Purism, Syncretism, Symbiosis

Cohabiting traditions on Mota, Banks Islands, Vanuatu

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prologue

On Saint Matthew's Day 1996, September 21st, which also is the Village Saint's Day of Lotawan, Wilson Lolomaio dies. He was the last of the flesh-and-blood archives of the history and tradition of Mota, indeed of the entire Banks Islands, who relentlessly advocated the need to know, and to follow, the way of the ancestors. He had been ridiculed by many for starting most of his sentences with 'Before …', but he nevertheless stuck to his conviction that knowing one's background is of vital importance for any well-functioning society. Attempts had been made to arrange weekly sessions where everyone in Lotawan sat down and listened to his stories, but after just a few weeks the young people began to loose interest, and even the adults made other priorities since Wilson was a strong and healthy man although he was more than eighty years old, whose teaching they would have many more chances to listen to. Then he quite suddenly dies, and in an instant everyone on Mota with an interest in traditional knowledge and history realises the loss they have suffered. Two weeks later an announcement sent over Radio Vanuatu saying that a Norwegian student wants to come to Mota to learn of its customs, history and culture is received by a man in Liwotqei village. Wilson's youngest son Paul and his grandchildren Frank Balian and Kate Fransi hear of this and an idea is conceived: he must stay in Lotawan so that the remains of Wilson's vast knowledge might be written down. One week later I arrive.

One month before the completion of this thesis, I hear the news of Wilson's widow Kake's death, who became my beloved little grandmother and joking partner after I had learned the Mota language. We spent much time talking about the women's traditional knowledge, particularly the graded societies, *Suqe*, of the women, the workings of which she had been among the last to witness. And joined with the sadness I felt for the passing away of a dear relative and friend, I realised that my father Paul's intention with my coming to Lotawan had started to bear fruit: the most comprehensive account of the women's *Suqe* is now recorded in my fieldnotes and will be given back to the Motese.

This thesis is dedicated to iWilson and roKake.

PART 1: THE BASICS

introduction

Coherence in the account - adherence to the reality[1]

The discipline of anthropology has lately received an increasing amount of criticism for being a quest for coherence and authenticity, where complex and ambiguous realities are reduced to, and presented as, seamless, a-temporal, conform aggregates, complying with Radcliffe-Brown's methodology of social anthropology as being 'snapshots in reality'. An outline of the pattern that unites the various parts of this thesis, and the ethnography of Mota as a whole, could therefore be justifiably omitted with reference to contemporary tendencies within the scientific field which this work addresses. When I nevertheless choose to present such an outline it is because I strongly believe it to have a real presence, not only as an analytical abstract that helps the reader, and the author, to construct analogies facilitating intra- and inter-cultural comparison, but also as a classificatory framework which the Motese themselves apply when conceptually digesting their experiences. To a student who previously was strictly opposed to the incorporation of cognitive categories within the field of social anthropology, since they in his view usually were unsubstantiated obfuscations which violated Durkheim's principle of explaining one social fact with another social fact, this was an unexpected cup to drain.[2] He might

[1] It has been my intention to produce a text which promotes criticism based on alternative interpretations of my data, in the spirit of the impressive work of Codrington (1891) which will be used extensively in this thesis. This strategy implies not leaving out elements which do not comply with the general picture. It should also involve sobriety regarding the rendering of unconfirmed 'supportive statements' - the employment of which David Schneider calls 'cheating' (1980: 124) - and vague references to other works to substantiate my views and experiences, something I have not been able to observe. Clifford Geertz lists the following as important factors in building an image of text credibility: "Footnotes help, verbatim texts help even more [hoc demonstrandum est], detail impresses, numbers normally carry the day." (1995: 17). The present work is not meant to be an unassailable product, but on the contrary aims to provoke discussion regarding the themes it touches upon.

[2] I maintain my scepticism towards analytical approaches which **comprehensively** operationalise concepts conceived in a setting both geographically and thematically remote from the empirical field, particularly visible in the many psychoanalytical interpretations of the various rituals

comfort himself with a reformulation of Bateson's solution on where to situate the Mind (Bateson 1972): if the origin of culture is immanent (physio-/psychological) it has to be made transcendent (social), whereas if the source is transcendent it has to be made immanent.

Inside - outside

The main classificatory principle that I have found to be prevalent in the Motese's organising of their world, and hence in my empirical material, is the one of inclusion and exclusion inherent in the terms *ta løløi*, 'inside', and *ta vareag*, 'outside'. These two terms provide the Motese with a flexible, and therefore powerful, tool for organising impulses of both internal as well as external origin. The concepts contain more specified denotations applicable for particular areas, which all nevertheless are encompassed by the opposition inside/outside.

Ta løløi	**Inside**	***Ta vareag***	**Outside**
Tamennina	Belongs to/ applicable only to us	*Tamenneira*	Belongs to/ applicable only to 'them'
Tanun	Living people	*Tamate*	Spiritual beings, both ghosts, lost souls, invoked essences, and men during dances and certain rituals
Tamate	See above	*Tamaur*	Consciousness of living people
Nina silsilga	Us blackmen	*Neira we qaga*	The whitemen
Sågåi	Relative/joking partner	*Tavala ima*	Other side/marriage partner
Å gene tape vatñmårag	Secret things	*Å gene talå maea*	Open/accessible things

connected to male cults and associations I have encountered during my work on this thesis (see for instance Allen 1967; Tuzin 1980; Cornwall and Lindisfarne 1994).

Å gene tape kastom	Traditional knowledge, activities and practices	*Å gene we garaqa*	New phenomena
Å Låglue	The Church	*Å gene ta vareag*	Everything else
Å Salagoro	The Salagoro	*Å gene ta vareag*	Everything else
Å vanua	The village[3]	*Å måt*	The bush
Å tqei	Garden, or potential clearing	*Å utag*	Area which can not be turned into garden

The usefulness of this conceptual tool rests on the Motese's ability to totally change the contents of the basic dichotomy inside/outside while still retaining its form, thus creating an overarching system based on a situationally determined criterion of **relevance**. Right from the end of my fieldwork the main scope of analytical inquiry had been to understand how the Motese manage to live with two apparently contradicting cosmologies - the 'imported' Anglican Christian and the 'traditional' Melanesian. Gradually the understanding evolved that the two systems of practice, beliefs and meaning are not experienced as being fundamentally antithetical to anyone but the fieldworker, and that maybe they even can not be counted as cosmologies in the ordinary meaning of the word, but merely are co-residing metaphysical domains which are intertwined with what the outsider might experience as being less mystical but nevertheless significant and morally sanctioned domains, such as kinship, food, work and body.

One could even argue that the 'true' cosmology actually is the **system of classification**, with the opposition inside/outside not only being the main tool for the ordering **of** the world but is equipped with qualities approaching an almost ontological nature, i.e. producing statements concerning how and what the world **is**. And that this might explain the ease and the pragmatic interest with which the Motese, and other societies that organise their worlds in the same manner, approach and incorporate new ideas and

[3] *Å vanua* means both village, island and nation, depending on context, and thus the term resembles the English word 'place'.

changing conditions, since what is at stake is **not** their entire world view but rather practice-complexes which are more easily adaptable should new appealing structures be encountered. In the same vein it could be argued that the incorporation of Christianity on Mota did not occur on the epistemological level that religion occupies in many other societies - following Geertz in imputing with religion the ability to "provide a framework of general ideas in terms of which a wide range of experience […] can be given a meaningful form" (1973: 124) and shape the social order (op.cit: 119) - but rather on a level which makes the structures of practice and belief inherent in Christianity more readily substitutable when the situation calls for different explanations, solutions and actions. This might be interpreted as if the Motese have a more secularised attitude towards life, but I would rather suggest that the approximate structural equality of the many different domains implies an **expansion** of the mystical theme within the different fields of Motese society and culture rather than a reduction.

However, since neither this thesis nor the field of social anthropology itself deals with questions regarding ontology, the last parts of the preceding argument will be forsaken since it is based merely on unsubstantiated speculations, and because it could suggest that the Motese are not 'really' Christians, which would be very far from what I experienced. The dichotomy inside/outside nevertheless remains decisive for the mapping of the contents of the Motese world, and enables the Motese to treat the structures of belief, knowledge and practice of the Church and the Salagoro respectively as alternately opposed, juxtaposed and merged, depending on the relevant context.

Let us now anticipate the events by briefly mentioning how this classificatory principle is discernible within the social, cultural, physiological and metaphysical fields discussed in this thesis, and what consequences it brings about regarding the handling of the more general issues which are possible to extract from the ethnography of Mota.

Kinship

Within the domain of kinship the principle of inclusion and exclusion is an obvious constituent of the *sågåi* matrilineal moiety system - *sågåi*:relative:joking partner::*tavala ima*:marriage partner:respect. The division between, and interdependence of, the two halves is expressed on most ritual occasions, and is the main theme of social interaction. Kinship imagery is therefore utilised on several other arenas, particularly in connection with the Church, and is fundamental for the understanding of how the Motese map their social surroundings. It might also be suggested that this dualism have consequences not only when the Motese think about their relationships, but in addition both is a symptom of and a increment to their classificatory principle.

The changes which this system undergoes at present are extensive, and is regarded by the Motese to be the most severe obstruction of the link between them and their history and tradition. Nevertheless, the ancient practice of adoption serves to retain the moiety system, and reveals the non-static contents of even as moral a domain as that of kinship, by being a manifestation of the basic system of classification. The kinship system is now becoming an idiom through which people might talk **about** relations more than **being** the actual relations, and the works of the inside/outside perceptual tool is again seen: adaptation to the new situation is facilitated since the formal structure, and thereby continuity, is preserved although the situation has occasioned a need to transform the components of the institution.

Salagoro and Church

The main part of this thesis addresses the dynamics related to the incorporation of the two dominant ritual complexes on the island: the elements of Melanesian religious structures inherent in the practices, knowledge and beliefs associated with the secret male *Tamate* associations, the total of which I follow the Motese in labelling 'Salagoro' after the associations' sacred dwellings;[4] and the corresponding structures of the 150 years old

[4] Some readers might question my assertion when placing an exclusively male secret domain at the core of the Motese's social and ritual practice, since this apparently neglects the influence the

Anglican Church on Mota.[5] The two will be referred to as 'traditions', since the Motese regard both as thoroughly embedded in their society and do not see any essential structural difference between them. This focus on co-residing bulks of knowledge and ritual will probably lead to a categorising of the present work as belonging to the field of syncretism studies. The notion of syncretism has in my opinion been applied to describe too wide a range of phenomena, which has reduced its value as a possible fruitful comparative concept - and recent works have even abandoned it altogether, to employ what in my view seems an even less distinct terminology of 'synthesis' or 'hybridisation'.[6] At the same time the concept has paradoxically been used too restrictively, since syncretism studies generally have omitted the process of ritual and dogmatic conservatism when focusing upon the interface between different ritual and cosmological structures. This process, which I have chosen to label '**purism**', is the field where the workings of the Motese's classificatory principle is made more explicit than anywhere else. In Part 2, Excluding Traditions, we encounter the Salagoro and the Church in their unmitigated, 'inside' forms. It is my contention that these forms are essentialised constructs that have been, and still are being shaped in an ongoing dialogue with the "meaningful other", their respective 'outsides' (Kolshus n.d.). The Motese also exhibit their concern regarding the potential metaphysical contamination which might be brought

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women's corresponding practices have on the Motese way of life and perception of their situation, and therefore make this work liable to a recurrent error within the field, viz. that of giving priority to dominant male structures and thus omitting the explanations of half of the population studied. The initiation rituals of the major *Tamate* associations take place every six to ten years, and they did not occur during my fieldwork. I was therefore only allowed to see *å gene talå maea*, the publicly open manifestations of the associations, just like the women and other non-initiated men were. The important position I assign to the rituals of the *Tamate* reflects their interest, reactions and convictions regarding the metaphysical structures which the associations form a part of.

[5] I will capitalise the first letter when discussing the ideological, ritual or structural contents of the Church and the Salagoro, whereas non-capitalisation denotes the actual building or area.

[6] At the European Society for Oceanists' biannual conference in Leiden June 1999 I presented a paper which used the term 'syncretism' in the same narrow sense that it will denote here (Kolshus n.d.), in order to stimulate a debate regarding our conceptual tools. The attempt was appreciated, but some of the participants wanted it replaced with 'synthesis' since they felt that 'syncretism' was a derogative term. I do not find neither 'synthesis' nor 'hybridisation' to have the same descriptive value as 'syncretism' in my application of the word - and if the term is experienced as being derogative this obviously must be due to our presentation of it, and will be mended by an emptying and refuelling of the concept's meaning contents.

about when elements from one sphere of relevance inadvertently is brought in physical or metaphorical proximity to the other (cf. Douglas 1966). The inside/outside classification is therefore essential in **keeping apart** the different legal, dogmatic, spatial, bodily, spiritual and ritual structures related to the two traditions, and thus strengthens these structures internally. This process enables the Motese to substitute one set of belief, practice and meaning with another depending on the relevant context, and thereby provides the student with a solution regarding his initial issue: how it is possible to maintain two seemingly contradicting world views without causing any apparent public stress or comprehensive attempts to reconcile the two.

The principle of situational relevance inherent in the opposition inside/outside creates occasions that ostensibly counteract the principles of ritual and metaphysical purity, such as when the *tamate* head-dresses used in the dances are placed in the village church to spend the night before the performance, while access to the church is blocked with a leaf preventing non-initiates from entering the church under threat of being abducted and punished by the big *Tamate* who dwells in the village salagoro. What has happened is the creation of another sphere of relevance, that of *kastom*, in which the Motese in this case include both the Salagoro and the Church as against the more 'profane' activities which are relatively 'outside' regarding the ritual domain. This is related to another part of the "under deconstruction"- concept of syncretism, namely a process which I label '**symbiosis**': the intended use of elements from the other tradition in order to illuminate aspect of the first. As a pedagogical measure it creates a metaphorical link between the two traditions, such as when the initiation rituals of the *Tamate liwoa* is explained by using the imagery of the baptism of the Church.

Through this juxtaposition of the otherwise so carefully separated traditions an unintended osmosis might occur, which creates new structures made up by inseparable entropies consisting of components from both. These are the features for which I reserve the term '**syncretism**', and it is used in this thesis to explain for instance the special

powers equivalent to *mana* which are attributed the clergy, and the reverence approaching sacredness with which the Motese regard the salagoro, as we will see in Part 4, Blended Traditions.

It might be inferred that this terminology is unsatisfactory since both purism and symbiosis are social processes while my notion of syncretism is but an outcome of these. As will be seen below, syncretism is most definitely a process but differs from the two former in generating unintended forms, whereas purism and symbiosis are characterised by the creation of more or less conscious constructs. They all describe processes which will emerge in the interface between different ritual and dogmatic structures where no one attains the hegemony as provider of explanations for the ordering of people's lives, which is exactly the situation that the old syncretism-concept struggled to grasp analytically.

Body and consumption

Just as the system of ideological and spatial relevance determines which structure to apply in the social and ritual field, the two traditions are materialised in the bodies of every Motese individual. In Part 3, The Mediating Body, the nature of the two souls, *atai*, is illustrated, and we see that the spheres of relevance which pertain to the ritual arena and the island proper are mirrored in the Motese's perception of the body. The two souls united in every Motese establish the physical body as a metonymic representation of the island as a whole and the social and ritual processes which take place there. The body thus becomes an important focal point both to the fieldworker, as an indicator of the practical consequences of the classificatory principle of inside/outside, and to the Motese, as a tangible arena for the negotiation of social and cultural development inherent in their aesthetic and moral standards.

The general principle of situational relevance is visualised on several occasions regarding the perception of the body: in the Motese's explanation of which of the two souls is the active agent on which occasion; in their division between two main kinds of illnesses, one that might strike everyone and one which only will harm 'blackmen', with their

corresponding causes and cures; and in the morally laden domain of food, where there are particular kinds of food applicable for particular occasions, and where the meal as the main arena for sociability becomes an important field for the communication of inclusion and exclusion.

We will see that the perceptual tool of inside/outside works on different levels which together incorporate all aspects of what it implies to be a Motese: as a person in interaction with other persons within the social network based on inclusion and exclusion - and their occasional fusion - inherent in the kinship system; as provider of the cognitive means for thinking about the world and perceptually manipulate and organise this world; and as a description of the nature of the body and a prescription for how to satisfy its basic needs for health and nourishment.

These social, psychological and physiological domains are products of, and continuously exposed to, elaboration by employment of the principle of relevance innate in the opposition inside/outside. One could therefore argue that on Mota the cultural field encompasses these other aspects of 'being', providing both the anthropologist and the Motese with a coherent whole…

Again we are moving a bit on the far side, and to prevent further suppositions let us commence with the primary issue of this thesis: life as we humans experience and live it under the particular circumstances encountered on the small island of Mota in the Southwest Pacific.

kinship - the creation of relations

On Mota, kinship is the single most important element when it comes to transforming an individual into a socially "manageable" person capable of entering durable and sustainable relationships. This transformation of the Individual into a Person is actually a prerequisite for the person to be treated **as** an individual, i.e. being ascribed the ability and likelihood to perform acts and create ideas which were not previously executed or contemplated, since **non**-individualised human beings otherwise are imputed with the attributes of the most readily available stereotype[7]: a woman from Ambrym is thus a poisoner, a coprabuyer is a cheat, and a Frenchman is a pompous, monolingual whip-punisher. These categorisations remain uncorrected until the interaction prevails long enough for the categorised to exhibit traits which are incompatible with the expected patterns and hence occasion a need for the creation of a Person, which is a far more easy and socially rewarding process than to remodel the generalisations we all live by. It has been postulated that the individualisation of Man is a feature related to the alleged age of modernity. This is in my view a highly inaccurate and ethnocentric contention, as are many of the other dogmas connected with this purported extraordinary state of being and state of mind which Western Man has endured for the last eighty years. Motese kinship practice shows that incorporation **promotes** the possibility for individual idiosyncrasies rather than creating homogeneity and uniformity.

Kin relations do not comprise 'total' statuses determining the direction and contents of the other positions and relations which are available to the Motese. As we will see below, the multiplexity of the kin relations between any two Motese provides an opportunity to

[7] In my view, this is a basic classification process common to all human beings. The Others are not many but One, and the continuum of distinction follows an inverted line of the relative geographical and cultural distance, increasing the crudeness of the generalisations and thus economising the intellectual effort used for making the world coherent and manoeuvrable.

opt for the set of relations which best serves the interests of the two (cf. Kondo 1990: 133 f, 151 f). The preferential aspect of 'friendship' most frequently operates independently of kinship ties. In addition, there are arenas such as party politics where the ties of kinship are suspended altogether - a most interesting phenomenon which unfortunately will be addressed only briefly in this thesis, as it is slightly outside its scope.

Nevertheless, kinship remains decisive regarding the allotment of land and sea utilisation rights, and to a certain extent residential patterns; it represents a tool for the mapping of individuals, and as such a scheme for prescribed behaviour; and, maybe most important of all, it constitutes an ideological focus regarding the Motese's definition of who they are, as against the Others: "we are the ones who belong to our mothers' side and marry with our fathers' side". A most interesting feature regarding kinship on Mota is that it at present undergoes profound changes which inevitably will cause, and to some extent already has caused, alterations in the daily intercourse, in the ritual life, and in the conceptual foci of the Motese. We will, however, begin where I began, with the idealities.

the house with the two sides

Before reaching Mota I was told by people in the provincial capital Sola that I was going to be adopted soon after my arrival. This is a common practice in most parts of rural Vanuatu and is done to everyone who is going to spend more than just some months on an island to which they do not belong and where no prior kin relationships are traceable. School children, students, teachers, medical workers and government officials alike are thus included in the local state of affairs.

My own adoption took place three days after I had arrived on Mota. I had been told right from the first day that there were two lines on Mota which intermarried, and everybody

belonged to their mother's line.[8] Each represented one side of a metaphorical house, and together these two sides supported the roof. The people who belonged to your side were your *sågåi*, which now is used to denote 'relative', the others were your *tavala ima*, literally 'other side of the house'. The members of one side could not survive without the other since no house consisted of only one wall. Both sides were required to provide the other with marriage partners to sustain the population and hence the roof, which was interpreted to be a symbol of the Motese society and its customs.
It was Qat, the mythical cultural hero of the Banks Islands, who instigated the arrangement, and therefore corresponding systems are found throughout the Banks with slight local variations. They are all compatible, and since inter-island marriage is a quite frequent occurrence it is easy to establish the exact kin-links with literally any of the approximately 9.000 people in the Banks through the use of certain points and persons of reference.

During my adoption ceremony this dual structure of the two *sågåi* was visualised. I was placed on a bench with the village's *kastom* chief standing next to me and my fellow-villagers-to-be lined up to my right and left facing each other, as an unmistakable statement of my not yet being fully incorporated: I was neither/nor, betwixt and between (Turner 1964). After a brief introduction by the chief concerning what was about to happen, he called on my fathers to come and take me in their custody. My 'main' father and his elder brother went out of their line with their backs bent in what I later learned was a respectful posture, grabbed me by the arms and kissed my hands before they guided me to their line. The chief proclaimed that the men standing in this line now were my fathers or my fathers' *sågåi* and thus my *tavala ima*, and all the men shook my hand. He then called upon my mothers to come forward, and my mother and the wife of my eldest father came over, kissed me on the cheek and followed me to their group. The chief said

[8] This was conveyed through the indiscriminate Bislama word laen.

that these people were my *sågåi*, the ones I should turn to in case I needed something, and that I now formally belonged to them. My new relatives greeted me in the same way as our *tavala ima* had done, after which the ceremony was over. The chief used the opportunity to emphasise the importance of hygienic measures while every villager joined in a communal meal to celebrate the occasion. I was served chicken by my new parents.

The overt principles of kinship: *poroporo* and *nommavva*

Kinship serves both as a conceptual scheme - in Bradd Shore's terminology 'Social Orientational Model' (1996: 62f), and as a pattern for more or less ritualised behaviour. To follow Bateson's (1972; 1991) solution to the problem of where to situate the Mind, one might state that the immanent and the transcendent capacities of kinship are interdependent: the conceptual models will need to be given a public expression in order to be experienced as having interpersonal validity, whereas the behavioural patterns require a more or less coherent and mutual frame of interpretation to justify some of the oddities inherent in the behavioural prescriptions, which again serves to reinforce the validity of both aspects of kinship.[9]

On Mota, the behavioural imperatives of kinship are placed on a scale ranging from enjoined liberties to enjoined reverence. The first cultural lesson I was taught when reaching Mota was the story of the two sides of the house, which immediately was linked to the practical consequences of this arrangement. I was told whom I was allowed to, indeed should, make fun of and laugh with, and towards whom I was not supposed to take

[9] I am aware that kin relationships and their attributes usually are presented by anthropologists as being 'doxic knowledge' (Bourdieu 1977) and as such should not require justification since they are 'be's' more than they are 'do's'. As we will see below, this is about to change for the Motese, and I would expect for quite a few other people who have kinship as their prime clause for social organisation, as they encounter people who organise their social life according to different sets of principles, both regarding family, work and ritual.

such liberties.[10] It was also clear that the relationships were based on reciprocity. The attitude and behaviour you were expected to present towards a person were the same as the person in question were to show you (Mauss 1995: 90).

The main rule is that you may crack jokes with or about your own *sågåi*. You shall not tell jokes about the unsuccessful actions of your *tavala ima*, and it is considered improper to tell stories at your *sågåi*s expense directly to your *tavala ima*, although this is frequently done. To be an eloquent storyteller is a highly valued gift for both men and women and is an important part of being considered a sociable character, *å turr tanun*, lit. 'a real/proper person'. He or she will be the focal point at every gathering during the many intermissions and delays, and the stories will usually be told with moves and gestures and an amazing talent for timing. Many people have stories known as 'theirs' which they tell over and over again to eventual new listeners. Those who have heard the story before will also enjoy the show by paying attention to the reactions of the new audience and contribute through repeating the main issues and one-liners, burst into laughter at several points during the tale and crack index fingers with each other in the special pan-Vanuatu fashion which allegedly started in the Banks. If the story is an anecdote about a *tavala ima*, particularly your father or his classificatory brothers or someone towards whom you or members of your family have affinal relations, *qaliga*, you are expected to respond by looking down and quietly shake your head and utter the Bislama word kwan, 'you must be joking', or more rarely the Motese equivalent *eqe*, to state your discomfort with the situation. This is the work of the *poroporo* institution, the term '*poro'* simply meaning laughter. When people from other villages realised that I had been taught these basic rules of *poroporo*, some of them had great fun talking loudly of my father's desire for kava to ensure that I heard what they were talking about. When I

[10] As a mere curiosity I can mention that right to the end of my fieldwork, every time I entered a house or met with a larger number of people I involuntarily scanned the ones present, putting a red light/left hand-image on my *tavala ima* and a green light/right hand on my *sågåi*. In the beginning I frequently encountered people who I did not know where to put. I would then treat them with respect until they started joking with me or some of my *sågåi* did.

then accordingly mumbled my *eqe* or kwan they would burst into laughter, while those who did not know me from before would look surprised over my already being familiar with this important part of *kastom*: I knew how to respect, *nommavva*, my father and his kin.

In addition to the rules of *poroporo*, there were certain regulations concerning bodily posture which I was taught during the first couple of weeks after my arrival. When entering or leaving a house with *tavala ima* present I was told to keep my back and knees bowed and if possible crawl behind their backs, and outdoors I was careful not to stand with my back facing those from the other side if it was avoidable. Furthermore, I never removed anything placed above the heads of my *tavala ima* if they were seated. In addition to abstaining from laughing, these were the unequivocal public expressions of respect, *nommavva*, lit. 'thinking heavy'.

Coming to terms with kinship

The Motese kinship system might be labelled as belonging to the Crow ideal type. Such a system is characterised by the merging of siblings and parallel cousins, whereas cross-cousins are separated in different generations related to ego. Hence the father's sister's children are counted as relatives of the first ascending generation whereas the mother's brother's children belong to the first descending generation. There has for the past decades been going on a debate within the discipline concerning what might be inferred from the study of kinship, both on an intra- as well as an intercultural level. The early anthropologists' approach, following in the footsteps of Lewis Henry Morgan and discernible in the works of Rivers, regarded kinship-terminology as the key to understanding kinship systems *qua* systems. Later adjustments by the British functionalist and structural functionalist schools served to partially "rehumanise" kinship through

establishing the sociological function of kinship structures as fundamental to approaching the works of political systems and cohesion, although the focus still remained with what the structures do to the people instead of what the people actually embodying and executing them do to the structures. Leach (1954) and Lévi-Strauss (1969) turned the anthropological interest in kinship from the (seemingly) static elements of descent and inheritance to the social dynamics of exchange and creation of alliances. Leach also found a discrepancy between the ideal and the real structures which later has been observed by researchers in many different societies - including Mota, as will be seen below (Leach 1961). David Schneider merges Leach and Lévi-Strauss in his studies on the American kinship system. He finds that American kinship points towards both a strong element of choice, at the same time as it is not separable from other social and cultural fields but is yet another reflection of the small group of epitomising symbols which are at the core of every culture (Schneider 1980; cf. 1984). This leads him to pronounce that there is no such thing as 'kinship', in a pure, analytical meaning of the word (1980: 119 ff). The concept of kinship is a non-problem, which, like Lévi-Strauss previously had concluded on the alleged unity of totemic beliefs, discharged its comparative value, since what was being compared was not the same socio-cultural phenomena.

Despite this development, kinship has never been absent from the anthropologists' research agenda, obviously because our fields demand an interest in the topic: kinship is the most important principle of social organisation in virtually any society, at least as a way of talking **about** groups, and it is also an idiom through which people elaborate on other social and cultural fields. Following an increasing contact between people with different practices kinship also becomes important for a people's identity and self-presentation, and as such ironically is reified in a way not too dissimilar from the early anthropologists' much criticised description of kinship structures.

The comparative aspect of kinship is gradually re-entering the field, with an increased awareness of the difference between form and content: the same manifestations do not

imply similar causes. It is also generally recognised that kinship is not structures but embodiments, as aspects of social interaction.

TERM OF REFERENCE			TERM OF ADDRESS	EXPECTED BEHAVIOUR
Relation	**Male ego**	**Female ego**		
Mother - child	*Veve - natui*	*Veve - natui*	Veve - use of name	Amiable. No particular prescriptions. Mother will correct improper behaviour, and will be listened to although quarrels occur and are accepted
Father - child	*Tamai - natui*	*Tamai - natui*	Papa - use of name	Avoidance increases with age of child. No joking. Quarrelling is regarded improper. A father's advice or reprimand carries weight
Sibling of same sex	*Tassio*	*Tassio*	Tass/name	Joking and close friendship
Sibling of opposite sex	*Tutuai*	*Tutuai*	Name	Increasing avoidance after they have reached puberty. Some joking but never over sexual themes.
Grd.parent -grd.child, from both sides	*Tupui*	*Tupui*	Bubu	Intimate and warm relationship. Mutual joking. Some work assistance might be expected from unmarried grandchildren
Mother's brother - sister's child	*Marauwi - vanañåi*	*Marauwi/ itata - vanañåi*	Angkel[11]	Joking and friendly teasing, particularly between MB/ZS. 'Share' children and land and marine rights
Mother's sister - sister's child	*Veve - natui*	*Veve - natui*	Veve - name	Same as for mother - child

[11] The term angkel is Bislama for maternal uncle or paternal aunt's husband (Crowley 1995). It is widely used by the Motese.

Father's sister - brother's child	*Vevegai - natmera*	*Vevegai - rånat*	Veve - natmera/rånat	Mutual respect, no joking. FZ has a special responsibility for BC's well-being, particularly regarding marriage. Is commonly referred to as 'specially honoured mother'
Father's brother - brother's child	*Mamagai - natui*	*Mamagai - natui*	Mama - natik[12]/name	Mamagai implies 'specially honoured father'. Joking is always avoided. Mamagai plays an important part in the marriage of his BC
Father's sister's son - mother's brother's children	*Tamai - natui*	*Tamai - natui*	Usually names	Not as strict as father - child. Some tactful joking allowed, particularly by the FZS. He, not the bride's father, gives the consent during the wedding ceremony. Usually heavy contributions to his MBSW's bride-price.
Father's sister's daughter - mother's brother's children	*Vevegai - natui*	*Vevegai - rånat*	Usually names	This relationship is rarely in focus nowadays. It seems to be merely a "something" as long as the FZ is alive. When she is gone, the FZD attains parts of her role. She and her brother might grant MBC temporary land utilisation rights to their father's land.

The primary exceptions to the scheme

After the initial introduction I was told that the general rule of joking with your *sågåi* and paying respect to your *tavala ima* had some refinements. The most conspicuous of these

[12] *Natik* means 'my child'. The usual way to express possessive in the Mota language is to take the basis of the word and add a suffix denoting the personal pronoun. Commonly the prefix *na-* will be added, but since the term *natui* already contains this it is abandoned in this case.

were the relationships between husband's brothers/brothers' wives and wife's sisters/sisters' husbands, commonly referred to as *qatporoporo*, the corresponding kinship terms being *sågåra/råsågåra*. This relationship was based on constant practical and verbal joking and mockery. A normal scene would follow approximately this course: I am standing with a group of people around a fireplace gossiping when I see my brother's wife at the other side of the *sara*, the public dancing ground, with two buckets hanging from her carrying rod and a stack of clothes under her arm. I shout "are you going to the water?", and she answers an anticipating "yes?". I then grab a bucket and shout "bring me back some water - from the top of the mountain", and everybody bursts into laughter. She might then just exclaim a rejecting "pooh", or she would answer something like "sure - if you wash my clothes and have the dinner ready when I get back", which would cause new convulsions of laughter. Or she could be making a *nåñ*, a sitting-mat made of leaves from the coconut tree, and I would ask her in a flattered tone "are you making a mat for me?". She then might say "no, I have finished your mat already", stand up and fetch an old, dirty mat which she would give to me, accompanied by the laughter of everyone present.

A common topic for this kind of mockery was dancing. When it was known that some men or women were preparing a dance for a feast, a *råsågåra* might tease her *sågåra* by asking him if he looked forward to dancing the *lañven*, one of the women's dances. He would reply by saying that he would *masig* her - appoint the best dancer by giving a leaf - with the trunk of a mango.

The other exception to the rule *sågåi:poroporo/tavala ima:nommavva* was the case of my brothers' father-in-law and his brothers. Although they were my *sågåi* I should treat them with respect since they had provided my brothers with women (cf. Rivers 1914 for a discussion of the levirate on Mota and the idea of 'corporate marriage'). In addition, my *marauwi*, mother's brother, informed me that since his children were my children, I should treat their daughters' husbands with the same respect as he did. I should under no

circumstance mention their name or say words that resembled it, and I should address them using *kamra*, 'the two of you', and speak of them not as 'he' or 'him' but as *rara*, 'the two of them' - an aspect which they suspended regarding me since I at the time mostly used Bislama. Violations of these principles were punished by the imposition of a fine.

The *qaliga* institution

This turned out to be a most sensible adaptation process to the events connected with my wife's arrival from Norway. She was adopted by two sisters who had married into Lotawan from a neighbouring village, and suddenly we found ourselves entangled in what we experienced to be a most complex web of relationships. To my wife this transition obviously was extensive, but since she had not grown used to the ways of unmarried life but almost literally had been dumped right into this, she had less trouble adjusting than I had - in addition to her being blessed with an amazing talent for keeping track of relationships. People who I previously had been on friendly terms with suddenly treated me with reluctance, as if they were not absolutely sure whether I would choose to follow the regulations inherent in the *qaliga*-relationship or not. When they realised that I intended to strive with this sudden change of behavioural patterns they clarified their positions towards me, and we made deals as to which relation was to be counted more imperative. My wife's father was the son of a brother of my father, hence he and his brothers were both my brothers and my *qaliga*. The real father, *turr tamai*, of my wife obviously had to be treated like a *qaliga*, but regarding his brothers the choice was made to let the brother-relationship carry more weight, much because we had daily intercourse since most of them lived in my village.

Through this most concrete experience of the constraints and sincerity of the affinal relations, which I 'braved' for the last ten months of my fieldwork, some of the oddities I

had encountered during my first months on Mota suddenly became understandable: the necessity of having at least two people present, preferably from different generations and different *sågåi*, when writing down a genealogy or registering the names of the members of a household; some people's use of Bislama or idiosyncratic terms for objects or phenomena that even I knew the Mota word for; persons who would talk to or about people as if they were plural when it concerned only one person; the hilarity of the story of the man who read the Christmas gospel and had a father-in-law named Joseph.

The name-avoidance in particular became a challenge. Every Motese has got two names, one traditional and one 'European', and since the traditional names usually involved a common object or activity such as 'house', 'water' or 'wash', and some European names were more popular than others, it was depressingly easy for the young fieldworker to make mistakes. Quite a few of the household-survey trips to the other villages ended with my giving twenty vatu coins as a fine to hitherto unknown *qaliga*s or to the ones in my village who had a namesake in that particular village. The same applied to the soccer games when shouting for someone to pass the ball - which was particularly embarrassing as several hundred people would be watching. Fortunately, I was not the only one to commit such errors. The 'worst' example occurred during a Saint's Day in a village where one of the chiefs read the names of all the men who were going to drink kava that day, using a megaphone. After realising that he had publicly shouted the name of his wife's father he suddenly stopped his reading and swore loudly before turning off the megaphone and running ashamed to his house, accompanied by a merciless wholehearted laughter from everybody present. Later in the afternoon he used the megaphone to complain over the lack of respect some of his invited kava partners showed by not attending although everything was ready, and he used the opportunity to apologise to his *qaliga* for 'shouting the name of you two in public'.

Coming to terms with the affines

The Motese usually separate their *qaliga* relationships into *we gånna*, 'hard, difficult', and *mataketake*, 'light, easy'. For the most "sincere" affines the honorary prefix *ra-* is added. These include the *turr* father and mother, *tutuai*, and mother's brother of wife/father's sister of husband. For more distant *qaliga* the relationship is eased, so that for instance a mother's brother's daughter's husband's brother will be a possible target for mild joking, although you will refrain from mentioning his name directly to him or to a wider audience and use the plural personal pronoun. Such relationships are usually referred to as *wolus/wal poroporo*, 'joking sister- or brother-in-law'.

When listening to an everyday conversation, the affinal kinship terms will pop up constantly. Usually they pass without further explanation since it is appears from the context which *qaliga, wolus* or *råwal* they are discussing. Sometimes a distinguishing remark will be made in order to specify the person, generally some bodily trait, "the limper", the person's relationship to someone, "wife of Reynold, mother of Yen", or details connected to the person's house or land rights. What amazed me during such conversations was the extraordinary ability to keep track of other people's affinal relations. One might suggest that this is because the Motese count only 750 people. This does not discredit the fact that my father had more than thirty different *qaliga* and *wolus* in the three villages surrounding ours, after which we gave up counting. Nevertheless he rarely had to explain which of them he meant, even to people with whom he did not have regular contact. To the fieldworker this was as astonishing as it was frustrating, since my confidence suffered serious blows when I for the fifth time did not understand who the *qaliga* who lived by the hibiscus was. I comforted myself with the fact that they start early. One of the favourite games of small children, encouraged by their adults, is called *råråråwinkå*. It starts with someone mentioning the name of one or several villages, and the participants will ask 'male or female?'. The point is to find persons in these villages

who are namesakes - a rather ingenious invention to instigate interest in social orientation.

TERMS OF REFERENCE			TERMS OF ADDRESS	EXPECTED BEHAVIOUR
Relation	**Male ego**	**Female ego**		
Spouse's mother - child's spouse	*Raqaliga*	*Raqaliga - ratawarig*	Same as terms of reference. *Kamra*, 'you two', and *rara*, 'they two', are second and third person pronoun	Absolutely no joking, name avoidance, preferably physical avoidance. Due to a tendency of viri-patrilocal residence some husband's mother - son's wife-relationships nevertheless entail a certain closeness
Spouse's father - child's spouse	*Raqaliga*	*Itata - ratawarig*	Same as terms of reference. *Kamra* and *rara* personal pronoun	Absolutely no joking, name avoidance, respectful posture. Since they nevertheless always will belong to the same *sågåi*, the avoidance is somewhat eased compared to that of spouse's mother - child's spouse
Spouse's *tassio* (same-sex sibling)	*Råsågåra*	*Sågåra*	Name	Compulsory joking and teasing, sometimes with a sexual pitch.
Spouse's *tutuai* (opposite-sex sibling)	*Rawolus*	*Råwal*	Same as terms of reference. *Kamra* and *rara* personal pronoun.	Highly sanctioned regarding name avoidance and respect. Will often be each other's guests of honour at celebrations like village feasts.
Parents of the couple	*Gasala*	*Gasala*	Same as term of reference. *Kamra* and *rara* personal pronoun	Respectful behaviour, but not in the same degree as that relating to those who call each other *qaliga*

Wife's mother's brother/ husband's father's sister - sister's daughter's husband/ brother's son's wife	*Rawolus*	*Qaliga - tawarig*	Same as terms of reference. *Kamra* and *rara* personal pronoun	Mutual respect and reverence. The HFZ might tease or scorn the BSW at certain given occasions by sitting on her back or force-feeding her with breadfruit pudding.
Mother's brother's son's wife - husband's father's sister's child	*Qaliga - tawarig*, if he has contributed in paying the bride-price	*Tawarig - qaliga*, if she has contributed in paying the bride-price	Qaliga - tawarig, with *kamra* and *rara*. If there has been no transfer of money they will simply use names	The possible transfer of money regulates the content of the relationship. If it has occurred the regulations of the *qaliga* institution apply, although not so strictly as for a son's wife - husband's parent. If not, they will treat each other as siblings.
Mother's brother's daughter's husband - wife's father's sister's child	*Qaliga - qaliga*	*Qaliga - qaliga*		Given that a WFZC always will receive money for a MBD since she is counted as the WFZC's child, this relationship is highly sanctioned and all the patterns of the *qaliga* relationship apply.

Desired and deterred marriages: *lag å rållåo* and *sañ-sañ*

The marriage prescriptions of the Motese are basically negative: nobody shall marry his or her *sågåi* or children. There does, however, exist a marriage structure which is encouraged to some degree, namely that between a father's sister's daughter's child/mother's brother's son's child. This used to be called *lag å rållåo*. Since the term '*rållåo*' could not be accounted for by anyone, it was now generally referred to as *lag tape tannå*, 'land marriage'. This phrase expresses the rationale behind the arrangement:

when carried out in two succeeding generations, a couple will possess utilisation rights for the same area.

The benefits gained from this kind of marriage are limited to the land control effect and the fact that all work is invested on the worker's future land, and the Motese nowadays generally regard the institution with some suspicion as they find it to spoil the blood of a family, '*å nara ti tatass*', if it is executed for several generations consecutively. It is also sometimes difficult to arrange since the potential spouses will belong to different generations. Marrying the father's sister's child/mother's brother's child would have solved that problem, but since these relatives are counted as respectively a parent and a child this violates the principle of avoiding parent/child marriage and is thus dissuaded, although no sanctions apply.

I encountered such a marriage just a couple of days into my fieldwork, during a conversation I had with one of my brothers. Having met with so many cross-cousin marriage systems in the literature, I brazenly and without any idea of neither the relevance nor the impropriety of my question asked him if he had married his mother's brother's daughter. He simply said "yes", and I congratulated myself on having found the core of the Motese kinship system after such short time - a core I obviously had to eliminate as soon as the next interview. It was not until some six months later that the same man told me that he had been caught totally off guard by my question. He had spent some time trying to find out how I could possibly have known about his marriage, and had finally reached the explanation that my scholarly training enabled me to read people's personal history and preferences simply by looking at them. He had told this interpretation to some members of our mutual family, and the rumour had spread to every village on Mota. We had a good laugh over the story, although mine had a touch of embarrassment about it: his wholehearted amusement proved to me how far from the truth he found his initial comprehension to have been…

Loftiness aside, in the same early conversation I asked what I thought was an insolent question about whether everybody followed the rule of marrying their *tavala ima*. He

answered ‘no’ in a matter-of-course kind of way, as if he was surprised that anyone could believe such a thing. I did not pursue his answer, and for the next couple of months I did not encounter any evidence to support his statement, so I decided that either I had misunderstood his rather nasal way of talking or he had misinterpreted my far from perfect Bislama. Instead the consequences of the *lagtatass*, lit. ‘bad marriage’, were spelled out to me. If two *sågåi* wanted to be married, or simply had an affair which became known, their *tavala ima* would be enraged and gather to destroy the property of the couple’s family. Their gardens would be uprooted and burnt, their trees cut down and their houses demolished, a custom which is called *sañ-sañ*. The victims of the destruction could not intervene, as the *sañ-sañ* was considered to be performed in rightful anger since the couple had violated the main principle for sociability: the interdependence of the two sides of the house.

the future house?

A new marriage pattern

Although interpreting the remark on frequent intra-*sågåi* marrying as belonging to the realm of misunderstandings, some oddities regarding the structure of marriage emerged during the first couple of months of my stay. When mapping each individual according to name, age, filiation and marriage, a recurrent problem of establishing which *sågåi* the husband and wife belonged to became evident. Given the rapid and comprehensive exchange of information regarding all other sorts of social matters I found this uncertainty quite peculiar, particularly when pertaining to such an important socio-cultural topic. Finally it was a joking session which revealed the state of affairs to me. Robert, a sister’s son of my father, walked past the kitchen while Frank, one of my brothers, told the story of a kava session he had attended the night before. Robert’s father, Frank’s classificatory

mother's brother, had been drinking too much kava, and had begun to vomit. However, his stomach was already upset before he started drinking, so each time he vomited he also farted. The audience found the story hilarious, and since Robert's passing by represented a possibility for Frank to retell the story, he yelled "*Qaliga*" and vividly re-enacted the postures and sound effects from last night. Since the target of the joking session was his father, Robert shook his head and uttered his gwan while the audience for a second time loudly exclaimed their amusement. Although I still was little more than rudimentarily acquainted with the Mota language, the re-enactment made the story understandable to me, and I laughed in a relieved manner over finally having understood both quite a few words and the context of the communication. When I wrote down the incident some hours later, I was left confused by the fact that Frank had called Robert *qaliga*. Since they belonged to different *sågåi* they could not be each other's *qaliga*, and I asked my father how this was possible. He answered that it was because Frank's wife was the daughter of Andrew, Robert's *marauwi*. I still could not see how that made it right, and somewhat embarrassed he explained that Frank had married his own *sågåi*.[13] They did not want to tell me in the first place since I had come to study *kastom* and thus might think that they did not follow the regulations of their ancestors, but at the same time he was proud because they had taught me the way of *kastom* well enough for me to recognise such deviations. I then asked whether such marriages were frequent, and he admitted that the ratio was steadily increasing. The fact was that the *sañ-sañ* routine had been banned by the Motese priest *mama* Lindsay in 1949 opening for this new development.

In the following months I conducted a survey which included all the **married** couples now living on Mota - 79 altogether - in order to endorse his statement.[14] It showed that 27

[13] He was also embarrassed because Frank had violated the rule against joking with his *qaliga* Robert.

[14] The non-married couples which have been left out of this inquiry form an assorted group consisting of couples with children and an intention to marry, couples without children who have an intention to marry, couples where the man has recognised his fatherhood but has no proclaimed plan to marry, single women where the father is either unknown or unwilling to accept responsibility for the child, and regular boy-girl relationships with no other aim than having a good time. Common to all these is that the frequency of intra-*sågåi* relationships is high - for the last

of these - 34 % - consisted of couples belonging to the same *sågåi*. Among those who had married during the last ten years, 45 % had chosen a partner who was recognised as being their own *sågåi*. Faced with such extensive diversions from the socially and culturally sanctioned ideal, how do the Motese respond? In a multitude of ways, displaying their ability of cultural creativity.

Oblivion is bliss

At a celebration in Mariu, one of the two villages who had branched off from Lotawan during the eighties, the village committee had decided that the meal should be served and consumed in a traditional manner. This implied the usual display of food on banana leaves placed on the ground, and in addition the two *sågåi* should stand on each side of the table in order to illustrate visually this main relational aspect of their society. When the announcement was made, a slight sense of confusion began to spread among some of the participants, particularly those who belonged in some way or another to both *sågåi* (see below). But also for quite a few others there seemed to be a problem regarding which side of the table they were supposed to be standing on. Children were given instructions by the adults, and some men were teased by their mates for initially standing on the wrong side. Eventually people seemed to have found their respective sides, but I saw several who had chosen what I thought had to be the side of their *tavala ima*, and there were some last minute changes following subtle advice from people familiar with *kastom*. After the feast I was told by the Village Chief that they had decided to have this line-up precisely because people were starting to loose knowledge of the *sågåi* system to such an extent that someone did not even know to which *sågåi* they belonged. He took pride in the fact that his village, consisting almost exclusively of his brothers and their families,

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three categories I was told that it was more of a rule than an exception that the relationship was between *sågåi*.

knew the traditions of *sågåi*/*tavala ima* well, but as I had seen this was more of an exception.

Although it sometimes will be awkward due to a score of conflicting roles and relational contradictions, the *qaliga* system regulating behaviour and attitude is applicable even when people marry their own *sågåi*, indeed it is carried out just as stringent as it is when a couple has married "right". But since this division between the mother's side and the father's side is such a pivotal theme for many rituals, games and narratives, the frequently encountered discrepancy between ideality and reality constitutes a major obstacle towards performing these sides of *kastom*. Victor Turner's seminal insight regarding the potential for rituals to be not only elements in the creation and recreation of a well integrated society but also containing a possibility of failure (Turner 1974), might serve to illustrate the situation presently experienced by the Motese. The increasing number of endo-*sågåi* marriages is a recent development. According to the Motese, as late as 1950 there were no cases of it since the threat of *sañ-sañ* effectively prevented any such desire. The changes have thus been extensive, since nowadays almost every second marriage is entered by couples belonging to the same *sågåi*. However, the ideal of interdependence and intermarriage between the two *sågåi* is still very much alive, and is expressed in rituals and games. Turner invokes the concepts of 'communitas' and 'societas' to explain two different societal 'states' which constitute the dynamics of, and between, culture and society.[15] Societas is the arrangements facilitating an adequately functioning community: regulations, authority, structure, contemplation, ideology. Communitas, on the other hand, is more of a social magma which will surface during the situations of exigency Turner calls 'social dramas', or be evoked during rituals. It involves solidarity, egalitarianism, anti-structure, desire for unity, emotions, creativity. Turner finds that insufficient communitas, or rather a discordance between the ideological structures of societas and the

[15] Similar pairs of oppositions or conditions have been popular among many social philosophers. Marx' 'infrastructure and superstructure' and Nietzsche's 'apollinian and dionysian' (1941) (originally used to explain the effects of art on its audience, hence having a most interesting parallel to Turner's work on the nature of symbols (1967)) are but two examples.

emotional nature of communitas, is a major force behind social and cultural dynamics. Such discrepancies become particularly discernible in rituals, which according to Turner is communitas staged. A public ritual which fails to arouse the required sense of unity and belonging will instead be an exhibition of the community's current difficulties and lack of harmony. In this respect, rituals might serve to accelerate the process towards fission rather than to impede it.[16]

When playing games and performing rituals where the ideal of the two-*sågåi* family is expressed, this discrepancy between the ideals and the reality is visualised. The Motese experience themselves to be inadequate custodians of their customs and culture. This makes the performance of these games, rituals and (other) narratives a reminder of their bad conscience regarding their responsibility towards their ancestors and descendants and is thus particularly distressing. The usual solution to this problem is either to abstain from staging these traditional activities altogether, or to play, perform or tell them solely in smaller settings at a family- or village level. A recent development is a recognition that just because they have ceased to follow one tradition, i.e. marrying their *tavala ima*, this should not force them to dispense with other customary activities. Some of the games are thus adapted to the new situation and played with a focus on geography, village against village or village part against village part, rather than kin relations. One might expect such cultural creativity to flourish also in connection with the, in cultural terms, more serious ritual activities. This will probably happen when the social imperative of exogamy has been emptied of much of its original moral contents and has entered the less rigorous but still very much idealistic, and moralistic, sphere of *kastom* - i.e. becoming a **doing** more than a **being**. Such quarantine periods before sufficient oblivion has been achieved,

[16] The Durkheimian and functionalist schools have received loads of criticism for their view that a ritual's primary function is for the individuals to be reintegrated with and reminded of the ideological unity and interdependence of their society. The criticism is just in some ways, since quite a few of the early approaches omitted the other aspects of rituals, such as the emotional, olfactory and aesthetic qualities. However, the literature is rich with examples of societies where the recreation of communion and fellowship is an explicitly stated intention for the performance of a ritual. In this respect, the Motese too are to be counted among these indigenous functionalists.

a stage which definitely has the qualities van Gennep and Turner outlined for the rites of passage (van Gennep 1960; Turner 1964), will in my view constitute a most rewarding field of investigation for researchers interested in how societies change, particularly when previous literature is available.

Adoption

Adoption is a very common phenomenon throughout the Pacific (Codrington 1891; Rivers 1914; Carrol 1970; Oliver 1989). Its frequency and the ideas underlying adoption has surprised many a visitor and has caused some of them to consider this practice to be rather superficial and to bear evidence of a lack of understanding for the 'realities' of relationships (Rivers 1914). And indeed, some of the forms of adoption which presently are found on Mota might substantiate such a view for an outsider. However, the custom of adoption, which used to be guided by the principles of a desire for balanced family-structure, or just plain preference, now serves a third purpose: saving the *sågåi* system **as** a system, and as such retaining the past in the present. Let us first consider the three main types of adoption.

Lareag. This is the term for adoption in general, but more specifically it refers to the Western notion of adoption: the transfer of an individual from one family to another, where that individual is given the same rights and obligations as the family's original members enjoy. This may take place when the adoptee is just an infant, but it occurs frequently with juveniles as well. In such cases the adoptee is counted as belonging to two families, although his or her rights to two different grounds might be contested at the death of the adoptive parents or mother's brothers. *Lareag* adoptions usually occur within the *tarañiu*, the group who has the utilisation rights to one of the ten traditional land and

sea areas on Mota (cf. Carroll 1970), but it is not uncommon to adopt a child who is relatively speaking an outsider.

The rationale behind adoption is manifold. If a couple has no male offspring to help them in the gardens and on the plantations it is common to adopt a boy from either of the couple's siblings, disregarding *sågåi*, who have more than two boys. This is considered to be a good adoption since the child remains within the family and as a lone *marauwi* will be administering a considerable amount of land and sea rights. The presence of a son will also ensure that the couple are taken care of when they grow old, since preferred post-marital residence is virilocal.[17] It is also much less complicated to adopt a boy child from a couple who already have sons, since it is the boy's parents who will carry the main financial burden regarding the bride-price and the wedding party. One of my brothers, who had four sons and no daughters, commented laconically that his pigs would all be gone due to his situation. Girls, on the other hand, who usually will provide their parents and mother's brothers with a substantial amount of money through the bride-price, are not given away easily, and such adoptions almost never takes place outside the mother's or father's *tarañiu*. I registered only one such case, in which the adopter, who worked on a visiting copra ship and saw a baby girl he found adorable, paid an amount equal to the bride-price for the infant as a compensation.

My father was adopted when he was a baby by a patrilateral cousin brother of his father again and his wife, who had only one son. He remained unaware of his adoption until he was about ten years old when he got into a fight with a friend who told him to get back to his parents (cf. Rivers 1914). He asked his mother what he had meant, but she said that he did not know what he was talking about. Some years later he once got so angry with his

[17] I do not have the exact numbers for this observation, but the general pattern was for a village to be controlled by a set of brothers who lived on an area which their father had released for that purpose, i.e. ground which belonged to their father's *vanañåi*. Both Codrington and Rivers describes a propensity for avunculocal residence, but this is not common nowadays. This might be related to a general drift from avuncu-/lineagefocality to patri-/familyfocality.

adoptive father that he started to throw stones at him. Enraged by this his father shouted at him "Go back to your real family!". His mother witnessed the episode and began to cry. He then suddenly realised that he really was adopted, and wanted to find out who his real mother and father were. His mother was reluctant to begin with, but finally she promised that she would take him to see them in their village.[18] He refused to go home in the afternoon, and asked his biological parents if he could stay with them for a while. They agreed, and he stayed with them for a couple of weeks before returning to his adoptive parents. He continued to spend time with both his families until he got married, when he settled permanently in the village of his biological parents - also because his wife came from that village. Nevertheless, he continued helping his adoptive parents until they died, looking after their garden and plantation, building a house for them and doing all the other things a devoted son is expected to do.

The same will be the case for someone who was adopted when he or she was old enough to know what has happened. They will be recognised as having two set of parents, although the adoptive parents will usually be counted as primus inter pares, particularly if the child was adopted when it was very young. This implies having the main responsibility for the wedding arrangements and being the principal source regarding the transfer of land and sea rights.

In case the two mothers belong to different *sågåi*, the adoptee's membership might be negotiated. If the adoption occurred when the child was an infant or before it had begun receiving teaching regarding the *sågåi* system, normally at the age of eight, he or she will be able to choose which *sågåi* they belong to when they meet their future partner - provided they know of their adoption. Consequently, they have the opportunity to marry people of both *sågåi*. Normally they will keep their membership with the *sågåi* of their adoptive mother, but it will not be considered a *lagtatass*, 'bad marriage', if their spouse

[18] My father told this story in his usual vivid and touching manner, which is not at all reflected in this short version.

belongs to the same because they originally belong to the other side. Likewise, marrying someone of their own *sågåi* from birth is not wrong, since they have been raised as if they belonged to the other side.

When the adoption takes place after the child is old enough to know the working of the *sågåi* system, the situation is different. In such cases the adoptee is expected to marry his or her *tavala ima* of birth. I encountered some couples who considered themselves to be married according to *kastom* since one of them had been adopted a long time before the two begun their relationship. Nevertheless, outsiders labelled their marriage *lagtatass* since the adoptee through education and blood was firmly incorporated in the *sågåi* of birth at the time of adoption. Nowadays, when inter*sågåi* adoption occurs with girls, their children are also understood by some to belong to both *sågåi*. This might be interpreted as a disintegration of the moiety system into one with emphasis on lineage, *tarañiu*. On the other hand, it could also be a sign of the importance of mothers regarding the filiation of their offspring.

The utility motif is not always the main inducement for adoption. In quite a few cases it is done because a couple enjoy having a child to look after - usually after their own children have grown up. They will then commonly adopt a child from a single mother, or from a family who have problems taking care of their members. My mother's parents, Robinson's and Ansen's history will serve as an illustration, although being a bit unusual even by Motese measures. Their secondborn, who later turned out to be their only boy, was adopted by Ansen's mother. He thus grew up calling his biological father *wolus*, since Robinson had married his sister, and he became the *marauwi* of his real sisters. When his adoptive mother died, he was disconsolate. Ansen then revealed the truth to him, and he became readopted by his biological parents. Not very much later their firstborn Alice gave birth to a boy. The situation being a bit difficult for her, her parents decided to adopt the child and raise him as their own. The true state of affairs was exposed to him when he was a young boy, and his real mother adopted him back. My

father and he nevertheless still call each other *wolus*, although they now are classificatory father and son. Ansen and Robinson also adopted my distant *marauwi* Olensak after his parents had died, and he therefore spends a lot of time in their village and in their gardens. My father should have called him *wolus*, but since Olensak's father was my father's *marauwi* he decided to treat Olensak as his son rather than his wife's brother. Ansen and Robinson are now both around eighty years of age, but they still have a child in their care who was adopted from a close relative. The child believes them to be his only parents.

Rsarsag. Rivers (1914) mentions an oddity he encountered during his three months stay on Mota; when a poor couple were expecting a child, couples who had no children or could not beget more would anticipate the time of conception, since the man who paid the midwife for her services would be recognised as the rightful father of the child. When the child was born, the penniless, or rather shell-less, husband and his wife would loose custody of the child if someone paid the midwife before they were able to do it. This was considered a most legitimate way of acquiring children, and there was no opportunity for the biological parents to protest.

I somehow suspected that Rivers had based his version on a slight misunderstanding, and in any case I was quite convinced that the custom no longer existed in such a form on Mota, following a more thorough introduction of Christianity and an increased degree of incorporation into a nation state. I therefore became quite surprised when I learnt from my mother's mother that the practice still prevailed in an almost unaltered form compared to that which Rivers describes. Her account was slightly modified by my father. He explained that the principle of family closeness still was predominant, so that if the person who wanted the child was for instance a mother's brother or an elder daughter of the pregnant woman there would be no objections to their wish. If the person was a more distant relative, on the other hand, he or she should clarify their intention with the couple if they wanted to avoid conflict.

Rsarsag is a more definite adoption than most of the *lareag* kinds, since it always happens when the adoptee is an infant and since it involves the transfer of money and hence the transfer of rights in a person - putum lok, 'put on a lock', i.e. strengthening and validating
the relationship. If such an adoption is to be reversed the adoptee must slaughter several pigs and prepare a large meal as a recognition of his or her adoptive parents' work and sacrifices.

Taptapui. The least serious kind of adoption is the *taptapui*, which might be done by everyone. The word comes from old Motese and means something equivalent to 'like/desire'. It involves the transfer of some merchandise, such as a blanket and soap, from the adopter to the child's parents. They retain custody of the child and are still counted as its true parents, but the person who *taptaui* a child will be associated with it and will take great interest in its upbringing and welfare. In some cases the adoptee might go to live with the adopter. It is also common that he or she is given use-rights to some of the adopter's land. My *vevegai* returned from Santo a couple of months before I left Mota, and I was surprised to hear my father call her husband Edley by his name, since a man's sister's husband definitely is a *wolus we gånna*. He explained that his adoptive mother once had *taptapui* Edley, and that they thus had decided to treat each other as brothers.
We then understand that even the *taptapui*, which might seem an incidental and impulsive act of preference, will have consequences for the creation of relationships, with their associated behaviour, and the allocation of rights for the utilisation of land and sea, and as such forms an integral part of the Motese kinship system.

Virtually every Motese will be adopted during his or her lifetime, and quite a few will be adopted several times. The network of kin relationships which encompasses everyone is hence extended, which makes it common to have several relationships with the same

person. Since some of these relationships necessarily imply conflicting roles, the aspect of **choice** becomes an important feature of Motese kinship.

Adopting change

Choice is also what initiated the ostensible decline of the *sågåi* system, after the Church had removed *sañ-sañ*, the main sanction against intra-*sågåi* marriage. But this flexibility regarding the creation of relations on Mota also facilitates an emerging essentialism: the old practice of adoption today constitutes a way of saving the *sågåi* system as a system. This is achieved due to the substance traditionally imputed in these adoptive relationships by the Motese. They represent less an 'as if'- than an 'it is'-connection. Through this the Motese have so far, in an ideological as well as a practical manner, managed to retain continuity with their history and their *kastom*, although some signs of change in mentality are becoming increasingly visible. But the usual procedure regarding an intra-*sågåi* marriage is still as follows:

When a couple belonging to the same *sågåi* wants to be married it is common practice that the husband-to-be is adopted by a woman from their *tavala ima*. In that way the interdependence between the two *sågåi* remains, with the father being a member of the other side of the house from his children. The adopter will in this case usually be a distant relative living on the other side of the island, or a relative with which the adopted husband has a relationship which will carry more weight than that of a mother who adopted him late in life, for instance a *vevegai* - a person the wife already will have a *qaliga* relationship with. This is done in order to keep the intricacies of the *qaliga* system at as low a level as possible, since the wife already has one set of *qaliga* relationships, namely her husband's relatives. It might also be conceivable that it is done to downplay the ad hoc conditions of the adoption, in the same manner as the rituals accentuating the interdependence of the two *sågåi* rarely are performed.

Although the husband has been adopted it is his 'real' parents who are the main contributors to the wedding ceremony, and they will also play the part of parents during the ritual. The adopter, her husband and their relatives will usually do little more than being present, thus legitimising the claim for correctness. Weddings involving persons of the same *sågåi* will normally not be celebrated with the degree of festivity and extravaganza which is common for the customary inter-*sågåi* wedding.[19]

Kinship systems, classification and perception

As Lévi-Strauss asserts, kinship is yet another way man as a classifying animal fulfils its drive towards creating order in its surroundings. It is definitely possible to dispute the contended vehicle for this classification, which according to Lévi-Strauss seems to be our innate propensity to arrange our perceptions and consequently our ideas in a coherent system of oppositions - something Bateson (1972; 1991) would have called 'digital differences', i.e. based on quality rather than quantity. There has been quite a few anthropologists who have not found an overt coherence in the principles of classification of the people they have studied (cf. Howell 1989, particularly appendices 3 and 4), and others who have found continuous quantity rather than binary quality to be the decisive parameter. The Motese way of creating order is based on a juxtaposing of oppositions. However, these oppositions are not fixed independent entities but rather varieties over the emic terms '*ta løløi/ta vareag'*, literally meaning 'inside/outside'. What is 'inside' and 'outside' depends on the situational and relational context. It will not be too far fetched to imply that the main framework for social interaction, i.e. the *sågåi* moiety system, could

[19] I was told by an old woman who had spent the first fifteen years of her marriage outside Mota that the present wedding celebrations was of a fairly recent origin. When she married sixty years ago the ceremony was very simple, involving only the closest family. When she returned marriage had become a major happening with large amounts of food and money being spent. She said that this was an introduction from some of the islands to the south of the Banks, such as Pentecost or Maewo. If her story is correct, it is most interesting to note that nowadays a large wedding celebration is regarded as an important part of *kastom*.

both be a product of and a foundation for this way of organising this world, in relations of inclusion and exclusion. A model for conceptualising social relationships will most likely have an impact on a people's epistemological guidelines, which again serves to reinforce the validity of the model. I will suggest that the aspect of interdependent dualism inherent the Motese kinship system, combined with its associated element of pragmatic choice, probably has facilitated the incorporation, within the classificatory framework of inside/outside, of the two seemingly contradicting traditions of the Church and the Salagoro, which we now will consider in detail.

PART 2: EXCLUDING TRADITIONS

The concept of ***kastom*** has become a pan-Melanesian notion. Its contents are rather dubious, however, since the social and cultural elements incorporated within it changes from one society to another, and even situationally within these societies, a factor Keesing finds to explain the rapid diffusion of the concept since its usefulness and persuasive power is due to this very vagueness (Keesing 1982a; 1982b; 1992). Some common denominators are nevertheless discernible. *Kastom* implies history, tradition, continuity and 'us-ness', as opposed to the phenomena which are not assumed to have the same historical continuity, be it real or fictional, to show for itself. In Vanuatu, these socio-cultural elements are usually labelled ol samting blong waetman, 'white man's stuff', as opposed to ol samting blong blakman/blong yumi, and thus serve as a symbol for anti-colonial struggle (Keesing 1982a; 1992).

It is obvious that being in a position to define what is to be counted as *kastom* and what is not involves a substantial amount of power. *Kastom* has immense rhetorical value, and to be able to invoke it in a dispute over for instance land rights will always be a crucial asset. I observed several times during my fieldwork that the mere mentioning of *kastom* had a strong effect. The ethical bearings of the concept serve as a solid rhetorical defence, since an eventual attack on something that has been labelled '*kastom*' proves the opponent to be unfamiliar with, or even hostile to tradition and "us-ness". In this respect the evolution of the concept of *kastom* has probably served to promote cultural continuity: knowledge of history and tradition has always been a social asset in its own right, but it is now also joined by the persuasive forces of utility and possible gain, and in my view it is not unlikely that this has provided an additional inducement regarding people's interest in learning and maintaining their historical values and practices.

Following an increasing contact with customs, objects and ideas from more or less remote areas, the sphere of *kastom* will encompass a core of a people's understanding of what is distinctively 'them', as against the outside world. This serves as a mark of identity both for internal use, "who are we?", and in relation to the presentation of themselves to others, "this is us". The exchange of elements of *kastom* from different parts of Vanuatu is a popular topic both when meeting with outsiders and during the evening fireside chats.[20] What has evolved in this interface between relatively homebred and relatively imported ideas is thus a kind of essentialism. Edvard Hviding (1992: 371 ff; 1993) describes a case from the Marovo lagoon of New Georgia, Solomon Islands, where the *kastom* experts' presentation of *kastom* and "us" to the representatives of a mining company involved downplaying their cognatic mode of descent for a unilineal one. Their "us" was thus displayed modelled on experiences of Westerners' reservation towards bilateral kinship systems, and they took this into account as a pedagogical measure when introducing their system to the foreigners. According to Hviding they become essentialists simply because they experience the Westerners to be so.

Usually, however, what seems to occur in the encounter between two traditions is a process of increasing conservatism. The introduced traditions, no matter how fragmentary when compared to its entire extent at their places of origin, will normally be experienced as internally coherent meaning complexes. This necessitates a deliberate fixing of what is outlined as belonging to the indigenous tradition, thus reifying the elements of ritual life, history and practices through converting them from processual "taken-for-grantednesses" into conscious being-**and**-doing entities which to some degree are exempted from the 'wear and tear' of social life. Margaret Rodman finds this to be the case also in the socio-economic domain when stating that "[r]eifications, and transformations, of tradition are highlighted at the interface between the traditional pre-capitalist world of Vanuatu and

[20] *Kastom* resembles thus our Western elusive and, in recent years, much desecrated notion of 'culture'. The controversies over which entities to impute this notion with, and the hegemony which such delimiting abilities implies, are also very similar.

the world of mercantile capitalism to which islanders are linked through the crops they produce for sale on the world market" (Rodman 1987: 2).

Paradoxically, any such kind of pronounced conservatism inevitably implies change, as Marilyn Strathern has pointed out (Strathern 1992: 8 f), so these processes of developing conservatism, which might prove to be of great value for the comparative scope of social anthropology, have a most interesting outcome: in periods of cultural contact and (ex)change, where new customs and ideas are introduced without the threat, or actual use, of force, the result will often be an increased focus on local traditions following an initial period of interest for the introduced customs. The local system of knowledge and practice is thus strengthened when challenged by alternative ways of regarding and organising the world, since these alternative world views are experienced to be 'a difference that makes a difference' (Bateson 1972; 1991 [1980]), and therefore serve as a most useful background when contemplating upon the traditional structures (Kolshus n.d.).

Consequently, cultural contact does not homogenise the world. It rather informs us of the fact that man is as plentiful as are his and her worlds. Whatever material or ideological features we may have in common, apart from the mere fact that we all are human beings with physiological needs particular for our species, do not turn us into One. They rather serve as measures by which we may count and compare our differences.

On Mota, the introduction of Christianity, money economy and other phenomena commonly associated with the 'Western' world together with impulses from the other islands of Vanuatu has not evened differences but rather accentuated them since the "us-ness", *tamen nina*, is challenged on a more frequent basis. This has occasioned a process which I have chosen to call **purism**: the intentional creation and maintenance of unmitigated systems of knowledge, practice, law and ritual (Kolshus n.d.). The main tool for this procedure is the principle of inclusion/exclusion inherent in the opposition *ta løløi*/*ta vareag*, which both expresses and is sustained by a desire to avoid contamination. This process enables the Motese to live with two seemingly mutually contradicting spheres of ritual relevance: one emanating from the old mytho-religious structures

discernible in the rituals of the secret male *Tamate* associations; the other stemming from the dogmas and rituals of the Anglican Church. These two are the main cultural veins and ideational foci of the Motese society, and their preservation and ritual separation is an urgent matter for the Motese. What follows is an account of the contents of the two, both of which I have chosen to call 'traditions', as they were explained to and observed by me.[21] In this respect I might be accused of being as essentialising as they are - an allegation I accept with stoic calmness.

the *tamate* associations

salagoro - the home of the tamate

The site

The etymology of the term 'salagoro'[22] is not clear, even to the Motese themselves. However, the Motese proverb emphasising the importance of hospitality, '*sala vannå*', was translated 'man is coming/going', thus implying that '*sala*' means 'man'. The suffix '*gårå*' denotes 'border'. It will therefore not be too far-fetched to conclude that the first

[21] Ben Burt, in a most interesting study on the relationship between indigenous knowledge structures and Christianity among the Kwara'ae of Malaita, Solomon Islands, chooses to use the term 'tradition' as a synonym for *kastom* as against the features related to the Church (Burt 1994). It might have been beneficial to the comparative value of this thesis if I had employed his terms, but the situation among the Kwara'ae is rather different, with many different denominations struggling for people's attention. Because the Motese all are Anglican, have been so for the last 150years and are very proud of that fact, they commonly include the Church when talking about their *kastom*. I call the Church 'tradition' because the Motese themselves do not regard it as being of a different nature from the 'old' tradition' connected with the Salagoro (cf. Tonkinson 1982).

[22] I have chosen not to italicise the word 'salagoro' nor transcribe it using the letter 'å'. This is done since I postulate a juxtaposition between the salagoro and the church, using the English term for the latter.

content of the word implied 'border of man'. As will be seen below, this interpretation is very much in accordance with the ritual restrictions that apply to the salagoro area today. There are salagoros connected to the six oldest villages on Mota. There is a total of nine salagoros, since two of those villages has got two salagoros and one of the recently established villages uses a salagoro which previously had been lying fallow for quite some time. They are situated at some distance from their respective villages, usually close to some kind of landmark such as an odd rock or a particularly tall tree. As a rule the salagoro area will not be located at places where it will obstruct peoples' daily doings. My village Lotawan was an exception in that respect since one of its two salagoros was situated at the end of Salte, the beach and reef which belong to the customary landowners of Lotawan. This prevents non-members of the *Tamate liwoa*, lit. 'the great of the non-living', the secret male association, from entering the northern end of the beach.

The salagoro itself is merely a clearing in the bush with some marks telling where members of the different sub-divisions of the *tamate liwoa* are allowed access. There is supposed to be a traditional *gamal* there, a house which is built so that the roofing shall reach the ground on either side, with plaited bamboo walls on each end of the *gamal* and windows in a diamond-like shape meant to depict the eyes of the *tamate*. However, the maintenance of the *gamal* is often neglected, and during the time of my fieldwork only three of the salagoros contained a proper house. Action was taken by the salagoro-department of the *Kastom Chiefs Council* to deny the dancers from the villages without *gamal* on their salagoro admittance to the dancing. This caused disturbance among some of the more *kastom*-oriented men, since the announced decision revealed the presence of a *gamal* in the salagoro area, which is a secret meant to be kept hidden from outsiders. The new rule was not carried out efficiently, and it was subsequently abandoned on the next dancing occasion.

Most of the salagoros have been on their particular area for a long time, but there are also examples of salagoros which have been re-established at new sites. This usually occurs when an area has 'gone bad', *å masåi me tatass*, the implications of which was never disclosed for me. Particular incantations and prayers, *tatarå*, are performed for the preparation and initiation of a new salagoro. The full content of these rituals are known only to the handful men who are *mao*, specialists in the laws, history and practices of the salagoro. *Mao* is more of an adjective than a noun, and was explicitly compared to the *tawusmwele* of the graded male societies of the *Suqe ta vareag*, the suqe of the open, both categories being men with extensive esoteric knowledge who therefore deserved the obedience and respect of the other members.

The establishment of a salagoro is a necessity when the men travel to other islands to dance. They are given a secluded area where the head-dresses can spend the night, faithfully guarded by the dancers. The prayers are performed to purify and prepare the area for the presence of a salagoro, and I was told with glee that the site used when they won a national dancing competition in Luganville in 1993, located in the far corner of a coconut plantation, still was feared and avoided by the plantation workers, although they had carefully cleansed it and performed the necessary rituals for the area to be reclaimable to normal use after some time.

This fear for the strict Salagoro *kastom* on Mota was close to being utilised by some young men when they found themselves stuck in the provincial capital without food or transportation after having attended a soccer tournament organised by the only Junior Secondary School in the province. The hungry and homesick men were on the verge of walking into the Principal's office and tell him that if he did not prepare a boat for them to go back to the island within the next morning, they would turn the school area into a tambu place, hence rendering it inaccessible for the pupils and their teachers. However, they decided to change strategy and were satisfied with simply introducing the Principal to their theory that the school's flagpole had the sufficient length for them to cut down

and use as a bridge back to Mota, and they were prepared to carry out the required deductive experiments if the boat was not ready to convey them the next morning. Returning a salagoro area to a place anyone may approach requires a ritual where the location is 'unwinded', *ulul*. Usually this cannot take place until the site has been left fallow for some time, giving the trees and ground time to rot or change appearance in other ways.[23] The consequences when non-initiates enter a salagoro area which has not been properly restored for common usage are extensive.

The borders

Mark, now the last surviving *tawusmwele* of the *Suqe*, had sent some women to clear a garden for him on an area which previously had served as salagoro for his village Liwotqei. This was observed by two elderly men, who responded by summoning every member of *tamate liwoa* by producing the penetrating sound, *werewere*, by using the conch shell placed in the salagoro of Liwotqei, since the area in question had not been properly unwinded. The penalty for transgressions leading to the advent of every *tamate* on the island is twenty fathoms of shell money, payable immediately if the liable part shall avoid the destruction of his gardens, plantations and other properties which follows a *sañ-sañ* of the salagoro. In this case, Mark got so angry due to what he considered to be a wrongful action that he actually crossed the road of the *tamate* on its way to the salagoro, which is another serious offense, in order to let the men of the procession know of his anger. He emphasised that he would have no difficulty meeting the claim for money, since he was a *tawusmwele* sitting mostly on the receiving end when a new member 'consumed a new fire', *ganna å af*, of the *Suqe*. But he threatened them with reprisals of a new and stricter precedent following this incident, and with most men being

[23] It is tempting to associate this with a process of oblivion on the side of nature itself, but I was never given any interpretation pointing in that direction.

short of shell money this caveat represented a serious threat to their property. Consequently, Mark was let off.

My fathers' father Wilson did not get away so easily when the *tamate* of Tasmate, a village on the other side of Mota, came to the salagoro on the beach of Salte because they thought he had cleared his new garden too close to the *pan sålåi*, the features demarcating the border of the salagoro. Although Wilson did not agree, he paid his twenty fathoms without objection since he was *mao* and knew that once the *tamate* has left its salagoro the damage is already done and the fine of the salagoro, *tapetape*, has to be settled.

The *tamate* of Tasmate was not equally acquainted with the laws of the salagoro, however. Although the fine had been paid they still performed *sañ-sañ* on Wilson's gardens, which entitled him to present them with a *tapetape* equivalent to the fine they had imposed on him.

In both these cases, the women were considered acting on someone's behalf, and therefore the men were deemed the transgressors, even though they had paid the *Tamate liwoa* and accordingly possessed the right to enter the salagoro area. They had violated the laws of the salagoro by sending non-initiates too close. However, the principles of exclusion and inclusion, inside and outside, regarding the salagoro domain are not absolute. The prerequisite of being male in order to join the *Tamate* associations opens for degrees of access, with adult women and adult members placed on the far ends of the scale. Since I was classified as a young man without children, *å lumagaf*, I was allowed to eat wild yam found within the salagoro area, and eat fish on a day where the members' intention was to eat fish in the salagoro, in spite of the fact that I had not yet *trå å tamate*, i.e. paid the entrance money and undergone the required initiation. To eat something taken from inside *pan sålåi*, the outer border of the salagoro, or to eat food of the same kind as the one meant for consumption in the salagoro on a day of *å ganna tape laka*, the meal joined by every *Tamate* member of a village to celebrate a dance, is strictly prohibited for women.

The spatial expression of this scale of relative inclusion/exclusion is particularly manifest on the beach of Salte. One of the first practical-cultural lessons I was taught after having reached Mota dealt with the sea passage belonging to my village Lotawan. In order to get there, you must descend by a steep path leading from the plateau down to the narrow streak of sand that meets with the razor-sharp volcanic reef at the terminal point of the high tide. At the end of the path there is an old tree with mantling branches sheltering the Sunday picnicking villagers from the sun. Correspondingly, there is a large rock sitting on the reef's end. Together these two landmarks constitute the limit for female imminence regarding the salagoro, with neither girls nor women being allowed to enter the northern half of the beach.

Passages like Salte are visited by most villagers during a normal day, when they go to fetch saltwater for cooking, bathe in periods where water is scarce, clean the kitchen utensils, fish, pick shells, or just for plain recreation. This spatial demarcation between men and women consequently becomes visualized several times during the course of a normal day.

The socialisation of children reflects the weight the Motese place on keeping the salagoro and its relatively most distant category 'female' apart. The boys are often seen diving off the rock marking the limit for female approach to the salagoro, indeed they are being encouraged to go towards the salagoro area itself when there are non-members present on the beach in order for them to understand their ability to approach the area and the fact that this privilege can not be enjoyed by everyone. The girls, on the other hand, usually bathe more quietly in pools on the reef, sometimes joined by the boys but most commonly not.[24]

[24] A deaf-mute woman from Tasmate, a village on the other side of the island, lived in Lotawan towards the end of my fieldwork. Some young men from my village wanted to test her to see if she knew about the salagoro or not, so they tried to send her to fetch them some coconuts inside *pan sålåi*. She refused, shaking her head violently and pointing her finger towards the far end of the beach where the salagoro is situated.

After having grasped what I believed to be some "core motives" of the Motese way of thinking, including a highly consistent idea of balance between the sexes, I found it a bit peculiar that the women did not have an institution corresponding to the secretiveness and exclusiveness of the salagoro. My father then explained to me that there previously had existed such a custom, connected to childbirth. At the time of parturition, the women would bring the mother-to-be to a house in the bush which the men were not allowed to approach. Here they would stay for approximately one week taking care of the mother and the child while the men were looking after the village and the children and provided the women with food. My father told me that this practice had not been carried out for a very long time, and its contents and secrets were long forgotten.[25] However, it is still considered impertinent to say that a woman is giving birth to a child, *la å reremera/å tete*. The word to be used is *gåtå*, the same as for the period of preparation before the dances, when the men await the time for the *tamate* headdresses to swim ashore.

The laws

The set of regulations which apply to the Salagoro are first being taught the initiates during their seclusion period, together with the secrets regarding the true nature of the *Tamate* of the salagoro and the *tamate* head-dresses used for the dances. *Å lea ta lå salagoro*, the laws of the Salagoro, are imparted by a person who is *mao*, eloquent and experienced in its life and practices, through the medium of *taman iragai*, the old man of

[25] On Mota Lava, they still have extensive rituals associated with the advent of a first-born child, involving carnivalesque mundus inversus-like behaviour where the women are allowed to chase and beat the men and a general acceptance of them having no duties except singing and dancing and looking after the new mother and her child for a month, after which the men give them small amounts of money and things return to normal.

the salagoro.[26] While the laws are being taught or reinvigorated, both during the initiation of new members as well as on other salagoro gatherings, it is strictly prohibited to utter words of disagreement or audacity. The man doing the teaching will be holding the leaf of the *mele*, cykade palm, in his hand, and if he finds a remark or a question to be insolent he will simply drop the leaf on the ground, which signifies that a *tapetape*, a Salagoro fine, has been imposed.

Related to this regulation against contradicting the *mao* is one prohibiting quarrelling among members while staying in the salagoro. In case an argument should occur, the participants would be facing a *tapetape*. Since several villages within the past fifteen years had undergone, or were in the midst of, severe internal crisis, which had lead to the disintegration of the two largest villages Tasmate and Lotawan into six villages altogether, the principle of peace while in the salagoro would serve as an indicator for the general mood in the village as a whole.
If the village was capable of staging a dance, communitas, the will **and** ability to unity and co-operation connected to ritual occasions (Turner 1974), would have been achieved and would have contributed in mending the disagreements on the extra-ritual levels of village life as well. However, if the regulation prevented the men from staying in the salagoro to prepare for the dances, the inadequate amount of concord would be apparent to everyone and would add further dregs to their history of insufficient togetherness.[27]

[26] The pronunciation indicates that this should have been written *tamaragai*. However, the etymology is clearly *taman iragai*, ´father of many`, and for the sake of making this applicable as a historical document for the Motese, I choose to relinquish my linguistic agenda.
[27] The villages Tannorosa and Garamal broke off from Tasmate in 1987 and 1993. Tannorosa is using an old salagoro area, but the men of Garamal are supposed to join Tasmate in their salagoro to *gåtå*. As far as I was told this has never happened, hence the (admittedly very few) men of Garamal has not performed in four years. The mother-village Tasmate is still infested with feuds, and the rare dancing appearances from that village are made solely by the young unmarried men or by men from only one of the opposing sides.

In addition to the two basic principles of obedience during lessons and the prevention of quarrels, there are also a number of other rules pertaining to more specified situations. The fine that one village can impose on another after hearing sounds of laughter from the salagoro is interesting at this point, since it illustrates an interesting aspect of the spherical property, the 'set-asideness' from everyday life, inherent in the ideology of the Salagoro.

When questioned about the general mood among the men while dwelling in the salagoro, different people emphasised that the time spent was a time of happiness and expectation. They try to abstain from laughing too loud, since this might bring about claims for *tapetape* from other villages, and of course they pay the *mao* the required respect during his teaching, but otherwise the attitude is one of amicability and comradeship. An elderly man who is *mao* told me that you were allowed to *poroporo* even the ones you had a *qaliga*-relationship to, since the rule against it did not apply to the salagoro area. My two *mao* fathers did not fully agree with this statement, saying that the regulation was not waived but only less strictly observed.

Nevertheless, a partial or complete suspension of the *qaliga* institution, one of the guiding principles of social organisation, cognition and interaction on Mota, underscores the anomalous, or rather extranomalous position occupied by the customs and ideologies connected to the Salagoro when compared to life on its relative 'outside'.

Another carnivalesque property inherent in the Salagoro practices is the limited right to take food without asking. The Motese stresses both verbally and practically the "personal belonging"-aspect of property. The men doing *vråvrå*, the particularly time-consuming preparations for the *maggå* dance, are nevertheless allowed to take whatever they need or desire from any garden. They will leave their leaf mark as a sign, *fagglala*, for the proprietors, so that they will know who did it and thus avoid the fine which is given when someone responds with anger towards the men who are *vråvrå*.

Purity lest danger - in change

The explanation I gave for my project, that I had come to study *kastom* and its change, made me the recipient of different idiosyncratic narratives regarding how things were before and what is missing today, particularly concerning *nommava*, 'respect'. [28] Such narratives particularly apply to the Salagoro. The hierarchy of the mode of payment is recognised by everyone: those who paid *Tamate liwoa* by killing pigs, *å qåe*, have a self-evident supremacy in relation to the many who have only paid with shell money, *å såm tamen nina*.[29] And since the entrance fee has been reduced due to the lack of the traditional currency, there also exists a schism between those who paid in full to every village on the island, *me sar waeljåg*, and those who gave just a nominal fee to the non-village members, *me sar niñ-niñ*. During my fieldwork, the shortage of shell money brought forth a suggestion of accepting the national currency, the Vatu, as part of the payment, since some men's lack of shell money had made their sons and sisters' sons reach twenty years of age without being recognised as complete Motese men since they were excluded from the activities and knowledge that above all distinguished Mota Men from Outsiders. Initially the Kastom Chiefs' Council were opposed to the proposal, since the Vatu was white man's money. However, the kastom chief of my village pointed out the fact that two highly valued cultural symbols were depicted on the notes: a boar's curved tooth and the leaf of the eerie cycade tree. Consequently, the money should be

[28] Umberto Eco, in his collection of travesties Misreadings (1994), brilliantly takes an elderly man of Athens' view to the new philosophy introduced by Socrates, and pinpoints the general scepticism towards change found virtually everywhere among social groups or categories who do not feel that the change they perceive is being brought forth by themselves. In the same vein, anthropologists have often been accused of taking the same cultural-conservative view, being more nostalgic and reactionary than the people studied, and it would not be too far fetched to assume that what has been called "The Greek Miracle", the shift from a mythological to a logico-scientific world view during a period of only one hundred years, would have been highly regretted by the possible ethnographer of Athens.

[29] The expression *'tamen nina'*, lit. 'among/with us', is used to denote objects or motives which have equivalents in the white man's world, *'namon neira we qaga'*, 'belonging to the white'. This can be traditional towels, names, food, matches etc.

considered local and was therefore admissible within a salagoro setting. This opens for a new category of inferiors, who probably will be made the targets for claims of authority and respect in situations where their relative superiors feel that such claims can be favourably utilised.

This example shows that what is to be let inside the Salagoro sphere is a matter of negotiable pragmatics, in this case the realisation of the limited access to traditional money and the subsequent reinterpretation of the multi-purpose currency as something belonging to the world of *kastom*. Such decisions are now made by the *mao*, with the human factor as a possible source of error. Up till thirty years ago it was the power and sacredness of the salagoro itself, *å råñå ta lå salagoro*, on Salte materialised in seven small rocks, which protected the purity by imposing sickness or even death on violators.[30] It also served to give the lessons taught additional weight, since the empirically founded fear for metaphysical retaliation made the respect for the place and its rules even more profound. It was when members of the monastic Melanesian Brotherhood order prayed the power out of the *råñå* that the lack of respect which is claimed to be typical for the young men of today was initiated, since then only ordinary men and no additional compelling force were doing the teaching and executed the punishments.

For social scientists, and indeed for anyone with a shred of interest in the development of Man, it will be most stimulating to read Codrington's account of how the Salagoro with its associated practices was regarded more than 120 years ago (1891: 74f). He describes a lack of belief in the supernatural contents of the *Tamate* that would have deeply shocked the Motese today, and as will be contended more elaborately below the **re**-mystification of the world is indeed as possible an outcome of cultural contact as the alleged universal process of **de**-mystification.

[30] The rocks on the reef of Salte were lying there for many years after they were bereft their *mana*. A man from Lotawan took one of them out in his canoe and dumped it in the sea, but the next day it had crawled back on the beach. The great cyclone in 1972, which threw gigantic rocks helter-skelter and made the sea rise more than twenty meters above its normal level, did not manage to move them. Now they have disappeared.

dancing - the art of the tamate

Apart from their house-making, there are few items on Mota which might be labelled 'material culture': the sitting mat, *å nåñ*, the sleeping mat, *å epa*, the coconut leaf bag, *tapera*, the dish and wooden knife used to make and cut the breadfruit pudding *låt*, and the liana basket, *tapera gai*, of which only the last two can be said to bear evidence of a creative process exceeding the absolute necessity, a factor I would consider decisive for something to be called 'art'. The art of the Motese is one of temporary being and eternal becoming: their dancing.

Creating occasions - creating pride

Next to the importance of Mota as a mission stronghold, there is nothing the Motese value more highly than their deserved reputation for performing the best dances in Vanuatu. The significance of this certitude for the process of cultural continuity can hardly be overestimated, and was explicitly stated by the Torba Province officials as an explanation for what they perceived to be the Motese's idiosyncrasy and backwardness when I first came to the province. Mota is the last stronghold of the old Banks Islanders' custom and culture, and the Motese are most conscious of that fact. The dancing of the Salagoro makes Mota and the Motese known and respected outside the island. Stories of the police forcing people back during their dance shows to protect the audience from the danger of the *tamate* head-dresses, which is done only when Mota perform, are told with glee and strengthens the pride associated with being of Motese origin and having a Motese primary identity.

Apart from the approximately biennial trips to various cultural festivals, the dancing, *å laka*, takes place at major feasts, Church holidays and on some special occasions such as the arrival of a highly honoured guest. If there is dancing, the occasion is considered to be much more festive than if there is none.[31] It is particularly the dances connected to the Salagoro who are favoured. This makes it imperative for the villages who desire to celebrate their Village Saints' days, *Qåñ ima*, in a splendid manner - and due to the strong element of competition inherent in such events, that includes just about all of them - to ensure that groups from other villages will be coming to dance through ordering and paying for dances in advance and assembling the most competent players and singers on Mota. These might decline, however, and during my year on Mota, six out of ten *Qåñ ima* went by without dancing.

[31] If there is no dancing this usually means that the only program apart from the Church Service is the serving of food and kava. This again implies that the men will be getting kava drunk while the women and children eat and wait for their tongue-tied pater familias to grab some food before he can stagger back home assisted by his wife. The stand 'no dance - less fun' is hence fairly reasonable.

Non-salagoro dances

The most frequently performed dances which are not connected to particular situations and with no definite link to the Salagoro are listed below, with their special distinctions.

Name of dance	Who is dancing	Description	Music/singing	Dressing
Maptåa	Everybody. Said to be the dance which makes people merry, *masekeseke*, more than any other dance.	Carnivalesque, lots of cheering and shouting. The children run in chains, the adults are "dance-padding" in circles round the band	Full band which is doing the singing of literally hundreds of different songs. Ends when he band is tired or thirsty for kava	No regulations, but many men dance with a stick held over their shoulder. Some wear flowers, the men in the hair and the women behind the ear
Lañven	The women, sometimes joined by giggling little boys and girls	Starting with a growing shriek from the lead singer accompanied by an on-the-spot burn-out, rassa, followed by a yell from all the dancers. Then they dance-pad back and forth in lines	The band is joined by a hollow tree trunk. The only one singing is the female lead singer. Usually four songs in every sequence	Some wear armlets of dried coconut leaves with leaves stuck into them. Flowers behind the ear. White powder sprinkled over the hair. Those who have paid the right to use *å ilil tape mea*, red marks in the face, wear this.
Leña	Same as for *lañven*	Two lines of dancers changing places and dancing towards each other, doing the rassa at certain points	No band, only a lead singer stamping her feet and singing loudly	The same as for *lañven*

Tamatwåsa	Everyone	The same as for *maptåa*, but with a slightly less "hullabalooish" touch, particularly if the salagoro dancers participate in their costumes (they will then be dancing in a wide circle outside the other dancers)	A full band with tam-tam do the singing, and the *tamatwåsa*-cycle, like *maptåa*, consists of a large number of different songs.	Special guests are being given *å gaita*, a leaf packet with the leaves corresponding to the different salagoro departments they have paid for, hung round their necks. If the men choose to dance with their salagoro equipment, everything but a *tamate* head-dress and the ankle rattle may be worn. They will also carry a thin long branch stripped of its bark as a spear in their hands.
Sawarir vat	Males who have paid at least *tamate matawånåwånå*.	Quite similar to both the *tamatmegegel* and the *nounou* dances of the salagoro, but they dance in circles round the band and the dancers laugh and shout.	There is a full band, but the lead dancers does the singing.	They wear the full outfit of the salagoro dances apart from the head-dress. *Varaké* ankle rattles can be used.

Inside - outside, and the case of the audience

As I have already stated, the emic opposition *ta løløi-ta vareag*, 'from the inside/hidden - from the outside/open', is important when deciding which set of standards is to be employed upon an action, a phenomenon or a ritual occasion. The same applies for the dancing.

The main division runs between the Salagoro and the non-Salagoro dances, where the Salagoro dances are defined by the dancers wearing the *tamate* head-dress. However, the partition is not an absolute, and opens for degrees of respect, awe and fear for metaphysical contamination. This scale is realised in two components not immediately connected to the dancing itself: the audience, and the money used to purify the dancing ground.[32]

Purification money, *å såm talassa*, 'the money from the kava-bowl', is given to the dancers primarily by their hosts during the performance of a dancing sequence.[33] The purpose is to *ul å sara*, lit. 'unwind the public dancing ground'. This phrase has a twofold meaning: to free the host village partially from social debts by paying the dancers for the

[32] The inclusion of seemingly non-participating spectators has for long been considered good Latin in connection with the interpretation of rituals (see Geertz 1973 and Kapferer 1984, which will be discussed below). Since I will be focusing on the dancing as the main tool for the communication of ideas and beliefs of the Old tradition, a focus on the receiving instance, viz. the audience, is inevitable. It is also a perspective and an experience I am entitled to say something about, my mainly being a spectator throughout my stay.

[33] This excludes all-embracing dances like *maptåa*, where the point is to engage as many as possible in the dance. If a village came to 'give' the dance to another village, it would be appropriate for the receiving village to collect money (or yams, sugarcane or matchboxes if no money were available) as a present and token of gratitude.
At Christmas-time a village containing mostly former Lotawan-residents came with *tamatwåsa*, as a return for Lotawan coming to them the previous Christmas. We had received 300 vatu for our visit, and money was being gathered to at least match, preferably exceed, that amount. However, the visiting village's chief renounced the gift, saying that the dance and the music was a present from them to us and payable only in friendship. His speech embarrassed quite a few of my fellow villagers, since they gladly had received the three hundred last year. Some were a bit upset, also, because of the trick they felt had been played on them which gave the visiting village a permanent upper hand since a debt had been created which would always remain a debt.

work they have done preparing for the dance, and to purify the area to enable access for non-participants (cf. Mauss 1995: 29 f, 35).[34] As will be seen below, the importance of the last aspect is relatively much higher for the Salagoro dances than for for instance the *leña* dance, and one might infer that the purification money for the women's dances is directed towards the social liability only. After the women of Lotawan had performed the *lañven* in a village on the other side of the island, they were complaining because of what they considered to be too small an amount of money. It was also clearly stated that they were going to give back accordingly. The men were concerned with a general tendency of decreasing gifts to the non-Salagoro dancers, *neira gate glala å matesala tape ulul å sara*, "they don't know how to unwind the area", emphasising that the village square was not brought back from the abnormal condition caused by it having been an arena for dancing. Both notions, the social debt as well as the aspect of purgation, consequently exist in relation to the non-Salagoro dances, although the one regarding contamination of a metaphysical nature is somewhat subdued.

The audience constitutes the other indicator on where to place the different dances on this scale of relative holiness, judged by their response and behaviour during the dancing session ranging from one extreme, *å maptåa*, where there are no spectators at all, only participators, to the other, the Salagoro dances, particularly when some of the *tamate* head-dresses are of the *lakatapas* kind.

Due to the competitive element inherent in the dancing, manifest in the *masmasig*, personal awards given to the best dancer, the crowd gathered round the dancing ground, *å sara*, on the village square will be paying attention to the performance, although quite a few of the men may seem to be suffering from a lack of interest when the women

[34] I write *partially* free because it is expected that the dance shall be returned within the following two or three years. This is the main reason why the villages with the most willing dancers also have the more impressive *Qåñ ima*, Village Saint's Day. The *ulul* money might be more of a token of the village's acceptance of the relationship, with the money being considered as the closing of immediate debt.

perform. There is talking and laughing and cards are being played, and sometimes the women are joined by a man who mock-dances, exaggerating their moves and steps and making the people laugh.[35] Nevertheless, everybody notices which dancer who receives the most *masmasig*.

The difference between dances from the 'inside' and those from the 'outside' of the Salagoro is explicitly pronounced regarding the audience both in Mota tradition and reinforced by the Custom Chiefs' Council. No one who has not paid *Tamate liwoa* may come close to the Salagoro dancers or the dancing, and there is a general rule against pointing one's fingers at the performance or to stare on one single dancer for more than a brief moment. The distance to be kept used to be approximately ten meters, to prevent the non-initiated from looking too closely at the *tamate* head-dresses and the moves of the dances. However, since people nowadays in general are considered to be much more clever than their great-grandparents, the rule was made more stringent some years ago, so that presently the non-members are not allowed within thirty meters range of the dancing ground.

Although these rules do not specifically apply to the dances not belonging to the Salagoro they are increasingly ascribed along the scale, most notably in the *sawarir vat* which strongly resembles the dances of the Salagoro both in moves and in decorations. Due to this the crowd seems to be uncertain how to behave: shall they join the dancers in their apparent insouciance or should they respond with deference since the dance is remarkably similar to the performances which require such an attitude: *å laka ta lå Salagoro*, the dance of the Salagoro.

[35] This is a recent development, frowned upon by the *kastom*-minded men who emphasise the traditional mutual respect between the sexes and the disregard for hard work and preparations such aping is a symptom of.

Desired sounds of silence

More than six months of my fieldwork had passed before I got to experience what had been told me by everyone was **the** feature of Mota *kastom*. It occurred at a *Qåñ ima* in a village near mine. The Service had just ended and almost everybody had lined up in order to shake hands with the Village Chief and his assistant, and give the mandatory present of a coin or some matches. All of a sudden a high-pitched voice raised from the bush just outside the village and some women asked each other "*mai*?" and abandoned the dancing ground together with the rest of us.[36] I felt an extreme rush of excitement and anticipation. Then two men entered, their bodies painted black with white stripes, wearing wigs of dried grass on their heads with snake imitations stuck into them. In their hands they carried long trifurcated sticks with white feathers at the tips, and they moved in an unpredictable pattern with their knees bowed and their backs bent forward, one man partially singing and partially yelling with the occasional reply from his co-dancer. After they had properly entered the scene, the band started to play and the leader of the two dancers began to sing. At first they kept themselves within the dancing ground, but after a while they began to perform threatening mock-attacks with their sticks, chasing the public and making them keep the required distance. About five minutes after the first sound of them was heard from the bush, the dancers left as they had arrived, intimidating and ominous. The spell was broken, the people started talking as if nothing had happened - and the heart of the ethnographer-to-be pounded like a slit-drum.

I had been witnessing *mai*, the dance of the black-and-white banded sea snake which inhabits the reef encompassing Mota. And during this session I encountered a silence I

[36] The dancers actually came from my village or were my brothers from other villages, and the only reason they danced was that they felt sorry for me since I had stayed on the island for such a long time without witnessing any Salagoro dances.

would not have thought possible on Mota, even though *mai* is not counted among the core Salagoro dances but is only a messenger announcing that there would be dancing. As the day went by and I encountered *råsa, nou-nou, wetmæt* and *marrawa*, I caught a glimpse of the very special position the Salagoro dances occupy in the Motese society and learnt to appreciate them myself: the dignified way in which the dancers enter the *sara*; the noise of the people's chatting which rapidly ceases as the tender yet penetrating sound of the ankle rattles makes the crowd aware of the dancers' advent; the anticipating silence when the dancers halt in their starting positions; the impetuous blast of sound when the band starts to play; the sensation of being mesmerised as the rhythm of the dancing and the music gets to you; the tranquillity while the dancers await the next song; and then the exodus, in the same elevated manner as they had penetrated us.
To a young fieldworker this was the stuff that dreams were made of.

Gåtå - preparing for the dance, on the inside and on the outside

The week before this experience, I realised that something was about to happen. Some of the men would be seen talking secretively together, obviously changing the topic when they were approached by an outsider. I overheard many questions starting with "do you have …?", and some of the young unmarried men were seen only in the early morning and after dark. A latent strife between the two main factions of the village had erupted just a couple of days earlier, and since the dancing initiative clearly emanated from one of them, the enthusiasm for the project was not too considerable among their opponents.[37] This led to some pungent remarks from the dancers since the dancing was meant to be a surprise present from the village to me. The speculation commenced as to

[37] There are two reasons for this attitude; both the rule of the Salagoro banning disagreements within its borders, and the fact that in times of quarrel the two factions will not support any enterprise initiated by the other - which is a major obstacle to the development and efficient functioning on both village, island and national level.

who would eventually dance, and the activity in the salagoro increased as the day of the *Qån ima* approached.

Around the island it had been rumoured for some time that different villages would be entering the salagoro to *gåtå*. Some days before the feast it was clear that these were only rumours, and when visiting the other villages of the island I was surprised by the fact that, considering the extremely rapid information exchange otherwise experienced, no one seemed to know that Lotawan were preparing their performance. The uncertainty remained until the sound of the *mai* was heard.

Among the people of the village, the speculations concerning who eventually would be dancing continued. The men of Lotawan had not been performing for quite some time, and it was rumoured that this occasion would be used to give a fourteen year old boy the chance to do his first adult solo dance with the *tamate* on his head, and also that two five year old children would have their first performances, dancing behind the adult solo dancer during the *marrawa* dance. The men belonging to the other faction had not decided whether they would dance or not. They were contributing, however, by lending their ankle rattles and fowl feathers to the men who were short of such items.

The consequences for the women increased as the men spent more time in the salagoro and therefore rarely were able to assist them in housework or garden-keeping. These tasks were also made difficult since the men had blocked the path leading to the sea with a leaf, *sissisga*, hindering non-members from entering places where they might be able to catch a glimpse of the sea and reef. This made the washing of kitchen utensils troublesome, and the salt water used for cooking had to be fetched elsewhere. Despite these complications caused by the dancing, the women did not complain. On the contrary, they were pleased that Lotawan would be contributing in making the feast a memorable one, and they were discussing which dance they wanted performed.[38] So when the first *tamate* was carried

[38] Since four of the dances are performed wearing the same *tamate*, this decision is often not made until the last day before the dancing.

into the village church at sunset the evening before the feast, it was my mother who first made me aware of it by whispering '*Thorgeir, å kåkåa!*'.[39]

Associated with the *gåtå* period is a special vocabulary called *å vavae tape vatñmårag*, 'words of concealment'. These include the substitution for the prohibited *ge*, 'make', which cannot be used when talking about the origin of the *tamate*. Instead it will be said that the *tamate* swim ashore, *garkallå*, and that the men are staying in the salagoro to await their arrival. It did not seem very likely that any adult believes that they actually arrive swimming from an unspecified Somewhere to the reefs of Mota. What is intriguing, however, is that the implicit rejection of this narrative as mere tradition emphasises the validity of the prevalent exegesis: that the *tamate* indeed are made, but at the same time are spiritual beings through elements in the process of production and by the fact that they are **called** *tamate*.[40] This aspect, which I never heard questioned by anyone, proves that the spiritual incarnation is a reality which might explain the fear members and non-members alike exhibit towards the head-dresses, and hence towards the other components of the Salagoro.

This definite life-of-its-own quality of the *tamate* is also immanent in one of the regulations concerning sexual intercourse, which is quite amusing seen from a comparative point of view. It is a common prescription in many societies that when being in a liminal state like the salagoro dwellers are when they *gåtå*, sexual intercourse is precluded. On Mota, this applies in a very limited way: the dancers may not have **extra**marital sex while they *gåtå*, since this will affect their *tamate* instantly so that the

[39] The word *kåkåa* refers to both the salagoro itself and the *tamate* head-dresses, and depicts the metonymic relation which exists between the phenomenon 'salagoro' and its different aspects.
[40] The motive of a name rendering power to its bearer, and the power of creating order on the side of the name-giver, is well known in most traditions (ex. Genesis chapter 1). On Mota, this is evident in the Christian names which are taken mostly from the ancient missionaries in order for the children to acquire their virtuous qualities. The people of Lotawan might hope that this conviction will be proved wrong in the case regarding the good-natured five-year-old boy who was born during the Iraqian invasion of Kuwait and rather hastily was given the name Saddam Hussein…

other men will know by the appearance of the *tamate* what has happened when the voluptuous perpetrator returns.

The dances of the Salagoro

Name	Description	Music/band	Head-dress/gear	Remarks
Råsa	Two rows of dancers, totalling from eight upwards. Men who are not part of the group will be padding in circles around the band.	Starts with high-pitched singing by one of the dancers ten minutes before they enter the dancing ground. Then the band takes over, singing and playing a cycle of four songs with accompanying dances, all but the last repeated.	Any of the three standards: *wewe, wis* or *manntalålama*. The dangerous *lagiga, qatmetatal* and *lakatapas*, applicable for all the dances, are also sometimes used. *Lavva*, the ankle rattle made of a particular kind of sea porcupine, is worn.	
Nounou	Same as above	Same as above, only different songs and lyrics.	Same as above, in addition a leaf is held in each hand. The start being a fierce on-the-spot stamping, ash is sometimes put under the dancers feet to resemble smoke.	*Råsa* and *nounou* are considered to be interchangeable, although only one of them can be danced at the same time.

Marrawa	One or two dancers, sometimes followed by a boy who *laka piriñ*, assists the dance. Circles the band while *asañ*, rubbing a stick rhythmically between his hands.	Full band who repeatedly sings the song about Marrawa. Only one song.	Same as for *råsa*, apart from the stick decorated with fowl's feathers. The boy will be carrying a stick shaped like a head as his *tamate*. Instead of *lavva*, the *varake* ankle rattles are worn, made of Tahitian chestnuts.	Marrawa, the spider, was first the main rival of the cultural hero Qat, but after Qat spared his life he became his sidekick. Is said to have created death.
Wetmæt	A group of dancers follows a lead dancer who is the only one who wears a *tamate*. When he sets his cane into the ground, the other dancers do one round.	Full band, several songs.	The leader carries the cane and has a *tamate*, the rest have no head-dress but will rub the same stick as used for *marrawa*.	

Tamat-megegel	Two rows of dancers, entering backwards with their backs crouched. Approach sequentially until reaching the band. The leader controls the progress by yelling. The dancing partially circles the band and partially threatens the audience.	Four songs in the cycle, performed by the band. The dance leader yells when the different dances reach their climax.	The same stick as the one used in the *mai* is held in each hand. The *tamate* is the same as for the other dances, but has a fat ribbon at its base resembling the black-and-white pattern of the mai, indicating a relationship between the two dances. *Lavva* is worn.	
Maggå	Rarely performed because of the extensive and time-consuming preparations. Was not danced during my fieldwork, and I was not able to gain much information about it. This is, together with qat, the only dance that needs rehearsal, which is done in a secluded river bed.			One will expect that the know-how connected with it will gradually vanish, or at least it will cease to be counted among the feasible dances because it is performed so infrequently since there are few who are willing or able to stay away from gardening or copra production for several weeks in a row.

Qat

The *qat*, or *varraqat*, 'qat dance', is the most impressive dance as regards both steps and gear. It is named after the cultural hero Qat, who is also called *å vui talå Bangkis*, 'the spirit of the Banks'. The story of the dance's origin is given by Codrington (1891: 157 f.). Much shortened, it contains the epic of Qat and his companion Marrawa who made themselves some dolls: Qat carved them of dracaena wood while Marrawa carved them from the wood of the *tavisoviso*. Qat started pounding on a piece of bamboo with a stick, and the dolls gradually began to move different parts of their bodies. Marrawa did the same with his figures, but became frightened when they started moving and buried them under a rock. After six days he came to see how they were doing. He found them rotting and was struck by an intense smell which he had not encountered before. For this, Qat is said to have created life while Marrawa will be herostratically famous for inventing death.

My fellow islanders had not heard this story before, nor any other story which could account for the origin of the dance, and they were very surprised by the legend since it explains so many of the peculiarities of the *qat*. It is a *tamate* which you have to pay separately after you have paid *Tamate liwoa*, and it has its own gear which the non-members are not allowed to wear. There is no band or singing, only a single man who is *nårnårå*, beating a thirty centimetre long piece of bamboo called *vatnårå* with a stick. He strikes in a manner which to an untrained ear will seem highly unsystematic, and there are periods of complete silence between the sporadic beating of the *vatnårå*. He is the only one without a head-dress, and he enters the dancing ground long before the dancers do. His arrival will immediately silence the audience, and they will quickly pull away from the *sara*. The non-initiates should be careful to have their backs facing a tree or a wall to prevent them from suddenly finding themselves in the path of the dancers, who are not entering by the main path like the other Salagoro dances but might suddenly emerge from

virtually everywhere. They arrive in groups of two to four men, dancing violently and making the people flee when they discover where the dancers are coming from. When the dancers reach the man with the bamboo, *å tanun tape nårnårå*, they suddenly halt. This is repeated until all the groups have entered the dancing ground. Every now and then, the leader will beat his bamboo, and the dancers will bend their knees. Then suddenly, the whole scene explodes, and the dancers will use the different dance patterns that they have been particularly trained for: the *vaganai*, the 'engine' that circles the leader with short fast steps, most suitable for tall dancers; the *vagatet*, sequences of four rapid steps from side to side, requiring shorter dancers; and the *åpsañ*, rhythmically jumping in series of three with the legs held together, a role corpulent men are the best to fill. Together, these three constitute the amazing experience *qat*.

Close to the dancing sits a group of mostly elderly men who might not be able to dance anymore. However, they know very well how it is supposed to be performed, and in addition to the *masmasig*, the credit given to the visually best performer, they encourage the dancers to dance harder and more violently by throwing scornful remarks at them.

A *qat* session usually lasts about fifteen minutes, after which the dancers vanish as abruptly as they arrived.

The *tamate* used in *qat* are the three connected to the other Salagoro dances worn underneath a spectacular head-dress reserved for *qat*. It can have a multitude of different shapes, such as crocodile, shark, mosquito, flying fish and Mount Mota. Nowadays even helicopters, aeroplanes and the caps of French policemen are made and painted using only natural materials and colour.[41] They can be over two meters long and more than one meter in height, and create astonishment wherever they are seen. The criterion for quality

[41] The estuarine crocodile is the only character used which is not found on or around Mota. However, they occupy a small but significant part of the fauna of neighbouring Vanua Lava, where the only two crocodiles of Vanuatu are found. A stock was reputedly brought there from the Solomons by bishop Patteson, who before releasing them made them swear that they would abstain from eating humans. After the cyclone in 1972, there were only two left. They are occasionally seen sunbathing on the beach by the airport.

as regards the *qat tamate* is resemblance to the original it was meant to portray, and artistic creativity is encouraged and highly valued. Inventiveness can be taken too far, however, and the role of the men who are *mao* is made evident through the case below.

Principles of purity

A young man in a neighbouring village had made himself a spectacular head-dress by using a pipe which originally was intended for draining the smell from his family's toilet. This caused strong reactions from the more traditional minded men, and they punished him by excluding him from the dances for the following two years. His offence was twofold: he had used an item which was not a natural component, and he had danced with something that the women **knew the origin of**, hence increasing female knowledge and endangering the secrets of the Salagoro and the dances.

But it is not only the possibility of retaliation from other men that contributes to keep the creativity within the limits of the traditionally acceptable. My father once made a *tamate* that got stuck in a palm tree by the cave where his *tarañiu*'s ancestors are believed to be dwelling, when he left the salagoro to dance. Eventually, he was able to release it, but immediately after the dance he became ill. His mother-in-law prepared a leaf for him, and diagnosed the disease as being a repercussion since my father had not followed his ancestors' warning: he had made the *tamate* too big and it had almost eaten him. His hubris had nearly cost him his life in his eagerness to stand out from the other dancers and receive more *masmasig* than anyone else.

The institution of the *masmasig* is the main tool by which people communicate the preferred style of dancing and decoration.[42] It is a leaf which traditionally is given only by *tavala ima* to the dancer who gives the best performance and has the best decorations and,

[42] This also applies to the women and their dances. However, while the men are allowed to *masmasig* the women, the women and other non-initiates must ask a man to deliver it for them if they want to *masmasig* a *tamate* dancer.

in the case of the Salagoro dances, the *tamate*. Now this is waived, and the *sågåi* of the dancer might also give this leaf of honour. When it has been presented, it is the duty of the receiver's *sågåi* to take it from her or him and return it to the giver together with a coin, a practice which is called *ul å masig*, 'unwind the *masig*'. The underlying principles of the institution are the two terms *wenewene*, clean/pure, and *taram*, proper/suitable. With the ordinary Salagoro dances, the elements to be considered are the dancing, the adornments, *å gasaglå*, and the *tamate*. With *qat*, the extra *tamate* comes in addition. My *mao* father, who is generally recognised for being the best dancer on Mota, explained to me that the period before and between the dances is the time to examine the head-dresses and the decorations. If they are found to comply with tradition, he can then focus on the dancing before he gives his leaf. A leaf from the men who are *mao* is valued more highly, since they know how things are supposed to be.
They will also test each other when watching the dances, giving hints like "there is something wrong with X's *tamate*, can you spot it?", thus sustaining the continuation of a fairly homogeneous cultural trait.

As for the *gasaglå*, the part of the dress which is not the *tamate* head-dress, strict rules apply concerning what the members of the different salagoro departments are allowed to wear. There are heavy fines for donning for instance a skirt made of fresh coconut leaves if a dancer only has paid *Tamate matawånåwånå*, one of the minor associations, and is supposed to use skirts made solely of dry leaves. The same goes for the leaves put in the bundle on the back, *å gaita*, and the ones tied to the upper arm, *å pannepanne*.
The importance of the olfactory quality 'smell', *punpun*, is emphasised in Motese dancing as it is in many ritual acts around the world (cf. Shore 1996: 60). The leaf bundle, *å gaita*, undergoes a special treatment the days before the dancing in order to give it the strongest smell possible. The leaves are wrapped in a larger leaf and put on hot stones for about a day together with other leaves which are known to have a potent scent. This is

now often done by the women, but traditionally the process was strictly prohibited for them to observe.

I was told with glee that one of the methods used in earlier days was to place the bundle on a known rat path, since rats urine when put on fire with the leaves will produce a very strong odour.

Simul homo et tamate

One of the most intriguing aspects of the Salagoro dances is highlighted when the *masmasig* institution is joined with the belief that when wearing a *tamate*, the whole person becomes the *tamate*. This creates an apparent discrepancy between the notion of the dancer being possessed by the *tamate* representing the Salagoro, and the idea of the dancer still being an individual giving a performance which most definitely is related to him (cf. Valentine 1961).

It would be easy to ascribe this to two related phenomena within the field of anthropology: the performance of rituals where conviction as to the dogmatic content has faded, or an inconsistency between the traditional exegesis and the idiosyncratic interpretations held by people. However, I encountered explicit statements and observed interaction which firmly point towards reaching another conclusion: when performing their dances, the Motese men are **simultaneously** individuals who are parts of the social body with its hierarchical systems of reward, and extended parts of the Salagoro which stresses equality and uniformity. The dancing both divides and unites: the division is a result of the proximity to the competitive structures of the Salagoro's 'outside', while unity arises from the shared sense of fear when dealing with the dangerous *tamate* of the 'inside'.[43]

[43] Shore (1996) provides an account of the historical treatment of Levy-Bruhl's use of the labels 'pre-logical' and 'scientific' as two different modes of the social administration of knowledge. Shore states that Levy-Bruhl has been systematically misread and wrongfully considered to be

To begin with I nourished a certain scepticism of the undergraduate-training-induced 'saying vs. doing' kind towards the notion of the *tamate* making everything it physically came in contact with part of the salagoro. Neither was I fully convinced of the menacing character which the *tamate* head-dresses allegedly possessed, since they after all were man-made objects.

The reality of the first point became brutally obvious to me when I was allowed to perform my first dance. I had been told that if a head-dress were to fall off and touch the ground during a dancing session, the whole village would be turned into a salagoro and hence be made uninhabitable for non-members.[44] The men would then have to purify the area, *ulul å masaåi*, by throwing coins on the ground and perform various prayers and rituals, in order for the women and children to be able to return from their Diaspora, which was required to last for at least one week while the purification was carried out. There were no records of such an incident, however, and I was told that if it ever had occurred it must have been a very long time ago.

The dance which was chosen was *nounou* since this was considered to be a relatively easy dance. I should perform it with the men from my village and some sister's sons of my father at the Saint Peter's Day celebration in Liwotqei. We had practised at night in a secluded garden close to the salagoro, where my father and some of my brothers introduced me to the steps and the movements. They were surprisingly uncertain regarding the order of the four different songs with their associated actions, but after some communal brainstorming they settled on the sequence. The night before the event

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proclaiming a fundamental difference between Western and 'Traditional' cognitive structures. He emphasises that the term 'pre-logical' just refers to the Aristotelian logic's demand to exclude contradicting statements, which was not followed by many of the people known through the ethnographic material available at Levy-Bruhl's time. One might be tempted to use Levy-Bruhl's term 'participation' in order to explain how it is possible for the Motese to be simultaneously man and *tamate*, but since the reality of this hypostasis never was explicitly recognised by anyone I talked to, I choose to abstain from such an analysis.

[44] See Kapferer (1984) for an account of the importance of the breach of illusion which is obtained by wearing the costume wrong or by doing the wrong moves during a ritual.

we first did our usual half hour of practice, then we went to the far corner of the village where we had a final rehearsal with band and singing. This was done to let the other villages know that there was going to be dancing from Lotawan - although usually they were not able to do it this way, since they were pressed for time to finish their *tamate*. Rumours had it that there would be lots of dancing in Liwotqei, and it proved to be right. The program was announced through a megaphone, and the order was as follows: *leña- leña- marrawa- leña- wetmæt- lañven- lañven- tamatmegegel- qat- tamatmegegel- nounou*. *Mai*, the 'announcement' dance, was not performed. It turned out that the Church Council had noticed that those who danced *mai* were not able to attend the Service since they had to work on their decorations. Consequently, they agreed to bar the *mai* dance from the *Qåñ ima* since this first and foremost is a Church Holiday.[45]

Although the dancing had started immediately after the large communal meal somewhere around midday, it was already late in the afternoon when I was asked to go and join my co-dancers. Since I had not yet *trå Tamate liwoa* but still was *Tamate matawånåwånå*, '*tamate* with the eyes closed', I was instructed not to turn around while the others lined up behind me. We formed to rows of dancers, with me being second in line. The two men ahead of me also carried the *tamate* of *Tamate matawånåwånå*, so that I should not be able to look too closely on the *tamate* of the *Tamate liwoa*. I felt the rush of excitement which they had prepared me for when the *tamate* eventually was placed on my head and the liana was tied under my chin, loose ends being cut off. We all put a leaf between our teeth, in order to prevent us from talking and to enhance our concentration. A young man had been singing in a high-pitched manner for quite a while already, one of the three songs which notify the public that either the *nounou*, *tamatmegegel* or *råsa* will arrive shortly. We were already lined up looking forward when we repeated our agreement on who were to change sides first. Then we marched into the village square. People

[45] Like so many other innovations of the not-so-popular kind, this regulation was abandoned already on the next *Qåñ ima* in Lotawan, where the dancers performed a most spectacular and intimidating *mai*.

immediately moved away while the band rose and grabbed their instruments. We halted on the periphery of the *sara* while we waited for the deep, cavernous sound of the four men beating the large plate covering the three feet deep hole on the ground to arise. To my shocked surprise, I almost immediately discovered that the liana strap had not been fastened well enough, and the bouncing caused by the fierce steps made my *tamate* slide further and further down the back of my neck. This was observed by the men who were sitting nearby, and they tried to help me both by adjusting my head-dress during the short intermissions between the dances and by advising me to keep my head down to prevent the *tamate* from moving further down. I had been told that if anyone spoke directly to a man carrying a *tamate* or used his name, the offender would be fined - and the men who addressed me complied with this by always looking in the same direction as I did, giving their advice in a casual manner as if they were meant for no one particular. My heart pounded violently, but I tried to refrain from thinking too much in headlines like "Anthropology-student ruins ancient society" and rather concentrate on finishing with at least a touch of dignity remaining. However, this was not easy: in addition to the gradually sliding *tamate* I broke my big toe quite early in the session on a mound which I did not see due to the fading sunlight; the temperature was much higher than the pleasant coolness of the nights in which we had rehearsed; and it turned out that we were to dance every dance two times, something I had not at all been prepared for. Fortunately, just as I was on the verge of giving in to my fatigue, we finished the session since the last dance should only be performed once. With my head-dress barely hanging on, we left the *sara* dancing until we were almost out of sight. The men had in the meantime made a point of not directing the non-members' attention towards what nearly had become a disaster, and I was about to draw the conclusion that the consequences of a *tamate* falling off were not as formidable as I had been told. However, one of my brothers who had been preparing the kava and therefore had not seen the dance, approached me during the kava session and asked how it went. I said that I 'screwed up', *nao me srava*. When he turned to my father who sat nearby for an explanation he simply said 'the *tamate* almost fell off'. The silent

shock visible in my brother's face once and for all proved to me that the popular beliefs were very much in accord with the doctrines I had been taught.

"Why dance when it's so dangerous?"

This question was asked by a friend to the two *mao* in my village, and it caught them off guard: they had never heard any explanation as to why, and they had not contemplated the issue themselves. I had not thought of asking this question myself, and since I considered it to be a bit too blunt I apologised by referring to the asker's status as a newcomer. Nonetheless, after the incident the question kept niggling me. I considered myself to be a poor fieldworker for not even having reflected on the topic, but first and foremost I was intrigued by the fact that the two men who seemed to have inherited such a vast exegetic tradition from their father, a heritage I had been so lucky to get a glimpse of, now were not able to answer what seemed to be a rather crucial question. The easiest, and probably best, solution is to give the answer my two *mao* fathers eventually gave; "we do it because it is *kastom*, and because the dances and the costumes look good".[46] Retrospectively, however, a pattern seems traceable when main cultural themes (or 'foundational schemes', to use Shore's term (1996, p.53 f.)) are examined synoptically, as they indeed are during the procedure of anthropological analysis. This enables us to consider the dancing as a ritual performance with an unintended aim of either saying something about or doing something with the Motese society.

[46] The melanesianist Arve Sørum's response to this question was simply "Precisely **because** it is dangerous" (personal communication). And the element of diversion must surely be important regarding ritual practices in societies where the changes in daily and seasonal rhythms and tasks are not particularly extensive.

Catharsis or laboratory?

Both Bruce Kapferer (1984), Clifford Geertz (1973) and Victor Turner (1974) implicitly or explicitly evoke the Aristotelian concept of catharsis when analysing the 'works' of such different rituals as a Singhalese demon exorcism, the Balinese cockfight and the structure of social conflicts. Aristotle considered catharsis, 'purification', to be an epi-phenomenon of the well-composed and well written tragedy: through displaying the fate of a seemingly impeccable hero, or heroine, who are unable to escape their destiny, the author will elicit feelings of **pity**, towards the ill-fated person who is predetermined for a disastrous end, and **fear**, that the same misfortune may strike them, among the audience. These two emotions will lead to catharsis, insights which will improve the audience as human beings and consequently the whole society (Aristotle 1991).

Kapferer, in his article "The Ritual Process and the Problem of Reflexivity in Sinhalese [sic] Demon Exorcisms", criticises both Turner (1967) and Geertz (1973) for misplacing the locus of reflexivity when analysing rituals. In his view, Turner overstresses the importance of cognitive distance achieved by the reordering of well-known ideas or objects in unfamiliar ways, while Geertz' 'deep play'-concept misses the important effect rituals might have on the more distant, but only seemingly non-participating spectators. He emphasises the movement between the partaking, close-to-the-danger, non-reflecting stance and the physically removed and hence contemplation-stimulating condition as a prerequisite for the demon exorcism ritual to function (sic!), with curative effects for both the possessed individual and society as a whole.[47] The nocturnal demon exorcism, with its three phases corresponding to Van Gennep's model for rites of passage, displays both

[47] Kapferer capsizes towards a functionalistic position in this article, with a most Durkheimian understanding of the causes for, and effects of, ritual and religious life. The dynamic aspect introduced by Turner regarding the possible **mal**function of rituals, and the changes this could bring about, is not taken into consideration (Turner 1974).

the visible and invisible forces inherent in the society and demands introspection and contemplation regarding basic values, thus revitalising them.

It is tempting for me to adopt Kapferer's analysis and theoretical conclusions, and it would not be too far-fetched to postulate a corresponding motif as regards Mota: the two traditions of the Salagoro and the Church which are pulling in different directions, both having possibly fatal contaminating effects to the other but usually kept well apart emotionally, intellectually, legally, spatially and ritually. During these public dancing sessions on the village square they are suddenly unveiled in immediate proximity to each other with possible disastrous consequences, thus creating a sensation of dismay among the people. After status quo has been reinstated this might induce reflection on themselves and their society, particularly concerning the permanent ideological ambivalence they are experiencing: being fully Motese involves being **neither** entirely Christian nor entirely 'Traditional'. These reflections would then have exercised the Motese's awareness of the consequences of not keeping things apart and strengthened their belief in the legitimacy and relevance of their customary rules and regulations.

Having participated both as a dancer and a spectator, I find this perspective to be neither fruitful nor valid. Unlike Kapferer, I do not believe that watching your brother or neighbour wearing a demon mask, or a *tamate* head-dress for that sake, will provoke the amount of fear required for such an argument to stay afloat. On Mota the danger of contamination if a hat should fall off is real, although such an incident is unlikely to occur. Nevertheless, this provides in the display of body control, co-operation and artistic mastery which the dancing involves the touch of metaphysical hazard which is such an important element for the life **in** a ritual, i.e. the interest with which people participate and observe, and the life **of** a ritual, i.e. the incentive for staging it and thus for the process of continuance.

The reason why the Motese keep dancing is definitely tradition, and of course the sheer beauty and wonder of the head-dresses and the steps which are linked to **pride**, an aspect which in my view is highly underestimated when it comes to understanding cultural continuance. However, it is also a controlled experiment where the two underlying forces of the Motese community are brought together and juxtaposed, not only to encourage contemplation about their society but rather to visualise their **personally** endured duality: the relation between old and new tradition exhibited in the Salagoro dances performed on the public square next to the church is one that every Motese experiences within him or her every day of their lives, as carriers of a Motese body. The dancing links the individual to the displayed mutual experience of belonging to seeming inconsistency - and having no problems coping with that situation.

The reason for this is simply the ingenuity of the tool of situational definition inherent in the concept of 'inside/outside'. It decides which set of ideological, ritual, emotional, spatial, juridical, and physiological relevance shall pertain to which circumstances. It therefore facilitates the creation of puristic, consciously conservative spheres as the Salagoro, which we already have considered, and the Church, which we now will focus on.

the Church

"It is ironic that while Christianity's success stimulated and provided the conditions for early ethnographic studies of Melanesian religion [through the missionarian ethnographers], Christianity, by virtue of its Western origins, has rarely itself been considered a reputable ethnographic object. […] Anthropologists pride themselves on their ability to grasp indigenous points of view. There is something ironic, therefore,

about the widespread resistance to the fact that many Melanesians incorporate Christian ideas, rituals, and organizations into their religious lives." John Barker 1992: 147 f

While the customs of the Salagoro provide the Motese with an important source for the creation of a distinct identity as **against** the world, the Church of Mota maintains the connection with it through the shared symbolic and dogmatic universe of the Christian community in general and the World Anglican Communion in particular. On the other hand, the special position Mota occupies in the history of the Mission in Melanesia constitutes a historical vein through which the Motese extract elements which are of the utmost importance regarding the Motese's demarcation of the contents of "Motaness".

the anglican church

The reformation and dissemination of the Church of England

In 1534, an escalating conflict between King Henry VIII and the Pope, following the King's somewhat dubious manoeuvres in the field of matrimony, led the English branch of the Roman Catholic Church to substitute the papal supremacy for a model where the King was the administrative head of the Church while the theological issues became the domain of the national clergy. The Catholic Church of England had been conceived (Haraldsø 1988).

This breach, based more on pragmatics and politics than on theological divergence as it was, caused little in the way of changing the dogmatic foundation of the Church. Decisive questions such as the contents and number of the sacraments and the issue of the episcopacy remained basically unaltered. For the argument of this thesis it is important to notice that the principle of apostolic succession, the uninterrupted chain of investiture

starting with Jesus' inauguration of Peter, was maintained throughout the fifty years of reformation.
Following the expansion of the British Empire during the eighteenth and nineteenth century, where missionaries followed and sometimes preceded the British envoys, the Church of England became an Anglican World Church in its own right.

In addition to its Catholic origin, the Anglican Church has to a great extent incorporated in its dogmatics and spiritual life a puritan vein inspired by the various theological reform movements which surfaced during the centuries after the Anglican Reformation.
This has enabled the Church to encompass two quite different theological traditions: the High Church, with its focus on liturgy and the ceremonial life of the congregation, and the Low Church, emphasising the imparting of the Gospel. These two traditions live side by side within the confines of the Anglican Church, although there recently have been raised questions regarding the usefulness of retaining this unity. Swain and Trompf (1994) observe a most intriguing point regarding the Anglican Church in the Pacific, where they find the High Church tradition to prevail without exception. This tradition's more 'mystical' practices might explain why it was propagated with more success than was the case for the Low Church, a detail to which we shall return later.

The Mission and the Church of Mota

The first known encounter of some endurance between the Motese and the Europeans took place in 1858, when the Anglican mission ship "Southern Cross", with the New Zealand Bishop George Selwyn among the passengers, reached the rugged volcanic shores surrounding the only decent anchorage on the island, which today is called Mission Passage. This was part of a preliminary survey conducted by the Anglican Church of New Zealand, which aim was to identify a bridgehead for their evangelising

efforts in Melanesia (Fox 1958). The islands which today constitute Vanuatu were at the time exposed to missionary activity belonging to different denominations, particularly the Catholic and Presbyterian Churches. There seem to have been some kind of tacit agreement between them on which parts of the archipelago the respective Churches should be allowed to "monopolise" dogmatically, and the Anglicans, being the last to show their interest, were allocated the northernmost part of the New Hebrides and the Banks and Torres Islands, together with the southern Solomon Islands and Fiji (Fox 1958).

The Motese proved to be a gentle and amiable people, which in the days of attacks from blackbirders and (other) seaborne head-hunters was not a matter of course (op.cit.).[48] The information gathered on the expedition was used by the man who was later to be the first Bishop of Melanesia, John Coleridge Patteson, when he established the first permanent Anglican mission station in the Southwest Pacific in Veverao village on Mota a few years later. He also brought six Motese men with him in order for him to learn their language and for them to be trained as native clergymen. Among these were the first indigenous priest of the Diocese of Melanesia, George Sarawia, and together with Bishop Patteson he is the most prominent and legend-wrapped character in post-contact Mota history.[49] These six were the first of many Banks islanders who later were recruited for missionary service by the missionaries. The task of translating The Book of Common Prayer and The Bible into a Melanesian language had already begun, and Motese, due to its relative

[48] Blackbirding took a heavy toll in the whole of Vanuatu. Between 1863 and 1903 over 40.000 men and women were being more or less enticed away to work on sugarcane plantations in Queensland (Vanuatu Kaljoral Senta 1996). They signed three years contracts, and upon its expiry they were entitled to be returned to their home island. However, the contracts were frequently broken: some were never allowed to return, others were simply dropped on other islands. This is how my father's father's father Jack Lolomaio, originally from Small Malaita in the Solomons, came to Mota. Codrington ascribes a substantial amount of the changes that already had occurred in the 1890´s to the effects of blackbirding: the diseases brought by the ships or brought back by workers returning; the increased desire for European goods; the introduction of firearms; and the cultural influence of the misplaced.

[49] Bishop Patteson has his own day in the calendar of the Church of Melanesia, an honour otherwise only attributed to the first apostles and other important holy men and women.

simplicity and "co-operating native speakers", had been selected as lingua franca for the evangelising activities of the Anglican Church (Fox 1958). Because of this Motese was spread to major parts of the region, from Anglican strongholds in the Fijian Islands to the island of Santa Isabel in the Solomon Islands, where it was in regular educational and liturgical use until the 1920´s when it was replaced by English (op.cit.).[50]

The Diocese of Melanesia, hereafter abbreviated DOM, emphasised a highly pragmatical approach in their dealings with the local customs they encountered. They were aware of the fact that rejecting or prohibiting local customs most likely would do more damage than gain to their cause. This made the DOM evangelical strategy somewhat more tolerant than most of the other missionary approaches in the region.[51] Practices which were not totally irreconcilable with the Gospel and the teachings of the Church were either directly encouraged or considered to be neutral, left for the converts themselves to decide whether they should continue to adhere to the custom or not (Codrington 1891; Fox 1958).[52] The *Suqe ta vareag*, graded male society, and the *Suqe ta lå salagoro*, secret male associations, were in the beginning institutions considered to be of such neutral character (Sarawia 1996; Codrington 1891: 72).

However, the tension grew between the second generation missionaries and the elder *tawusmwele*, the men who had reached high rank within the *Suqe*, probably due to an

[50] The Bishop of the Diocese of Northern Vanuatu, Charles Ling, told me that there are still elderly people elsewhere in Vanuatu as well as in the Solomon Islands and Fiji who are denying to attend the church Service unless it is being conducted in the old Mota language. Stories like these are of course told with pride and delight by the Motese.

[51] This is an extremely important point when considering the possible comparative value of this thesis. The Anglican and the Roman Catholic missionaries generally incorporate more of the already existing structures in their teaching than most other denominations, who commonly emphasise a radical breach with the old customs as an unequivocal sign of a person's conversion and re-birth as a Christian. Particularly the Seventh Day Adventists have had success in Melanesia during the past decade, and I would expect that, quite paradoxically, precisely their rigid discipline is accountable for their progress. The aspect of "new life" is definitely more evident when someone starts to observe Saturday as Sabbath and abstains from eating pig and using kava, betel, smoke and other possible intoxicants.

[52] According to these writers, the most strict attitude towards pre-Christian customs was displayed by the newly converted Melanesian clergy. Similar examples of strict conservatism and orthodoxy among recent converts are found in many different historical and sociopolitical settings.

increased dogmatic focus introduced by the new missionaries and the educated Motese clergy. This in turn made the *tawusmwele* realise how considerable the changes brought about by the introduction of Christianity really were. The young men were discouraged from joining both the *Suqe* and the *Tamate* associations, and the *kolekole*, a lavish feast connected to men's entrance into higher grades of the *suqe* (Rivers 1914; Mauss 1995: 74), was forbidden. This actually involved barring the performance of the dances of the *Salagoro* since they were inseparably linked with the *kolekole* celebrations and were not staged on other occasions.

The Poison and The Pledge

After 1920, the Mission on Mota was gradually being built down as the DOM concentrated their activities elsewhere, and in the mid-30´s the main responsibility for the Church of Mota was put in the hands of the Motese themselves. According to the Motese this was a bit premature, since neither the clergy nor the people were entirely ready to deal with such sudden independence. The slumbering *Suqe* began to flourish again, and an initiative was taken to restore the *kolekole*.[53]

The highly competitive nature of the gradetaking rituals, probably enforced by a cultural rhetoric directed towards the Church, caused widespread envy which led to an escalation of fighting and use of poison and black magic. I was told that this was not the traditional form of the *Suqe*, but was the direct outcome of a quarrel following a traditional bird-hunting competition between the two moieties some years before the 2nd World War. This feud was brought into the *Suqe* arena, with fatal consequences for the Motese society.

[53] I was given the kastom name 'Malla' when I came to Mota. Malla was a man who had completed the seventeen grades of the *suqe* together with another man, and started giving *kolekole* feasts in order to outdo his competitor. After both of them had killed and given away several hundred pigs belonging to themselves and their supporters, Malla gained the upper hand by gathering people to a *kolekole* where he dressed his own sister's son like a pig ready to be slaughtered and then clubbed him to death with an axe, upon which his opponent acknowledged his defeat.

A turning point in the history of conflict between the adherents of the *Suqe* and the followers of the Church took place on a Monday in 1949, when *mama* Lindsay Wotlimaru summoned every man, woman and child on Mota to the main village of Lotawan. He made them swear with their hands placed on the cross worn by all clergy in the Anglican Church that they would abandon once and for all the use of poison, black magic and leaves causing abortion (cf. Tonkinson 1981: 250 ff. for a most interesting parallel case on south-east Ambrym some thirty years later).[54] *Sañ-sañ*, the punishment for marrying within the *sågåi*, was also prohibited. *Mama* Lindsay made them take this oath following a request from his wife Leñas and my mother's mother Hansen, who had been observing with deep concern a dramatic decline in the population which followed the extensive use of poison and black magic related to the status wars within the *suqe*.
I was told this story literally every time I visited a new village or talked to new people for more than five minutes, which indicates its extraordinary importance for the identity and self-understanding of the Motese. What amazed me was how the different versions corresponded, regardless of the age or sex of the narrator. The only point where a slight deviation occurred was related to the number of inhabitants still left on the island: the estimates varied between fifty and one hundred, with adult men being the definite demographic minority.[55]

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[54] The Motese distinguish between the mechanical use of poisonous substances meant for the victim's consumption and the malevolent effects caused by spells or incantations (or simply ill intentions) added to a piece of spilled food or hair or other objects closely connected to the victim's body. The knowledge of the esoteric words which empowered, *manag*, the substance was either inherited, mostly from a maternal uncle, or bought. For black magic they use the euphemism '*å gene we tatass'*, lit. 'bad thing', while they use the Bislama word 'posen' for poison, maybe implying that the use of toxic plants is something of fairly recent origin.
When the Motese promised to abstain from the use of black magic, the owners of benevolent white magic also gave up their knowledge, frightened that the *mana* of the vow would consider their practice irreconcilable with the nature of the promise and therefore kill them. Joseph, an old rainmaker who was born before the first national census in 1890, showed me how he had been able to control the sun, rain and lightning, and it was a general regret among the Motese that this most useful ability was no longer with him - especially since we at the time were enduring the impact of *El Niño*.

[55] Some told me that there were only four adult men left, who spent their time digging graves and burying bodies. This is definitely an exaggeration since I personally met at least ten men who

Another subject of the story to which every tale conformed concerned the period that followed the pledge. This was a time of funerals, as the owners of poison or other malicious substances who were not complying with their promise were killed by their own actions rebounding on themselves. This served to strengthen the Motese's dedication to the pledge, since it showed that the *mana* of the promise made to *mama* Lindsay's cross was mightier than the *mana* immanent in the substances or invocations meant to cause injury or death.

This incident was the final major conflict between the two main cultural veins of Motese society and proved the hegemonic position the Church had seized through showing its powers to be more potent than those of the old tradition. But through this encroachment by the Church on what were considered to be insupportable, distorted elements of Motese customary heritage, other parts of *kastom* which had been lying fallow could be revived. The dances had not been performed for some twenty years due to the ban against the *kolekole* ceremony, but now *mama* Lindsay took the initiative to have them performed at the Saints' Days, *Qåñ ima*, of the six villages (cf. Gnecchi-Ruscone 1997).[56] This implied an encouragement and recognition of the practices of the Salagoro by the Church, and transformed the relationship from one of mutual antagonism into one of reciprocity. The *Tamate* associations were provided a field for the public display of their activities while the Church was rendered credibility and desired historical anchorage through being associated with the ancient tradition of the Salagoro dances.

Such an association was not established on the other islands in the Banks and Torres, which proved detrimental when the last European Archbishop of Melanesia, Bishop Wrongley, during a visitation in the beginning of the 1970's instructed his clergy to

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were above eighty years of age. However, if the population since then has been growing at roughly the same rate as today (i.e. app. 4 % p.a.), a total number of about one hundred is highly plausible.

[56] This link between *kolekole* and *Qåñ ima* may have been unintended, but the *Qåñ ima* village feasts definitely have traits similar to the lavish expenditure of the *kolekole* - a fact which today is recognised by quite a few Motese, to which we will return below.

actively oppose the activities of secret associations like the *Tamate*. Since most of the clergy in the area were not originally from the islands on which they were posted it was easier for them to accept the Bishop's directive. *Mama* Lindsay, on the other hand, realised that the Church would loose credibility if it was associated with a strategy of counteracting *kastom*, and since he in addition could not find anything offensive or blasphemous within the *Salagoro* he strongly resisted the Bishop's dictate and denied to execute it on Mota, saying that the structures of *kastom* had paved the way for the introduction of Christianity in the first place (cf. Tonkinson 1981: 254). This was an unmistakable testimony to the fact that the Church of Mota had become an independent and indigenised Church, supported and controlled by the Motese themselves.

the Church today

Protector of People, Provider of Pride

To fully appreciate the significance of Mota being an island freed from the fears of poison and black magic, and thereby the pride the Motese invest in this and the impact it exerts on their self-esteem, it is necessary to take into consideration the situation on the other islands in the Banks and in Vanuatu as a whole.

The Vanuatu Prime Minister of 1997, Fidel Soksok, stated in an interview printed in the Vanuatu Trading Post on June 8th 1997 that black magic and poison was **the** major obstacle to development in Vanuatu, since the fear of falling victim to malevolent actions due to envy intimidated both public servants and private entrepreneurs from doing their best. He made this statement following unrest over what ni-Vanuatu felt was an over-representation of Ambrymese within the Vanuatu public services: although constituting only 5 % of the total population, 20 % of the positions within the central administration

were occupied by Ambrymese, and it was indicated that this was due to their extensive knowledge of black magic.

When a Motese falls ill after a visit to another island speculations rise concerning the cause for the condition. Several times during my fieldwork it was suspected that people from the neighbouring Vanua Lava or Mota Lava islands, or from the more remote and infamous Maewo or Ambrym, had killed the returning person by ripping out his or her intestines just to refill the interior with leaves or pieces of cloth and send the victim as a zombie back to Mota, where the living dead would be sick and die within a week after continuously having vomited leaves and cloth.[57]

When the copra ships arrive the crew will often be offered food when they come ashore, and the Motese describe with glee the reluctance the seamen show towards receiving their meals.[58] The seamen's disbelief when experiencing that on Mota they need fear neither poisoned food nor that pieces of lost food or faeces will be used for black magic is equally rewarding.

Expatriate Motese tell stories of how every man on Ambrym who dies before having reached old age is buried with a machete so that he will be able to avenge himself in case his death was caused by black magic. A teacher from Ambrym who was posted on Mota during my fieldwork nourished this comprehension of his fellow islanders being particularly skilled in the ways of poison and magic and eager to use it, by telling horrifying stories during kava sessions (Tonkinson 1981; Rio 1997). Upon his arrival, the people of Mota were a bit concerned because he was not aware of the pledge. They did not fear being hurt by posen since they were protected but they were worried that he might die trying to use whatever he had brought with him. They asked the Motese headmaster to see him and enlighten him on the situation. The headmaster did so.

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[57] A brother of mine lost his son because of poisoning in February 1999. He had attended a secondary school on Espiritu Santo.

[58] The conduct of the crew of the different ships when arriving at outlying islands like Mota most definitely gives them reason to fear retaliation upon their return. Cheating with the coprascales, selling overpriced kava and foodstuff, chasing the women and generally behaving like city boys in the countryside is more of a rule than an exception.

When the Motese are told stories such as these, and learn of the unrest in other parts of the world through the occasional newsflash on the radio, the local notion of Mota as an oasis of tranquility and safety in a dangerous and threatening world is supported. The promise made to *mama* Lindsay encapsulates the island and frees the Motese from the anxiety and feuding which the presence of poison and magic often create in the other islands of the archipelago, and indeed in the region as a whole (Weiner 1976; Tonkinson 1981; Brison 1992). But by which power does the pledge eradicate, or rather reverse, the effects of poison and black magic? This will be made clearer when we consider the issue of apostolic succession linked to the concept of *mana*. First, it is necessary to give an account of the organising principles of the Church of Mota, both regarding space, time and ecclesiastical structure.

The Church and the village

The Church plays a decisive role regarding the spatial organisation of the island. The total number of villages on Mota is ten, with the term for village, island and nation alike being *å vanua*. Garamal, a village established in 1993 counting only 25 people, is smaller than some of the areas lying midway between villages, but they have raised a church named after John the Baptist on the village ground. Those domains lying between villages are also named but are referred to *å masaåi* rather than *å vanua*, and their inhabitants consider themselves to belong to one of the adjacent villages. Such areas are established for a number of different reasons: some prefer to be living on their own ground instead of ground owned by others; some move outside the village due to quarrelling or embarrassment following specific incidents or long-term developments; others choose the silence of solitude before the safety of plentitude; others again do it because of illness in the family.

What constitutes a village is therefore not the number of residents but the presence of a church building, and the declaration of independence from the residents' former villages which is implicit in the election of a Village Church Council led by *å maranaga ta lå sara*, 'the chief of the village ground' (cf. Burt 1994).[59] The Village Church Council will send its representatives to the Mota District Church Council, which again has its seats in the Diocesan Council which will be electing delegates for the Regional Synod of the Archbishop of Melanesia where the envoys to the decadal Lambeth Conference, with participants from every branch of the World Anglican Communion, are elected. Thus, by the erection of a church building the aspiring village is incorporated in a world wide structure which lends its recognition to the village's claim for independence (Burt 1994).

Selecting a name for the church under construction is an important task. The reservoir is made up by the 22 holy men and women who have been granted their respective days in the Church calendar, and the choice will decide the day on which the *Qåñ ima*, 'the House day', i.e. the church house, is to be celebrated. These usually large feasts are definitely the most important enterprise carried out by the village during a year, and they comprise a high level of competitiveness. When choosing a name several considerations must be made: the saint should be an important one; the day must not be included in or immediately preceded or followed by the major holidays of Christmas and Easter; and it is desirable if the previous and coming *Qåñ ima* are at least a month away so that the people long for a party and know that there will be a while before the next is coming up. The saint chosen will not form any particular focal point for the villagers apart from their responsibility for organising the celebration of his or her day. Some villages have painted or woven the name of their saint over the entrance to the church, but there are no images inside the church which are supposed to be associated with the selected holy person.

[59] It is worth notifying that the presence of a salagoro is not required.

The Time and Order of Worship

The ritual calendar of the Church and circumstances related to the different church buildings give the main premises for the structuring of the day, the week and the year on Mota.

Every morning at dawn, the *maranaga* wakes the people by hitting the large corroded gas tank used as a church bell. About one hour before sunset the bell sounds again to tell the people that it is time to have their evening bath. Depending on the enthusiasm of the village catechist, there will be Morning and Evening Prayer, *å tatarå matava* and *å tatarå ravrav*, up to five times a week, and even though they usually are not attended by anyone but the children (sent by their parents) and some of the older men and women in addition to the catechists, the *råñå*, the quietness and sacredness, of the service will have its influence on the non-participating members of the community. Since everyone is expected to observe the Prayers, nobody would want to proclaim their absence by making loud noises or walking past the church windows.

The Sunday Service, where the *ganaråñå*, Holy Communion, is celebrated, is the main inter-village event of the week.[60] On normal Sundays there are usually two Services in villages lying on opposite parts of the island so that no one will have more than approximately forty minutes to walk in order to attend them. The structure of the Service is given through the liturgy, and apart from the readings from the Bible with the related sermon and the Prayer for the day, which all change according to which Sunday of the Church year is being celebrated, there is little in the way of variation between the different Services. But since it is an occasion on which most people assemble, it also

[60] The term *tatarå*, prayer, is used for both Prayer and Service. Although the Motese Book of Common Prayer uses *å lñe ganaråñå*, 'Holy Mass', for the Sunday Service it has not been adopted in colloquial Mota.

constitutes the most important channel for passing on and receiving information. Both in the priest's prayer for the day and in the announcements at the end of the Service, topics of common concern are addressed and criticism is delivered when deserved.
When the people are gathered outside the church after the Service, the representatives of any of the Village Chiefs´ or Kastom Chiefs´ or the political Mota District Councils frequently will air their concerns regarding a wide range of issues, from specific cases of theft to topics such as the general lack of interest in family planning. The prospect of not receiving the information others possess is most likely a major incitement for the more reluctant churchgoer to attend the Service, although they probably would have heard the news before the next day.[61]

In addition to the Sunday service, there are about thirty *Qåñ we råñå*, single holidays in memory of specific events or holy persons including the saints of the different *Qåñ ima*s, which are being observed during the ritual year of the Church - which as for most other Christian Churches begins with the First Sunday of Advent. Some are more important than others, and the Motese have a system of labelling which divides these holidays into Class 1, 2 and 3. Class 1 implies a strong incentive not to work before midday and a recommendation that the rest of the day should be likewise commemorated. The *Qåñ ima*s and some other important days are labelled Class 2, which stresses the importance of taking the day off and prohibits work which is not immediately necessary. Class 3 signifies a general holiday where no one is allowed to engage in any kind of work apart from cooking and necessary food gathering, and it is expected that people who are not seriously ill will attend at least parts of the Service. At Christmas this state lasts from the afternoon of Christmas Eve and three weeks forward, while the corresponding period at Easter is two weeks starting on Palm Sunday.

[61] These announcements were an invaluable source of information for me, much since they were presented in a straightforward and unvarnished manner which enabled me to observe people's immediate response to different situations and dilemmas.

An interesting peculiarity regarding the perception of time is worth noting at this point. The concept of *gagapalag*, translatable into 'program', is important for activities and rituals connected with both the Church and its corresponding 'Outside', and a time schedule is expected to be available for any major enterprise. However, since most Motese do not possess watches, and since nothing can start until the food, the performers, the decorations and other required features are ready, the timetable is usually shattered before the program has even begun. During my fieldwork I never experienced less than two hours delay in connection with any important occasion. It seemed that no program would begin until late afternoon no matter the time originally meant for it to start, but that the earlier the time set the greater the event and hence the participation. These hours of waiting proved most valuable for the young anthropologist in the field, until he caught the pattern - after some ten months - and due to end-of-fieldwork holistic stress started showing up just an hour or two in advance, having learnt that idleness is but ostensible. The interesting point for the argument of this thesis is that complaints are not raised if the occasion is one belonging to the Salagoro or other events which are not associated with the Church and consequently is *ta vareag*, 'Outside', in relation to the Church: preparations for the dances, a communal meal or an inter-village *kastom* game. If it is a Church happening, on the other hand, much discontent due to the hosts' or the performers' unpreparedness is displayed and it is said that *å gagapalag gate fallagå mantag*, 'the program does not run well'. In my opinion, this points towards an essential difference in the apprehension of the **morality** of time which follows the division I have outlined between the spheres of relevance connected to the Church and the Salagoro respectively. Belonging to the Church sphere is a conception of 'preciseness' not prevailing elsewhere in Motese society. The principle of relevance hence manifests itself also in a temporal sense, and supports the notion of the Church and the Salagoro as having complementary validity.

The Means of Worship

Since Motese was considered to be a comparatively easy language by the missionaries, the Bible and parts of the Book of Common Prayer were translated into it and were used by the Anglicans elsewhere in Melanesia. A hymnbook was written based on famous tunes taken from the English Church, and a practical catechism presenting questions and answers to fundamental dogmatic and pragmatic issues was also printed. The complete version of the Bible was released in the mid-twenties, but the New Testament, *å lea we wia*, had been available already in the 1880's and had been widely distributed.

Since the Mota language had changed considerably and rendered the scriptures unintelligible for most people, an initiative was made fifteen years ago to retranslate the Bible following contemporary Motese. Two Motese men were given responsibility for the project, under the supervision of Dan Garst, a Canadian Bible translator who lived on Mota now and then for a period of seven years. The New Testament and the catechism are now completed, together with a version of the Book of Common Prayer based on *kastom* songs instead of the medieval chants of the original liturgy. The first Bislama Bible was published in 1998, so the fact that tiny Mota is about to have her second Bible translation completed within a few years advances local pride and self-esteem, and serves to emphasise the position of the Church of Mota as unique.

Although these translations exist, parts of the English liturgy are sometimes used on special occasions such as *Qån Ima*. Employing the slightly archaic English of the liturgy promotes a feeling of exclusiveness as most of the people attending the Service do not know neither the contents of the recitations nor the meaning of the words themselves. Thereby the liturgical English attains a function which is not dissimilar from the mystifying role of other ritual languages such as Greek, Latin or Sanskrit, at the same time as these languages provide a link to the historical origin and 'authenticity' of the

rituals, which probably serves to reinforce people's devotion to the rituals and adherence to their dogmatic contents .

The Sincerity of Worship

There is no evident coercion towards attending the various Services, but since there exists a strong link between the nurturing of a Christian faith and being counted as an honourable and virtuous member of society, most people will be present by the time the Service is finished. *Å lñe ganaråñå*, the Service where the Holy Communion is celebrated, ordinarily lasts for about two hours, but the church is seldom full before it is near the end since the visitors from other villages usually do not start walking before the Service has well started. This became a topic several times during my fieldwork, with particularly the main deacon castigating the crowd for neglecting their spiritual lives when arriving late and thus missing both the readings of the Bible as well as the sermon. Such reprimands did not seem to have long-lasting effects since there always appeared to be some who were less keen on attending the church earlier than you who would serve as a moral buffer.

However, there was one man on Mota who had refused to attend any Church ceremony for the last twenty years. On this and other issues he was something of an outsider, since he already was in his mid-forties but not yet married. He had a 'happy-go-lucky'-attitude towards life and apparently enjoyed his bachelorhood, at the same time as he was a hardworking man who was known for supporting communal activities and general sociability. Everyone on Mota knew of his little idiosyncrasy, and every priest who had been working on Mota for the past twenty years had tried to talk him out of his persuasion, without notable success. But since he was said to be the first to obey *å lea ta vareag*, the norms and rules of the society outside the church arena, and did not do

anything improper or offensive which might hurt any of the churchgoers' feelings, he was respected as a decent man and a good citizen, although being a bit on the peculiar side.[62] I found the case of his being a possible atheist quite intriguing given the general level of reverence for Christian life and values and what I considered to be an equally high level of homogeneity regarding the same factors. I therefore tried at different occasions to ask him the reason for his opinion. He firmly stated that he believed in God, and that his not going to church was "just an idea of his", *å nunumya nañmuk gap*. Understandably, he did not elaborate on this.

Being the judge of the sincerity of the piety exposed is admittedly a most difficult task, since we then must embark on a rather futile discussion which aims to distinguish between personally motivated urge and socially rewarding norm as regards ritual behaviour (cf. Obeyesekere (1981: 14 ff) for a related discussion on the use of private and public symbols). Although it is possible to understand the tendency to arrive late as a sign of negligence of the spiritual life and a general lack of interest in Church activities, there were other aspects which testified against such an interpretation, and I found both the socially instigated and the personally desired present in the Motese's reverence toward the ceremonies of the Church. A description of the 'typical' Sunday Service might serve to give the reader an impression of how it is.

Veverao village at seven - eleven a.m.

The sun has already risen above the massive mango trees sheltering Veverao from the exposure to wind from the turbulent Coral Sea which is breaking its waves on the shore forty meters below the cliff on which the village is located. The birds have finished their

[62] I suspect that his ability to withstand the pressure to change his conviction made up a decent portion of the respect he enjoyed.

greeting routine, and the village seems deserted when I arrive. From Saint Andrew's church, situated alongside the main path leading to a rather small *sara*, the sound of a tiny bell is heard chime three times through the window holes, which are designed in a way resembling the Gothic style of many English churches. It is followed by silence, unless I go into the church room itself where muted recitations will be heard from about ten people present, most of them elderly women kneeling by the pews on the left side, where the women usually sit. The couple of men present does also belong to the eldest generation, apart from the village catechist in his white robe who finishes his prayer before commencing his duties. He spends the last half hour before the Service placing the cloth on the altar, lighting the candles, displaying the wafers and the liquor used for wine together with the dish and cup by the entrance, and assisting the priest while he puts on his alba and stole.

The children enter the church in a semi-respectful manner, and take their regular seats in the front pews. They start to sing some merry children songs, mostly in Bislama but also some in English and a couple in Motese, involving lots of clapping, with the occasional scoundrel who destroys the rhythm being rebuked by the catechist or one of the adults, now finished with their pre-Service duties and starting to read their morning prayer. Some people from a neighbouring village have also arrived by the time the priest goes to the altar to check on the catechist's arrangements, just some minutes before 7.30 when the Service is due to begin. They have already put their coins for the offering on the plate which is placed next to the wafer and wine on a stool next to the entrance. Some boys in their early teens serve as choir boys, and they too conduct a last minute check on something, wearing their red robe partly covered by a smaller white one just like the choir boys in the Anglican churches in the 'big countries', *å vanua we poa*. Then they go in order to line up for the procession. The small bell is sounded again, upon which the priest asks in an authoritative manner for the hymn, *å as*. The catechist or the village choir-leader answers by giving a number in the Hymn book, and sings its first line to establish which of the many applicable melodies he has chosen. The congregation joins the singing

from that point on, while the procession walks up between the pews carrying a ceremonial cross and the Bible. If it had been an important holiday, the Head catechist might have filled the censer with slow-burning coconut shells and shrouded the church-room with the smoke of this incense substitute - leaving behind him a chorus of badly concealed coughing. The Service then continues with Kyrie and Gloria, which are sung while standing up, and the Prayer for the day before the two Bible readings, separated by a hymn. In accordance with Anglican tradition the people remain seated during the readings whereas they stand while singing the hymns. The newly arrived continue to enter the church, and by the time for the sermon, *å tårtåre*, the church is half full. The Gospel for the day is read, after which the priest explains its biblical context and unravels its theological meaning before construing the practical implication it has for our lives. Some priests will be preaching for up to thirty minutes whereas others are known to be relatively much shorter. The congregation usually keep their heads bowed in a contemplative guise, and some obviously use the occasion to drop off for a minute or two. Both the thinkers and the drowsers rise when it is time to sing the Nicene Creed, where the congregation bows when we reach the part where Mary is honoured as the mother of Jesus, while we all remain kneeling during the intercessory prayer which is read by the catechist at a pace on the brink of intelligibility. The procession is then repeated, this time carrying the vessels for the Holy Communion together with the plate with the offering, *ålå-ålå*. Then we kneel on the limestone floor in front of our pews during the preparation of the Holy Communion, which is quite a strain for the knees. Some eventually give up and choose to sit, either with their backs leaned against their pews or on the pew itself. This is followed by the singing of Sanctus, *råñå*. The consecration of the bread and the wine would have been accompanied by incense had it been an important Holiday. The priest honours the bread and wine as physical manifestations of Jesus Christ. Then there is a moment of silence, before we all say The Lords Prayer and sing Agnus Dei, *lam non God*. By this time the church is packed with people, and occasionally a suppressed laughter can be heard through the windows coming from different groups of people who

came too late to get a seat. After the priest's invitation the congregation sings a children's hymn while all the children approach the altar to be blessed by the priest, upon which they leave the church giggling. Then the women line up to receive the Communion while the rest of the congregation sings a hymn. The men follow when the women have finished. They all first receive the wafer, which they then shall immerse in the chalice containing the wine. Since the Communion is continuous, most people do not spend more than a brief meditative moment by the altar before they walk backwards for a couple of meters making the sign of the cross and then return to their seats where they still are expected to kneel. Quite a few, particularly among the men, do not join in on the meal but remain kneeling. This is due to different motives: some do not feel competent to go since their minds and hearts are not entirely concentrated on the sacrament, others might not go because they could not contribute in the offering and therefore do not feel entitled to partake in the meal, whereas some might suffer from exclusion imposed by the priest due to transgressions of either the Church's rules or the laws of the 'outside'. After giving thanks for the gifts of the Communion, the priest goes to the vestry to remove his stole while the congregation sings a hymn. The priest returns to start his announcements. Sometimes they might be short, involving little but where the Services are to be held next Sunday, but usually one or two cases of common concern are addressed, often concerning lack of contributions to the District Church Council or specific cases of theft or other forms of moral deviation. The congregation will respond on such information by shaking their heads and otherwise exclaim their disapproval of that kind of behaviour. After the announcements the priest exits the church, followed by the people. Some pious individuals remain to silently perform the Prayer of Gratitude before they too join the others on the village square. Here the discussions regarding the announcements continues, sometimes generating additional information or stern speeches. The men and women of the village act as hosts, and they are responsible for preparing a meal to the chiefs, the clergy and other prominent guests and friends of the village. Some are explicitly invited but anyone might partake, since the food is always abundant and it is an honour to the

village if people want to stay. The young fieldworker has been asked to stay, and he is delighted to be able to join in the chatting and joking which takes place between the around twenty people who are present. Rice and seafood is also considered to be appropriate elements of this post-Service meal, providing an appreciated variation in diet. After a couple of hours the meal is over and the guests go home, where some might take a nap while others will join their fellow villagers picnicking and dozing on the beach. It is an ordinary Sunday on Mota in the Southwest Pacific.

The clergy

The clerical structure of the Church on Mota contains four categories: priest, deacon, catechist and members of the monastic Melanesian Brotherhood.

The Priest, *å pris*, is called *mama*, an abbreviation of the term for father's brother which is *mamagai*, 'reverend father'. There were three priests on Mota during my fieldwork, with the District Priest being the primus inter pares. In order to be appointed District Priest there are required four years of training with the Anglican theological college in the Solomon Islands while the Village Priests usually have only one year of training at an Anglican seminar in Vanuatu. The Village Priest is nevertheless granted all the rights which apply to a priest's position, although it is easier for the Bishop to revoke those rights since they are considered to be of a more temporary kind. Mota has always been a 'net provider' of clergy. This is an important fact, since the priests of the Church of Mota consequently rarely come from other islands, which again serves to implement the use of the Mota language in worship and underlines the notion of Mota as being something of its own - both in the eyes of the Motese and to the people of other islands where a priest from Mota has his work. Since they through their ordination by the Bishop are part of the apostolic succession and thereby partake in the blessing Jesus once gave Peter, they are to

a certain extent men of a different kind (Kolshus n.d.) and are shown signs of respect identical to, and sometimes even exceeding, those associated with the *qaliga* institution. People are expected to keep their backs bent when leaving a house where the priest is seated, and his presence makes everyone in the house *qaliga* so that the rule against taking anything from above a *qaliga*s head is extended to include everyone present.

The District Church Council is responsible for providing the District Priest with a house, an office, a garden and one fourth of his salary.[63] The Village Priests also receive a small salary.

The priest is the Guest of Honour wherever he is present. He will be consulted on all sorts of matters, ranging from marriage guidance to the interpretation of dreams and provision of rain or sun.[64] The District Priest in particular, who due to usually having lived outside the island for a long period of time is relatively unconstrained by the changing webs of allegiance which exist on the island, has an important position regarding the negotiation of irreconcilable conflicts. His independence also makes his opinions listened to when he is addressing issues of general concern, or when advising or commenting on specific cases both from the pulpit and elsewhere. He may also intervene when all other means of redressive actions from relatives and *kastom* chiefs have failed concerning unacceptable behaviour from individuals, who will be strongly condemned if the troublemaker does not comply with the message.

I experienced a case where a young man had conceived five children with four different girls in just two years. When a girl becomes pregnant, the father-to-be, if it is known who he is, is expected to take responsibility for his actions either through moving in with her

[63] The District Priest receives about twice the income of an average Mota family, which is not sufficient since he rarely has the time to attend to his garden and therefore must buy most of his food from the store. 75 % of his salary is provided by the Diocese, while the remaining 25 % are contributions from the villages.

[64] The Motese regard of real persons, living or dead, to be important messages. Some are easy to understand, such as a deceased grandfather revealing to his grandchild where he or she can find money which he had hidden before he passed away, whereas others, particularly those who involve the death of a person, require professional help.

or supporting her financially, although these decrees are frequently violated. This young man had a minor position which brought him a regular income, but he nevertheless refused to accept liability for his conduct although he was met with contempt by most of his fellow islanders. The District Priest then took action to have him sent to the provincial capital to face charges, even though the man was the youngest son of his elder brother. This was seen to be yet another example of the unbiased position of the priest's office. In this respect, the special features of the priest's faculty - which will be examined more closely below - serve to exempt him from the problem obstructing the implementation of most comprehensive decisions and projects on Mota: the suspicion that someone is feathering their own nest. The abilities the Motese attribute to their priests give them a touch of "set-asideness" which constitutes a position not too different from that occupied by the leopard-skin chiefs among the Nuer (Evans-Pritchard 1940). They actually exceed the power of the leopard-skin chiefs, since the Nuer chiefs' ability to negotiate necessitates a desire on both parts to end the feuding. The chiefs can thereupon offer the opportunity of an honourable retreat through the threat of casting a spell. While the same is partially true for Mota, Evans-Pritchard states that among the Nuer, "..the basis of law is force" (op.cit: 169) whereas on Mota the clerical power **exceeds** the law. The main difference between the Nuer leopard-skin chief and the Mota priest regarding their roles as arbitrators is consequently that when the leopard-skin chief threatens to curse the opponents if they do not settle their feuds, it is merely a part of the procedure, while on Mota this threat remains dormant and thus stronger since the mediator is a man whose blessing from God provides him with powers the people know they have only seen fragments of.

The deacon (*å dikan*) has also been through some theological training and is ordained by the Bishop. He may perform all parts of the ecclesiastic duties except from bestowing the sacraments, but he must be reinaugurated every other year by the Bishop in order for him

to retain his position. The deacon usually receives a small salary from the Diocese, and is a highly respected man.

The catechist (*å vatigå*) is elected by the village on an annual basis. There is at least one in every village, and they have the responsibility for the Morning and Evening Prayer and for the reading of the Bible and the prayers during services held in their church and in the church of neighbouring villages. They are also expected to keep an eye on the spiritual life of the village. The people elected are usually relatively young men of some education and eloquence, and for their services they receive a monthly payment from the Village Church Council. Since they are not installed by the Bishop they do not have the powers otherwise attributed to people who occupy official positions in the Church.

The Melanesian Brotherhood (*ira tassio*) is not directly connected to the Church on Mota, but is more of an Anglican 'task force' which is used for establishing initial contact with non-Christians living in the inlands of the larger islands of Vanuatu, and for re-evangelising in areas where the spiritual life is considered to be suffering from recession. The order was initiated in the Solomon Islands in the 1930's by a policeman who received a message from God in a dream, which said that he should start a movement based on four principles: obedience, faith, poverty and celibacy. The members join the brotherhood for an initial period of four years, which they may prolong at the end of the term. On Mota, joining the Brotherhood is a way to receive education and to see other parts of Vanuatu, especially for boys who for different reasons were not able to attend Secondary school, and there are at all times some young Motese who serve as *tassio*. They live together in groups of six, and are not allowed to possess money. They are supported financially and spiritually by an organisation called the Companions, which mainly is made up of former members of the Brotherhood who adopt individual members and organise fund-raising sessions to provide them with what they need.

A *tassio* is inaugurated by the Bishop and he therefore possesses God-given abilities which are used to convince Christians and non-Christians alike of the power of God. There are many stories of how people were persuaded into believing following miracles performed by the *tassio*s. Like the priests they have a cross round the neck, and they are also equipped with a cane which is said to have the ability to levitate, cure illnesses and exorcise evil spirits. A priest who previously had been a *tassio* for fifteen years compared it with the cane which Moses used to make water flow from the rocks during the Israelites' exodus from Egypt. They wear black shirts and trousers with a white rope tied round the waist, and are to a certain extent feared by the general public since they through their inauguration have the power to inflict illnesses and other misfortunes on people. My younger brother was told by our father that if he did not qualify for Junior Secondary School, he would be sent to join the *tassio*s. The nine-year-old responded quickly by saying that it was fine with him, and when he came back after his training he should throw a curse on us all if we did not obey him.

The Motese usually have few problems shifting between the many different statuses which are attributed to each person. A man with whom another man has an ongoing land dispute will be respected and listened to by his opponent when he talks as the General Secretary of the *Kastom* Chiefs' Council and when he is the potential father-in-law of a brother's son, while the two again will accuse each other of incompetence on the political arena.

Common to the priests, deacons and *tassio*s, who all are instated by the bishop, is that they are not included in this social process. As long as they wear their cross they are always regarded as clergy, and even kin relations are considered to be secondary. A man can be the Village's *maranaga* in one second and a soccer team-mate in the next, but this does not apply to the clergy. Their positions as men of God become total statuses which subordinate all other roles potentially available to them. This again indicates that their

inauguration constitutes men of a different kind, and opens for the understanding of their clerical powers that will be discussed more thoroughly below.

However, we will first enter the matter where the perceptions of the two traditions of the Church and the Salagoro are created and maintained, and where their respective manifestations co-reside: the Motese body.

PART 3: THE MEDIATING BODY

Conceptions of the human body must form an inevitable focal point for a scientific discipline which aims to compare different manifestations of human life in order to reach a common denominator that expresses what being a human being among other human beings really implies. Since Bronislaw Malinowski, writing on the origins of totemism, linked both the physiological and cognitive aspects of man with his environment through stating that " [t]he road from the wilderness to the savage's belly and consequently to his mind is very short [.]" (1954: 27), the body as a unit of needs and desires, as an entity potentially dangerous to the general social body and hence subjected to moral and spatial control, as container of the means for the creation of symbolic systems, and indeed as provider of that very imagery which can be utilised to enhance the understanding of other societal and environmental issues, has been of major importance for the development of the comparative method within the discipline.

As I intend to show, the human body stands in a metaphorical relationship to Mota as a geographical entity, and through being part of this dyadic relationship the island and the people populating it illuminate and contribute to increase the expanse of meaning of both . When choosing to associate the two souls of the Motese with the domains belonging to the two main ritual complexes on the island, and thus regarding both the body and the physical landscape as tangible containers of the two traditions of the Salagoro and the Church, I find that the bodies become mobile places while the island proper attains is imputed with the human qualities it previously possessed through the myths of origin and utility attributed to virtually every rock, tree, streamlet and cave (cf. Shore 1996: 275 ff; Hviding 1992: 39f, 254 ff; Anderson 1996).

Anne Salmond notes that among the Maori, features of the physical landscape serve as reminders and evidence of traditional knowledge (1982: 82 ff). But since no such

knowledge is possible without people remembering it, the analogy between people and places is made evident: actual people and actual places depend on their histories being told in order to partake in social interaction. Corporal death does not imply a termination of the social relationship - indeed, as will be shown below, nor of social interaction, but oblivion does. The Motese have commemorative meals five, ten, fifty and hundred days after a person is dead, but the ultimate feast might take place many years after, when the deceased's walking cane is taken from his or her relatives' house and burnt during the *siñ å qatigå* ritual. This final commemoration marks the passing, at the same time as it signals the end of people's responsibility to uphold a person's *nomkel*, 'memory'. Likewise, the old woman who lives in the stone by the brook near Lotawan to whom you should apologise before fetching your water is now on the verge of entering the limbo of forgetfulness, converted from an active party to a historical narrative known only to a few.

the two souls

An analytical dilemma

Malcolm Crick makes other scholars remarks his own when stating that "..most of our anthropology involves *trusting* the accuracy of our colleagues. [Den Hollander] (1967:29). This trust is remarkable since we are trained to be sceptical about what our informants tell us (Bleek 1980: 292)." (Crick 1982). At this point in the thesis, I feel a need to make an explicit claim for that very same trust.

There are two interconnected methodical-analytical reasons for this. The first is an aim to present, as far as possible, the view held by most Motese on their society, customs and beliefs, which implies either leaving aside altogether the stories and interpretations which were not endorsed by another source or specifically to state that those are the accounts of

a single individual. Through this I wish to avoid the temptation of presenting the Motese as being something they are not by rendering stories which only underline their discontinuous "otherness" instead of regarding Motese society as what it is, namely yet another expression of social and cultural processes common to all humans. Whether I have succeeded in this enterprise remains for the reader to decide.

However, I had to abandon this principle when accounting for the nature of the two souls, *atai*, dwelling within the Motese body, since my mother's mother Ansen was the only one who was able to give a coherent explanation of the contents of the term.[65] I asked quite a few others, and most of them were able to give a partial account but they openly confessed that they themselves did not fully understand the nature of the two souls - although everyone immediately admitted their existence. Thus I have temporarily abandoned the principle of 'common denominator' for a perspective that regards societies' cultural heritage as being more like a jigsaw puzzle, where the total sum of the knowledge possessed by the members of the society in question constitutes the culturally relevant information. This view implies that no one is familiar with every aspect of their culture - and renders the anthropologist the role of cultural authority, capable of drawing conclusions exceeding the local exegesis.

Such a position is one I have been trying to avoid, but which I feel inclined to occupy regarding the second reason for my explicit claim for trust, which is the postulated metaphorical and metonymical relationship between the two *atai* on the one hand and the Salagoro and the Church on the other. This interpretation is an analytical construction which never was suggested by anyone I talked to, and upon which the bulk of the argument of this thesis rests, maybe uncomfortably. Nevertheless, I found it to be a most useful tool with which to understand the organising principles of the Motese world. This

[65] 'Coherence' is obviously not an emic term, and as I stated in the introduction there has been raised criticism against anthropologists' presentation of neat and consistent structures when the lived and experienced realities are much more complex. I choose to disregard the implications of this criticism at this point, since the Motese also were concerned about the lack of consonance in their knowledge of the two *atai*.

will not imply that I believe that cultures and ideological complexes are seamless entities - incongruence is indeed as common a feature as coherence - or have a "real" existence behind all the confusions and delusions of their users and mediators (cf. Peter Worsley, quoted in Oliver 1989: 139). The analysis helped me to calibrate my comprehension of what being a Motese is all about, and I strongly believe it to be within the confines of Motese tradition.

The concept of *atai*

The term *atai* did not emerge in my fieldwork until I found it in Codrington's *The Melanesians* (250 f) just a couple of months before I left Mota. Codrington recognises the elusiveness of the word, but he renders an explanation from a man who "..believed it to be the reflection of his own personality; he and his *atai* flourished, suffered, lived and died together." (op.cit.: 250). But at the same time he regarded *atai* a good equivalent for the Western concept of 'soul', indeed he could not see any major difference between the notions inherent in them (cf. Oliver 1989: 131 f). I choose to follow Codrington in translating *atai* with 'soul', since the accounts of the nature of the *atai* given by different people all bore witness of a conscious presence strongly related to the individual body but which also to a certain extent was independent of it. Some spoke of the *atai* of birth as a *vui*, spirit, when explaining its characteristics to me, but this seemed to be more of an illustrating example in order for me to understand the message better. Codrington separates *vui* from *atai* by stating that a *vui* had never been a human being but possessed superhuman qualities

As will be seen below, the *atai* of the birth is nowadays frequently referred to as a *vui* when it roams the forest after its host's death or when it is captured and detained outside the body by *malevui*. It is called *tamate* when possessing a person. I could not find any essential differences between the three, so it seems that it is called *atai* when inside the

body, *vui* when it recently has left the body either temporarily or permanently, and *tamate* when it has been independent of physical bodies for a longer period of time.

Consequently, the vagueness experienced by Codrington concerning the nature of the *atai* remains. But at one point all the explanations converge, proclaiming a profound and highly interesting change which has come about since Codrington's descriptions were written more than a hundred years ago. There are now **two** *atai* in every person: one with which you are born and another which enters the infant when it is baptised (Kolshus n.d). They represent two different aspects of life, complementarily united in the body of every Motese man and woman. The attributes of the two will be considered in the pages to follow.

The *atai* of the world

Å atai ta lå marama, 'the soul of the world', is present from the day of birth,[66] and leaves the body only if seized by the *malevui*, 'bad spirits' - the consequences of which will be discussed below - and when the person dies. After a person's death the *atai* will enter the bush where it will be heard roaming at night producing an eerie noise, sometimes for several months, until it settles 'somewhere'. This might be in a special tree or a cave, usually associated with the *tarañiu*, the corporate lineage, of the deceased. Here it becomes a *tamate.*

The *atai* might also choose to remain in the house where the person died, in which case the house will be left uninhabitable unless the *ravvelu*-procedure is carried out. A close relative of the same *sågåi* will enter the house holding a leaf of the *kalatå*, stinging nettle-

[66] I was not able to obtain any information concerning potential pre-confinement presence. However, considering the couvade-like precautions followed by the infant's father immediately before and after delivery, I find it likely that the child is equipped with *atai* before delivery (cf. Weiner 1976).

tree, and will most amiably ask the *atai* to leave the house, calling it **only** by the *kastom* name of the deceased. A refusing hawk might then be heard, and the envoy will repeat the request. If the leaf suddenly feels heavy, the person holding it will hurry to the fresh grave and throw the leaf on top of it so that the *atai ta lå marama* can have a chance to leave the body for a second time and go to its proper place. My father told me that most people do not dare to perform the *ravvelu*, especially if the departed was known to be a strict or contentious person. He himself had done it once, when his mother's brother had died. The *atai* had refused to come out since the deceased had died in his own house. The house was consequently left to rot.

The Motese have two personal names, one *kastom* name and one European, usually English, name, which are used alternately. The *kastom* name refers to the *atai* of birth. It normally relates to specific phenomena or situations pertaining to the time of birth - thus the aridity caused by the 1997 world wide weather phenomenon El Niño led to several new-born children carrying names like *Peitagai*, No Water.

Codrington writes of the *atai* that it is closely related to the personality and abilities of the man or woman it stays with. On Mota today, the *atai* is the link which makes possible a continued relationship between the living and the dead after the *atai* has settled and come to be called a *tamate* and thus have joined the ancestors. The *atai* will then look after the *tarañiu* by to a certain extent protecting their land through causing sickness to transgressors, and by ensuring that the members themselves behave properly. They may appear in dreams and tell of hidden money or warn you of accidents or other misfortunes which are about to happen. *Poroporo*-relationships also persist across the divide between the living and the dead, as your dead *sågåi* might show up in your nightmares. I told my family of a bad dream I had which they understood to be the work of my father's father who was joking with me, and I was instructed the next time it happened to wake up and say loudly that he should stop playing with me since I wanted to sleep peacefully.

If a person suddenly shows signs of aggressiveness or other kinds of deviant behaviour, it is commonly understood that the reason might be one or several *tamate* who have taken control of the person's body, a condition which is called *tamatelelera*.[67] To establish whether it actually is a *tamate*-possession or merely a case of temporary insanity, the violator must be apprehended and have saltwater spit in his or her eyes. If there is no direct response to this, the diagnosis will be that the person has been possessed. The next step is then to send for someone who knows how to establish the identity, or identities, of the *tamate*, so that they can be exorcised from their host. This is a matter of some urgency, since the next stage of the condition normally leads to the victim disappearing in the bush for either never again to be found or to return in a state beyond recovery (cf. Codrington 1891: 219). The reason for the possession is usually that the victim inadvertently has trod on or near a place which was the dwelling of the *tamate*. Such places, called *å masaåi we tatass*, are usually known and avoided by the Motese because of the presence of some conspicuous feature like a *mele*, cycad tree, or a peculiar rock, but accidents do occur.

A symptomatic game

At moon-less nights men will occasionally leave the village for the bush on the pretext of having a nocturnal picnic and kava-session.[68] It is crucial to keep the true nature of their enterprise a secret until it has well begun, since the mission otherwise will be a failure since the *tamate* they have come to engage in the tug-of-war-like *ravvetamate*, 'pulling *tamate*', game will refuse to appear due to the presence of *tamaur*, which is understood to

[67] The word '*lelera*' means 'walk around aimlessly'.
[68] I was not able to get an account from any women on the following, and my father said that he did not know whether the women had a similar game of their own - but he said that they probably did not.

be the consciousness of people not present (Kolshus n.d.).[69] The men carry a basket containing *låkå fetal*, pudding of banana, and *låkå ñmake*, pudding of Tahitian chestnut, a small fish which is said to belong to the *tamate*, and a dried banana flower which looks like a blood red tooth. A branch from the *ñmake*, Tahitian chestnut tree, about ten meters long, is also brought, and the basket is hung on the end of it. When picking their opponent the men will usually choose a man who was renowned for his strength when he was alive, and they start to talk in laudatory ways of his might and abilities, using only his *kastom* name. Should a female *tamate* show up, the *rassa*, the fierce on-the-spot stepping of the women's *lañven* dance, is heard coming from inside the basket. The men then politely ask it to leave, since they want to play with a man. After having talked flattering about the dead man for some time, the men line up on both sides of the branch gripping it firmly, with their backs turned towards the basket. If nothing happens, the explanation will be that an outsider knows of their enterprise and therefore has brought the village sphere into the bush through the presence of a *tamaur*. But if they feel a brief shiver in the branch, they know that the *tamate* has arrived. Then they ask if it wants to play, and if they sense a slight push it is time for the game to begin. However, if the branch moves in a shaking fashion it implies that the *tamate* is obstructed from joining the game due to the presence of a *wolus* or a *qaliga* with whom the *tamate* is not allowed to *poroporo*.[70] These persons have to be identified and excluded from the branch-holding party before the game can commence. After this the others will line up, stemming their heels firmly into the ground, and the game starts with the *tamate* pushing the branch forward while the men try to hold it back. Their attempts are soon proved futile as they are driven at accelerating speed head first through the thicket. The two who are standing first in line try to steer them wide of rocks and trees, which is an impossible task since the bush is dense and the night is dark.

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[69] The term '*tamaur*' is also an elusive one, but in the case of *ravvetamate* it seems that the village will be present in the bush if someone not participating knows about their intentions. Hence the *tamate's* refusal to join the game, since the village is associated with the Church and therefore is matter out of place.

[70] This applies only to the *qaliga* and *wolus*-relationships. The *tamate* has no problem playing with people who are its *tavala ima*.

However, the men do not receive any bruises or injuries of other sorts during the game, although when examining the scene of the game in daylight they find both stinging nettles and low-lying branches in their track.

When the lack of control becomes too frightening, every participant may stop the race immediately by turning his head towards the basket or utter the **Christian** name of the *tamate*. The game will then immediately be over. Two members of the Melanesian Brotherhood from the Solomon Islands who spent some time on Mota did not believe the stories of this game, so they agreed to join a session in order to see for themselves. They had to take off their uniforms identifying them as men of the Church before going into the forest where they were to experience the *ravvetamate*. After just a short time of being driven through the bush at high speed the game stopped, and one of the Brothers admitted that he had become so afraid that he had made the sign of the cross after which the spurt instantly halted. Just as the presence of a *tamaur* brings components from the village context into the bush, the sign of the cross, the Christian name and the clerical clothes obstruct the required purity through being manifestations of the **other** order, and as such are **conceptual** matter out of place (Douglas 1966).

The danger in eliciting comprehensive analytical keys from a game played for amusement should be obvious to all, and indeed it was to me (although Bradd Shore (1996) uses baseball in an amusing and stimulating attempt to understand the basic ideas of American culture and mentality, not to mention Geertz' classic interpretation of the Balinese cockfight (1973)). Nevertheless, the *ravvetamate* points towards people's perception of the nature of the *tamate*, the *atai* and the relationship between *kastom* and Church in a taken-for-granted way that the ritualised conduct of the dances reveals only indistinctly. So when the *tamate*, the *atai* of birth of a person long dead, disappears when the Christian name belonging to the person it was a part of is mentioned or when features like the sign of the cross or clothing connected to the Church is shown, the understanding that Mota and the Motese literally incorporate two distinct and mutually exclusive cores

becomes highly plausible, precisely **because** it is a game played for amusement where the 'ideal' ritual context is relatively absent. Applying Lévi-Strauss (1966: 30ff), the game creates open-ended events out of structures, but in the case of the *ravvetamate* the structures brought to bear are not limited to the rules of that particular game but are symptomatic of the Motese world view as whole. In that respect the *ravvetamate* in my analysis holds both **ethological** qualities, "between the emotional aspects of details of cultural behaviour and the emotional emphases of the culture as a whole" (Bateson 1958: 30), as well as **eidological** qualities, "between the cognitive aspects of details of cultural behaviour and the general patterning of the cultural structure" (op. cit.), which establishes it as a most rewarding arena from where to observe the consequences of the peculiar state of the Motese: being incarnations of two seemingly mutually exclusive and inconsistent world views, but having no problems coping with such a condition. The principle of inclusion and exclusion innate in the opposition *ta løløi*/ *ta vareag*, deciding which structure to apply to situations and locations, serves to keep the conceptual frames relatively free from the ambivalence others might have experienced under the same circumstances.

The *atai* of Heaven

Å atai tape vassågåråñå, 'the soul of baptism', joins the child when it is christened. This is usually done within a couple of months after birth. The baptism commonly takes place at the end of the Sunday service, although the ceremony sometimes is performed more privately during an independent shorter service - which normally is due to embarrassment caused by the birth of an illegitimate child, since baptism on Mota, like everywhere else in the Christian Church, basically is an introduction of a new Church member to the congregation, in addition to being a sacrament. The baptism itself is executed at the entrance of the church building, with the symbolic significance of the child being

incorporated at the threshold of the church and thus not until then becoming a socially and mentally fully equipped human being being evident to all. Both the *kastom* name and the Christian name are given when the priest during the ceremony asks for the name of the child.

When a person dies, he or she is buried the following day in a consecrated area lying near the village. As opposed to the *atai* of the world, the *atai* of baptism follows the body in the grave, where it dwells until the third day after the day of death. It will then ascend into Heaven, just as Jesus rose from the grave on the third day. The ascension of the *atai* is possible to witness by holding a reflecting item like a piece of glass or a pot lid directed towards the grave while hiding. A translucent silhouette resembling the deceased will then be seen sitting on top of the grave, looking fragile and debilitated. After a while a ray of light emanating from the sky will reach the *atai* and it will follow this ray upwards. It is imperative that the spectators themselves are not seen, since this would hinder the ascension of the *atai* and mean that the observer him- or herself will die within a short period of time, which has happened on several occasions in the not-so-distant past.

sickness and health

Two kinds of illness

The Motese hold a vast tradition of healing methods and medicines.[71] At the same time they are included in the National Health Service through a dispensary which is run by a

[71] *Kastom* medicine on Mota would be a most rewarding subject for an extensive study. I received a basic introduction to it from my mother's mother, who was renowned for possessing more knowledge on the matter than anyone else on the island, and although it was but a short glimpse it proved most interesting and illuminating for the understanding of Motese man and world view. Hopefully, I will have the chance to return to do a more thorough study on this matter - also because the Motese, due to the fact that knowledge of medicine or healing methods are

trained nurse. The Motese reveal a highly pragmatic attitude when selecting the kind of treatment they feel required (cf. Welsch 1983). Both *kastom* medicine and Western medicine provide solutions to most diseases, in addition to offering help on birth control and midwife services, and the Motese seem to regard both main medical traditions as equivalent regarding the curing of common conditions like fever and headaches.[72] Whether they choose one or the other is a pragmatic decision based on matters of availability and cost. The dispensary is free of charge when visited during daytime in the weekdays, whereas a small fee usually is given to the person practising *kastom* medicine, who on the other hand is a cheaper and more accessible alternative in the evening and during weekends. Panadol, a basic painkiller, and penicillin treatments are favoured for their rapid effects, but the Motese have seen that if taken in excess the efficacy of these means is reduced, so most of them will alternate between the two medical schools.[73] If a close relative possesses a cure this will be tried first since it is free. If recovery fails the dispensary is visited. In case the condition worsens someone holding a particularly potent traditional treatment will be contacted, before the afflicted person is sent off for an

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properties which are being sold, are reluctant towards transferring their knowledge to others since this might undermine the "market" (cf. Barth 1990). Consequently, much knowledge and many practices are lost when a person dies.

[72] I do not feel comfortable in applying the dichotomy "traditional/Western" regarding folk models of medicine. In my view it would be more rewarding to divide each of them into two: traditional instrumental, traditional magical, Western instrumental and Western magical, following the procedures of the cure. Where there is no perceived connection between the cure and the ailment, in traditional medicine commonly associated with the utterance of secret chants or recitations, it is believed to be magical and hence more weighty than the mere consumption of a leaf beverage or pill to get rid of the cause for the illness instrumentally. The point I wish to emphasise is that on Mota, "traditional" and "Western" medical practices are not mutually exclusive but rather complementary. The dichotomy found is that between the two kinds of illness. In addition, the Church enters the field as a third major participant in questions regarding illness and health. However, since the use of traditional/Western is rather established (at least among laymen within the field of medical anthropology, among whom I definitely count myself), I choose to employ the terms when dealing with this matter.

[73] I was told that the Canadian bible translator had suffered from an undefined disease which had severely weakened him, and neither the staff of the local dispensary nor of the regional hospital in Santo were able to come up with a diagnosis. The local interpretation was that he suffered from some sort of malnutrition since he rarely ate local food but kept to rice and tinned foodstuffs. One of the experts on traditional medicine went to him and prescribed a cure involving eating nothing but tubers and vegetables in addition to receiving leaf potions, and much to their satisfaction he recovered after a couple of weeks.

expensive journey to the regional hospital as a last resort. If the patient returns without being fully recovered, the priest might be called to conduct intercessory prayer, in addition to most of the experts on *kastom* medicine substituting each other in providing cures for the condition (cf. Lewis 1995).

Some of the most renowned practitioners told me that in the years after Vanuatu had won its independence a general prohibition against practising *kastom* medicine was issued, as it was understood to be a major obstacle to the efficient implementation of a National Health Service. The ban was lifted after a few years, and although the national political discourse still regards *kastom* medicine as a remnant of the past which discredits the nation's road toward "development and enlightenment", there are people within the health service who see the benefits of ancient healing procedures both as a way of treatment and as a strategy to accustom the public to the use of health institutions. An old woman in my village who had the ability to heal fractured limbs using a leaf which she empowered by singing to it, in addition to drawing on an extensive acquaintance of the human bone structure, received an offer from the country's second largest hospital in Santo to start her practice there (cf. Stoner 1986). My mother's mother also told me that a nurse had come to her to undergo treatment for excessive menstrual bleeding, for which *bubu* knew of a remedial potion.

Bubu herself suffered from an inflamed swollen foot, which every now and then turned so ill that it prevented her from walking altogether. She had tried all the procedures she possessed, and every other practitioner of *kastom* medicine had been doing their work on her. She had paid the dispensary countless visits and had spent several weeks at the hospital in Santo. Numerous priests had touched her foot and prayed for its recovery, she had been prayed for during many services, and even the Bishop had come to see her during a visitation to the island. All these measures had given nothing but temporary improvement to her condition, and the only option left in order for her to walk properly again was to have the leg amputated below the knee, an idea which she strongly resented.

When asking her what kind of illness would make her foot resist all these attempts of treatment, she answered somewhat cryptical "*å gåpai namon iragai ta añmåa*", 'a disease of the people of the past'. Given the confused look on my face, one of the bystanders interpreted her statement by saying that the problems with her leg was inflicted by poison or black magic and hence was "*å gåpai namon kamam ira silsilaga*", 'a disease belonging to us black people', incurable through application of Western medicine and most resistant towards prayer and the majority of *kastom* remedies. I was then told that most of the irremediable illnesses on Mota belonged to this category, from which Western medicine was excluded. I wondered how it was possible that black magic or poison could impose these injuries, since the Pledge protected us from the consequences of such malevolent actions. *Bubu* replied that in her case she had been exposed to it before the Pledge was taken, only the effects had been lying dormant in her body up to recently. People who were not born at the time might also fall victim to these phenomena, who allegedly were eradicated by the Pledge, through inadvertently stepping on places where people possessing poison or other means for performing mischievous acts buried them following their promise to *mama* Lindsay.

After this incident I encountered at several occasions the distinction between illnesses which were found to be curable by all kinds of medicine and common to all humans, and those sufferings which were inflicted by forces, beings or practices exceeding the ordinary. One case demonstrating the consequences of this notion took place in my own family, and I was able to witness both the different strategies chosen for the patient's recovery, as well as touching the view on the nature of the Person these strategies entails.

In search of the lost *atai*

The *atai ta lå marama* is closely related to the well-being of the body, and since my younger sister had been suffering from an inexplicable illness for quite some time, involving frequent vomiting and a consequent lack of appetite without any of the measures taken having had any effect - including the Bishop's blessing, as she went to a secondary school run by the Anglican Church on Vanua Lava, a theory that her *atai* had left her body had been raised (cf. Sørum 1980; Sillitoe 1998: 218ff).[74]

She was sent home to Mota since one of the specialists in retrieving lost *atai*s lived there. He worked on her at dusk and dawn for two days, and the procedure was the same every session: he would sit across from her "eating" air five times, which my father interpreted as being a *tatarå*, a prayer, an understanding to which he agreed. Then he would yawn loudly and spit a couple of times on the ground. This procedure was repeated two or three times, and during the air-eating he stated things like "you have been to this-or-that place", or asked her questions such as "did you see a black-and-white striped sea snake?". He then took a cup of water which he first moved in circles round her head and then smeared at her face after having looked into the water.[75] The sessions would go on for approximately twenty minutes, during which the spectators showed respect but not deference towards the healer: they knew parts of the contents, but they also realised that there were parts which they were not acquainted with.

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[74] My father thought that her sickness could be a result of her being discontent with going to school, since she had been reluctant towards attending secondary education in the first place - she would rather stay on the island. Psychosomatic explanations apparently form part of the reservoir for interpreting diseases.

[75] I took photographs during one of the morning sessions, but when he reached the part where he moved the cup and inspected the water first the film got stuck and then something obstructed the aperture, although both the film and the aperture worked perfectly immediately afterwards. Since this was the most critical phase of the procedure, my father said that a *malevui* might had prevented me from taking pictures of it - and I am glad I am a student within a discipline which does not force me to come up with a better explanation or to decide what is 'real' and what is not…

The routine was ideally performed two times per day for three consecutive days, but since the healer was going on a trip to Mota Lava he found two days to be sufficient in order for him to try to retrieve the lost *atai* of the girl. The night after the last session he will sleep alone in a house lying in the outskirts of the village, because his abilities are lost if he is woken up while searching for the lost *atai*. When he has fallen asleep, he will through his own *atai* start to search for the *atai* which has failed to return (Codrington 1891: 208 f; Sørum 1980). The hunt starts at places nearby, where *malevui*, evil spirits, or the *atai* of old men are known to dwell: river beds, caves and rocks are inspected. Then the trip goes to similar locations on other islands, which might take the search all the way to Espiritu Santo lying some three hundred kilometres to the south of Mota. My father explained to me that during their nocturnal voyages the healers see horrible things, and my mother seconded and said that her mother, who also practised this particular kind of healing but who could not do it for my sister because of her bad foot which prevented her from walking, wanted to teach her the method but that she was reluctant because of the dire visions she would have to experience.

My sister's *atai* was discovered under a rock in a river bed close to her school on Vanua Lava, where it had been captured by some *malevui*, probably because they had resented her throwing sticks on a black-and-white striped sea snake which she had seen in shallow water. The abductors asked him what had brought him there, to which he replied that he had come to guide the *atai* back to its rightful owner. They had denied him this, and he had then snatched the *atai* out of their hold and fled with it back to Mota. The patients will quiver in their sleeps but not wake up when their *atai* returns, and recovery will start immediately. My sister was examined thoroughly on her condition when she woke up, and she said that there were some signs of improvement.

Medical knowledge and social assets

It is implicit in the relationship between the healer and the patient that the cure will be commended and that it will be the ultimate attempt to relieve the patient from the condition which had this particular cause linked with these concrete symptoms lest the practitioner might be offended.[76] However, this does not prevent people from seeking a 'second opinion' if permanent recovery fails to appear, since the same symptoms might be related to several different causes. The explanation will then be that although the ailment apparently is the same, the reasons for it are different. Hence the first treatment had the desired effect but regarding this new disorder another strategy is required. Thus no conflict occurred when Judah, possessing knowledge of a method he alone was acquainted with, was sent for after my sister's condition had worsened following a temporary recovery - and he considered this to be a good occasion to instruct me on the value of knowing the means for healing sickness.

He had been taught the method by his father, who had been given it from his father again, and he himself would eventually educate one of his three sons as part of his inheritance. Because Judah was the only one who possessed this special technique, and because it was considered to be particularly effective even with patients whose hearts had stopped beating, it provided an opportunity for extra income which was not inconsiderable. He would charge 500 vatu, approx. 4 US$, for a successful treatment. In addition to the

[76] When I was watching the healer working on my sister, I had recently learned that Judah (whose method will be described below) knew one of the most potent cures on Mota. I was told by my father that the man who was working on my sister was the best one on Mota, next to my mother's mother, his *qaliga*. I then suggested Judah as one who might be rated third, but my father denied this and said that he only knew how to cure diseases caused by too large difference in age between lovers (an ailment which I unfortunately forgot to gather more information on…). I later learned that Judah actually had saved the healer's daughter after she had been declared dead, from a disease her father apparently had not been able to cure. Therefore my reference to Judah had been quite impertinent since the healer was present and was the one being paid tribute to on that occasion. My family's action after Veronika's relapse proved that they were fully aware of Judah's abilities, but that it was inappropriate to show anything but complete reliance on and attention to the healing potential of the present practice and practitioner.

money, he explained that his knowledge also earned him the respect of his fellow citizens and a general hesitation on their behalf before starting a conflict with him since his services might be required when people least expected it.

The procedure is as follows: at the break of day he will pick *å matig memea*, a red coconut, or send someone to pick it for him if the patient lives far away from his village in order for him to be able to be there before sunset. He will *manag*, impose *mana* to, the coconut by singing seventeen different songs using extinct languages stemming from Gaua in the south to Torres in the north. Then the patient will be made to stand facing the rising sun while Judah spits the juice of the coconut from head to toe on both the front and the back of the sick person. This is repeated three more mornings if the patient lives close to Judah's village, but since my family lives in a village at some distance from his he did his work two consecutive mornings using two coconuts every time. The treatment will remove the causes of the disease and the more severe symptoms, but he said that sometimes ordinary leaf medicine of a more instrumental variety would be required to get rid of remaining minor ailments.

The idea of certain types of knowledge being personal property thus prevails also in matters of sickness and health, as it does in connection with the *Tamate* associations and more conspicuously regarding the *Suqe*. However, the rules of offer and demand seem to regulate which kinds of knowledge are considered to be scarce and which are abundant. If a man or woman were to tell the measure of how deep they plant their yams, a skill they inherit from their own mothers and fathers, the only consequence would be that their neighbour's garden might yield the same amount of yam as their own.[77] The commodisation of knowledge starts when the outcome of a particular kind of knowledge is desired and difficult or impossible to obtain without the participation or approval of the

[77] The ability to grow fine yams is highly respected, but nevertheless the Motese do not have too much faith in the transferability of the planting marks or methods, because different ground needs different treatment and because the man and woman who make the yams thrive possess the *mana* for it.

people already familiar with it, who in their turn have the right to expect direct payment for their services or convert their favours into social assets like gratitude causing indefinite debts, which might be realised when additional workmen are required in the garden or political support is needed. This practise of ownership to ideas, methods, secrets and traditions is firmly based in Motese society, and indeed in Melanesia as a whole, and the reluctance towards diminishing the value of knowledge through making it accessible to more people was common - although quite a few had begun to realise that this could be a reason for the alleged decline of *kastom*, since people died without being willing to let anyone partake in their knowledge (cf. Barth (1990) for a description of the 'conjurer's dilemma').[78] When my mother's mother showed me which were the basic medical leaves and how and to which diseases they might be utilised, I was charged for the information since I now was able to start making money on my own.

A touch of couvade and "Original Sin"

"In the Banks islands […], both parents are careful what they eat when the child is born, they take only what if taken by the infant would not make it ill; before the birth of her first child the mother must not eat fish caught by the hook, net, or trap. After the birth of the first child, the father does no heavy work for a month; after the birth of any of his children, he takes care not to go into those sacred place, tano rongo*, into which the child could not go without risk."* Codrington 1891: 228

Codrington relates these customs to the practice of couvade: the father simulating childbed or even larger parts of the pregnancy in order to publicly claim the fatherhood of the child.

[78] Vanuatu Cultural Centre emphasises strongly the point of traditional copyright in its dealings with researchers. This involves both the ownership to designs of cultural artefacts and the ownership of customary images, dances, narratives and secrets.

On Mota today, the custom is basically unaltered, although the duration of the period has been shortened. A man whose partner is in labour will remain in the village until the child is born, and will for five days after the birth not touch a knife nor make up a fire. Neither will he go anywhere near the salagoro, since such activities might hinder the child's navel, *å ptøi*, from growing, and hence make the intestines week. If the infant dies before these five days are gone, the father will be made liable and will have to *sako-sako*, pay money corresponding to the bride-price for causing a person's death, to the child's *sågåi*. The mother, on the other hand, will be working as soon as she feels fit for it.

But the child is also vulnerable when still in its mother's womb. During the last months of the pregnancy, the mother will avoid seeing the *tamate* head-dresses or even putting herself in a situation where she might catch a glimpse of them. The *tamate* could otherwise enter the child and kill it or cause it to be born disabled.

The high frequency of albinism - about one out of every thirty new-born - is also explained partially by outer influence.[79] Although they talk of *å tarañiu tape wåke*, i.e. lineages where albinism occurs at higher rates than normal, there are places which all pregnant women should avoid if they wish to be certain that their child receives no stimulus towards developing the condition.

Lévi-Strauss, in his masterly build-it-up-to-tear-it-down approach to the old problem of explaining the contents of the alleged unity of totemic beliefs, mentions Motese totemism as one of the four main types of the phenomenon (Lévi-Strauss 1963), drawing on Codrington's descriptions of the personal relationship between a man or woman and a particular specimen of a species, later in life the species as a whole. Such relationships are now quite rare, but they are sometimes used retrospectively to explain a person's mental or physical idiosyncrasies. They are referred to as *mlemle*, 'mark'. When a woman

[79] Albinism is so common in the Banks and Torres that the Bislama word for the Banks, 'Bangkis', also means 'albino' (Crowley 1995). Due to the sun, their condition is a real handicap with their skin chronically covered with blisters and wounds, and they seldom reach old age.

recently has found out, *we une*, that she is pregnant, she might see or eat a squid, *wirta*, shark, *qagåa*, the fish *taqarata*, coconut crab, *nair*, reef crab, *gavve*, or black-and-white sea snake, *mai*, which afterwards will enter the foetus and eventually constitute some sort of additional lineage for the child.[80] I was told that if a man's wife was close to giving birth he might see one of these animals when walking on the reef. He would then strike it with his knife or spear, but it would evade him or simply dissolve in thin air. When a scar later was discovered on the child's body, the parents would see the connection and know that the child was related to the animal. My eldest father's only daughter had such a mark on her temple which had been caused by her father injuring a squid with his spear before she was born. Her mother also saw a shark when she was pregnant with her younger brother, and the relationship was made evident when he started walking: he did not want to walk straight but only to and fro or in circles just like a shark.

These stories were told as mere curiosities, but there could be more serious consequences from *mlemle* relationships. A fourteen year old girl had been suffering from epilepsy starting when she was very young, and she had been to several different healers without being cured. A diviner whose mother came from Mota had worked on her and had found that her mother while expecting her had discovered a squid in a pool on the reef which she had tried to kill by hitting it to a rock. The squid kept escaping, and she asked her father who had accompanied her to kill it. He tried once but it fled again, and he said that they should let it live. The diviner found this to be the cause for the girl's convulsions, but now that the reason for them was discovered the attacks stopped.

[80] The information I received on the *mlemle* was seldom coherent, and one account would usually contradict the other. It seems that it is used merely as another explanation for illness, and that the belief in the phenomenon is receding - something which was explicitly stated by several people (*å nåmtup namon iragai ta añmåa*, a belief of the people of before).

The body ethics

Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Margaret Locke write of the human body that it is exposed to three kinds of social processes, with their corresponding analytical perspectives: the experience of a bodily self as against the others - the individual body; the utilisation of the body to elaborate metaphorically on society and vice versa - the social body; and the body as an entity which is subject to social control - the body politic (Scheper-Hughes and Locke 1987).

The human bodies constitute the only definite means of measuring the moral state of the society, i.e. how well the past is preserved in the present, and as such serve to reinforce the confinements placed on them. Since actions seldom are understood by the Motese to differ essentially from the alleged inner desire or state, the morality of the body as reflected through pose, deed and temper is taken literally for its face value (cf. Bourdieu 1990).[81] The well-being of society is manifest in the actual bodies of its members, and it is at this point that the concept of '*nommavva*', respect, becomes important for the Motese. Hence a violation of the regulation keeping the uninitiated at a safe distance from the dancers creates a public outrage not only because it has jeopardised the boundaries between the Salagoro and the 'outside' but also because it is a symptom of what the Motese consider to be an ongoing decline in the observance of traditional values. Likewise, not bowing the head at the point in the Confession of the Faith where Mary is credited for giving birth to Jesus is considered to be a most irreverent act of omission, which again serves as a sign of the general recession of faith and devotion among the

[81] This is an empirically founded notion since the Motese usually express their emotions instantly, and is not relatable to for instance Geertz' or Wikan's accounts of the Balinese's subduing of their inner states - although they seemingly reach radically different conclusions regarding the "reality" of this phenomenon (Geertz 1973; Wikan 1990). In the liturgy of the Church, the first element is the common confession of sins which states (in the Mota version) "You [The Lord] know our every desire, no one can hide their thoughts from you", which represents a slight conceptual discrepancy from the notions I found to be prevalent in general interaction outside the church.

public. It was actually mentioned specifically at the annual workshop of the Mota *Kastom* Chiefs Council as a point where they ought to take action if there were people who did not want to comply with this.

The respectful attitude which permeates the *qaliga* relationship is also marked by the observance of certain bodily postures, such as not standing upright while your *qaliga* is sitting or having your back turned towards them if it is avoidable, not taking anything which is placed above his or her head, in addition to abstaining from laughing when someone cracks jokes on their behalf and instead look down, shake your head and utter a gwan.

It follows from this that since what remains immanent in peoples minds never can be positively ascertained, the publicly compliant expression 'pose' is taken for a **transcendent** testimony of the inner mores and desires of the members of the society, hence making their bodies an instrument for negotiations concerning societal development - political bodies in the very essence of the word.

aspects of food: consumption, contemplation, commemoration

Peter Winch, in one of his contributions to the discussions regarding rationality, relativism, and the possibility of intercultural translation and comparison, opens for three aspects of human life which might constitute fruitful objects for comparison: birth, death, and sexual relations (Winch 1970: 107 ff.). He calls them 'limiting notions', "because these notions, along no doubt with others [sic], give shape to what we understand by 'human life'; and because a concern with questions posed in terms of them seems to me constitutive of what we understand by the 'morality' of society." (op.cit.) This slight departure from a former program which rigorously denied the possibility of illuminating

one set of cultural concepts through employing another, left this reader with quite a few questions. Firstly, what is the ontological status of the term 'morality'; and secondly, why has he excluded common human themes such as 'pain', 'food', 'weather', 'posture', 'migration', or even 'housing' (Cunningham 1978), from this morality bin of his?

The limiting aspects of food are certainly of major comparative interest, and although Georg Simmel degrades the **need** for food to be something low and disgraceful, he highly appreciates the social reconstruction of this basic desire into the symbolic realm The Meal, which serves to differentiate humans from beasts and again us from each other through our inclusion or exclusion from the esoteric knowledge of the codes of behaviour attributed to this highly sanctioned arena (Simmel 1957). Roland Barthes makes these very codes his point of departure when he examines French consumer habits as an encompassing system of communication which unites aspects of health, hunger, history, class, religion, and ideology, a system which is rapidly expanding (Barthes 1979, see also Bourdieu 1984). He seems to imply that this system is typical for the Western world, with its highly stratified social structure and diversified consumer goods accompanied by extensive marketing. This is too strict a limitation of a possible fruitful arena for cross-cultural comparison, and I have indeed found diversity to be a striking aspect of the Motese's symbolic elaborations based on their food realm, and the social and ritual significance and structuring of different kinds of meals form a most interesting source for understanding how the Mota society is constructed.

The ordering of a meal on Mota

My first "proper" meal on Mota was performed the day after I arrived, in the company of what I later discovered was a rather hastily assembled Council of *Kastom* Chiefs who wanted to question me on the purpose of my stay. When the meeting was over, food was carried into the *gamal* where we sat - tubers in large dishes and rice and meat on plates. I

was given a spoon and a fork, a stool and a separate plate, but since my Romans chose to eat with their fingers directly from the plates while sitting on mats I self-evidently chose to follow their example. This turned out to be a quite rare occasion, as the Motese usually prefer to eat at least their meat and semi-liquid foodstuffs with a spoon since they have been made aware by the Health Service that diseases spread easily when many people eat off the same plate, and because spoons symbolise excess money. But this meal was consumed in a traditional way since the occasion was a Kastom Chiefs' Council gathering and since their guest had arrived to learn of their life and history.

The Motese usually have three meals during the day. The morning meal consists of a yams, sweet potato, wild yam, banana or another staple food in season which is accompanied by tea made from dried leaves of the orange tree, and it is more frequently referred to as *ima å ti*, drink tea, than *ganna mattava*, morning meal. The second meal, *tina*, is usually consumed around midday if the family works in a garden not too far away, and is not very different from the morning meal apart from the tea normally being left out. If they have been working in a garden where they grow *tåape* (Hibiscus Manihot), a soup is made by boiling the leaves in coconut milk, at least for *ganna ravrav*, the evening meal, which is eaten after sunset. The more wealthy families will sporadically add some rice and tinned fish or canned meat to their diets, and some also occasionally have biscuits for morning meal. But usually it is the gardening season which decides the menu, with the tuber presently being harvested constituting the main food.

If there is no kava session at night the nuclear family usually eat together, with people from other villages being invited to join them. Since the men are convinced that the effects of the kava will be reduced if they do not drink it on empty stomach they usually consume their meal some hours after the others. The families of the drinkers might share their meals and await the return of their neither very hungry nor very talkative men.

The communal village meals follow a different structure. They take place during minor celebrations such as days of Saints who are not considered to be of major importance, the

days of the compulsory three weeks holidays of Christmas and Easter which do not require the assembling of the whole island, welcome ceremonies for returned villagers, or other occasions particular to that village. Every family will on such events join in the *gamal*, where the food usually is pooled. If there is a Guest of Honour, he or she will be seated in the middle and given a personal plate from every house. The village catechist says grace unless any of the more prominent clergy is present.

When two or more villages, or the whole island, join together in a meal on special events or the major holidays such as Independence Day, *Qåñ ima*, Christmas Day or Easter Day, the food is displayed on a long row of banana leaves placed outside on the dancing ground. There will usually be served fresh meat on such occasions, and portions of the meat is wrapped in banana leaves and displayed on the table together with the tubers, for people to serve themselves after the highest ranking clergyman present has said Grace. The people occupying high positions will be seated at a separate place. Such people are normally the clergy, the chairmen and secretaries of the District Council, Church Council and *Kastom* Chiefs Council, the leading men of the host village, other persons which they feel should be honoured, and the occasional fieldworker.[82]

The Motese take great pride in their abundant food supply, and it is important to serve more food than it is possible to finish. What kinds and how much was served of food and kava are the main subjects when people discuss a feast, and if the hosts hear rumours of remarks made post festum regarding insufficient servings, they will secretly prepare a *qarañis* and invite the unwitting complainers to a minor meal which turns out to be a feast of gluttony as the hosts reveal the amount of food prepared and explain to their guests the reason for the invitation through exclaiming "you told others that our serving was meagre and consequently that we don't have enough food in our gardens. Now try

[82] The first time I was not explicitly invited to sit at this table I felt a rush of satisfaction, since I understood it to be a sign of my beginning to be regarded as part of the inventory and not someone who required special treatment - my "levelling" job had succeeded. When I was invited on later occasions, however, I appreciated it for the mark of respect and friendship it really was.

finishing this!" This did not occur during my time on Mota, and I received no account of it having happened recently. However, it clearly existed as a regulating narrative.

Communicative consumption

Food is one of the main instruments through which people exhibit some occasions to be more festive than others. This presupposes an agreement on the codes of the communicative aspects of food in order for the intended message to be understood by the receiver. 'Genuine mozzarella' might then be comprehended as everything from 'cheese not made from cow's milk' via 'Italian cheese not made from cow's milk' to 'cheese made from buffalo milk from the fields outside Salerno', and some of the point in spending three times the money for the real thing instead of using a cheaper Danish copy is lost when your guests are not able to read the extra-flavoural message you wanted to convey.

On Mota, food is a particular system of communication which is shared by everyone, ensuring that the message is understood and making it a powerful non-verbal tool which might be used both to honour and to insult. Thus food becomes a most important indicator on the state of affairs between individuals or even whole villages, since the general agreement on the codes renders the messages unequivocal.

Å sinaga tape pulpul, 'food of friendship', is the term for the kinds of food which are regarded appropriate to serve for feasts and other celebrations.

Tubers: traditionally it was only yams and taro, but now sweet-potatoes and *tomagå*, a tuber resembling yam but softer and with stinging leaves, are generally accepted. Manioc, banana, wild yam and bread fruit are not considered to be food of friendship.

Låkå (cooked pudding): only *mekårr*, consisting of yams and dried *nñai* nuts.

Låt (grated pudding): *mekårr* and taro

Pigpig (food to go with the tubers, and sometimes the pudding): pigs and cattle as meat, and *sessetåape*, *tåape* tied in a special way and boiled in coconut milk. Fish might be admitted, while sea crab or coconut crab never will be served.

Common to the kinds of food which is counted among the *sinaga tape pulpul* is that they require human effort and attention to be able to grow or breed. Tubers like manioc and wild yam which grow *påpålåtag*, 'everywhere', or animals which are there for the grabbing do not satisfy the demands.[83] Fish occupies a special position, as it might be preserved by drying it on hot stones and then becomes acceptable since there has been invested labour in its preparation. However, since catching fish is considered leisure and not work, fish will never be fully recognised as food for great occasions. This follows Marx's assertion that the value of a commodity should be decided by the amount of labour invested in its production.

Preparing the tubers in a *qarañis* oven guarantees that the guests will appreciate the feast, as the making of the *qarañis* is a time-consuming task. A circular hole about one foot deep and up to four meters in diameter will be dug and stones the size of tennis balls will be gathered to cover the hole. Then large amounts of firewood will be piled and lit before the whole bonfire is covered with more stones. It will burn all night and occasionally send an exploding stone rocketing into the air, and in the morning the fire is out and the stones are hot. The tubers are packed in banana leaves and carefully put between the stones, after which all is covered with banana leaves and three buckets of water are poured through a hole on the top of the stack, thus steam-boiling the tubers. After a couple of hours the food is done.

Since both the *qarañis* and other tasks connected to a larger feast require lots of work, it is a common practice to have one or several days where people from other villages will

[83] As written earlier, Mota has an extraordinary fertile soil which makes the cultivation of staples such as banana and manioc, which elsewhere would require a substantial workload, relatively effortless - and consequently, they are not held in very high esteem.

come with food, firewood and water to one or two of the families who are giving the party. This is called *sig-sig*, and is a very popular social happening, especially after it became normal practice for the hosts to prepare kava to reciprocate for the help they receive. Food is also served by the families to their helpers, but in the case of *sig-sig* the only food accepted is Western food, which means rice and soups based on tinned meat. The reason for serving exclusively *å sinaga namonneira we qaga*, 'whiteman's food', at a traditional happening like the *sig-sig* was not accounted for, although some indicated that it was part of the old *kolekole* mentality: you should give a party bigger than anyone else, and since rice and tinned meat was barred from entering the party itself but still was considered to be prestigious food since it was expensive and therefore rarely consumed, an opportunity to serve it and thus show off the wealth of the community to the visitors would be embraced - at the same time as every *sig-sig* is part of long-lasting ties of reciprocity, the moral of which is to return no less than what is received.

As recounted above, Roland Barthes implies that the communicative aspects of food and consumption mainly is a feature of the Western world, where professional marketing serves to link issues of morality and identity to choices concerning which of seemingly indistinguishable products the consumer should use (Barthes 1979). To an outsider the vocabulary possible to deduce from the food-sphere on Mota might seem limited, given the apparently minor variations in diet. But when one learns that a breadfruit is not only a breadfruit but comes from one of more than one hundred different kinds of breadfruit trees which are easily recognised by the Motese, and that there are more than fifty main types of yams, one realises that the vocabulary is both extensive - and shared.[84] To give a yam of the *maliñ* variety is an unmistakable sign of respect, likewise to reciprocate with a

[84] The separating principles of the yam are colour, taste, structure of skin and flesh, softness and on which kind of ground they will thrive. In addition to the different phenotypes, the Motese also separate each yam into male - conical shaped - and female - round -, as well as categorising them according to six main kinds of growth.

yam of a less valued phenotype is a tacit insult lest it is followed by a sincere apology and a promise of additional gifts at a later occasion (Mauss 1995).

To **abstain** from eating certain kinds of food is also a powerful signal. The custom is called *val-val,* and is a voluntary practice connected with the death of a close relative, usually a parent or a spouse or a mother's brother. At one of the memorial meals following five and ten days after for instance a father has died, one or more of his children will *val å sinaga,* declare one or several of the deceased's favourite food impossible for them to eat for a period of two months upwards. Since my father's father Wilson had died immediately before my arrival, I was able to see his sons' avoidance of the food they had chosen and their preparations for the time they were able to eat that particular food again. Thus my father did not eat *låkå* made from wild yam and *nñai* nuts, while his elder brother in addition abstained from eating his father's favourite, coconut crab, and *ñmake,* Tahitian chestnut, since his first memory was of his father giving him chestnuts when he was a small boy. When visiting other villages, most people seemed to know of their choice and offered them other kinds of food if *låkå nñai* was served.

My father had chosen the one year commemoration of Wilson's death for the occasion to eat *låkå nñai* again, but his plans were overturned when the small garden of wild yam he had planted particularly for that reason was ravaged, much to his grief. Due to this he prolonged the *val* period, and the occasion did not coincide with the one year memorial as he had planned. But although he finally did eat it without much ado, quite a few people turned up to see him do it. It was explained to me that usually the sister's children of the deceased would attend such an event, but since Wilson's only sister died from poisoning when she was young and did not have any children, the people who watched Paul eat were basically his fellow villagers, his adoptive brother and some of his sisters' children.

Communion, communication and dis-communication

Just as the Holy Communion creates a world-wide brotherhood through uniting the believers in the body of Christ, so is the opportunity to partake of meals with every man and woman on the island an indication of your being a righteous person. And just as being excluded from Communion is a visible and serious punishment, so is the denial of people to share a meal with somebody a sign of severe resentment against actions committed by that individual. The priests have the authority to exclude people from Communion for a period of time, depending on how serious the transgression was. During my fieldwork the longest period of exclusion was three months, given to a man who had molested a child. The excluded is welcome to join the service, though, so that he or she can repent even more strongly when they see what they are excluded from partaking in.[85]

This punishment of the Church comes in addition to the contingent sentence pronounced by the Government. But the closest relatives of the offender will also make a public response through denying to participate in meals with him, since the crime also has disgraced them in the eyes of the public. A ceremonial meal called *sarsar apmaragai*, lit. 'cleaning of shame', is then prepared by the culprit in a public place observable by everyone in the village, and the relatives who have refused eating with him will be invited. He will first give them a small amount of money to restore the possibility for communication through publicly acknowledging his guilt and apologise for the embarrassment he has brought upon his brothers, after which they will share a bowl of kava and eat together (Mauss 1995).

[85] The offender rarely shows himself for the first months after being punished, and will usually work extensively in a remote garden or go to another island to stay out of the public eye for the same period. The reintegration then goes smoothly and the event is not mentioned - but it is not forgotten either.

Food thus becomes an important vehicle for communicating the state of social relationships. Sociability and concord are expressed through the ability to partake in a meal, and the exchange of foodstuff constitutes a system of signs that convey unambiguous messages. The regulations regarding which kind of food is to be served on which occasions promote the notion of the necessity of keeping thing apart, through the principle of relevance intrinsic to the classificatory tool of inside/outside.

But this principle is a pragmatic device, and which factors to include and exclude depends on the context. This opens for the creation of a domain of ritual as against non-ritual practices, and the Church and the Salagoro are thus united, promoting the exchange of elements and ideas which otherwise are zealously kept apart.

PART 4: BLENDED TRADITIONS

Globalisation, the exchange of ideas, knowledge and (other) merchandise between people around the globe, has lately been declared one of the main agents behind social and cultural change world-wide. This process is bemoaned by many, including quite a few anthropologists, as the direction of this process, following the worst of brazen Western world view and anthropological diffusionism, is regarded to be almost exclusively from Us to Them. The impact made on these Us by non-Western practices and ideas regarding religion, medicine, food, music, art and eco-philosophy/sustainable development is thus overlooked, although these phenomena in my view have brought about more profound changes than a can of Coke in the Amazon, a T-shirt with the print "I WORK FOR SEX" worn by an old Balinese woman at a funeral, or the notion of 'democracy' in Vanuatu. And the ideology of the Coca-Cola Company is not introduced in its unaltered form to the Amazonian any more than the mythological pattern on the Florese carpet hanging on the wall of some posh City apartment converts the Urbanian into organising his or her world in a thorough system of binary oppositions.

This does not imply that a can of Coke, democracy or Florese tapestry all are non-contextualised neutral entities which slip easily into the existing cognitive, semantic and ideological pool. Some require more elaboration than others, and some are maybe excluded altogether - such as dishes using dog meat from the European version of the Cantonese kitchen. But the point is that such imports, be they ideas or objects, never "settle" in their new location bearing the identical extra-material message that they convey at their place of origin: they are always adapted to the already existing symbolic system, hence neo-patriating, 'localising', these introductions. This process normally takes place in steps, where regional centres do the first interpretations before the concept

is passed on for further elaborations at relatively more remote places, thus facilitating the process of adaptation.

For these reasons I understand the notion of 'globalisation' to be inane, since it shuns a basic attribute of the human individual, and hence social, mind: the ability to encompass new phenomena in the present system, thus changing these phenomena and making them in many ways their own. A people choosing to let their loincloths go will do so for a score of reasons, of which many will be of the utmost interest to the anthropologist since they bear evidence of considerations including **and** exceeding climate and supposed new mores. It is time for anthropologists to realise that 'authenticity', traditionally one of the major words of credit within the discipline, is an aspect of interaction and hence change, and is not exclusively linked to people who purportedly have lived under the same material conditions since the "beginning of time".[86] Not ascribing to our friends and informants the ability to handle impulses and influences stemming from another socio-cultural context is in my view little less pejorative than our anthropological forefathers' explicit use of the word 'savage' (cf. Carrier (1992) for a brilliant critique of these attitudes within the anthropology of Melanesia).

It is in this very same vein that I criticise the evolving concept of 'syncretism'. The word brings about connotations of hybridity and spuriousness which diminishes the fact that the blending of ideological, religious, political, and other structures of beliefs and

[86] Arve Sørum (personal communication) followed the tracks of the Norwegian explorer Carl Lumholtz up the Upper Burrito flood on Borneo, and met with a people Lumholtz had described some ninety years earlier. They were now very wealthy due to the large amount of co-dwelling swallows in their area, whose nests they sold to Chinese businessmen for very good money. But although they usually wore Western clothes and owned shotguns, they appreciated their former lifestyle so highly that they frequently donned their traditional clothing and went hunting with their traditional weapon: a combined blowpipe and spear. See also Oliver (1989) for examples of peoples who seemingly voluntarily have given up what to us would seem to be superior material benefits for following 'the way of the ancestors'. In his introductory book to Melanesia, Paul Sillitoe (1998:xviii f) comments on and criticises the traditionalism and a-historism of some anthropologists - before embarking on exactly the same course in his choice of descriptive material. Roger Keesing, in an otherwise most interesting account of the Kwaio's struggle for cultural autonomy, also seems to link the donning of clothes to a cultural change of mind, something which is only partially true (Keesing 1992).

meaning is more the rule than the exception in the world today (Stewart and Shaw 1994), and most likely has been so throughout the history of mankind since the first homo sapiens sapiens started their migrations some 60.000 years ago (Keesing 1981; Oliver 1989). Indeed, as we have seen in the previous chapter, the alleged 'pure' traditions also rely on each other in order to keep clean both their semantic as well as their cognitive and physical area. Practices which are made the subject of conservatism are thus already altered forms, changed from a 'being' to a 'doing' in the ideational discourse, and as such they constitute yet another side of the poorly designated domain of syncretism studies (Strathern 1992).

The Anglican Mission and the dances of the Salagoro are the two main components in the Motese's creation of themselves as against the others: they are the difference that makes a difference, emically speaking (Bateson 1991). As we already have seen, they also serve to mutually define each other's internal spatial, legal, ideological and spiritual boundaries, thereby minimising the potential area for negotiations and dispute.

Both being more or less coherently structured systems of knowledge, practices and internal organisation, they are also occasionally utilised to shed light on each other through the deliberate appliance of elements of the first to explain more abstruse corresponding aspects of the second. One such element might for instance be the meaning-laden baptism ceremony, which is a prerequisite in order to join the Church and as such can serve to clarify the content and meaning of the initiation rites of the *Tamate liwoa*. The difference between this process, which I choose to label 'symbiosis', and that of 'syncretism' is the intentionality inherent in the former.[87]

[87] The term 'symbiosis' is taken from biology, where it denotes two different organisms living together in a mutually beneficial manner, while the original meaning of 'syncretism' was that of uniting quarrelling parties (initially on Crete) against a larger outer enemy (Webster's Dictionary 1994). This definition serves well for what I have called 'symbiosis', and explicates the need to deprive the all-too-encompassing concept of syncretism of some of its meanings in order to make it a useful analytical term.

But intrinsic to this pedagogical practice which is executed by the ritual experts, i.e. those who are *mao* and the priests respectively, is a potential for change exceeding that of the new utilisation of imagery: any comparative action, including those of which this thesis forms a part, involves the use of metaphors, i.e. the drawing together of two objects or phenomena based on a principle of 'likeness'. Fredrik Barth, in his explanation of the deviations between the initiation rituals among the different Ok people in New Guinea, finds that what is being communicated in the ritual is not a particular system of knowledge, but the social and ritual transfer of a group of relatively younger men into a group of relatively older (Barth 1987). Given the time-span between the initiations and the fact that the initiator chooses to emphasise different aspects and uses different didactic means to meet with what he perceives to be that particular group's needs, both the form and the content of the initiation ritual will go through profound changes, which explains the differences between the male cults among the Ok-people.

Likewise, the chain of interpreters, regional/sub-regional/national/provincial/local, who digest an ideology or an item before it reaches 'the ends of the world', are responsible for the differences in understanding a concept or an object in New York, New Guinea and Guinea. In that respect, Mota represents a most interesting case, since they, in co-operation with their missionaries, were first-hand interpreters of the Anglican version of the Holy Gospel, starting 150 years ago and still going on today. Mota is also a good example of how people actively participate in determining the direction and shape of change, and as such advocate that man is not a submissive dupe passively accepting introductions but an active party in creating, recreating and accommodating influences and challenges coming from both inside and outside his or her social and cultural setting. On the other hand, as metonymic constituents of a conceptual whole, the elements which are being compared will be laden with meaning stemming from other parts of the total structure and hence bring to play a far wider range of connotations than was intended by the ritual experts in the first place. In other words, the explanatory means cause an elaboration on the part of the audience which brings whole systems of thought and belief

closer to each other, thus enabling the unintended osmotic exchange of motives and ideas which eventually leads to what I have chosen to label 'syncretisms'. One special instance of this pedagogical practice is that entailed in the choices made during translations, an issue which is highly relevant on Mota and which will be examined below.[88]

Symbiosis - the blending as process

Speaking the reality or living the words?

The relationship between signifier and signified, sign and object, language and reality has puzzled linguists, philosophers and other scientists with an interest in the humanities since the works of Peirce and de Saussure at the turn of the last century. The statement 'the sign is arbitrary', implying that there is no logical connection between an object and its corresponding denomination, seems to be generally accepted. Since we are not dealing with the genesis of languages but rather with how they are used and developed, the slogan is not all that relevant. And through the work of different anthropologists one might get the impression that what is arbitrary is the **working** of languages rather than their development (Salmond 1982; Bourdieu 1963). After recognising the impossibility of reaching, through words, the ontological status of worldly concretes or abstracts (most notably the later Wittgenstein, see also Bateson (1972)), one might turn to a most intriguing question: how does the fact that verbal communication is our main tool for conveying thoughts and creating relationships **in** our worlds influence our perception **of** these worlds? Does the occurrence of fifteen personal pronouns in the Mota language as

[88] This includes such apparent a phenomenon as Bible translation. Like any translation it naturally has to be an interpretation, in addition to taking into consideration the balance between the use of familiar concepts on the one hand and the danger of misreadings and misinterpretations on the other. We will return more explicitly to these questions below.

compared to the common European six or seven give the Motese a different perception of their social world? Is it merely a reflection of this difference in the first place? Or are we dealing with an interaction between the described and the vehicle for description?
These questions will not be explicitly addressed in this thesis since they are slightly outside its scope and definitely outside the author's field of competence. But in an applied version they will serve to illuminate our issue: how does the vocabulary of the translated Motese Bible and Liturgy influence people's understanding of the Christian gospel? And what counter-effects have these interpretations had on the meaning complex from which they were drawn?

Holy book in homely words

Birgit Meyer describes how the missionaries among the Ewe in Ghana chose to translate the proper names of God and Satan by using the names of gods and cultural heroes from the indigenous mythology, and how this influenced the converts' apprehension of Christian dogmas and ethics regarding the conflict between good and evil (Meyer 1994; 1999). This outcome was unintentional. However, there are regional theological schools which explicitly use more proximate objects, thoughts or situations in their communication of the Gospel. The 'liberation theology' of some of the Churches in Central America emphasising the ideology of equality inherent in the words and deeds of Jesus in their religious and political struggle against an oppressing elite should be known to many. There is a similar movement among some denominations in the Pacific which uses a cultural-relativistic pragmatic approach to the contents of the Bible through stating that if Israel and Judah had been located in the Pacific the imagery of the Bible would have been very different, hence the Gospel might be retold in a more 'localised' manner (Swain and Trompf 1995; Burt 1994). In a conversation I had with Charles Ling, Bishop of Torres and Banks, who also participated in the team that translated the Bible into

Bislama, he said that the coconut tree was the most valuable resource to the people of the Pacific and as such was a most useful example when explaining the mercy of God. He was convinced that Jesus would have used the coconut tree in the same manner if he had been born in the Pacific.

The new Bible translation project on Mota has so far completed the New Testament, which is called *Å lea we wia*, 'the good law' or 'the good news', the Book of Common Prayer, *Å buk tataro,* and a booklet containing one hundred questions and answers regarding central dogmatic and ethical issues. As a rule they have chosen to follow the old standard set by the missionaries on crucial points, as these are familiar to everyone and thoroughly embedded in the tradition of the Church on Mota.[89] This implies that a concept like *mana* remains linked to the abilities of God. 'God, almighty' translated '*God, turmana*', the prefix *tur-* denoting 'real' and 'undiluted'. Likewise, in the Lord's Prayer the word 'power' at the end reads *mana*.

In addition to using the English term 'God', the Motese Bible translates 'Lord' with *Maranaga*, which is the term for village leader.[90] 'Father' is rendered through using *Mama*, the word for father's brother denoting 'extra revered father', which also is the term to use when addressing a priest. The Holy Spirit has found its equivalent in *Å Vui we Råñå*, which carries much the same connotations of elusiveness and potential peril as the term does in English.

During the Service the most notable linguistic remnant from the ancient Motese tradition is the Offertory which has been called *ålå-ålå*. This was the name of the prayers directed

[89] The translators, both of them Motese, stated that their biggest problem was to find satisfactory equivalents for 'experience-distant' concepts, particularly objects. The rich imagery drawing on strictly Middle-Eastern phenomena provided the translators with a major challenge. On the numerous occasions where Jesus speaks of himself as the shepherd looking after his herd, the usual choice is to give the English term (which lead to some quite amusing confusions both for the fieldworker and his people regarding the size and looks of sheep).

[90] I do not mean to imply that "our" perception remains unaffected by exactly the same process. Indeed, the words '*filia*', '*eros*' and '*agape*' used for three entirely different emotional processes in the Greek original of the New Testament is in the English only translatable with 'love'.

to secret places, rocks or trees to make them provide the pleader with shell money and pigs. It was an individual practice which usually included the offering of shell money and probably some food for the spirits residing in the objects to multiply the return in order for the man or woman to buy their own or their supporters' way up in the *Suqe* fires. The remarkable thing is that this translation was done at a time when the antagonism between the Church and the *kastom* men was escalating. It must have been quite annoying for the strict *kastom* adherents to see that one of the prerequisites for the *kolekole* ritual and hence the whole *Suqe* institution had been claimed by the Church. At the same time this usage must inevitably have contributed in the Motese's conception of the Offertory, and as such has brought a touch of the old tradition into the Church, and a trace of Christianity into the traditional practices and values.

The Gifts of Grace as they are described in Romans chapter 12 and 1st Corinthians chapter 12 are abilities given by the Holy Spirit in order to make the congregation work as an integrated whole capable of solving a wide range of tasks. These include prophetic gifts, teaching, speaking in tongues and interpretation of such speech, compassion and quite a few more. They were commonly explained by use of the word *mana*, and on one occasion a deacon held a sermon where he explicitly declared skill in gardening and aptitude in fishing as gifts of the Spirit, since they brought blessings through food to many people.

Qåñ ima and *kolekole*

The most salient manifestation of the mutually beneficent 'cohabitation' between the old and the new tradition is the *Qåñ ima* which already has been considered from different perspectives. The connection between the *kolekole* ceremonies, which formed the main arena for the public display of a man's or a woman's newly achieved status and the

outmanoeuvring of rivals, and the Village Saint's Days is evident: both the lavish feasts and the salagoro dancers are attributes of the traditional *kolekole* (cf. Gnecchi-Ruscone 1997). During the time when the *kolekole* was prohibited by the Church the dances were not performed. Allegedly, it was the young *mama* Lindsay who incorporated the dances in the Saint's Days when he was a deacon on Mota around 1930. Through this acknowledgement the dances were rescued from the oblivion of non-performance, and the relationship between the adherents of the old customs and those of the Church, which had soured in the first decades of the century, changed from one of conflict to one comprising initial recognition.

Through the joining of a Church celebration with this most conspicuous feature of the *Suqe*, the Church did not only provide an arena for the dances. It received an additional element to highlight the celebration and thereby strengthened people's desire to observe the holidays. This first initiative towards a peaceful concomitance since the teachings of the early missionaries would also have made a profound impression on the Motese at the time, who most probably had come to regard the two main structures of knowledge as incompatible or even irreconcilable.

Today this symbiotic relationship provides the Motese with their most cherished events: the preparations before the feast, involving co-operation and fun; the Service in a festively decorated church; the treating of the guests with plenty of food and kava; and the dances of all kinds. This is material for discussions regarding the quality of the various celebrations which might go on for months, sometimes even years.

From Qat to Jesus

One of the comments I encountered most frequently regarding the relationship between the structures of the old tradition and Christianity was that there was no profound difference between them. The ideas and beliefs connected to *kastom* had done nothing

else than pave the way for the eventual introduction of the Gospel by the missionaries. Respect, equality between people, helpfulness and hospitality were ethical standards which were emphasised as belonging to both. The most striking correspondence was that between Qat, the cultural hero of the Banks, and Jesus. The stories of the deeds and marvels of Qat were many: he created life; he brought the night to Mota from Torres; he divided the Motese into the two *sågåi*; and he was responsible for many of the curious features of the landscape in the Banks. He withdrew from the visible world together with his wife, Ro Lei, and his eleven brothers (sometimes said to be twelve, to equalise the number of Jesus' disciples) by paddling his canoe through the rim of the volcanic lake of Gaua, thus creating the spectacular waterfall on the island, something which was explicitly related to the ascension of Jesus. One of Qat's brothers, Tañaro Fagglala, was particularly clever and was equated with Jesus' disciple John, whereas Tañaro Løloqoñ was a forgetful and dim-witted character who the Motese compared with Judas. There are other stories that carry a striking resemblance to other narratives from the Bible, such as the Israelites' exodus from Egypt, being in some respects manifestations of the same kind.

Most of the stories of Qat are now told more like humorous tales, since many of them involve carnivalesque features such as cross-dressing, display of stupidity or the unexpected use of amusing bodily functions. But they are at the same time important, especially for the elder Motese, as a testimony of their existence prior to the missionaries' arrival. The stories serve to prove that the ideas presented by the missionaries were already known through Motese *kastom*, which explains to the Motese that they always have been the children of God since they have followed his commands. It was only the final part of the revelation which remained hidden from them until the missionaries came. Therefore quite a few Motese explicitly stated that Christianity was a Melanesian religion, and this will also explain why the Motese in many situations refer to Christianity as a natural part of *kastom*.

Other features of the Church and the Salagoro were recurrently compared as structural equivalents: their respective buildings and surrounding areas; the baptism and the *Tamate liwoa* initiation; the priest's clothes and the dressing of the dancers, both referred to as *reñ-reñ*; the hymns of the Church and the songs of the Salagoro dances, none of which were allowed to be sung outside their specific ritual context.

From avuncufocality to patriorientation

Although not totally complying with the process of symbiosis, i.e. the intended use of elements from one tradition to illustrate aspects of the other, I nevertheless choose to present an important shift in the kinship practice of the Motese which has been going on for quite some time and might have been occasioned partially by the introduction of Christianity. As we have seen, the Motese are concerned about their history and the development of their society, and one of the most profound social changes that I heard the Motese frequently comment upon was the emerging transition of functions from the role of the mother's brother to that of the father. Codrington describes a pattern of inheritance which seems to imply an increased patrilateral transfer of property (Codrington 1891: 35f, 64ff). This became discernible in the ancient practice that trees planted by a man belongs to his children and not his sister's children. The same goes for money and durables. Some of the customs related to the *marauwi/vanañåi*-relationship became gradually less 'functional', and today this is most conspicuous in the marriage-preparations. The recognition of the mother's brother as the head of family of his sisters' children prevails only in families who explicitly state their adherence to *kastom*, and the mother's brother's right to the bulk of the bride-price for a sister's daughter - just as he is supposed to be the main contributor in paying his sister's son's bride-price - is a common cause for conflict. Open disputes often arise between the parents and the mother's brother over a sister's daughter's bride-price, and lately even the bride herself has been heard abusing her

marauwi for claiming his rightful lion's share of the bride-price, arguing that it is her parents who have raised her and given her food and clothes and therefore also should receive the bride-price. This has scared some men off from actively participating in their sister's children's wedding, and I was told that their number was likely to increase. There are several reasons for this development, the main one obviously being the Motese's increasing incorporation in a monetary economy. The Church, kava and tobacco, feasts and clothes all require money. If a child attends Secondary School, the need for money increases exponentially. Bride-price being made payable in mani blong waetman also constitutes a major expense. Since copra is the only cash-crop and you inherit the trees your father has planted, the focus regarding the transfer of property is redirected to the potential inheritance from your father at the expense of the 'taken-for-granted' rights to utilise your matrilateral communal garden.

However, I do not find it unlikely that the 'God as father'-motif which is persistent throughout the New Testament has caused a change in the Motese view of the role of the father. Particularly the concept of the compassionate father, rendered in for instance Luke 15:11-32, represents a markedly different father-figure from that inherent in the traditional Motese 'father'. The father, since he is your *tavala ima* and consequently does not belong to your family, is the main authority, and the restriction on *poroporo* between a father and a child was absolute since joking would undermine the respect which was deemed vital for an efficient implementation of the father's role. The mother's brother is the proper partner for behaviour involving license, and according to Codrington he would also be the one to whom you would turn for advice regarding personal matters. These conventions were observed by some of the more *kastom* minded families on Mota, and on particularly one occasion I witnessed the practical consequences of the father not really being regarded as part of the family.

There had been an incident on the soccer field where some twenty young men had been engaged in a major fight inflicting rather severe injuries on quite a few of the participants. This was yet another outburst of a long-lasting feud between the sons of two sisters, who

also happened to be my brothers. In the evening while tending their wounds the brothers of one side assembled to discuss what they were to do both about the feuding in general and the size of the fines for the broken bones and lost teeth. The eldest brother and the mother did most of the talking, alternately making vindictive remarks and seeking solutions to the current problem, while their only sister sobbed vigorously and occasionally stuttered the words "Why do they want to destroy us?". The younger brothers, who had received the most damaging wounds, joined in with scornful remarks directed against their opponents, while I was told by one of them that this continuous fighting was their family's problem. The only one who did not speak was their father, who usually was a most talkative man not hesitating to shed neither his mockery nor his flattery. This time, however, he sat quietly and listened to his wife, daughter and sons. After some time, two of their adversaries arrived. One of them chose to stand in the dark while the other apologised on his behalf: he had kicked his opponent in the back while wearing soccer boots and had therefore caused more injury than he had intended. They wanted to shake hands and forget this latest episode.[91] While he talked, the mother, sister and elder brother continued to complain as they had done before their opponents' arrival, disregarding their message. The culprit himself intervened in order to explain how truly sorry he was and excused himself by stating that he usually did not wear boots and had totally forgotten this when he attacked. He repeated the request for a sekhan, but the family's disregard continued, until the father finally began to speak. Everyone present turned silent when he almost casually started to mumble his opinion on the matter: there was no reason to sekhan since they would fight again when the next opportunity arrived, thus making the sekhan an empty sign. He was also angry because of the injuries, and being one of the three members of the Island Court he said that he would use his authority to bring the most active of the brothers before the District Court accused of assault and

[91] Shaking hands, sekhan in Bislama which is more commonly used than the Motese translation, is an important sign of respect and good intentions. Almost every celebration contains a sekhan ceremony where some guests of honour are seated and the other guests line up to shake their hands and give a kiss on the cheek and a coin.

battery. The visitors listened to his comments and repeated that they still found the idea of a truce to be important and sound, but since the old man opposed it they would not push it any further. They realised that when he finally decided to comment on a family matter which really was not his concern, they ought to respect his opinion since he was their *tavala ima* and classificatory father and as such his words carried an almost veto-like weight.

This would not have occurred in every family, something which according to my family was due to the increasing amount of endo-*sågåi* marriages making the father belong to the same *sågåi* as his children and as such having a multitude of roles conflicting with the 'last resort punisher' attributed to the traditional Motese father-image.[92] He would have taken part in the discussions right from the beginning, but this would again mean that his opinion was not deemed to be as monolithic as that of a 'traditional' father. Some men who had married within their *sågåi* tried to make their adoption relevant and thus keep the distance, but most did not utilise this option. I frequently overheard complaints regarding the behaviour of children towards their parents, a development which was ascribed to the evolving practice of *poroporo* between fathers and children.

A matter of history

The virtues of the past and how to retain them in the present and the future is a predominant theme in virtually all societies.[93] Studies such as the present depend to a

[92] This is not to say that fathers do not contribute in the rearing of their children. On the contrary, the Motese are caring and loving fathers who have the main responsibility for learning their children *kastom*. However, their task is completed when the children are old enough to realise the relationship between the two *sågåi*, which is accomplished when they reach puberty. After this, the father and the child are expected to respect each other as *tavala ima*, i.e. no joking or quarrelling unless it is absolutely necessary. Such behaviour is reserved for their mother and ideally for the mother's brother. As we have seen, this is about to change.

[93] One might infer that the advocates of the post-modern age and their structurally inverted equals - the aboriginals of Australia, who allegedly have no notion of linear history - will serve as evidence to the opposite. Pertaining to the first group: to explicitly disregard a phenomenon is also a kind of regard.

large extent on historical sources external to the society studied, since local versions of history commonly is imputed with moral qualities making it a "theirstory", a narrative with an intention of playing an active part in the present. As such these narratives are of great interest to the researcher, since they convey ideas of how the world should have been, and provide important statements regarding a people's understanding of themselves. One might therefore say that what we call 'history', i.e. static accounts written down, or based on writings written, shortly after the incidents, is of a totally different nature from the dynamic narratives of a people without a tradition for literacy (cf. Goody and Watt 1968).

When searching to grasp the mechanisms behind social and cultural change, previous ethnographic accounts such as Codrington's and River's, although obviously liable to inaccuracies or even outright errors, are vital for a critical approach. And without these works I would never have been able to recognise the single most surprising development I encountered, namely the re-mystification of the attributes of the Salagoro and the transfer of the *mana* motif from the old tradition to the Church, through being associated with each other by the pedagogical measure of 'symbiosis'.

Syncretism - the blending as aggregate

mana *of the Church*

The concept of *mana*

Mana, or *manna* as the Motese pronounce it, was understood by Codrington to be a magical, supernatural or spiritual power which would reside with people or places or in

objects or words (Codrington 1891: 51, 191; Oliver 1989: 136 f). Keesing, among others, has later pointed out that Codrington misconceived the *mana*-concept for a noun when what it really referred to was more of an action **of** this power and hence was a verbal (Keesing 1984). This might be due to the fact that on Mota, whose language Codrington knew better and on which he spent most of his time as a field missionary, the term *mana* actually is a noun, with a corresponding verbal, *manag*, denoting the action of endowing an object or a phenomenon with *mana*. Burt writes of the Kwara'ae of Malaita, Solomon Islands that the attributes of their perception of *mana*, called 'mamana', is better to translate with 'truth', in the meaning of predictability and fulfilment of obligations between agents, than with the usual translation which reads 'power' (Burt 1994: 54f). This is not applicable to the meaning of the term in the Mota language, and serves more as a warning against uncritical comparison based on phonetic similarity without a proper consideration of the meaning contents, rather than a suggestion to reject the traditional connection between *mana* and 'power' altogether. On Mota today, the words *mana* and *manag* are used for a wide range of events and circumstances which all have something to do with 'special ability', 'power' or 'empowering'.[94] The quality of the ground, luck in fishing, the efficacy of a medicine and the power of God are all spoken of in terms of *mana*. Strength, on the other hand, will not in itself be referred to as *mana* unless it is an ability believed to be extraneous to a person's physical gifts. *Mana* thus seems to be an empirically observed faculty connected to an action or an object which causes outcomes exceeding the expected and therefore is interpreted as having external roots. In some cases, particularly regarding objects, the ability to control it might be transferred at the death of the man or woman possessing it.

[94] Before I knew the Mota language, the Bislama word paoa, 'power', substituted *mana* in the accounts I was given. As will be seen below, this is also the meaning the Bible translators chose.

Mana, mercy and might

My last night in Vanuatu I spent drinking kava in the house of Windsor, the *maranaga* of the twenty-or-so Mota men living in Port Vila, together with some of my fellow islanders. At that time, I had begun to elaborate on my observations of the peculiar relationship between the Church and the Salagoro: sometimes co-operating, sometimes competing. At the kava session a former District Priest on Mota was present, a very talkative and sociable man who found this to be an appropriate occasion to instruct me on his control over the weather conditions. He said that because of his consecration as a priest he was able to coerce the sun and the rain to follow his commands - before suddenly correcting himself by emphasising that it of course was the work of God, **through** him. Likewise, the ability to cure diseases or even raise the dead as Jesus did at several occasions was granted him through the Bishop's blessing, the evidence of which was manifested in the cross he wore hanging from a silver necklace.

I had received similar statements earlier, and the powers ascribed to the clergy both by themselves and by the public had puzzled me right from the beginning of my stay. I had also learned that what was distributed did not include only the **mercy** of God but also his **punishment**, which I knew that my kava companion had been using several times during his assignment on Mota. But this was the first time that I explicitly recognised the similarity between the concept of *mana* and the Anglican doctrine of apostolic succession. The idea of an uninterrupted chain of investitures, starting with Jesus telling Peter that he would build his Church on him and thus inaugurating Peter as the first bishop, who eventually appointed and blessed his bishops who in their turn inaugurated their own clergy in a successive process reaching today, resembles on crucial points the elusive nature of *mana*, in this case emanating from the most powerful source of *mana*

ever to have been on earth, viz. the son of God.[95] And in the same way as *mana* is an attribute which is not evenly distributed among the population, the ability to use the *mana* of God is generally accepted to reside with the clergy through their inauguration by the Bishop. The extraordinary consequence of this is that the blessings and the curses of God are allotted to the people by the clergy as one of their pastoral rights, and through the connection with *mana* this allotment cannot be questioned on moral grounds since it is their **right** as possessors of the ability to do so!

One of my brothers had a little business involving the selling of kava. A month after I arrived Mota he received a large supply, and since he sold it cheaper than anyone else the business flourished. A Village Priest, who was equally known for his desire for kava as for his insolvency, wanted to buy some bags on tick. My brother refused, upon which the priest said that something would happen to his body. One week later, during a soccer tournament where most of the people were present, my brother broke his big toe clean off, and was indisposed for a month. The priest was present at the game, and immediately after the incident he was seen congratulated by one of his friends. The people were upset by the affair, and the District Church Council arranged a meeting to discuss how they should react. It all ended with the Head Chief going to see the priest and ask for an explanation, without any further sanctions.

The incident clearly caused public distress, but the accusations against the priest did **not** involve abuse of power, only charges of inflicting injury on a fellow citizen.[96] The fact that God had punished a man who had done nothing wrong did not elicit resentment against the Church as such and certainly not against God, since the utilisation, although

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[95] Father Walter Lini, an Anglican priest who was the Vanuatu prime minister for the first eleven years after the nation became independent, died on February 20th 1999. He should have been sent home to his island of Pentecost, but his *mana* was said to be so strong that the National Council of Chiefs placed him on lit de parade in the Parliament for several days before he was ready to be sent home (Pacific Islands Report, February 22nd 1999).

[96] In order to pursue my reasoning it would be tempting to give a secondary explanation: the outrage was also partly due to the application of qualities reserved for the Church sphere in the public area. Since this obstructs my present argument, and first and foremost because it seems a bit far-fetched according to my data on the matter, I choose to let the intellectual game lie and stick to the narrow path of compliance.

randomly, of the forces rendered through a priest's office was considered to be a right of his and in that respect he had not committed any offence (Kolshus n.d.).[97] The *mana* of the clergy is thus an extra-moral capacity, a right more than a virtue, and as commissioners indirectly initiated by Jesus this *mana* is under their management until the Bishop bereave them of their cross.

This does not imply that the clergy and their actions are excepted from the process of public judgement: indeed, they are rated according to the execution of their duties and general sociability like everybody else.[98] The difference regards the fact that they are **entitled** to respect from the members of the congregation through their education and installation in office. Thus the public might, in severe cases, practically decide to force a priest from the island through not making the necessary contributions to pay him for his services, and this actually happened immediately prior to my arrival. Nevertheless, he enjoys the same esteem as his more pious brethren when in face-to-face contact with his congregation: every side of the *qaliga*-institution which has been transferred to the relationship between a priest and his parishioners will be observed as a matter of course.[99]

When learning this, I felt as if the process of my fieldwork had completed a full circle. I set out with the initial hypothesis that the secret knowledge of the Salagoro was utilised to provide sponsors and support for advancing in the *Suqe ta vareag*, the graded male society, and in other socio-political arenas, thus showing how 'the knowing of people

[97] I will not here start a discussion of the Motese's conception of God, since that would be too extensive a task, but I would like to remind the reader of the difference between the Old Testament's description of God as it is found in the Pentateuch and the books of the different prophets and Job, and the God presented to us through Jesus by the Evangelists and Paul in the New Testament. The Old Testament leaves the impression of an almighty God, whereas in the New Testament the aspect of the Almighty is diminished for that of the merciful God.
[98] See Brison (1992) for a discussion of the importance of rumours and gossip in political processes among the Kwanga on Papua New Guinea.
[99] It will be remembered that I ascribed this respectful attitude not only to the priests' metaphysical connections and their education but also to their social importance as fairly unbiased negotiators in conflicts.

knowing something you do not know of apart from it being something worth knowing', i.e. the social value of secrets, was a most important aspect in manoeuvring people into positions of social debt which were reimbursable with political support which, together with the corresponding *mana*, is a prerequisite in creating oneself as a Big Man, *å tanun we poa*. When finding that the *Suqe ta vareag* had lost its importance and no longer accepted new members and that the activity in the salagoro had receded, I abandoned my primary focus for one trying to explain how those changes had evolved. But eventually I returned to my basic assumption in a slightly altered way: the *mana* which abides with the Big Man and is recognised post factum is immanent in the constitution of the clergy. Negotiations regarding the substance of their power or the legitimacy of their claim for respect is thus not necessary, and the generally accepted relevance of their knowledge and abilities renders some clergy prone to utilising them outside the Church arena and in that respect resembling the Big Man converting ritual sponsorship into political support.[100]

"..in remembrance of me": *mana* and the Holy Supper

Paul Connerton, in his stimulating account of the importance of the body and bodily practices in the communication and transfer of cultural knowledge and tradition, states that the Communion as a commemorative ceremony constitutes a slight discontinuity regarding the ritual calendar of the Christian Church, since the Church year really is a re-enactment of Jesus' passion while the commemoration of the Last Supper, one of the very 'highlights' of this story, is performed every week (Connerton 1989: 46 f.). One of the

[100] I can hardly overstress the point that the clergy on Mota, and elsewhere in the Banks, who I encountered during my fieldwork, were predominantly amiable, caring and humorous people, and considering the potential for personal gain through 'abusing' their ascribed power chose to follow the narrow path to an admirable extent. However, the few examples I experienced of the opposite attitude were indeed extended cases, both regarding the priests as participating social actors, the present opinion on the nature of their office and the dogmatic content of the Church of Mota, and as such, although not representative for most of the clergy, became extremely fruitful as a source for approaching the view the Motese exhibit regarding their Church.

reasons for this extraction of the Maundy Thursday meal from the calendar is that it dogmatically speaking not only is a commemorative ceremony repeating the events of that special day, but also is an anticipation of the eventual reunion of all Christians with Christ in Heaven through the sharing of his body and blood (Modalsli and Engedal 1980). This sharing emphasises the equality of the body of believers, at the same time as it accentuates the special position occupied by the priest. The ritual and social highlight of the week is the Sunday Worship, and the *Gannaråñå*, Holy Meal, is the very essence of this event. Thus, when the Holy Supper starts with the procession carrying the bread, wine and money from the entrance of the church up to the priest standing by the altar, where he through the Words of Consecration transforms the bread and wine into the body and blood of Jesus Christ, it corresponds to a performance recognising the powers inherent in him and the public dependence on those very same powers. When the priest in front of his congregation *manag* the bread and wine and thus brings Jesus to them for consumption it becomes a public display of his abilities, which reinforces both the awe for his potentialities and the comfort in knowing that they are supervised by a true representative of God. Likewise, when incidents such as that of my brother's broken toe occur, they paradoxically serve as testimonies of the legitimacy of a Priest's occupation of office and thereby as assurance of the continued potential protection of God through his dedicated servants.

The magic of the Church

This weekly re-enactment on the main ritual arena, where the equality between the act of praying and the act of *manag* is made evident, has definitely been a most important source in providing the priest with the role of controlling the *mana* of the Church, thereby making him distributor of sickness and health, sun and rain, blessings and curses, i.e. possessor of all the abilities which prior to the pledge to *mama* Lindsay were dispersed

between a larger number of people. The practice of *sañ-sañ* in connection with endo-*sågåi* marriage was also abolished when the Motese gave their promise to *mama* Lindsay, since he found the destruction of property and gardens to be a too grave punishment for such an offence (cf. Codrington 1891: 23).[101] Ironically, the last time a *sañ-sañ* occurred it came as a consequence of the actions of a man of the Church, and was executed in sheer anger despite the ban on the practice. The incident took place about five years before I reached Mota, and had therefore sufficient time to develop into quite a few different versions as regards both cause and liability. The most frequently told account of the story is as follows:

A man from Lotawan together with his brother accused someone, or were accused by someone, from a neighbouring village of stealing a pig. Someone from this village went to see a *tassio* who stayed on Mota at the time to ask him strike the brothers with an illness. Not long after both of them became seriously ill, and one of them died while the other was rescued at the hospital in Santo from a possibly terminal liver cancer. The *tassio*, who in the meantime had left Mota, admitted upon questioning that he had brought the illness upon them through prayer. The relatives of the deceased responded with anger, tearing down the house, cutting the trees and destroying the gardens of the persons who had asked the *tassio* to pray for this disease. The offenders publicly acknowledged their guilt. They were made liable to pay *sako-sako*, which in this case was especially high since it also was a case of *wål å es*, 'paying for a life'; a woman who took part in the incident said that it involved the payment of 50.000 vatu, six pigs and six breadfruit trees, of which only the money had been received at the time of my fieldwork. A most interesting aspect of this story is that nobody accused the *tassio* of having done something illegal or immoral, although he was the one who actually had caused the man's death. When asking him to use the power connected with him as *tassio*, the people who were made the subject of *sañ-sañ* became the offenders while the *tassio* simply was an

[101] The *sañ-sañ* of the Salagoro was not affected by this, which again supports the notion of the principles of domains of relevance pertaining to the two main bulks of tradition.

instrument with the extra-moral capability of executing their desire and an obvious concession to do so.

But although the stories rendered so far describe what to me seems to be the more malevolent sides of the *mana* of the Church and its servants, by far most of the actions performed by the clergy were benevolent. As will be recalled, when the pledge was given to *mama* Lindsay many kinds of 'white' magic which the Motese possessed were given up due to the fear that such practices also could lead to the death of the user. The means for controlling the sun and the rain, the sea and the plenitude of garden produce and animals were thus lost in the process.

Quite a few of these are still available, however, only now they reside with the clergy. It is common practice to visit a priest before a large feast to ask for rain just prior to the celebration to guarantee sufficient water supply, and sun on the day proper so that the salagoro dances could be performed and the host village could avoid a *tapetape*, the fine of the Salagoro. Several times during my fieldwork did the teachers who lived at the school go to the District Priest to ask for a brief but violent shower to fill their water containers. The global weather phenomenon *El Niño* caused a severe drought which made the brooks dry out and severely damaged the gardens, but I was not told of any requests directed to the priest for rain apart from such occasional showers as the teachers asked for. Since the villages' contributions both to the Bible translation project and to the catechists' and clergy's wages had been insufficient for quite some time, one of the elected Church leaders suggested in an announcement after a Service that the aridity was brought on them due to their lack of faith and devotion.

A village will also ask the priest to perform a special Service followed by an intercessory prayer where all the community members join in a procession around the village with seven stops during which the priest prays for all the important elements of the village and the island: the sea, the brook, the bush, the gardens, the dispensary, the school and the church, that they all may thrive and serve their designated ends.

Regarding illness and curing, the Church gospel has always contained a strong element of this, which, as we have already seen, is most compatible with the Motese's perception of such procedures. When Jesus cured the sick by praying for them or touching them (see for instance Matthew 8:14-17; Matt. 9:27-34) or commanding evil spirits out of their bodies (Matthew 8:28-32; Luke 11:14-15), and particularly when these gifts are attributed Peter (Acts 9:32-43) and the members of the Christian Church (1st Corinthians 12:28), the resemblance to traditional Motese curing practices becomes striking. And since the ability to cure diseases definitely is an attribute of *mana*, the healing prayer of the clergy and the *mana* given to Judah's coconut when he sings to it was explicitly stated as being of the same kind.

The following quote from Karen Brison will serve to illustrate my argument:

"When speakers in Kwanga meetings […] suggest that sorcerers killed someone who showed disrespect for community leaders, that account reproduces the general belief in the close relationship between sorcerers and leaders. When others argue, as sometimes occurs, that God has the ultimate power to decide who lives and dies, they challenge the belief system that supports community leaders." (Brison 1992: 3f).

I have shown that on Mota, through annexing a monopoly of the possibility to manipulate superhuman powers, the Church has been ascribed the *mana* which used to be an extra-moral quality residing with certain objects, actions or individuals. One of the reasons for this is the empirical fact experienced by the Motese themselves that the power of the Church is stronger than the *mana* of individuals. Every time a person dies because he or she intended to poison or enchant somebody, the Church is proven more potent than the *mana* controlled by the people in earlier days. The first funeral I attended was occasioned by this: when I asked what had caused the man's death, I was told that he had tried to poison an old man in my village and that the poison had struck back on him and killed him - immediately followed by the story of the pledge made to *mama* Lindsay. One

more time during my fieldwork was a similar explanation for a person's death given, and at neither occasion did the malevolent action cause any resentment towards the deceased's ill intentions. Anyone were free to try, but the pledge protected the Mota people, as yet another evidence of the hegemony of the powers of the Church.

The pragmatic attitude the Melanesians generally present regarding metaphysical issues surely must have facilitated the introduction of Christianity, and the small miracles which still are performed by the clergy and the *tassio*s, and the occasional retaliation effected by the pledge, maintain peoples' faith and reverence (Swain and Trompf 1995).[102] On the other hand, we have seen that the connection with *mana* has influenced the content of the Motese Church itself, which has served to establish a Church with a highly independent dogmatic and pragmatic structure through this attribution of *mana*.

However, it would not have been a true Melanesian institution unless a gift had been presented in return. And this is exactly what has happens in the case of what I postulate to be the sacredness of the Salagoro.

sacredness of the salagoro

Tapu vs. *råñå*

The following quotes from Codrington will serve as background for what I find to be the single most surprising development I encountered when working systematically on the subject of 'change'.

"*In the Banks' Islands the tamate has survived the introduction of Christianity. All belief in the supernatural character of the associations has long disappeared, all women and children know that*

[102] I was told by some former *tassios* that their cane was used to convince people who had not yet heard the Gospel or who had returned to their former practices. When people saw a levitating cane it made them realise the power of God and his aides.

the tamate are men dressed in disguises made by themselves, and that the sounds and cries are naturally produced. […] In truth, the social power of these societies was too great to be readily dissolved, and in the absence of any strong political organization the importance of the position of a member of the largest and most exclusive of the societies has been considerable." Codrington, 1891:74 f

"*The [*salagoro*] is not sacred,* rongo, *it is set apart,* tapu, *by a sufficient authority*." Op.cit:77

Codrington finds the Melanesian implications of *tapu* to be a bit less metaphysical than what is inherent in the Polynesian term: it first and foremost connotes 'forbidden' under the threat of human sanctions rather than 'sacred', although he remarks that there are exceptions in the Solomon Islands and that the *mana* connected to an individual might be counted as an addition to the perils of violating a *tapu* (op.cit. 31, 215f).
Råñå, on the other hand, he finds no problem in translating with 'sacred', and seems to imply that this is equivalent to the Polynesian content of the concept of *tapu* (cf. Shore 1996: 272, 275; Gell 1995).
Today the connotations of the words are approximately the same. Codrington himself in his capacity as Bible translator chose to use *råñå* for 'holy' and 'sacred', but its main denotation is still 'silence' when used outside a ritual context. *Tapu* is shouted to the children when they are about to do something dangerous or illegal.[103]

Salagoro, *tamate* and re-mystification

The quotations from Codrington's The Melanesians contain three statements which today would be strongly contested both by the Motese and myself. These will be dealt with in some detail, since I do not find it likely that Codrington has misunderstood or

[103] In a regionally comparative scope it might be worth noting that while the Bislama Bible calls the Holy Spirit 'Tambu Spirit', the Mota Bible uses '*Å Vui we Råñå*'.

misinterpreted this particular data when he dealt so enviably correctly and systematically with all the other parts of information he was able to gather. It seems more probable that we have encountered a transfer of motif from the Church to the Salagoro which has not only helped the Motese preserve the activities of the Salagoro, but actually has imputed them with a systematic structure of belief which most definitely carries the supernatural connotations Codrington's statements deprive them of.

The salagoro is not sacred but set apart, and there is no supernatural character

The salagoro today is most definitely set apart by a "sufficient authority", since an illegitimate crossing of its outer borders, *pan sålåi*, by a non-member will lead to a rallying of all the members of *Tamate liwoa* on the island who subsequently will seize the perpetrator. If it is a male he will be detained in the salagoro for thirty days where he is tormented in order to teach him respect for the Salagoro, after which he will undergo the required initiation rituals if he can find someone to sponsor his membership fee. If no one is willing to do this he has to remain in the salagoro, but this is an unlikely outcome. The last time an illicit crossing of the borders occurred was approximately thirty years ago, when two curious boys caused the *Tamate liwoa* to rise. Their memberships were paid immediately after the thirty days of punishment had been observed. The consequences following an eventual deliberate intrusion by a female were even more serious, but since the scenario was rather inconceivable to the Motese I was only told that previously she would have been killed - just as they would have done to a male intruder in the old days. As will be remembered, the two cases where women had worked on gardens which someone regarded as inside the *pan sålåi* did not lead to them being deemed liable since they had been sent by members of the *Tamate liwoa*. In one of those cases the area had not been used as salagoro for a long period of time but was nevertheless strictly unapproachable for non-members, a fact which definitely points towards a conception of the salagoro as being more than "set apart by sufficient authority", at least when Codrington does not regard this authority to be of a supernatural nature.

I accidentally got a chance to see the members' response towards trespassing. One of the first things that had been explained to me was which part of the beach I was not allowed to approach, a regulation I obviously was keen to observe. I had been on Mota approximately six months, and the men in my village had danced on the *Qåñ ima* in Mariu. In accordance with tradition they were preparing *å ganna tape laka*, the meal which all the members in the village will join in the salagoro to celebrate the dancing. They had decided to eat fish, and most of the men had gathered on the north end of the reef where they took turns in diving and spearing their catch. I was reading in one of the pools on the reef when the idea struck me that maybe they were fishing from this unusual spot because they did not want to disturb me in my reading. To show that they should not worry about me I walked towards them on the outer part of the reef. I realised that I had passed one of the borders but this was a stone lying on the beach some fifty meters away and I had not been given any corresponding mark for the reef-side. One of my brothers saw me and said something to the others, and my father and he went hastily towards the point where I now was standing, since I had begun to realise that something was wrong. They smiled and escorted me back to where I had been sitting, and started talking as if nothing had happened. I later learned that I had almost come close enough for the *Tamate* of all the other village to come to take me, but the men had responded quickly and sent for a *mao* man from a nearby village who had performed the necessary rituals together with those who are *mao* from our village. Six fathoms of shell-money had been paid to the *Tamate* in order to clear the area, *ge maea å masaåi*. Two days went by before I heard what had almost happened. Needless to say I was extremely embarrassed by the episode, and I invited to a *sarsar apmaragai*-ceremony to acknowledge my shame and apologise for the incident. The men had kept the story for themselves because they rightfully expected me to become devastated if I knew the potential consequences of my action. When I finally was told what the *mao* men had been doing to prevent a calamity some men responded with anger since their intention was to keep it from me in the first place. Afterwards they nevertheless found it to be correct, since I then had experienced the

solemnity of the salagoro and the zealousness they exhibit in observing the laws of the Salagoro.

It could be inferred that this is little more than deterring others from doing the same thing, and that the outcome of an intrusion is only **social**, i.e. the distribution of secrets to people who have not paid for the right to know them, and not **metaphysical**, i.e. the contaminating effects of bringing together elements belonging to different parts of reality. But when we take into consideration the many years required before the rituals of unwinding a former salagoro area may be performed, and that even after this the place is avoided if possible, we realise that the "sufficient authority" must be part of a larger complex of belief, and that an intruder does not first and foremost represent a threat towards the respect for the *Tamate* associations but a threat to pollute the area by bringing a body which is not calibrated for the salagoro domain in proximity of a Something - and thereby disturbing the balance between the Outside and the Inside by inserting another structure of relevance.

This shows that the Motese most definitely attribute supernatural qualities to the salagoro area. The attitude towards the *tamate* head-dresses, who are parts of the salagoro and are referred to by the same term, *å kåkåa*, also strongly indicates supernatural associations.

Everybody knows that the *tamate* are man-made objects

According to Codrington all non-members know that the *tamate* are men in disguise and that the head-dresses are produced by the dancers, and this is also the case today. But in addition to the dancers being men in disguises they are also *tamate*, which is not only a fancy looking hat but also a potentially dangerous being. Their association with the Salagoro through being its metonymic parts gives them a spiritual essence that causes much of the danger which, as we have seen above, is inherit in the dancing sessions on the public square. And the performers, although they are recognised as men and distinguishable as individual dancers, become the *tamate* by being in physical contact with it.

The special vocabulary, *å vavae tape vatñmårag*, connected with the *gåtå*, the time of producing the *tamate*, is considered to be a remnant, maybe from the time when the belief in the metaphysical qualities of the salagoro and the *tamate* were not comprehensive, and it is not expected that neither the children nor the women believe that the *tamate* actually swim ashore the evening before the dancing. The opinion that the *tamate* is the embodiment of a live spiritual essence through being part of the salagoro is conversely not questioned. The histories of their frightful acts and menacing nature are told as fire-side anecdotes to men, women and outsiders alike, and they are all considered to be true. A pregnant woman would always be careful not to stay somewhere she might catch a glimpse of a head-dress, since the *tamate* then could possess the foetus.
I once asked some men in my village if they ever were frightened when they danced with a particularly ferocious *tamate*, such as *Lakatapas*, *Qatmetatal* or *Lagiga*. They admitted that they were afraid, but that they would never be alone with those *tamate*. One of the younger men told me that *Qatmetatal* once had eaten a man on Mota Lava who had been left alone with it, and a man who had not heard this story before exclaimed his surprise because he had believed that only *Lakatapas* had a history of eating men. This reaction, and others similar to his, were clearly genuine, and confirmed my impression that the *tamate* is a living being and not just the "man-made object" Codrington describes.

Great social importance following membership in the most exclusive societies

The *Tamate liwoa* is now an overarching association which encompasses all the other sub-divisions, so the possibility for distinction between the members are not all that great. As might be remembered, those who paid by killing a pig, and later those who paid individually to every member on the island will sometimes claim superiority over the newcomers who only have paid a smaller amount to each village with a salagoro. Those who are *mao* will also be entitled to the respect of the other members since they know the laws and the practices of the Salagoro better than anyone else. I once overheard a *mao* say

to a friend that if one of the young men did not want to participate in communal work he would not receive help when it was time to decorate his *tamate*.

Nevertheless, it seems that the associations have undergone a change, from a previous position which contained a potential for social stratification to the one of solidarity and male unity inherent in the *Tamate liwoa* of today.[104] This unity of course is partially based on an element of exclusiveness towards the women, and some might explain the occurrence of associations such as the *Tamate* to be founded solely on this (cf. Allen 1967). I still suspect an additional factor to be of at least as great importance as the "all-male arena", namely that the dormant danger in what they see and do erases the differences which are possible to extract from the various modes of payment and the uneven distribution of knowledge and skills. These become petty considerations in comparison with the perilous capacities of the *tamate* head-dresses and the immanent danger in disturbing the balance between the ritual spheres.

From secrets to sacredness

The material described above point towards a qualitatively new conception of the complexes of ritual and belief connected to the *Tamate* associations, and during this process they have in my opinion attained a new and much more fundamental position, and function, in the life of the Motese. This is something of a paradox, since the time invested in the salagoro activities is substantially less than what both Codrington and Rivers found to be the case during their visits. We have seen a shift in focus, from one emphasising the difference between people caused by an uneven distribution of secret knowledge and power, both internally among the men and between men and women, to

[104] Rivers (1914) emphasises the utility motif of the 77 different *Tamate* he recorded: they use leaves for property protection, but the leaves exclude only those who are not members of the associations which leaves are used. It is therefore important to have many memberships, where at least one is in a *Tamate* with few other members. Today a leaf blockade, *sissisga*, can not be violated by anyone, not even the members of that association.

one stressing the equality of men. In some contexts the women still constitute the 'meaningful other' as being perpetually 'outside' in relation to the Salagoro, but much more important is the boundary between people and the world of the *tamate*. This is a boundary the men occasionally cross, not without a sense of excitement, and it is one which receive much attention from men and women alike. People, *tanun*, remain on the outside whereas the salagoro is the domain of the *tamate*. The associations have thus changed their social function, from being secret male societies into arenas where an important part of the Motese universe is being observed ritually. They represent and maintain general beliefs that unite member and non-member alike, instead of being fields of utility and diversion for the possible gain of individual members.

Although speculations regarding the origin of practices are not entirely comme-il-faut within the discipline of social anthropology, I can not abstain from postulating that this development of re-mystification, or perhaps rather neo-mystification, has followed the gradual embedding of Christianity at the core of Motese tradition. Following the opposition between the old structures, particularly the *Suqe* but also the dancing of the Salagoro, and the Church, the two became structural opponents that both tacitly and openly used the other when outlining their own practices. And through being associated with the new ritual and dogmatic structure of the Church, the *Tamate*, which according to both Codrington and Rivers had no supernatural contents at the time of their visits, gradually received the expectation that a ritual attitude shall be displayed. During this process the salagoro area with its related features are not just set aside by a 'sufficient authority', but has become *råñå*, imputed with the potential of causing metaphysical hazard to members and non-members alike. Thus the salagoro and the *Tamate* associations are structurally speaking considered to be of the same spiritual nature as the church and the rituals which are performed there. And just as the congregation is united in their wonder and awe over the rituals and narratives encountered in the church, the main dividing principle of the Salagoro is no longer that between men and women/initiates and non-initiates, but the distinction between Man and the Sacred. The

fact that certain men are able to temporarily change their being from *tanun* to *tamate* just serves to reinforce people's reverence towards the mystical nature of the physical and spiritual manifestations of the Salagoro domain.

It is my contention that while the Church has been properly 'indigenised' by its appropriation of the *mana* concept, the Salagoro has undergone a change of contents which has not only made it more resistant towards entering cultural oblivion through receiving the mystic capacity of 'sacredness': it has become much more crucial to the Mota society as a whole, by being a symbol which sums up in a consistent framework the conceptions the Motese have of their world 'outside' the Church sphere. And it is as such that what previously was an exclusively male sphere now suddenly might be put at the core of 'Motaness' by the occasional fieldworker, as provider of the tools for contemplating on and acting in the world.

concluding potentials

I have throughout the more than five years I have been in close contact with the field of social anthropology always felt that there has been a pattern that unites the large number of miscellaneous approaches exhibited by the authors addressing this particular scientific discipline. And although periodically powerful voices have been raised advocating the futility of the anthropological project in the wake of rationality debates, logical consequences of relativism, post-colonialist theory, feminist critique, deconstructionism and other varieties of the problem of reducing reality to topical texts and what these texts ultimately represent, I still feel that their aim is more to calibrate the tools available for our mutual work on this project rather than to invalidate it altogether. The project dwells by the junction where the social sciences meet with philosophy and biology, and is simply stated "what does it imply to be a human being?". 'The pattern that unites' is Gregory Bateson's definition of Mind: the aggregate of elements within a system which are able to respond to the internal flow of information, i.e. the cognitive aspects of a whole (Bateson 1972; 1991). Some might find this to be tautological, but as a heuristic device it definitely serves a purpose since it brings the project of anthropology back full circle: our "raw material" is people in some form of interaction, from which more general issues might be extracted, which again justifies the focus on what relatively speaking are micro-level processes, making the various parts simultaneously subdued by and subduing to the other components of the whole and thereby endorsing all kinds of information as potentially valuable since they are manifestations of the human state of being.

Confronted with an increasing recognition of the vastness of human experience, some axioms are transformed into statements with merely contextual validity whereas certain reflective or pseudo-reflective deductions undergo refinements, or are even disposed of altogether.

Many motifs from life and practice on Mota have valuable ethical bearings, hospitality and solidarity being but two. On a more scientific level the corrective observations deductible from the ethnography of Mota also are numerous, as the reader probably already has noticed. I will concentrate on three affiliated aspects which all have **history** as their common denominator.

Conceptualising change

Most of Western philosophy, particularly its aesthetic vein, has since the renaissance been occupied with temporality in one way or the other, of which the Past has been the preferred focal point. In the decades surrounding the First World War, where Man - at least in his European guise - lost his innocence, the attitude changed from one of describing the ways to reach back to or bring forth this Past, to one claiming that an incorrigible breach had occurred which separated the Present from the Past by the introduction of a qualitatively new state of being: the age of Modernity, with its corresponding philosophical and aesthetic framework, modernism.

This particular mode of existence involved a nostalgic longing for a lost Golden Age and a recognition of the fact that because our innocence was gone we had no better opportunity of returning to that state than Adam and Eve after **their** fall. We were no longer united as human beings since the fragmentation of reality had lead to the creation of several different worlds, causing a limited possibility for interpersonal validity. And although the contents of this description of Western existence has had its successor in post-modernism, which acknowledges all the postulates inherent in modernism but embraces rather than bemoans this development, the traces from the philosophical tradition of modernity are still deeply embedded in Western self-consciousness.

This is probably the foundation of one of the most die-hard notions within recent anthropology, namely the popular divide between ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’ societies, with an idea of corresponding ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’ research practices and topics. I have never encountered any reasonable explanation regarding the nature of difference

between the two. Some have said that a 'modern' methodology involves a focus on more limited phenomena as against the holistic approach of 'traditional' studies: the focus on more bounded social and cultural elements will obviously be applicable also in a 'traditional' society, and I find it hard to believe that researchers in a 'modern' society will not be engaged in trying to grasp as much of the whole picture as possible. Others have stated that it is the degree of complexity that decides how to classify a society: it would be interesting to learn where on this scale of relative complexity one shall place the limit between 'traditional' and 'modern', and if the classification opens for analogous differences such as 'more' and 'less', or is based solely on digital absolutes.

It seems to this student that the far end of the dichotomy 'traditional/modern' is modelled on little else than relative geographical distance to the Western world, a basic level of technology and an idea of a coherent 'small-scale' society, and as such is but yet another manifestation of the old notion of the noble savage living in harmony with his surroundings as he has done since the beginning of time. In anthropological terms a Masai society in Nairobi or New York is therefore an anomaly and subsequently must be conceptually brought into line by being classified as 'modern'. As we have seen from the ethnography of Mota, the Motese have experienced a social, cultural and economical development during the past one hundred years that in my view represents at least as radical a change of conditions as that undergone by the people of the First World. Their world also contains fragmented realities, it has indeed been argued that the Motese society is based on them. It seems to me that the difference between the Motese and people enduring modernity is the inventiveness with which the Motese handle seemingly contradictory impulses.

Secularisation or remystification?

The 'traditional vs. modern'-notion contains an implicit unilinear view on historical development. Related to this is the idea that societies in change - which in my view will include all of them - necessarily will undergo a gradual process of demystification, or

secularisation. This process is occasioned by education, commodisation and the increasing awareness of the relativity of truth through acquaintance with other people's practices and world-views.

We have seen that on Mota the mystical and supernatural aspect of the *Tamate* associations actually is present in a qualitatively higher degree than was the case one hundred years ago. And it has been my contention that the introduction of a new ritual and dogmatic complex actually has re-imputed the old religious structures with mystical contents, and that this process is probably not unique to Mota but actually might occur in many different settings where a new dogmatic structure is introduced in a similar relatively subtle way. Such introductions could provide the already existing system of belief and meaning with a set of ritual and cosmological themes that revitalises the previous practices and thus serves to strengthen a people's adherence to their old customs while simultaneously incorporating the new. The alleged universal process of demystification in the wake of increased cultural contact and 'globalisation' should therefore not be accepted as an axiom, since re-mystification also is a possible outcome of this process.

Authenticity, Acculturation and Anthropology

However, it does not come as a surprise that anthropologists treat external influences, and particularly those which in some way or another form a part of the researcher's own background, as threats to possibly original findings - which, as has been pointed out recently, might be essential in promoting an academic career. Malinowski produced numerous works from his fieldwork on the Trobriand Islands without mentioning that missionaries had been living on the island for thirty years before he got there. Annette Weiner, arriving sixty years later, criticises him for a number of misunderstandings and omissions - most likely legitimately - but without even taking into consideration the possibility that the lives of the Trobrianders actually could have undergone internal changes during those sixty years. In the popularised version of her monograph, hardly any

of the pictures portray people wearing "Western" clothes, although this is worn by practically everyone outside a ritual setting (Weiner 1988). The Christian presence is only mentioned twice, in two of her daughter's diary entries with which Weiner heads the various chapters of the book, and they both state that "the Church Service was dull/boring" before moving on to more interesting matters (op.cit.: 97, 139). Her having been to a Service in the first place should indicate that the Church actually occupied a position in the social lives of the Trobrianders that would legitimise more than a brief, almost involuntary reference to its presence. To omit from a study something that is deemed important by the people with whom an anthropologist is staying because it is regarded to be inauthentic, is in my view neither particularly unbiased nor proficient inductive science. A study named "Coming of Age on Mota" would obviously have to include sports, and the present thesis might be accused of not having described the aspects of 'work' thoroughly, which after all is what people spend most of their time doing.

It would nevertheless have been an even more grave failure to have neglected the role of the Church from my description of the Motese, even though I initially was disappointed when I reached the island and discovered that they were Christians and that the *Suqe* had disappeared and the activity of the Salagoro was rather infrequent: the Motese call themselves Christians, and that is a social fact of great importance. Like most other people of the Pacific they have been in close contact with Christianity for a long period of time, and in this part of the world, where social and cultural change occurs at perhaps an even higher pace than elsewhere, it would be absurd to treat a phenomenon that has been around for 150 years as inauthentic and extraneous to my field of study.

And through this eventual focus I encountered a highly indigenised Church, which had been actively adopted and adapted by a people with an ability of cultural creativity that in my view is common to us all. The Motese might have been particularly fortunate in being approached by missionaries with a different attitude from perhaps the majority of their kind, and their classificatory principle of inside/outside might also have facilitated a fairly

smooth incorporation of a new ritual complex. It is nevertheless my contention that what is experienced by outsiders as being hegemonic structures of belief and meaning always will be engaged in a dialogue with the existing 'little tradition' when brought into a new field, and that this dialogue commonly will take the shape of processes such as purism, symbiosis and syncretism which have been outlined in this thesis. The various outcomes of these processes will be of the utmost importance to the comparative scope of the field of social anthropology, because they are approximately corresponding structures which are being localised in a manner that bears evidence of different peoples' response to the same complex of ideas and practice and as such are manifestations of a people's system of classification.

On Mota, the introduction of Christianity has actually created a new ethnographic field, although still within the confines of imaginable change from the situations described by Codrington and Rivers. I would expect that a similar 'refuelling' of meaning, belief and practice in the interface between traditions has occurred in many other societies, both near and far from the tiny island of Mota in the Southwest Pacific.

Appendix 1

the field: an essay on context

Mota in Anthropology

Considering Mota's diminutive size it has received a disproportionate amount of attention as provider of ethnographic material for discussions leading to the development of the comparatively young scientific discipline of social anthropology. The works of R.H. Codrington, gathered in his The Melanesians from 1891, rendered the growing field of ethnography with a vast source of information for comparative employment. Between 1863 and 1887 he spent much time with men from different parts of the Melanesian islands where the Anglican Mission was engaged, during his assignment as a teacher and Bible translator for the Melanesian Mission of the Anglican Church on Norfolk island. He wrote down their accounts of the customs of their respective homes, from Santa Isabel in the Solomon Islands to Fiji, following this principle: " [t]o set forth as much as possible what natives say about themselves, not what the Europeans say about them. […] In conclusion, this book, though written by a missionary, with his full share of the prejudices and predilections belonging to missionaries, is not meant to have what is generally understood to be a missionary character[.]" (Codrington 1891: vi f.). Since the language of Mota was chosen as a lingua franca for the Anglican Mission in Melanesia, Codrington became during his Bible translation well acquainted with Motese customs and culture, and he dedicates almost half of his book to the Banks Islands, particularly the secret *Tamate* societies. He also describes the kinship system in detail, in addition to providing information on social organisation, religious beliefs, economy, material culture and folklore.

Having read Codrington's accounts of the secret *Tamate* associations and the graded male *Suqe* societies, William H. R. Rivers followed the mission vessel "Southern Cross" on a one year round trip journey in the same area in the year 1911, where he collected kinship

terms on every landing for a comparative project following the methods of the at the time flourishing diffusionist school. He disembarked on Mota to spend some three months there, concentrating on the relationship between the *Tamate* societies and the *suqe*, phenomena which receive much attention in his History of the Melanesian Society (1914). Felix Speiser, the Basel-based ethnologist, travelled for two years between the different islands of the region including some months in the Banks, particularly Vanua Lava and Ureparapara islands, documenting through extensive use of photography different aspects of material culture (Speiser 1913; 1923).

Mauss uses both Codrington and Rivers when comparing the Kwakiutl potlatch-ritual with the *kolekole* festivities (1995), whereas Lévi-Strauss in Totemism (1973) concentrates on Codrington's descriptions of what Lévi-Strauss labels as being a fourth kind of totemic beliefs: the personal relationship between a particular animal and a person.

When I attended the biennial conference of the European Society of Oceanists just prior to the completion of this thesis, I found that the ethnography of the Banks Islands as presented by Codrington and Rivers still provides researchers with valuable cases for their debating.

It is then quite noteworthy that there has been conducted only one thorough study of the Banks Islands since those days, viz. Bernard Vienne's fieldwork on Mota Lava in the late 1970's.[105] As a whole, the New Hebrides with the Banks and Torres Islands experienced a period of relative lack of interest from foreign researchers between 1920 and 1960, probably following the gradual opening of the more "pristine" research opportunities of

[105] His entire work is written in French, which unfortunately prevents me from accessing his undoubtedly interesting findings on the relationship between the *tamate* head-dresses and social organisation, world-view and representation (Kaufmann 1997). I have nevertheless chosen to list his book in the bibliography, in case some of this thesis' more linguistically enlightened readers might find it to be of interest.

Inland New Guinea, and an equally surprising tendency towards non-publication among those who conducted their research in what was to become Vanuatu (Allen 1981: xiii). But even after Vanuatu standards the islands of the Torres and the Banks have received little attention as possible subjects for systematic inquiries into their customs.[106] This might be due to the isolation they endure situated at the far end of the geographical unit Vanuatu. It could also be caused by the lack of an immediately remarkable ethnographic feature, such as the famous land-diving rituals of South Pentecost, the ideology and practice of male dominance among the Big Nambas of Malekula, or the Jon Frum cargo-cults on Tanna - although Michael Allen finds the existence of no less than 77 male secret societies on Mota which Rivers reported quite extraordinary, without even having seen the dances associated with them (Allen 1967).

Mota in Vanuatu

Mota is one of seven populated islands in the Banks group, which got its name from Joseph Banks, Captain Cook's botanist. It was Captain Bligh who named and mapped the islands when he sailed by them on his way to Timor following the famous mutiny of HMS Bounty. He called Mota 'Sugarloaf Island', since its shape reminded his men of a sugarloaf.

The group stretches over approximately 120 km of see from Gaua in the south to Ureparapara in the north. Its larger islands, Gaua and Vanua Lava (lit. 'big island') both have thermo-volcanic activity, and the other islands of the group, apart from Ureparapara, have been delivered from them according to their myths of origin. Mere Lava ('big child') and Merig ('little child') hence were born from Gaua, whereas Mota Lava ('big bush')

[106] This was recognised by Ralph Regenvanu, the Director of the Vanuatu Kaljoral Senta, during a conversation with me.

and Mota (originally Motrig, 'little bush') released themselves from distinct areas on Vanua Lava.

Together with the four Torres Islands the Banks today constitute Torba Province, the northernmost of Vanuatu's six provinces. Torba has all the characteristics of a classic periphery: infrequent and unreliable communications; poor elementary schooling and therefore little chance of attending higher education and virtually no work opportunities after completed studies for those who do; irregular access to cash-crop markets totally dependent on the whims of the occasional ship-owners and businessmen; an experience of being forgotten by the national government. The provincial government has received additional grants during the last couple of years due to the regions underdeveloped condition, money which basically have been invested in promoting sports activities in the province in order to create regional pride and unity through the achievements of their athletes.

When I first arrived in Sola, the provincial capital of Vanua Lava, I was employed by the provincial government to write down the customs of Mota since the officials regarded Mota as the last stronghold for the old Banks culture. They themselves were highly educated people mostly from other islands in the Banks where fasin blong taon, 'city way of life', had been adopted by many, a development these people had profited from and for which implementation they had been a highly important factor. Nevertheless, they spoke of Mota with respect, sometimes even remorse, since they considered the life on their own islands to be changed for good.

Mota is thus a periphery within the periphery. That fact highlights the importance of the position this tiny island occupies within the history of the Anglican Mission, and their reputation as skilful dancers after having won several national dance contests. These two elements are anchors which retain the historical and customary continuity of the Motese, in a time when the lures of Western material influences attract many young ni-Vanuatu and make them loose interest in their historical background.

Mota in numbers and a nutshell

Mota is of mixed geological origin. Its base consists of raised petrified coral, upon which the now extinct volcano *Tawe*, lit. 'mountain', has built a thirty to one hundred meters high plateau surrounding its twin peaks reaching approximately 450 meter above sea level and providing a spectacular view of the surrounding islands for those who go there to dig for the delicious coconut crabs. Unfortunately, the peak is not high enough to stop the rain-clouds which are more regular guests here than anywhere else in Vanuatu, so the high annual rainfall reported from Torba, approx. 3500 mm p.a., is measured on Vanua Lava and Gaua, both having peaks exceeding 1000 meters. In the rainy season, November - March, the small brooks following the ravines from the mountain down to the sea trickles steadily, and sometimes they even run following a major rainfall or cyclone.[107] At the end of the colder dry season, however, lack of water is a regular occurrence. During my stay the rainy season failed, and from August onwards the only water available was the brackish water of the provisory wells dug by the seaside. Needless to say, the wanting rain was disastrous to most garden crops.

The hat-shaped island is only twenty square kilometres in extent, and its approximately 750 inhabitants live in ten villages all situated on the extremely fertile plateau encompassing the central peak, giving it one the highest population densities in Vanuatu.[108] It also has the highest population growth in the country with 4% p.a., while the national average is 2.8%.[109]

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[107] Devastating tropical cyclones used to strike Torba so frequently that people from other parts of Vanuatu were reluctant to marry with Torba people. Since 1987, however, there has been only one (1998, hitting Gaua), and I was told that this was due to a man on Gaua who had performed weather magic. During my fieldwork there were two cyclones which almost hit us, and I experienced the positive effect external threats have on the unity and togetherness of man.

[108] Most of the information in this sub-chapter is provided by national statistics being made available to me by Torba Province.

[109] A per annum growth of 4% implies a doubling of the population every sixteen years. It could be a sensible key for interpreting the change the Motese have been going through during the last thirty years, but in my experience they are only now beginning to reach the limits of surplus of land

In addition there are at all times about one hundred Motese living in the city of Santo on Espiritu Santo, and another twenty forming a small colony in the capital city Port Vila. They provide a security network for the newly arrived Motese who want to try their fortune as recipients of a more or less regular income in the city, since the time before, and between, the different odd-jobs might last several months (cf. Muratorio 1980). The possibility of going to these cities, particularly Santo, is used by an estimated one-third of the Motese at one time or the other. Some are more or less forced to go since the education of more than one child requires more money annually than is possible to acquire by copra-production alone. Others are fortune hunters attracted by the rare stories of success, whereas others again, mainly the unmarried youth, do it just for the taste of something different. They usually do not stay for more than a couple of years, upon which most people return with a tape recorder and a couple of extra large plastic dishes.[110]
Those who have managed to obtain a secure and steady job and therefore stay permanently will be expected to send money and clothes back to their families, and also contribute in paying the school-fees for their younger siblings.
The only possibility for transportation off the island is to follow the small ships that come to buy copra, which occurs three to six times annually. It is also possible to charter the small community boat to do the perilous fifteen kilometres open-sea journey to the airport on Vanua Lava where there are three departures weekly, but the price for the charter and the plane-ticket prevent anyone but the teachers and the occasional fieldworker to opt for this.

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and garden produce. It will therefore be an increasingly important factor in the years to come, with migration to the cities, probably **the** major social problem in Vanuatu, being the immediate choice. The Motese have for long been aware of the dangers connected to an uncontrolled growth, but the attempts to introduce birth control programs have not yet been successful.

[110] This is not meant to disparage those who choose to go. It is actually what happens in most cases, and therefore is an image of what the Motese find materially interesting and is as such potentially important data.

Mota at work

The normal work group on Mota consists of a husband and a wife, sometimes joined by their unmarried children who are past school age, hereafter referred to as 'family'. They work together on most tasks. Cooking, brushing and washing clothes is usually done by the women while house-building and fishing normally is done by men, but it rarely elicits comments if men participate in the brushing or vice versa. A family will usually have gardens and coconut plantations in various parts of the island, and if they go to work on a plantation far away they will leave after having eaten their breakfast and will not return until just before sunset. Their lunch is prepared on the plantation by roasting the food on the fire, and they also bring some mats to take their naps on. They spend approximately the same amount of time annually producing the copra as they do gardening, but the copra requires intensive work in shorter periods of time while gardening work, apart from the clearing of new gardens, is distributed more evenly around the year following the staple in season. Their main garden crops are: yams, sweet potato, bananas, wild yams (which now usually is planted), bread-fruit, papaya and *tåape*, hibiscus manihot, a hibiscus-variety used for its leafs. Quite a few plant different kinds of taro, whereas tomato, beans, pineapple and water-melon have been introduced by those who have tasted it on other islands. The yam season occurs twice a year, four months altogether, the same as for sweet potato, whereas bananas and wild yam fills in the gaps between these two main staples. The breadfruit season arrives at different intervals, sometimes as often as four times every year, and provides the Motese with a cherished change in diet. The *tåape* carries leafs the year through, provided that the rainfall is sufficient.

For particularly time-consuming tasks, such as the clearing of a large garden or the collecting, opening, carving an carrying of a huge amount of coconuts for copra production, the family might give a couple of hundred vatu, approx. two US$, to the Village Church Council, i.e. the village chief, and the whole village will join in

community work for one day. A village other than that to which a family belongs might be asked - the larger villages with more than a hundred inhabitants are of course preferred - but it will then cost three times the amount and there is a good chance that they will decline, unless the Village Church Council is in urgent need for cash. The village might also turn down a request from one of its own members, particularly if it regards copra which is not meant for school-fees or if they already have worked several times on the land of the asker. The value of their work efforts has become apparent to most of the Motese, since an investment of three hundred vatu might result in copra worth 50.000 vatu, and they are therefore reluctant to grant community work to those who seem to be well off. The possibility for converting semi-voluntary work into personal economic gain across economic spheres such as Fredrik Barth describes from Darfur is thus limited (Barth 1967), although young unmarried men (and occasionally married ones too) willingly will give a days work for a promise of being treated with kava in the evening. The most usual kind of communal work is therefore the delayed exchange of work, especially between close relatives such as brothers or sisters or mother's brothers. It is expected that kava will be served after the work is done.

The average annual income per family from their copra production is approximately 100.000 vatu, 800 US$, with two or three making as much as 200.000 whereas few obtain less than 80.000. This is supposed to cover school-fees for secondary schooling, ranging from 25.000 to 45.000 per year for each child, clothes, ceremonial funds such as brideprice etc., contributions to the Church, village feasts, and miscellaneous consumer goods such as tools, buckets and kitchen utensils. There are about ten store-keepers on the island, who pay an annual fee to the Province to be allowed to run their businesses. They sell rice, some tinned fish and meat, kerosene, dried kava, tobacco and matches, but since the ships where they buy their stocks make such unreliable calls they are often sold out. Normally they do not calculate more than five to ten vatu profit per item, apart from the bags of kava which they sell for twice the gross price. Since the cash flow on the island is

so minimal, they usually give credit to their customers with security in specified piles of coconuts. Some hardly give credit at all, since numerous stores have gone out of business during the years due to unsettled claims.

One might expect that the people of an island where no villages are situated more than a ten minutes walk from the sea would have interest in utilising such possibly vast food resources in an efficient manner. This, however, is not the case. The reef with its narrow patches of sand beach serves more as a place for leisure and recreation for the Motese than as a potential site for labour. Fishing is not considered to be proper work, although the Motese possess a wide range of catching techniques and convictions regarding the nature of different sea creatures. It is only the unmarried boys who will go fishing during a normal week, but on Sundays and major holidays they are joined by the adults who loudly exclaim their thrill when fishing from the reef or from an outrigger canoe or diving off the reef spearing fish or lobster using a Hawaiian sling, or simply gathering shells and small crabs on the reef. Seafood is not regarded as suitable to be served on important occasions, the reasons for which has been discussed in the chapter ‘Communicative consumption, but it is often had at minor village celebrations.
Although the Motese do not consider the sea to be an important larder - even during the drought of 1997 which ruined the bananas, sweet potato, papaya, *tåape* and taro crops they did not significantly increase their intake of seafood - it serves vital ritual functions as provider of a vast gallery for possible symbolic elaboration. The shark, sea snake, tuna, swordfish, manta ray and porcupine fish are all present in the dances of the salagoro as well as being important characters in *kastom* stories and other narratives. The sea is also in other ways vital to the practices and beliefs connected to the Salagoro.

Appendix 2: language

Vanuatu has more languages per capita than any other nation in the world: its 180.000 inhabitants share 113 vernacular languages among them, in addition to the national languages of French, English and the Vanuatu pidgin Bislama (Kaufmann 1997). The Motese have their own distinct language which belongs to the Central & Northern Vanuatu sub-branch of the Remote Oceanic branch of the Oceanic sub-group of the Malayo-Polynesian group of the Austronesian language family. They do not use Bislama in daily interaction, and although the education in the local school is done in English there are only a handful with more than a rudimentary acquaintance of it. I used Bislama as a contact language in order to learn the vernacular, and due to the relative simplicity of the Mota language and the untiring attitude of my many teachers I stopped using Bislama after four months in the field. Since one never stops learning a language, there were most definitely some details which were lost due to this, but at the same time I was able to record, and participate in, normal daily interaction and conversation in a way that not knowing the language would have prevented me from.

In the thesis the Mota words are *italicized* and the Bislama words are <u>underlined</u>.

I have chosen to follow the most recent norm for spelling outlined by the Bible Translation

Project as close as possible, but have deviated where I find the discrepancy between the spoken and the written language to be too significant, since this also is a historical document for the Motese. Some of the letters represent different sounds than they do in most European languages, and they shall be pronounced as follows:

- ‘g’ is a Melanesian ‘g’, a guttural sound resembling the -ch in the German word ‘noch’
- ‘q’ is a peculiar clicking sound which is an immediate combination of a ‘p’ and a ‘k’
- ‘ñ’ is the same as the -ng in ‘sing’
- ‘å’ is pronounced as the o in ‘horse’
- ‘ø’ is the same as the u in ‘burn’

- ‘r’ resembles more the rolling Scottish than the English pronunciation

Appendix 3: Maps

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