *kundu* [‘drum’] and he wanted to do it at ... Nabuo, he had to kill a pig for us, the lineage of Tangava. This cleared the place to make a *hous malagan* [*rogomo*]. ... First he had to give a pig for the land, to clear the place so that he could start work. My ancestors took this pig and cooked it. They knew all the parts of the family that lived in different places and would send a leg to Penata, Makiri, Rukaboroko or wherever. If the people of Tangava were there, some of the pig would go to them. This would inform them that Nabuo had been cleared. (Bambala, Makiri)

Readying the drum inaugurated a ban on fighting. Given the ubiquity of major ramage and the intermarriage of high-ranking families, truces encompassed most, perhaps all, of the island. Any dissension led to the silencing of the drum until the offender had paid a pig. Theoretically, his life could be taken instead but in reality, there was some latitude. During a dance at Vunakambiri, a woman stabbed a rival with whom her husband was having an affair. She was not punished because the *tumbuku*, Panga, the grandson of Laupu and Mangu, judged, “The drum must not die. The woman was injured because of her own bad behaviour. She was running around and being promiscuous” (Takaili, Penataketinerave).

Rogomo honoured the dead and united ramage members throughout the island with their ancestors. Pulata (1974) translated *rogomo* as ‘house of respect’ in an account of his own ancestor’s memorial ceremony. Several allied clans collaborated in their construction.

The first post in the *hous malagan* is for the senior clan, the second for the second clan, and the short posts for the other clans. Each area of the house belonged to a particular group, and each had their own *matambubu* [‘design’] on it. (Vambura, Makiri)

Each post was brought to the building site with special songs. Different clans had specific roles in the construction of the *rogomo*. In Tsinegaro, where Durapenata ranked after Malangai and Paravulu,

[t]hose [higher-ranked] two groups knew all about the important work but they couldn't make designs. They could use drums. They could make a *hous malagan* but they could not decorate it. Only Durapenata could do that. If they wanted to perform a ceremony, they would discuss it with Durapenata. Durapenata would ask the chief [*tumbuku*], "What would you like?" "I want to do this". So he would instruct Durapenata and they would come and decorate [the *rogomo*]. Only Durapenata could paint the *matambubu*. They were the carpenters. They were not big-men, but if the big-men wanted something, they could do it. (Bito, Malangai)

Later stages included creating costumes and decorations, rehearsing performances, revealing the completed *rogomo*, and finally, ceremonies featuring singing, dancing, masking and the exchange of pigs and other food.

THE WAR AT MALANGAI

A 19th-century war illustrates the dynamics of Uneapa society. Beginning as an intra-alliance quarrel, it ultimately involved the entire island. The Tsinegaro alliance included three clans located on Mt Kumburi: Malangai, Paravulu and Durapenata, descended respectively from Kolokolo, Kalago and Rave, the three sons of a founding couple, Bito and Buaka. Saropo, the current *tumbuku* of the senior lineage (Malangai) and his eldest son Bito, who were 13 and 14 generations below the ramage founder, told the story, and others added details.

Vorai, a sixth-generation descendant of Kolokolo, the firstborn of Bito and Buaka, was the *tumbuku* of the three lineages. Conflict began when Vorai's third son, Pilapila, misbehaved with a Durapenata woman. The woman's family were furious. As *tumbuku*, Vorai should have punished the crime, perhaps even had his son killed, but he tried to save him, instructing his other sons to take him to the mainland because "he has done wrong and we are ashamed of him". The brothers left him with Kove relatives on Kapo Island.¹¹

With Pilapila unreachable, Durapenata hired an assassin to kill Vorai, although he was both a kinsman and their *tumbuku*. They invited him and his wife, Kumui, to collect pandanus north of Malangai territory. While Kumui gathered the fruit, Vorai stayed with the canoe. On her return she found him dead. She took him home, then sought refuge with her brother in Givololo. On their return from Kove, the brothers discovered that their father's *rogomo* had been burned, an insult to both the living and the dead of the senior lineage. Durapenata's actions enraged the descendants of Kolokolo not only in the alliance but throughout the whole island. Baule, Vorai's second son, met with

Lepani from the neighbouring community, Palianikumburi (Vundapenata alliance), about countermeasures. Bitō recounted,

E vovo tupi. That is to say, they went about down below to Penataketinerave, Penata, Makiri and the other Penata, Nivoroko [Monopo] over there, Penatabotong and Palianikumbu. They went around to all of them. They went to the two Kumburis. They followed the beach and visited Matapupuru and Tamongone and Kumbu up above. They all met together and set the law in motion.¹²

Members and allies of Malangai lineage from all over the island met between modern Tamongone and Kumburi and surrounded the hill at Durapenata.

Together, they destroyed Durapenata. They burned all the houses and killed all the dogs. There was nothing left. The people who lived there later were half-castes of Malangai and Kumburi, and some were half-castes of Matapupuru and Penataketinerave.

Bitō added that the people who participated in the attack carved the smaller stones at Malangai as memorials to the war while they waited for the feast at which they received payment from the lineage of Kolokolo. The large stone, Vatutianga, carved by an ancestor called Tiapo, was already in place.

Vorai's kin now pursued his suspected assassin, Puto, a high-ranking man from Lekavungo (modern Penatabotong) in the neighbouring Magarogaro alliance¹³ who had either carried out or arranged the killing. He was married to Galiki, who was either the current or designated *tumbuku* of the senior lineage in Givololo. After the assassination, Puto retreated to Narandadeko on Mt Kumbu in fear for his life, but soon joined his wife's kin in Givololo.

Hostilities between Tsinegaro and Magarogaro continued. When Morrell returned Dako to Uneapa in 1834, they were ongoing (Jacobs 1844: 102). There was also conflict within Givololo because both Puto and Vorai's wife, Kumui, had found refuge there. Kumui encouraged her kin to take revenge on Puto and his kin and perhaps fomented too much dissension. Finally,

One big-man [perhaps Puto himself] saw that his men were being killed, and so he put on all his beads and his pig tusks. He put *marangingi* ['decorations'] on his head. At Nikalava [a formal battleground], he saw a big stone that looked like an umbrella and sat on it. They said, "Go back! The enemy will see you." They gave him all kinds of inducements, but he kept sitting there. What could they do? They said, "Kumui, come and see this areca palm." ... They marked the areca palm and threw their spears. She fell down and died. They carried her away. (Tsigomuri, Penatabotong)

Despite entering Givololo as a refugee, Puto prospered. His descendants became *tumbuku* of the senior line of Givololo through his wife, Galiki.

AFTERMATH

When I first visited Uneapa in 1975, the society appeared egalitarian. Local government councillors and their deputies provided formal leadership. Traditional leaders spoke sparingly at public meetings, although they continued to be respected. Big-men resembling Sahlins's (1963) model were absent. Entrepreneurs ran copra businesses, but they did not overtly compete for renown.

To some extent, the ranking system and the position of *tumbuku* appeared obsolete because there were fewer institutions to give it meaning. Warfare had ceased before intensive European contact and was not resumed. Magarogaro and Givololo agreed to substitute canoe races for armed conflict, and Magarogaro sent two women in marriage to Givololo "so if anyone in Penata started making trouble then the women could stand up and prevent it". Givololo and Vundapenata also made peace. Finally, storytellers relate that the west and the east of the island made a general peace, perhaps a strategic reaction to an increasing German presence. Combatants met at Namanekambaka, a battleground near modern Nigilani Village, for one last fight, but oral historians said that the warriors were distracted by a beautiful bird that displayed before them and so entranced them that they went home without fighting.

Conversion to Catholicism took place in the 1930s. In 1975, islanders were Catholics, cargo cultists or Seventh Day Adventists. Superficially there was little sign of the old religion as overt ancestor worship and men's-house ceremonies had ceased. Houses of respect (*rogo*) continued to be built in Garove and Mundua, but on Uneapa the last traditional *rogomo* was built before World War II (Fig. 2). A few were attempted later, but they were "different from the old ones". Large-scale ceremonies were rare although smaller celebrations were held. Traditional currency was occasionally used as a component of bride price.

The German authorities, and later the Australian, encouraged settlement in large nucleated villages rather than hamlets. People identified increasingly with their local communities. It was suggested that if there were warfare today, visiting relatives would be associated with their village rather than their family and might be killed. The Bali-Vitu Local Government vice-president noted that rank became less important as "the eldest used to be boss of all the family property and could divide it up. Now this doesn't work well because the younger brothers don't obey him and the family breaks up."

As Scaglione (1996) argued, the *luluai* system imposed by the German colonial administration suited hierarchical societies because traditional leaders were appointed. This occurred in Uneapa, but as a result, the latter became agents of the government rather than rulers in their own right. Kumbu lost its primacy. Then, in 1967, when Local Government Councils



Figure 2. *Rogo*, Koravu Village, Mundua, 1975.

were established, younger men with more formal education but sometimes lower hereditary status became councillors. The council vice-president noted there was disenchantment with the “mixed” leadership in the island, but that if today they were to try to reorganise Uneapa on traditional lines, the cargo cultists, who had rejected the Local Government Council, would say, “I told you so”. In fact, the Kalt Misin blended traditional and innovative strategies. Its leader, Cherry Dakoa Takaili, was primarily affiliated to the Goloki clan (Givololo alliance), which specialised in peacemaking and facilitation. He was a self-made man who had come to prominence through his business enterprises, including the Kalt Misin’s copra business, Perukuma. Traditionally, he would have been a leader but not of the highest rank, and, like Kwaisulia, he had made the most of both modern and traditional avenues to power. Nevertheless, the cult supported the traditional system and also adopted its symbolism (Fig. 3). Kalt Misin churches were adorned with the barracuda ridgepole and artwork typical of *rogomo* and were built on ceremonial sites that included Vunakambiri, where Panga’s *rogomo* had stood. As well, the family heads who represented villages supporting the cargo cult notably included *ex-luluai* and other traditional leaders.

Council supporters too had not entirely abandoned the old order. Some *tumbuku* had been able to reinvent themselves. Administration-inspired business groups were organised on traditional principles, and some high-



Figure 3. Cargo Cult Church, Uneapa.



Figure 4. *Rogomo* adapted for Alois Tailo's First Mass, 1975.

ranking men became entrepreneurs, directing copra and cocoa businesses. Where expedient, a distinction was made between official leaders, the genealogically senior men, and those who provided practical business leadership. Lineage-owned designs (*matambubu*) were painted on trade stores. It was also significant that Alois Tailo, the first ordained Catholic priest from Uneapa and a lineal descendant of Puto and Galiki, held his first mass in a Christian adaptation of a *rogomo* (Fig. 4).

* * *

The Vitu Islands form one point in the triangle defined by M.D. Ross (1988) as the area from which the Lapita culture dispersed into the Melanesian Islands and the central Pacific about 1000 BC (Sheppard *et al.* 2015). Little is known about the Vitu Islands at this time, although preliminary archaeological studies speculate occupation for perhaps 6,000 years (Torrence *et al.* 2002: 7). Unlike the mainland, there has been no volcanism in recent millennia on Uneapa, and the external crater wall provides some protection against tsunamis. In contrast, the traditions of the island's trading partners tell of social disruption in recent centuries. The Bulu people migrated from Nakanai (Muku), the Bakovi moved up from the base of the Willaumez Peninsula (Specht 1980) and the Garove people migrated from the Willaumez Peninsula (Specht 1980). Thurston (1987) suggested that the coastal peoples of West New Britain (Kove, Kaliai, Bariai) migrated from the Siassi region in the late 18th or early 19th century. Oral history indicates that Uneapa has received immigrants from Garove, Mundua, the Willaumez Peninsula and northwest New Britain, including refugees from volcanic activity. Effects on the island's culture are unknown.

Uneapa Islanders appear exceptional in West New Britain in their emphasis on hierarchy. In the other Vitu Islands, matrilineage leadership was based on genealogical seniority, but matrilineages are not ranked within clans (Blythe 1979). Among the Lakalai, Kove, Kaliai and Bariai on the mainland leadership is achieved, although, among the Kove, being the child of a big-man was an advantage (Chowning 1979: 70–71). Along the north New Britain coast firstborn children were celebrated as in Uneapa, but here more prestige accrued to the child's sponsor than his protégé (Chowning 1979; McPherson 2007: 139). Perhaps in the past the custom was associated with ranking. Uneapa's deep genealogies imply social continuity for the past several hundred years, and this stability may factor in both its hierarchical social organisation and its conservative language (M.D. Ross 1988: 263).

Traits shared with other ranked Oceanic societies included leaders who managed war and peace, dispensed justice and oversaw the building of large canoes and ceremonial and defensive structures. Uneapa chiefs did not receive tribute, but they could leverage the labour of the "people of the

short posts". Vitu Islanders had excellent canoes (Parkinson [1907] 1999: 104), cultivated trade partnerships in communities from the Willaumez Peninsula to Kilenge and sometimes travelled further. Whether hereditary leadership and ranking in 19th-century Uneapa are survivals from Lapita times or later developments is uncertain. However, there are some indications that the island's social organisation may have changed. It is considered that proto-Oceanic societies had matrilineal descent (Hage 1999; Marck 2008), and there are clues that Uneapa, like the other Vitu Islands, may once have done so.¹⁴ Bifurcate merging kinship terminology (Marck 2008), ideas about heritable totems, and moieties diagnosable through lines on the hand support this. Legacies of Lapita times may remain, but other aspects of Uneapa society as it existed in the 19th century may have developed *in situ*.

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NOTES

1. Chiefs or high-ranking persons were referred to as *tumbuku*. *Turanga* was also used as a title, e.g., Mangu Turanga. *Paraha* signified a prominent person, an adult or an older person compared to a younger. *Tamahane kapau* 'big-man' was sometimes used to describe a leader.
2. After Local Government Councils were set up in 1967, some people moved to hamlets on family-owned land, leaving the nucleated villages favoured by the colonial powers. New communities were also established by religious minorities. Seventh Day Adventist families from Rukaboroko and Penata, where most people supported the Kalt Misin, moved respectively to Nidoko and Nigilani, where they had land rights. Nikalava was founded by cargo cultists from predominantly Roman Catholic Monopo.
3. Alliance boundaries indicated in Figure 1 are approximate only. Byrne's (2008: 406) map shows clan territories in the west of the island but similar data are not available for the east. It is difficult to establish the alliance affiliations of clans whose lands were alienated for the plantation. Since members of Kulubago and Vunaloto moved to Nalagaro village, these clans were probably part of the Magarogaro alliance together with Lekavungo (modern Penatabotong) and Mororoa (Bali Harbour area). Nalokaloka, often referred to as "The people of the airfield", included Rulakumbu and most probably Vunidiguru, clans located on the northwest slope of Mt Kumbu and the valley floor. This alliance was aligned with Givololo, and when their land was alienated for the Bali plantation, members moved to Monopo. Vunemaliku, not included in Byrne's map and described to me as part of Nalokaloka, was possibly a sub-clan of Vunidiguru located near the Givololo border.
4. Malinowski ([1922] 1961: 52) described a similar pattern of deference in the Trobriand Islands.

5. Specialisation existed in hierarchical Melanesian societies both within and between descent groups. Among Mekeo- and Roro-speaking people in Central Papua, there were two chiefs in each clan, the high chief and the war chief, and departmental specialists, such as war magicians (Seligman 1910: 342). In the Trobriands, regions had different specialties, partly based on local resources (Malinowski [1922] 1961: 67–68). In Fiji, clans within each political group specialised, for example, in fishing and carpentry (Deane 1921: 2019–20; Hooper 2006: 7).
6. There was a battleground at Vatu Kapau—where Mororoa (Magarogaro) fought with Tamongone (Tanekare), Kumbu (Vundakumbu), Kumburi (Vundapenata) and occasionally Penata (Givololo). Malangai (Tsinegaro) fought at Nalagudupu, the place for fighting and dying. Vatukele was their boundary. If a man from Palianikumburi or Kumburi (Vundapenata) crossed the boundary at Vatukele he would die. And if men from above (Tsinegaro) crossed the boundary they would die. (Koroi, Penatabotong)

Formal battles seem to have resembled extreme sport, with posturing and mutual insults as a major component. They contrast with serious conflicts, such as the Malangai War, and assassinations where particular victims were targeted.

7. Close kin of *tumbuku* did fight. When Uneapa warriors attacked Morrell's ship, Dako, the son of the Magarogaro *tumbuku* Tupi (Mogagee), led the attack (A.J. Morrell 1833). The sons of Vorai, *tumbuku* of Malangai (Tsinegaro), were famous fighters.
8. *Vohuku* were the cannibal monsters of West New Britain folktales. Tanepuka means Father of Puka. The latter was Laupu's fourth son.
9. The butchering table at Vunakambiri appears to be in a prominent position, but this part of the site may have been included in the *mamada*, the enclosure behind the *rogomo*, which was off-limits to women and the uninitiated.
10. If a drum was inherited by a high-ranking woman or given to her as dowry, she would take it when she married. Mangu Turanga, who held the drum associated with Nitombo (Vundapenata), lived with her husband Laupu at Nabare (Vundakumbu).
11. There were occasional marriages with people from West New Britain. Kove survivors of a wrecked canoe also settled in West Uneapa, probably in the 19th century.
12. Note use of modern village names.
13. Lekavungo (modern Penatabotong) and Mororoa (Bali Harbour area) were part of the Magarogaro alliance, but Puto likely had kin in the Tsinegaro alliance. Byrne (2008) noted the lack of stone features in Magarogaro. According to Tsigomuri of Kumburi, "There were stones with names at the station. When they cut the plantation they removed all the stones. They broke them and took them away."
14. The Vitu Islands other than Uneapa have dispersed matrilineal clans, *hahaka* 'creepers', and local lineages, *dananga* (branches). In Uneapa, kinship terminology is bifurcate-merging, as elsewhere in the Vitu Islands, suggesting that descent was previously unilineal (Marck 2008). In Uneapa *habu turanga* refers to all cognatic descendants of a descent group ancestor. In the other Vitu Islands, it refers to the cognatic descendants of matrilineage men, inclusive of their great-grandchildren.

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ABSTRACT

Although chiefs are frequently associated with Polynesia and big-men with Melanesia, ascription and achievement are relevant to leadership in both regions. Hierarchical societies with ascribed leaders occur throughout Melanesia and, based on archaeological and ethnographic evidence, were more common in the past. In recent centuries, external influences have provided opportunities for achieved leadership. The purpose of this paper is to reconstruct Uneapa society as it existed at the end of the 19th century before intensive European contact. Historical accounts, recent archaeological research and oral accounts indicate that prior to the 20th century, Uneapa consisted of a number of chiefdoms. Location, descent and ranking were integral to social organisation, including institutions of war and peace. A 19th-century conflict that involved the whole island and resulted in the destruction of a community illustrates how these elements intersected. Internal and external change over 120 years have transformed Uneapa into a more egalitarian society, but traces of the old order remain. Uneapa is situated to the north of the Willaumez Peninsula, within the Proto-Oceanic triangle (as defined by Malcolm Ross), the likely dispersal centre for Western Oceanic languages. In a seismically active region, Uneapa differs from the Willaumez Peninsula and coastal West New Britain in terms of residential continuity. However, there are clues suggesting that social change has occurred since settlement.

Keywords: big-men, chiefdoms, hierarchy, Melanesia, social history, Uneapa, Vitu Islands

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