– ARTICLE –

TOPOGENIC FORMS IN NEW GEORGIA, SOLOMON ISLANDS

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ABSTRACT

James Fox coined the term 'topogeny' to refer to practices where the recitation of an ordered sequence of place names is employed as a means of categorizing and transmitting social knowledge. In the Solomon Islands such narratives are an important component of tribal identity, typically tracing ancestral origins to inland mountains and then descending in a sequence of migratory steps towards the coast where present-day groups reside. Previous accounts have sometimes argued that the recurrence of such narratives on virtually every island indicates that they are ideological impositions on the landscape, perhaps having a post-colonial origin. Archaeological dating of ancestral sites on the other hand demonstrates that such narratives can have historical content. This tension between historical 'truth' and ideological narrative is the primary concern of this paper. I argue that it can be resolved by focusing on the materiality of topogenic forms.

INTRODUCTION

When speaking of origins it is common to refer to histories of generation. The genealogy is our classic model for this, tracing personal origins through a precession of ancestors. By way of analogy it is also used to explain the non-biological generation of related entities in other circumstances. In archaeology and design history, for example, the genealogy serves as a model for narratives of stylistic development in classes of artefact – we might say the inter-subjective domain of sociality where persons give rise to persons, is analogical to an 'inter-artefactual domain' of style, where forms give rise to forms (Gell 1998: 216; Gosden 2005). But there is a conventional difference in the means by which generations are regarded as linked in each of these cases. For personal genealogies the link may be portrayed as substantive. In European thinking it is blood, or more recently genetic substance, which is carried over, linking people in concrete ancestor-descendant relationships. In the reconstruction

of stylistic genealogies, however, connection is either portrayed as being a result of the flow of immaterial ideas, or of habitual practice and material socialisation: no substance passes from one generation of artefact to the next, instead links appear through the 'growth' of forms in a shared cultural context or habitual field (Ingold 2000: 345). So, in the former case connections are held to be innate whilst in the latter they are a matter of circumstance. Put another way, in personal genealogies entities *generate* entities, while in artefactual genealogies entities are merely *related* via some process, and this relatedness is noticed only through analysis.

Genealogical histories are obviously not exclusive to European modes of analysis. They are, somewhat stereotypically, a feature of many non-Western origin narratives and it is not always the case that such narratives maintain the distinction between people and things noted above. Oceanic societies are a case in point – here, genealogies narrate origins through enchainments of persons, but often connect these to histories of artefacts, food crops, and forms of specialist knowledge. It has been noted that such narratives typically have a spatial or topographic dimension, particularly (though not exclusively) amongst Austronesian speaking populations (Fox 1997a). Place names may be recited as an integral part of the genealogy, and both people and things are seen to have journeyed about the landscape in generational steps. Fox has coined the term 'topogeny' (1997a: 8) to describe this connection of landscape and history in a genealogical way, arguing that such narratives are a means of ordering and transmitting social knowledge and externalising memory spatially. In this paper I focus on various topogenic forms that occur in the New Georgia region of the Solomon Islands (Fig. 1). Particularly, I am interested in how spatialised lineages of persons, things, and knowledge are thought to relate to each other, how such lineages form, and how they connect to notions of personhood and sociality. These concerns have also emerged in recent debates about kinship in Melanesia and so I give some background to these first.

TOPOGENY AND KINSHIP: GROWTH AND SUBSTANCE

Fox regards topogenies and genealogies as distinct forms – although they can connect up in linear narratives, or be transformed one into the other, they are fundamentally analogous ways of establishing precedence by referring to either a spatial or a personal origin point (Fox 1997b). But maintaining this distinction immediately brings up the question of how the analogy is thought to work by the societies in question: do places give rise to places in the same way that persons give rise to persons? Fox is not explicit on this issue but does emphasise the role of personal journeys and memory-work in the creation of
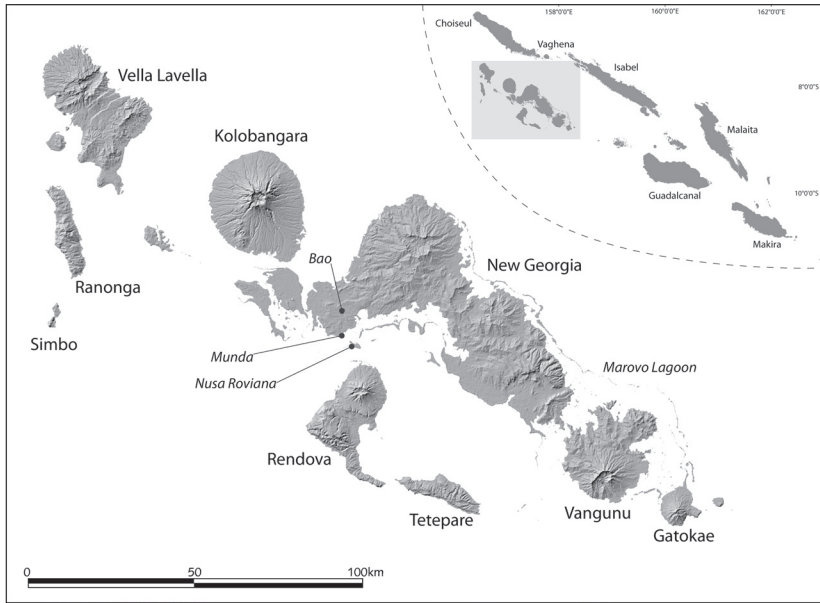
Figure 1. Map of the New Georgia archipelago, Solomon Islands.

topogenies. In all the examples Fox gives, it is the activities of persons (or other ancestral or spiritual agents) in their historical movements and contemporary recollections, that connect places in series. In a broad sense topogenies reveal that persons, things and forms of knowledge are regarded as fundamentally emplaced, such that personhood and its products cannot be explicated without reference to place (1997b: 89). From this perspective then, topogenies are the spatial correlate of genealogies. Perhaps the analogy works in much the same way as noted above for European personal and artefactual genealogies – whilst persons generate persons through the transmission of biogenetic substance, places are created and related to each other by the habitual activity, work, and movement of persons in a landscape.

So it would seem on the face of things. But recent debates in Oceanic ethnography and the anthropology of kinship suggest an alternate perspective on how the analogy of genealogy and topogeny might operate, and indeed, lead us to question whether it is an analogy at all. The reinvigoration of anthropological interest in kinship, after Schneider's (1984) critique of European biases about its necessary conditions, has famously turned upon the very contrast between biogenetic generation and relatedness noted above (Carsten 2000). Increas-

ingly, the universality of beliefs about the role of physical reproduction in forging human kinship bonds has been challenged by ethnographies that claim to document contexts where kinship is gradually acquired, sometimes via non-sexual means. Marilyn Strathern's (1988) depiction of Melanesian exchange as a means of eliciting gender and relatedness has been highly influential here. In some Melanesian cultures particular substances such as food, blood, milk, and semen, are regarded as permutations of one another in different male and female forms. Being detachable from persons they circulate in exchanges and can create lineage connections via their movement as well as their role in the growth of children. Gender and genealogy in these contexts appear as products of social process rather than biogenetic innateness, but they are still regarded as being made through the passing on of substance. In contrast to Western notions though, connecting substances and their effects are regarded as fundamentally mutable and malleable rather than immutable and innate (cf. Carsten 2003: 109–135). Thus, any lineage, identity, or gender produced by these flows is also regarded as potentially impermanent, appearing as a momentary reification out of a multiplicity of possible relations.

In other Melanesian contexts shared bodily substance may be thought to play little role in making relatedness and be seen rather as a *product* of related-ness. Leach (2003), for example, argues that among the Nekgini speakers of Papua New Guinea, shared participation during landscape production (work, growing and eating food, ceremonial activity in a common place) produces connection. The sharing of substance comes from the sharing of land (Leach 2003: 215) and so land can be said to be creative of kinship – it has generative power. Bamford (2004) has argued for something similar with regard to the establishment of patrilineages among the Kamea people of Highland Papua New Guinea. Using land and moving through the landscape are the means by which ties between men are elicited through time (Bamford 2004: 294).

Here then we see the possibility of an inversion in the role of topogenies with respect to genealogies – rather than being merely the spatial correlate of ge-nealogy (places are made to relate via the work of persons biogenetically de-scended from each other), topogeny is constituent of genealogy (personal relations form through engaging in and with the same landscape as one's con-temporaries and predecessors). From this perspective topogenies and genealo-gies are not related analogically, but rather are different views of the same proc-ess. Moreover, since landscapes are potentially unbounded and may take in any number of persons dwelling within them, any lineage of persons or places might be seen as a partial sectioning of a wider range of possible relations. As with Strathern's analysis of gendered exchanges that eclipse multiple relations

to produce momentarily stable identities, kinship is depicted as cognatic by default in these accounts – a network of relations that is cut (Strathern 1996) only when certain topographic lines are drawn (Leach 2003: 212–3).

The applicability of this perspective to all occurrences of topogeny amongst social groups in Melanesia or wider Oceania is a matter for demonstration, not least because it rests on particular formulations of exchange, substance, and relatedness that are defined in opposition to Western European forms for the purpose of analytical leverage (Strathern 1988: 6). Put in context, this strategy is part of a broader intellectual movement involving the critique of Western models of subjectivity persistent since the Cartesian enlightenment, and of which new perspectives in the study of kinship are but one token. The approach to landscape, for example, is linked to broadly phenomenological critiques of the Western scientific tendency to see environment as a backdrop to, or container of, social life, rather than as an ongoing product of worldly engagement (cf. Leach 2003: Ch.7). In this sense, ethnographic examples from Melanesia serve as analytical models describing regional variants of what is thought to be a rather more universal human process. Whether this involves the privileging of a recent philosophical perspectives of our own over indigenous perspectives (as suggested by Scott (2007: 351)), is a matter for debate. Certainly both Leach and Bamford grapple with the fact that in their respective ethnographic contexts, the local idiom has it that kin are those who share 'one blood', posing some difficulties for their claims that notions of biogenetic substance are of less importance than land. The solution for each is to argue that being 'one blood' is the result rather than the cause of relatedness, and so their accounts can accommodate the ethnographic data without contradiction.

More interesting, from my perspective, is that the congruency of the two sets of contrasts – between supposedly Western and Melanesian forms of sociality and Cartesian and post-Cartesian models of subjectivity – allows a residual valorisation of perspectives to emerge. Internal critiques of Western notions of subjectivity have always provided a challenge to apparently dominant or hegemonic conceptions and, as such, are an ongoing part of liberal academic debate (cf. Marcus 1991). When these critiques inform ethnographic analyses of other social contexts, local conceptions that may appear similar to dominant Western forms have a tendency to be described as more or less ideological representations, as forms of local essentialism rather than lived experience. Hence, in the models of Melanesian sociality described above, fixed identities and lineages are regarded as being the result of politically motivated, temporary eclipses or encompassments of a general multiplicity of relations. They are reifications occurring against a more neutral background or social field.

Occasionally this essentialism may be depicted as being influenced by cultural contact with the West. This effect is particularly evident in accounts of land and kinship in the New Georgia region of the Solomon Islands.

LAND AND LINEAGE IN NEW GEORGIA

An early example appears in the work of Miller (1980), who, while conducting one of the first large scale archaeological surveys of the Solomon Islands, noted a recurring pattern in the topogenic narration of settlement sequences and histories of particular landscapes. On many islands throughout the archipelago oral histories typically begin by naming a distinct origin site on the highest point of a territory, marked by abandoned architectural features in the form of shrines, house platforms, and the like. Sites then descend gradually downhill as a generational sequence of occupation, the final, most recently occupied site being located closest to the coast. Each sequence of sites is connected to a single-line genealogy, the beginnings of which blend with mythical events describing the origins of mountains, rivers, death, warfare and so on, and the end of which connects to the narrator.

Miller argues that it is 'unlikely that these sequences represent true genealogical knowledge, but more probably represent a few generations' ancestry tacked onto a string of legendary figures, related to and thus justifying settlement of an area' (1980: 454). The parallel gradient of height and time was thought to be invoked due to an association of height with sacredness, and reinforced by recent settlement trends. In the decades following the establishment of the British Protectorate in the 1890s many groups abandoned inland settlements to reside in large conglomerate coastal villages established by missionaries. On the basis of limited archaeological evidence from Malaita, Isabel, and Makira, Miller argues that pre-colonial life involved small dispersed hamlet clusters, with a highly mobile population successively abandoning and reoccupying numerous available sites within a given territory. This always-existing patchwork of sites served as a resource for resettlement and use, but could also be incorporated within 'a linearly conceived series' if a new settlement was close to the shore (Miller 1980: 458). The pattern of lineal topogeny then, is a formal model with ideological motivations rather than an accurate depiction of a history more fluid and variable.

In the New Georgia group these spatially descending linear topogenies are all pervasive and their veracity and interpretation is a matter of much local debate, having important political and economic ramifications. Recent ethnographies focus on the internal manipulation of such narratives in response to ever in-

creasing pressures from externally owned logging and fishing operations. Schneider (1998), for example, documents legal conflicts and community schisms amongst the Kazukuru people residing in the western part of Roviana Lagoon in southern New Georgia, deriving from debates about rights to the forest of the unoccupied interior of the island and its potential as a source of logging revenue. In order to understand these debates a little background is necessary.

High in the mainland forests behind Roviana lagoon, on steep ridges above river cut valleys, large arrangements of stone mark sacred sites of origin for the present-day inhabitants of the coast. These are places where the earliest remembered ancestors lived or emerged into the world, and from whom currently recognised tribal groupings, or *butubutu*, descend. Each place is inextricably tied to the meaning of *butubutu*, defining the root or starting point of a group's extent in terms of land and lineage. The term *butubutu* encompasses both spatial and social territory; membership is recognized by tracing descent from apical ancestors according to cognatic principles of bilateral filiation informed by co-residence and shared work within distinct estates or *pepeso*. The latter stretch from the origin points in the mountains down to currently occupied coastlines and their neighbouring waters, and are co-extensive with histories of human occupation (Aswani 1997; Hviding 1996). As such, the unity of *butubutu* and *pepeso* is an embodiment of past human action, having accreted cumulatively from patterns of ancestral practice and movement during the habitation and cultivation of successive locales through time. Landscape is history in this context, simultaneously generating and being generated by the same social moments that make persons (cf. Thomas *et al.* 2001; Hviding 1996:131–66).

The Kazukuru people claim descent from apical ancestors (particularly a male named Kazukuru) who resided at a place called Bao in the interior of the New Georgia mainland. According to tradition, intermarriage occurred with descendants of a woman named Roviana, before a gradual migration towards the coast (the journey marked by shrines and village remains). This led to the occupation of the barrier reef island of Nusa Roviana and the establishment of Kazukuru villages in the Kindu area of the coastal mainland. In this way a new Kazukuru/Roviana polity was formed. Members of the polity are also related to Kalikoqu and Saikile people, who reside in the eastern parts of the lagoon. The exact nature of these relationships is debated; Kazukuru/Roviana people on Nusa Roviana claim the Saikile people are a sub-branch of the main Kazukuru/Roviana lineage, whilst Saikile themselves argue they descend from another inland tribe, Tagosage, who they say moved to Nusa Roviana before, or at the same time as, Kazukuru/Roviana. Also resident on the barrier reef

islands are the Vuragare people who claim independence and precedence of occupation, but who are argued to be merely coastal Kazukuru/Roviana people by those on the mainland.

Debates also occur within tribal groupings. Schneider (1998) focuses on the creation of three Kazukuru factions in the Dunde area of Munda, each stressing a different interpretation of the customary role of chiefs (*bangara*) and ritual experts (*hiama*) in managing access to land. Crucially these interpretations are influenced by differing lineages descending from three siblings (Turana (m), Vivisi (m), and Vakorige (f)) through whom factions claim Kazukuru identity and land. Some are able to show an unbroken chain of female links to Vakorige, whilst others descend from Turana via a line of men (many of whom were ritual attendants at land fertility shrines). A notorious decision on an appeal to the Western Pacific High Court in 1971 divided Kazukuru territory in two on the basis of arguments made by these factions and a colonial desire to formulate concrete principles for adjudicating such cases. In particular the successful appellant had embarked on a sophisticated campaign of influence, managing to get his perspective on Kazukuru history published in anthropological literature (Waterhouse 1931; Hall 1964) and hosting the second Lands Commissioner during his visit to the region (Allan 1989: 42). The published articles stressed the role of matrilineal connections to Vakorige, who, in Hall (1964), was reported to be an autochthonous ancestor of all Kazukuru people rather than a particular sibling descended from other apical ancestors. This perspective gelled with that of the Lands Commissioner Allan, who, drawing on early-mid 20th century kinship theory, regarded cognatic descent principles as an obstacle to development, ultimately arguing that primary rights in the Western Solomons should be restricted to those able to demonstrate matrilineal connections. This latter choice was not arbitrary, being based on a line of reasoning ultimately derived from Rivers (1914: 102) that matriliny was the 'original form' in Melanesia. Official efforts to codify local kinship notwithstanding, the 1971 case spurred a long sequence of land court cases as excluded groups mounted challenges and counter-challenges in the ensuing decades.

These conflicts epitomise a process by which particular interpretations of genealogy and custom are mobilised to refashion potentially closely related people into groups with separate social origins in the context of post-colonial economies. For Schneider this entails 'the negation of former common social identities predicated on traditional cultural concepts and results in a reinvention of social identities that reflect economic concerns of people' (1998: 193). Schneider clearly regards this process as inauthentic, involving 'conscious fabrication' (1998: 197) and the use of externally derived concepts and bureaucracies. It is

ultimately a struggle to establish an 'internal hegemony' in response to an ever encroaching capitalist hegemony (Schneider 1998: 208). In large part Schneider is probably correct, but as with Miller, the primary image we are presented with is one of disjuncture; a default relational sociality appears as the authentic traditional condition, whilst attempts to forge unilineal identities appear ideological, hegemonic, or inauthentic. What is missing is a recognition that debates proceed by mobilising quite local forms that clearly have long term salience – it is not the basic structure or existence of topogenies and lineages that is debated but their internal content.

A more subtle picture is presented in a series of publications by Edvard Hviding (1993, 1996, 2003) which goes some way towards smoothing over the disjuncture. Hviding analyses the way in which groups of people living in the Marovo Lagoon region of eastern New Georgia, like their Roviana counterparts, truncate the potentially unbounded or limitless character of cognatic relatedness inherent to *butubutu* groupings, by following simplified unilineal principles in certain contexts. Particularly when dealing with outsiders and development forces, Marovo people tend to engage in a kind of 'indigenous essentialism', partially in response to a perception that outsiders in general are unable to comprehend the complexity of local ways of reckoning relatedness. At times these unilineal models are put into practice to exclude kin who might otherwise have some claim to resources, whilst in others they are played off against each other in order to strategically frustrate forms of unwanted development. As with Roviana, internal dispute is a common outcome. Crucial to Hviding's analysis, however, is the means by which people engage in this form of essentialism – they do so by engaging in enduring cultural practices that revolve around local figurative conceptions of 'sides' and 'paths'.

For Marovo people a 'side' (*kale*) refers to one half of a dualism that is complementary or symmetrical, and is a term used in all manner of contexts. With regard to the making of *butubutu* every person is said to derive from both mother and father, but practically people will 'take sides' when reckoning filiation according to what is regarded as the stronger side in relation to the affairs of the *butubutu*. Inland and coastal groups have a tendency to follow different sides. Groups living on lagoon shorelines stress cumulative patrifilial ties to place, as embodied by chiefly lineages embedded in the landscape as topogenies of ancestral shrines – a 'men-leadership-territory' complex historically centred on the predominantly male activities of inter-island exchange, fishing, long-distance raiding and associated rituals. Inland groups, on the other hand, stress cumulative matrifiliation and blood ties – a 'women-blood-territory' complex centred on female cultivation of people (birth) and garden land

(Hviding 1996: 147–9). Through 'taking sides' in a given landscape, historical patterns of symmetrical relationality emerge and are underpinned by dualist interdependencies of land-sea, taro-fish, and female-male oppositions apparent in everyday practice. Balanced dualism is held by Hviding to remain a core concern when dealing with outsiders, resulting in the reification of particular relations by way of opposition – in these contexts the 'side' becomes a boundary making mechanism (Hviding 2003: 96–7).

The prototypical 'path' (*huana*) in Marovo is a repeatedly used trail in the forest that is experienced as a series of named places and topographical features offering a structure for meaningful practice. Accordingly, *huana* also refers to sequential patterns of action or the habitual ways of persons and groups – elements of shared experience that are distinctive to the 'side' of a group. In the definition of different social realms and ecological zones, *huana* is used to describe similarity or shared substance – people/things are 'on the same path'. Thus, while 'sides' express group sociality, 'paths' refer to the contexts and practices associated with identifiable groups and their places. 'Paths make sides...in the sense that shared knowledge and experience of paths constitutes the basis for intraside solidarity and interside relationality, as well as for consistent management of the outside world' (Hviding 2003: 100). There is clearly a difference in the degree of simplification that pertains when emphasising particular sides during engagement with outsiders versus drawing on similar strategies internally, but crucially the routes to 'essentialism' are formally the same and part of enduring cultural practice.

Consequently the account presented by Hviding is a more seamless depiction of the emergence of unilineality in a potentially limitless social context. Scott (1997: 339) points out however that whilst Hviding's account draws attention to the importance of cultural continuity in historical change, it nevertheless casts doubt on the long-standing character and centrality of the content of particular claims to resources on the basis of unilineal identities. Lineages are still regarded analytically as fictive. In contrast, Scott presents an ethnographic account of matrilineal connections to place amongst the Arosi people of Makira in the eastern Solomon Islands, in which human matrilineages emerge through processes of inter-relationship and territorial emplacement, but are regarded as being fundamentally unique, each bearing an essence deriving from a particular pre-human category of ancestor. Rather than being 'cut' from a network of relational sociality, Arosi matrilineages recover primordial differences conferred by descent from autonomous pre-human categories of being. In other words, Arosi take unilineal essences as given and regard relational sociality as something that must be produced; an inversion, that is, of the model

of Melanesian sociality presented in the above accounts (Scott 2007: 350).

Scott's conclusions depend largely on the particularities of the Arosi context, in which matrilineages are strongly totemic and trace descent to beings that existed in an asocial, aspatial, utopic primordiality – animate rocks, female snakes, quasi-human creatures; one lineage was called forth from the song of a bird (2007: 347). There are some parallels with the Arosi case in the matrilineal communities of southern Rendova, Vella Lavella and Ranongga, where particular lineages also descend from mythical beings (snakes and other forest creatures, pandanus shoots, bamboo plants etc.) and according to tradition initially existed in asocial isolation (see McDougall 2004: 204–17 for Ranongga). But a similar argument would be more difficult to make stick in the Roviana and Marovo regions of New Georgia since butubutu there are only weakly totemic, and most apical ancestors are clearly human. Moreover, in many origin narratives apical ancestors are already emplaced and already connected socially to other beings. Nevertheless Scott's refusal to privilege a Western philosophical model over Arosi understandings, brings forth the possibility of examining whether the lineages of New Georgia as an enduring form, may be regarded as a fundamental or secondary component of sociality.

In the remainder of this paper I turn back to the topogenies of New Georgia, drawing on my own (and others') archaeological and ethnohistoric research on the materiality of place making and negotiation of sociality in Roviana and wider New Georgia in the pre-colonial era. I argue that the tensions noted above surrounding the veracity of local unilineal social narratives, can be interrogated productively by paying attention to the enduring social role or purpose of such formations historically, the means by which intergenerational links are forged, and their temporal dimension. Particularly, however, the above debates about kinship neglect the materiality of lineal social formations and this facilitates to some extent the ease with which they are regarded as fictive or secondary phenomena.

THE MATERIALITY OF LINEAGES IN NEW GEORGIA

As noted above, the core foundation of a *butubutu* is its territorial estate (*pepeso*). This embodies the work of ancestors evidenced by cleared areas of forest, nut tree groves, gardens, villages and ritual sites – some of which are abandoned (though remembered) and others continuously reused. These places of ancestral activity are the nodes of topogeny, recording *butubutu* attachment to a specific landscape. Most important amongst them are ancestral shrines, particularly skull shrines housing the crania of dead chiefs (*bangara*), although

all shrines–irrespective of whether they contain bones–are regarded as sacred (*hope*). Shrine locations are the canonical topogenic places. The reasons for this are no doubt partially due to the fact that amongst the fast regenerating rainforest, stone constructions are the most enduring material evidence of human activity. More importantly, however, shrines emplace the ancestral bones and spirits of the dead (*tomate*), and this effectively gives the landscape its generative capacity.

Although not formally visited or tended today, in the pre-Christian past shrines were the focal point of offerings and communication with *tomate*, and the persistence of social agency was dependent on careful maintenance of these relationships. Enshrinement of the skull was part of a complex funerary practice that served to ensure the safe transition of the soul of the dead to the afterlife, while assembling the potent remains–an embodied spirit–embedded in the landscape (Walter *et al.* 2004). At shrines *tomate* could be induced to accompany the living in important endeavours, making these *mana* or efficacious, ensuring strength and success. It is useful to note that headhunting was pervasive in the region until about 1900, having the effect of rendering enemies incapable of securing enduring relationships with their own ancestral spirits through absconding with the all-important skulls.

Because of the ongoing central role of ancestral spirits in worldly endeavours, it can be argued that a *butubutu* was primarily constituted as a ritual community at this time. One outcome is that relationships between *butubutu* were (and sometimes still are) conceived in terms of relationships between shrines (cf. Keesing 1970: 757).

Take for example, the topogeny of shrines associated with the relationships among the Roviana Lagoon *butubutu* described above (Fig. 2). The origin place of the Kazukuru/Roviana polity is Bao, a high ridgeline far from the coast. Archaeological surveys here have documented (Sheppard *et al.* 2000) a linear series of large shrine platforms descending the ridge, mostly constructed from earth and rubble fill, and faced with basalt slabs that sometimes exceed a metre in height. Some are stepped and the largest sit on long paved areas associated with an altar-like 'table stone' oriented down-slope, consisting of a rock slab suspended on top of smaller rounded boulders. In local tradition these sites feature as the ancestral home of the Kazukuru people, and in some accounts their apical ancestors are said to have transformed into the massive upright stones (e.g. Aswani 2000). From this place further sites descend towards Kindu near Munda (unsurveyed) and Nusa Roviana, effectively documenting the coastward radiation of the Kaukuru/Roviana polity. This process
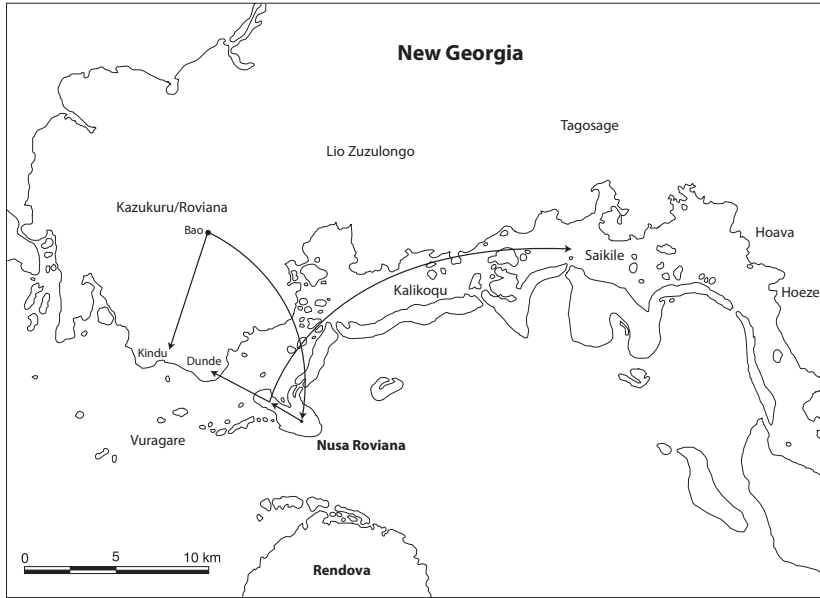
Figure 2. Southern New Georgia and Roviana Lagoon. Arrows show basic topogenic movements of Kazukuru-Roviana tribal branches as described in text.

is crystallised in the person of Ididubangara, a chief who is said to have abandoned the last shrines of Bao to take up residence on Nusa Roviana some 14 generations ago (Aswani 2000: 46–7). Oral histories of the island associate a shrine there with the arrival of Ididubangara. The site is a series of coral slab platforms incorporating basalt columns and a 'table stone' all imported from mainland New Georgia, and placed in a similar arrangement to the shrines at Bao. The topogeny continues on Nusa Roviana with a second series of sacred origin places proceeding down the only ridge on that island. These sites are associated with the immediate descendants of Ididubangara, embedding Kazukuru/Roviana in a new locale. The dislocation is mirrored in oral history with a series of events that created a new beginning, a new focal point of origin. Nine of Ididubangara's descendants are said to have died while living near the summit of Nusa Roviana, before magically transforming into a class of spirits called *mateana*. The bodies of the nine dead sank into the earth at the summit of Nusa Roviana leaving their *mateana* spirits to haunt the skies. The places where they sank were marked by shrines incorporating volcanic stone imported from the mainland, mirroring the transformation of Kazukuru ancestors into stones at Bao (Thomas *et al.* 2001). From the *mateana* shrines

further sites proceed down the ridge to a point marked by a shrine known as Olobuki (Fig. 3). This is said to have been the place of a chief, Taebangara, a descendant of one of the *mateana*. Soon after his rule the Roviana/Kazukuru polity split into the Kalikoqu, Kokorapa (Nusa Roviana) and Dunde *butubutu* branches, and Odikana–his classificatory sibling–is said to have left Nusa Roviana and formed the Saikile *butubutu*. Subsequent generations ceased use of Olobuki, shifting the interment of chiefly skulls to shrines within each new tribal area. Kokorapa, for example, began to use a shrine on the coastal flat of Nusa Roviana (Hio), and then later an offshore islet where chiefs are buried today (Piraka). Conceptually these are branch shrines stemming from the central trunk (*ngati*) embodied by the central Nusa Roviana ridge, and its base or origin at Bao.

Effectively then, shrine topogenies today materialise the relationships and branching of *butubutu* lineages. Differences between persons are experienced as differences between places (cf. Leach 2003:194). Fascinatingly the broader elements of the contemporary oral history of these places closely follows a series of stylistic shifts in the construction and content of shrines and the
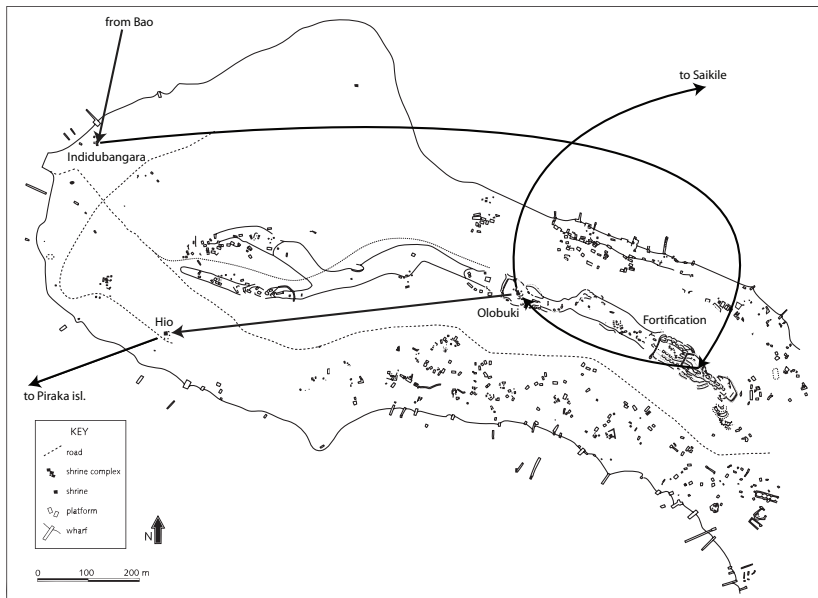

Figure 3. Archaeological landscape of Nusa Roviana. Arrows depict topogeny of shrines described in the text.

radiocarbon dating of these changes, as documented by archaeology. During the late 1990s archaeological surveys led by Walter and Sheppard (2000; 2006) revealed that the shrines at Bao began to be constructed around 1250 AD, whilst the earliest coastal shrines (such as the shrine on Nusa Roviana associated with Ididubangara) date to about 1500AD and the shrines of the Nusa Roviana ridgeline begin to appear from 1600AD. Allowing three generations per century, these dates correlate remarkably well with genealogical accounts (Sheppard *et al.* 2004: 127). Each period is associated with changes in shrine construction – the shrines at Bao are large, earth filled and faced with basalt slabs; the early coastal shrines are similar but faced with coral slabs; the later shrines of Nusa Roviana are coral rubble constructions. Furthermore, the shrines at Bao are isolated and lack artefactual content, whilst the later Nusa Roviana shrines are surrounded by defensive walling, are closely associated with house platforms, and contain shell valuables and the paraphernalia of war. By the time of European contact Nusa Roviana was recognised as the central place in the lagoon, and the most densely settled part of the landscape. In this later period, cobble shrines and associated features spread throughout the region documenting the development of the Kazukuru/Roviana chiefdom (Sheppard *et al.* 2004).

Contra Miller (1980) the recent settlement pattern history of this region is apparently much like that remembered in topogenies today – beginning with linear isolated settlements high in the island interior before gradually fanning out in branches towards the coast. This pattern occurs twice in the oral account – first with the migration of Kazukuru people from Bao to the coast, and then again from Nusa Roviana to neighbouring areas of the lagoon. Now, clearly people did not emerge autochthonously at 1250AD in the centre of New Georgia or any other island. In fact prior to this time there was a period of initial coastal settlement at least 3000 years ago (Felgate 2003) and a gradual movement inland which probably culminated in the beginnings of shrine construction. But with respect to the past 700 years topogenies evidently have some historical content, notwithstanding the various heterotopic perspectives surrounding the finer details referred to in the previous section. This knowledge enables us to consider a perspective shift: rather than primarily regarding the landscape of shrines as a resource to be manipulated in contemporary discourse, we can focus on the processes and principles by which topogenic landscapes formed and what salience these processes had.

A simple answer might look to the topographic character of the New Georgian landscape – areas available for settlement are naturally linear, caused by the dissecting coastward flow of rivers, forming narrow ridgelines. But within this

context it is the specific character of ongoing ritual practice which constitutes the formation of topogenies. From a contemporary perspective, shrines can stand in for the relationships between *butubutu* because they contain the emplaced bones of ancestors in genealogical series – shrines are seen to bud out from previous shrines just as persons give birth to persons. But shrines were not constructed in order to facilitate this perspective, which only emerges retrospectively. In practice the construction and use of shrines was an act of encompassment of the past in order to serve the interests of the present.

Prior to the advent of Christianity the constitution of the *butubutu* as a ritual community focussed on the skull shrines of *bangara* (as well as *tamasa* (god) shrines dedicated to land clearance and fertility, the weather and ocean). It is these shrines which feature most prominently in the contemporary Roviana topogeny, remembered because they relate to the men-leadership-territory focus of coastal people identified by Hviding (1996). In the past the cumulative filiation of successive *bangara* formed a chiefly line (*tuti bangara*) to which generations of *butubutu* members forged attachments (*sinoto*). On Nusa Roviana the *bangara* shrines of the central ridgeline were used exclusively during ceremonies associated with the preparation and success of headhunting raids (Thomas *et al.* 2001). Success at taking heads was one of the ingredients of *mana*, a state of being that promised perpetual efficacy for leader and *butubutu*, and part of a project of constructing local utopias where 'living well' (Dureau 2000: 86) meant ancestral spirits joined their descendants in all endeavours: gardens would be bountiful, fish would be caught, enemies would be vanquished, and the *butubutu* would prosper. Chiefly shrines were the focus of ceremonies because it was *bangara* who organised and sponsored raids. Hocart (1931) on the nearby island of Simbo in 1908, recorded these ceremonies at chiefly shrines known as *inatungu* (in Roviana *atungu* is the respectful name for the 'sitting *bangara*' or high chief; in Marovo *inatungu* are the founding spirits of a *butubutu*). Prior to a raid, warriors would gather at the shrine and make offerings of shell valuables and burnt food to the chiefly spirits in a ceremony known as 'clubs appear', chanting: 'This is the club, thou the inatu̲nu. Grant me an enemy to slay, and let me club ... be efficacious you spirits. Grant a victim' (Hocart 1931: 308). These ceremonies effectively called forth the efficacy of dead *bangara* who had achieved success in their lifetimes, enlisting this in contemporary practice in an act of encompassment. The clubs (actually steel trade axes in Hocart's time) embodied the presence of these potent spirits on a raid. In the event of success, the entire community would gather and make parcelled offerings of shell rings, puddings, and pigs, lacing these along the handle of the weapon. These were then gathered up by the wife of the current *bangara* using another ring, the '*singe inatungu*' or sacred ring of the shrine,

and then given to the successful warrior as compensation for securing a victim. However, the warrior owed the rings to the attendant of the *inatungu* shrine who had conducted the initial 'clubs appear' ceremony, and they were ultimately given back to the spirits of that shrine in recognition of the true source of success–its ancestral spirit (Hocart 1931: 316; Thomas 2004: 272–4).

What these ceremonies make evident, is how agency was seen to be guided into efficacy through the maintenance of relationships with the ancestral dead at shrines. A warrior was compensated for his actions, but this was ultimately owed to the influence of the spirits induced to provide success – because his actions encompassed their agency. Now, these spirits were considered potent in this way because as *bangara* they had organised and conducted successful raids during their lifetime, and this too was derived from their own relationships with earlier ancestors at shrines. In effect, potency was continuously deferred through an ever receding and successively encompassed chain of spirits. This pattern is the fundamental source of the linkages between shrines, the reason why they emerge as a topogenic lineage. Each *bangara* shrine owed its potency to a previous shrine, and the living effectively affiliated themselves to this lineage during the ritual practices integral to the well-being of the community. The process might be said to be one of a continual grafting of shrines and persons onto the past rather than descent *per se*.

Shrines are not the only things that occur in topogenic series, although they may have been the most important in terms of the maintenance of *butubutu* groupings around lineages of *bangara*. Topogenies formed in every sphere where worldly activity relied on ritual practice, and these reveal the process to be fundamental to efficacious personhood. That is, they form at two scales: *butubutu* and person. One example comes in the form of charms referred to in Roviana as *liqomo*, consisting of a small plaited bag decorated with shell rings, which would be tied to a fighting shield and carried into battle. The bag contained the tooth of an ancestor (Fig 4). Hocart (1931) records such a charm on Simbo, with his informant giving its name as *hinindi* or *siokale* and describing it as having the power to protect the user against spears. 'The tooth was that of Penu, his [classificatory] 'father'. 'He make him father all same devil (*i.e. tomate*) belong him, make him all same *hinindi*'' (1931: 306). During battle, when an enemy prepared to throw a spear, the user of the charm would recite a prayer (*varavara*) invoking a list of names and places, calling on the spirit of the charm to be *mana*, to make spears and arrows pass by. Similar charms in Roviana were used to divine the location of enemies/victims during raids – the spirit would 'whisper' the location to the warrior when consulted via the charm.
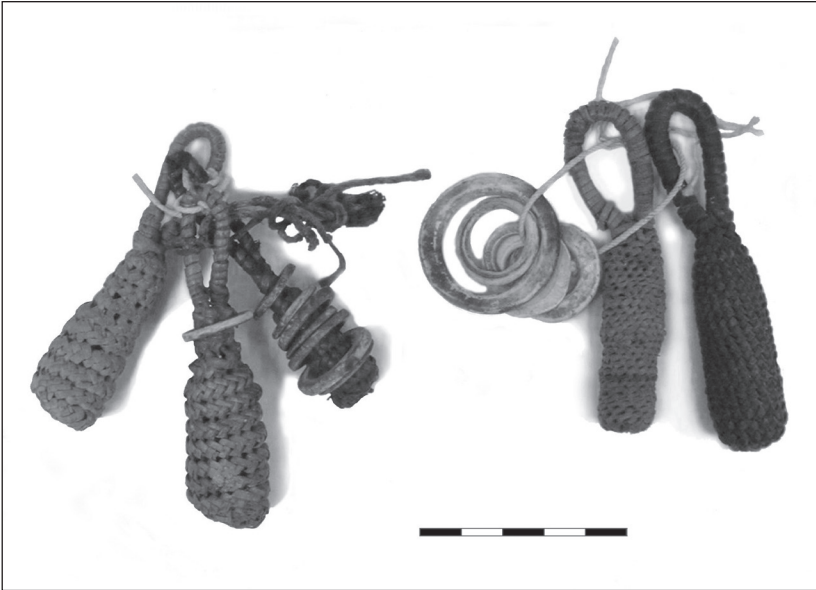
Figure 4. Liqomo charms, Auckland Museum MEL236, MEL237 (*author's photograph*)

Liqomo can be understood as an extension of personal agency conceptualised as the ability to elicit a *mana* response from ancestors rendered present by the tooth contained in the bag. If efficacy was understood to arise out of a state of complementary action on the part of humans and spirits, then *liqomo* charms enabled the revelation of a warrior's person in those terms. But this was not a simple matter of a warrior being seen to be dependent on a spirit, rather he encompassed the agency of his father – in holding his father's tooth within a bag and then being seen to act successfully, the warrior claimed the agency of the dead as his own. Thus, a person was revealed as efficacious only insofar as their visible actions eclipsed the invisible and complementary actions of an encompassed spirit. By these means *liqomo* charms invoked a genealogical enchainment of agency.

But this was itself reliant on other enchainments: 'Panda paid twelve rings (*poata*) for the charm' (Hocart 1931:307). Having constructed the material charm himself, his ability to do so, the magical efficacy needed to entrap his father's agency, was 'purchased' from some (unnamed) other person. We also learn that in Roviana the charm 'was said to come from Laina in Choiseul, through Matovagi in Ysabel' (1931:307). In other words, efficacy at warding

off spears in battle was itself reliant upon another form of efficacy deriving from another enchainment of persons, and was thus embedded within a wider temporal and spatial field of sociality (Fig. 5).

Similar patterns emerge with numerous other charms, associated with warfare, voyaging, bonito fishing, pig hunting and so on. In each case the spirits of the charm and often the places it had been used were remembered and invoked. One example is a Roviana charm called *ragomo* (Hocart n.d[a]:20) consisting of an assemblage of shell rings lashed together into a 'pile' inside of which certain unknown objects were concealed. Used to cure wounds and bites, the *ragomo* was said to have originated from a *tamasa* of Santa Isabel called Sovubangara, but Hocart records a narrative listing 69 places in Isabel, Vaghena, Manning Straits and Kolobangara that the charm was carried to before it passed to 'Hika' of Roviana as his 'heirloom' (n.d[a]:21). Hika then 'taught' it to the current owner, Riabule, who appears to have taught it to at least two other living persons (where 'teaching' involved a gift of shell valuables from the recipient to the teacher, who then offered them to the spirits of the charm). The remembrance of such extensive histories was essential to the performance of charms insofar as this involved the recognition of the source
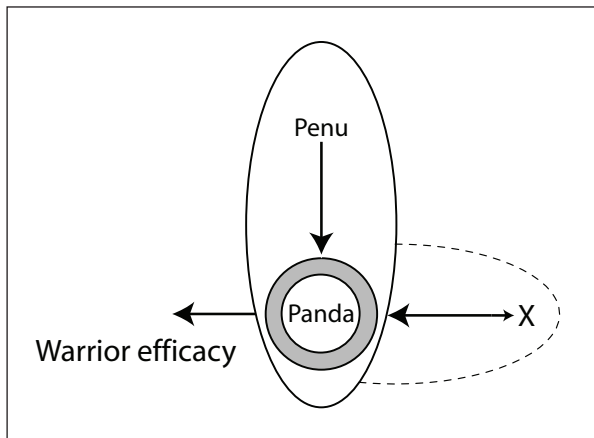

Figure 5. Diagram of agency – *hinindi liqomo*. The warrior efficacy of the agent Panda, is enabled by his ability (deriving from an exchange with X) to encompass the agency of his father, Penu. When acting as a warrior, Panda claims the agency of both Penu and X as his own. Arrows denote lines of agency, the ring denotes the primary agent who is seen to act, and the solid line denotes encompassment. The dotted line indicates secondary encompassment.

of efficacy conveyed: the persons who had held and used the charm in the past, embodied or contained by the valuables bound together. Here is another chant for a charm called *vovoso* associated with war canoes:

> Great *vovoso* ō! Come down, let us go out to sea…let us lie in wait to eat; come down to embark on the canoes, thou *vovoso*, Ninge ō! ... Let us set out together to look for food, thou *kolokovara* ō!, [thou Irugugugusu, thou Tutuvina ovo, thou Koko retese, thou Gopa *mbanara*,] thou five *vovoso*. Be efficacious in the meeting at sea; be efficacious at the going down; be efficacious at the burning fort, the burning house, the hall. Be true, thou, be thou efficacious; guess thou, eye of thee, the moon, eye of thee, the sun; [prophesise well o! guess and prophesise successfully. O!] (Hocart 1931: 310, 322 LX)

In some instances these enchainments provided access rights to land and re-sources as well as the ritual knowledge or capacity of the charm. Another Roviana charm associated with voyaging, called *serubule*, gave the person who currently held the artefact rights to travel to and use the resources of Vaghena in the Manning Straits, by attachment to the ancestors of the charm that had voyaged there with its aid. In that instance the bones of those ancestors were interred in shrines on Vaghena (Hocart n.d[b]: 20). But most charms had as-sociated shrines, often being the place at which they were kept when not in use. Prototypically shrines are the houses of *tomate*, being quite literally small houses containing the skulls of the dead. In this respect the topogenies of charms are also topogenies of shrines.

From another perspective we might think of charms as portable shrines. The process of enshrinement was not restricted to those of chiefly status, but ex-tended to persons considered *mana* for specific forms of action and knowledge. Thus there were bonito fishing shrines, netting shrines, hunting shrines, cura-tive shrines and so on, each enfolding lineages of persons. Just as the efficacy of a charm could fan out to lineage affiliates (i.e. those who 'purchased' the charm), so shrines could be set up in branches affiliated with an originating root. Hocart (n.d[c]: 4), for example, records an instance in which a man of Simbo gave shell rings to a Roviana man in order to acquire the ability to set up a shrine allowing successful hunting with dogs. There is evidence that such transferrals were effected by taking ash (from ovens where offerings were burnt) from one shrine and scattering it at a new location where a secondary shrine was to be set up (Hocart 1935: 104; Hall 1964: 133). Such shrines were constructed without the skull of an ancestor but the *tomate* was still held to be responsive by virtue of the gift transaction and ash transferral, and carvings

or stones would be set up to embody their presence. The origin of secondary shrines was recognised explicitly during offerings: 'one [bonito fishing shrine] was imported from Simbo and still sends its catches to the parent shrine' (Hocart 1935:109). In this way efficacious lineages attracted and were supported by lateral affiliations of persons deriving efficacy from the same ancestors.

To sum up, what shrines and charms reveal is the means by which topogenic lineages emerge as products of a historical process of continual encompassment. Ritual practice enabled successful action through the maintenance of social relationships with the dead, and the character of this forged topogenies. Links between generations were not in this sense established through inheritance or the one-way passing on of substance; rather they emerged during continuing interactions of nurturance and exchange. To the extent that linking substances were involved in the process, they involved gifts of food and shell valuables travelling 'upwards' to the ancestors as a means of maintaining relations. Being *mana* was reliant on one's ability to elicit a response from ancestral spirits, and thus situate oneself within a chain of agency. This is what topogenies are primarily about – ensuring particular forms of successful action for persons and groups.

It is important to note that enchainments were always partially dependent on others – other persons, and, of course, the material means (shell valuables, food) by which responses from ancestral spirits were elicited. This required access to things that might be offered: puddings for example, which themselves were dependent on the relations of pudding making (pounded and offered by ritual specialists) and access to gardens and nut trees, not to mention the success of a harvest, which was ensured by successful relations with gardening spirits sustained via other elicitory offerings, and so on. Every single act derived from an entire field of agency, a ritual community that made it possible, and its success reflected back on the efficacy of the group and its ancestors as much as the agent.

This did not mean, however, that persons could not own their actions. In fact it was only during action that the relational field of social life could be encompassed and eclipsed and a person could become visible as a specific kind of person (cf. Strathern 1988). That this was the case is reflected in evaluations of particular *bangara* recorded by Hocart. After noting that a Simbo *bangara* called 'Hangere' was *mana* for bonito fishing and had set up a shrine in Roviana, he writes: 'All the bonito of Simbo belong to Hangere of Roviana and Simbo. Hingava, the great chief of Roviana, does not *mana*, because he has no

bonito shrine. To *mana* a man must have a bonito shrine, a garden shrine, a property taboo (*kenjo*), a madness shrine.' (1935: 108–9). In these statements the status of the person as an efficacious agent encompasses their control of a shrine, eclipsing the fact that it was partially the *tomate* within that was responsible for their success. This was made possible by the topogenic connection – the shrine-owner was the living embodiment of ancestors who had once been efficacious, and so, stood as the product of a chain of persons stretching far into the past. By owning a shrine and acting successfully, a person was revealed to contain the potency of the dead within themselves, to encompass the many with one body. The central paradox is that enchainments which encompass and eclipse were dependent for their creation on relational fields, and so the priority of one over the other is a matter of perspective.

CONCLUSION

Focussing on the archaeological and ethnographic history of the social role of topogeny and lineage emergence allows a recognition that such formations have their source in the conditions thought necessary for effective person-hood and proper sociality – an integral part of maintaining ontological order. Although certainly emergent from fields of relations, such lineages are not best considered to be fleeting reifications or only momentarily stable – they are enduring and rely on this for their efficacy. Moreover it also makes sense to say that fields of relations emerge surrounding these enduring topogenic lineages as much as the other way round. It may not be necessary to privilege one image over the other in an analytical sense. Persons must affiliate with lineages in order to act, and in doing so invariably cut off other potential alignments, but they must also rely on lateral relations in order to achieve af-filiation. It is, then, the intersection of these relational forms which gives social life its momentum, rather than the emergence of one out of the other. As with a figure-ground illusion, motion is generated by the possibility of perspective shifts (cf. Wagner 1987).

Taking a historical view of the long term emergence of topogenies enables this consideration of perspective. We could say that in the past topogenies emerged as a side-effect of particular forms of ritual practice and an underly-ing theory of efficacious agency. Rituals accumulated persons, encompassing them in sequences throughout a landscape; a person attached themselves to, and eclipsed, a chain of agents with their own contemporary action. But from another (perhaps present-day) perspective a person at the end of such a se-quence might appear as a product of that enchainment, to have inherited what that enchainment provides. It is only in this latter sense that topogenies can

be said to be about origins. We might call this a shift in perspective from pre-thematic action to thematic reflection – a movement from being to narrative.

Ingold (2005:103) points out that Western ontology is predisposed to seeing landscape as a *surface* to be occupied, allowing a colonial perspective wherein 'the family of man' branched out over the world from a common origin point. He contrasts this with an image of the world as the *medium* that people move through rather than atop or across, just as a wave moves through water. The first side of this contrast corresponds to a narrated or reflective mode of looking back at the past, and the second to an embedded state of being-in-the-world. But the possibility of the resolution of this contrast is contained within itself. A 'wave', after all, both describes the movement of a medium and is the name of a thing–which one, is a matter of perspective not ontology. Understanding topogenies requires noticing how we play such perspectives off against each other, comparing the figure of genealogical agency against the ground of sociality, the synchronic reification of the past against its diachronic emergence, the landscape as resource against landscape as medium.

It could perhaps be argued that a directional movement from being to narrating is encouraged by forms of detachment, in that today topogenies in New Georgia appear as a given resource rather than a continually enfolding structure of worldly action. But again perspective is important: topogenies clearly still have ontological import in the negotiation of agency (rights) and are both supported by and attract fields of relations in an enfolding and unfolding landscape. History is made from such tensions.

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