

Reference:

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Tambu: the Shell-Money of the Tolai

A. L. Epstein, 1979
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WHEN, IN 1875, the Wesleyan missionary George Brown landed on New Britain he encountered a people whose ways contrasted sharply with those of the Samoans with whom he had previously lived for many years. In their political organization, their modes of government, as well as so many of the arts of life, the Samoans evidently enjoyed a much more advanced culture than the Melanesians; but what impressed Brown no less forcibly was the difference between the two groups in regard to their commercial attitudes and activities. "A Samoan gives, a New Britain native sells or lends at interest....There were no markets in Samoa, but every district in New Britain had one. There was no money or any recognized standard of value in Samoa like the diwara or Tambu in New Britain, for the fine mats, or other property given at marriage or funeral feasts, had no fixed negotiable value." (Brown, 1910, p. 434.) Other early visitors to this part of New Guinea were no less intrigued by the local monetary system and the way in which Tambu was intricately woven into the very texture of social life. One such traveler commented that New Britain was the only savage country he had visited where the natives had a true money currency of a standard value. "With this money you can buy anything you like, a wife if desired. It is as much a standard coin of the realm as the sovereign is of the British Empire." (Pitcairn, 1891, pp. 178-179; cf. Romilly, 1886, p. 24.)

Within a short time, fuller and more scholarly accounts of New

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Britain shell-money began to appear in the ethnographic literature (e.g. Danks, 1887; Kleintitschen, 1906; Parkinson, 1907) from which the major features of the system emerged quite clearly, even if certain of the claims made for Tambu were to be received skeptically by later anthropologists (see Malinowski, 1921). More recently a number of professional anthropologists have carried out extensive field research in different parts of the Gazelle Peninsula, and they have reported not only on the continuing use of Tambu in the contemporary setting but they have also attempted to elucidate and clarify the traditional working of a very complex institution (see Epstein, A. L., 1963, 1969; Epstein, T. S.,

1968; Salisbury, 1966, 1970). As between these various accounts and analyses there are certain differences of emphasis and perspective and, indeed, on occasion, of interpretation, but what is common to all is the treatment of Tambu as a cultural artifact, a "social fact" to be handled and understood in relation to other "social facts". Thus Danks, another early Wesleyan missionary, in a paper that might fairly be regarded as anticipating the brand of functionalism that Malinowski was later to develop, pointed out that there was not a custom connected with life or death in which shell-money did not play a great and leading part, and suggested that if Tambu were removed from the people their whole way of life would collapse. By contrast, Scarlett Epstein, in the context of her discussion of Tolai economic development, has been primarily concerned with Tambu as a monetary institution, while Salisbury, with rather similar interests, has emphasized the importance of Tambu in the emergence of local entrepreneurs and the part they play in the political system. I have no quarrel with these various approaches as such. Together, and in their several ways, they have helped to make Tambu perhaps the best known and best understood among primitive currencies. My claim is, however, that in paying inadequate attention to the dimension of affect, such analyses leave many questions about Tambu unanswered and, indeed, unasked. To take but one example for the moment: the term by which the Tolai refer to their shell-money is also the one by which they denote that class of phenomena usually categorized in the anthropological literature as taboo. Is this a matter of coincidence to be explained, or rather dismissed, after the fashion of Malinowski, as another example of homonymy (see Leach, 1958)? If not, what is there about their shell-money that leads to its association with the category Tambu? As I hope to show, many of the attitudes, ideas and practices that pertain to

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shell-money are permeated by a profound emotional charge. In Freudian terms, Tambu is highly cathected, suggesting that behind its pragmatic uses powerful unconscious impulses are also at work. The aim of this essay is to explore this possibility and to trace out some of the implications that stem from it. Before embarking on this task, however, it is necessary to retrace some of the ground, to describe by way of background something of the social setting and circumstances of the Tolai, and to outline the main features of the Tambu complex.

Tolai society

The Gazelle Peninsula of New Britain offers an environment at once harsh and fertile; isolated from the rest of the island to the south and west by a rugged range of mountains, the landscape and topography of the area also testify to continuing tectonic activity over long periods of time. Volcanoes or their extinct craters dominate the skyline around Blanche Bay, picturesque but threatening - the last major eruption in 1937 transformed a small island in the bay, which had

itself been thrown up in another eruption some sixty years earlier, into a substantial hill connected to the mainland, wrought havoc in the town of Rabaul, and claimed the lives of more than a thousand Tolai. On the other hand, soils enriched by volcanic deposits made possible one of the densest populations throughout the whole of Melanesia.¹ The marked degree of ecological diversity, particularly striking in so tiny an area, may also perhaps be associated with this history of vulcanism. Such diversity, expressed in a great variety of highly localized products, provided a matrix within which an indigenous trade could develop.

To its earliest European observers the Gazelle Peninsula presented something of a puzzle. It was not simply that men and women went completely naked or that head-hunting and cannibalism were regularly practised. It was rather that the people appeared to possess few of the familiar indices of cohesion and social solidarity. They acknowledged no common name for themselves as a group, and designations of the land, the people, and the language as Gunantuna or Kuanua were merely usages adopted by the incoming Roman Catholic and

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Methodist missionaries respectively.² There was a common language, referred to simply as tinata tuna - the true or proper tongue - but dialectal variation was often considerable, even among neighbouring communities, and the contemporary homogeneity of the language owes a great deal to the influence and efforts of the missions. Again, there was no substantial body of historical lore common to the group as a whole; legends of origin tended to vest in particular clans (vunatarai), telling of more or less recent immigration into the area from New Ireland or of movements within the Gazelle Peninsula itself.

But what probably served most to convey the impression of almost total anarchy was the lack of any centralized political institutions. People lived in small and sometimes scattered hamlets, each surrounded by its own fence, within territorial units known as gunan. The gunan or village had a population that rarely exceeded 300 or 400 individuals who, while they did not always actively cooperate among themselves, nevertheless saw themselves as a unit in opposition to other like units. With the inhabitants of these other villages they arranged alliances or marriages and carried on trade, but they guarded their autonomy jealously and, as Salisbury (1966, p. 113) put it, wars were

¹ According to Salisbury (1970, p. 19), the population density at the time of first contact was more than 100 per square mile. At present it is probably around 300 to 400.

² The use of the term Tolai as a group designation has no sanction in tradition, and is in fact of quite recent origin (cf. Epstein, A. L., 1969, p. 13).

continually fought to avenge slights to village self-esteem, which usually involved the theft of pigs or the seduction of women. The absence of judicial mechanisms for securing law and order was also evident. While the earlier ethnographers perceived dimly that Tolai society was not given over entirely to utter lawlessness, their puzzlement is seen clearly in the way each sought the key to its fragile integration in a different direction: Kleintitschen in the power commanded by the wealthy; Parkinson and Brown in the role of the dukduk, a masked dancer and the central figure in the secret male cult, while Meier sought for the means of law enforcement in the work of the sorcerer (see Sack, 1974).

The traditional Tolai polity was thus highly fragmented and marked by a pervasive parochialism. Yet countervailing processes were also at work within the social system, binding people into wider and more complex networks of relationship. Apart from the presence of trade and markets previously mentioned, there was an elaborate kinship system built up around the principle of matriliney. One aspect of this was the dual organization in the form of two exogamous units

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or moieties, which operated throughout the Gazelle Peninsula, the neighbouring Duke of York Islands, and part of New Ireland, to regulate marriage. Marriage links might therefore be fairly widespread, creating intricate webs of obligation between otherwise hostile communities. There was too a rich and varied ceremonial life. Certain prominent individuals, known as *ngala* (literally big-man) or *lulua*³ were in a position to sponsor the performance of large-scale mortuary rites or to initiate the activities associated with the secret male cult of dukduk and tubuan. Such festivities, usually marked by a ban on fighting, involved the participation of, and competition between, individuals and groups from many different villages and so served to create new ties as well as to cement established ones. All of these various activities, as I shall discuss presently, turned on the capacity to command considerable resources of shell-money.

In the hundred years that have elapsed since first sustained contact with the outside world, the Gazelle Peninsula has seen many changes. In this period the Tolai have moved from a condition that Danks once referred to as "commercial savagery" to becoming the most sophisticated and wealthy of all the indigenous people of contemporary Papua New Guinea. Yet the passage has not been an even one, nor free from stress. Times of rising prosperity and heightened expectation have alternated with periods of slump and frustration, reflecting not

³ In some parts of the Gazelle the term *lu/uai*, which was adopted by the Germans to describe a Government-appointed village headman, referred traditionally to a war-leader. In others, so I was assured by my oldest informants at Matupit, it meant simply a man of wealth, one who had ample stocks of Tambu at his disposal.

only the Gazelle's increasing involvement in the world's economy, but also in its political system. For the Tolai have experienced at close quarters a succession of imposed regimes, civil and military, each with its distinctive policies and programmes and style of approach.

In the Gazelle Peninsula the Germans found an ideal setting for the establishment of a colonial plantation economy, but they also stimulated indigenous economic development by the creation of a road system, by encouraging increased production of food and cash crops, and by introducing schooling which prepared students for a variety of relatively skilled occupations. Then, on the outbreak of the First World War, the Germans were supplanted by the Australians. Through the inter-war years New Guinea was administered by Australia under Mandate of the League of Nations and the town of Rabaul, established by the Germans, remained as the capital and

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main seaport of the Territory. The Mandate imposed certain obligations for the development of the country in the interests of its people, but for the most part they received little more than lip-service, for the Australians took few positive steps to carry further the developments initiated by the Germans. It was a period which few Tolai recall with notable enthusiasm, and even though they sometimes refer to it as "the good days" (*ta ra boina bung*) this must be understood less as an expression of nostalgia and more as a way of marking off the years that immediately preceded the coming of the Second World War.

The entry of the Japanese into that war marked the beginning of a period of great hardship for the Tolai. Within a short time the Gazelle Peninsula came under military occupation and later, when the Japanese found themselves cut off from their lines of supply, their regime became increasingly oppressive. Many Tolai died through punishment at the hands of their new masters, others through malnutrition and lack of adequate medical supplies, while yet others were killed in Allied bombing attacks. In addition, in some areas the coconut plantations, on which Tolai pre-war wealth had been built, were destroyed and many years would have to pass before they could be restored. In some parts too accumulated stocks of shell-money were seriously depleted, in some cases because Tambu had been seized and destroyed by the Japanese, in some cases because it had been used up in the purchase of food from more fortunately placed communities.

The ramifying consequences of the war for the Tolai are difficult to assess, but what is at least clear is that once peace was restored, and the Australian administration re-established, few were in a mood to return, meekly to the status quo of the pre-war period. At the same time Australian policy, previously quiescent, was suddenly seized with a new urgency. The stage was thus set for rapid changes in every sphere of social life; in the economic there was, for

example, the setting up of the Tolai Cocoa Project; in the political, the introduction of Native Local Government Councils to the Gazelle, the first of their kind in the Territory. Serious attention was also being given to improving services in the fields of education and health. The result of these various developments is that today the Tolai area has come to occupy a position of prominence in the affairs of the country out of all proportion to its tiny size. For many years, its contribution to the Territory's revenue, based in large measure on the efforts of Tolai producers, has been quite disproportionate when simply measured against that of

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other Districts. Over the years too, increasing numbers of Tolai have held a variety of relatively skilled jobs in many parts of the country clearly less advanced than their own, so it is not surprising that they should have come to develop a view of themselves as an indigenous elite. Though the situation in this regard has begun to change gradually, Tolai predominance in certain "white-collar" occupations is still especially striking.⁴

There is, however, another side to the coin. For some time there has been ample evidence of mounting social tension on the Gazelle to impress even the most casual observer. Most dramatic perhaps was the emergence of the new political movement known as Mataungan (see Epstein, A. L., 1970), and the later killing of the District Officer at Rabaul. The Mataungan movement was founded avowedly to oppose the establishment of a Multi-racial Council that would have replaced the existing Gazelle Local Council, a Tolai body, but at its roots lay a variety of interconnected social ills and problems: population growth of quite startling proportions; a seemingly intractable land problem; a situation of rising unemployment exacerbated by the presence of a high proportion of sixth-form "drop-outs", and so on. All of this has been going on in an atmosphere of growing uncertainty among the Tolai about the political future of the Territory, and of the position of their own area within it.⁵

This review of the recent social history of the Gazelle has been necessarily cursory and selective, but it is essential to my analysis, not simply by way of providing background information but in order to make a number of important points. Together, and in their several ways, the various developments just outlined have generated a considerable strain on the traditional fabric of Tolai

⁴ The case of teaching affords a vivid illustration of the point. According to an index provided by Finney (1971), calculated for the purpose on the basis of teachers per 100,000 head of population, the figure for east New Britain (that is, the Tolai area) was 472; for the Madang District, with an equally long history of contact, 43; and for Chimbu and the Eastern Highlands populous areas, which were only effectively opened up after the Second World War, 8.

⁵ For rather fuller discussion of these issues see Epstein, A. L. et. al. (1971).

social life. Indeed, given all the surrounding circumstance, one might readily imagine that little of the pre-contact social organization or culture can have survived, save perhaps as folk-memories. It is true of course that the world of the modern Tolai is vastly different from that of his great-grandfather, but it is no less true that in certain fundamental respects Tolai society remains recognizably traditional. Making a basically

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similar point, Salisbury (1966, p. 115) observes that in the village of Vunamami the religious ceremonies of the tubuan are carried out virtually unchanged from Parkinson's descriptions based on his observations in the 1880s, and that land tenure still operates in terms of the traditional, highly flexible matrilineal system. The island of Matupit, where my own research was conducted, and perhaps the Tolai community in which cultural erosion has proceeded furthest, presented no less striking evidence of continuity, leading me to take this as one of the central themes of my own monograph (Epstein, A. L., 1969).

This situation is not quite so paradoxical as it might seem at first sight. From the earliest days of contact, the Tolai have shown themselves receptive to new ideas and willing to adopt new practices - but selectively and only on their own terms. Salisbury (1970, p. 97) has commented that withdrawal rather than argument is a usual Tolai reaction to European experts who think they know best, and I have myself frequently observed Matupi respond in this way. Among administrative officers and other Europeans such behaviour has earned them a reputation for obtuseness. Thus one observer of the contemporary New Guinea scene, having paid tribute to Tolai responsiveness to schemes put forward by the government for their advancement, goes on: "But they are not a tractable group: they do not consider themselves particularly obliged to the administration for its special attention to their advancement. They do not respond with unquestioning loyalty and affection. On the contrary, some Tolai clans tend to be stubborn and at times violent." (Williams, 1964, p. 51.) From the standpoint of the anthropologist, however, such behaviour appears rather as a fairly typical expression of defiance, a response in an unequal power situation to demands made by the more powerful figure which the other regards as a threat to his autonomy. We shall see later that such displays are not confined to interactions between Tolai and *kiaps*⁶ they find expression no less frequently in a variety of purely indigenous contexts. They point to a fierce sense of personal independence, a prickliness and assertiveness in all forms of social intercourse, and a refusal to acknowledge any man as one's master. Along with such traits there goes a refusal to yield, a tenacious clinging to that with which he closely

⁶ The term 'kiap' commonly applies throughout New Guinea to a government officer who is concerned with native affairs.

identifies himself, and through which he seeks to assert his autonomy. Nowhere is this more

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clearly revealed than in the persistence of the Tolai's attachment to shell-money. But this is an issue we cannot explore further until we have learned a little more of the uses to which it is put, and the meanings, conscious and unconscious, with which it is invested.

The uses of shell-money

Tambu consists of the shells of a small mollusc, the main source of which for the Tolai for many years has been Nakanai on the north coast of New Britain. The journey today is not hazardous as it was in the past, but since the collection of a sizeable quantity is a slow business it may still involve for the party making the trip an absence from home of some months. Collection, however, is only the first part of the task, for the shells do not become Tambu until they have been properly treated. This consists in the arduous process of cutting the whorl of the shell away from the lips and then stringing the lips on lengths of rattan (Salisbury, 1970, pp. 281-283). A further point mentioned by Brown (1910, p. 295), which I shall refer to again, is that when first acquired the shells have a dull brown colour; they only became valuable as in the course of time they were bleached.⁷

The ease with which the threaded shells can be divided into strips of different length makes Tambu particularly serviceable for use as a currency. The standard unit of measurement is the fathom (*a pokono*), calculated as the distance between one's two outstretched arms. There is in addition a whole series of smaller units, measured off in terms of the distance between different points of the body, for example, between outstretched fingers and the middle of the chest (half a fathom) or the inside of the elbow (quarter of a fathom), until one comes to the smallest units of all which are counted in pairs of shells. It is clear that the larger units cannot always be of uniform

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⁷ Brown was uncertain how the bleaching was accomplished and attributed it to light, time and constant handling. However, according to Powell (1883, p. 56), it was achieved by burying the shells in the earth. Of interest in this connection is a reference by Pfeil (1899, p. 119) to counterfeit shell-money. Apparently early European traders had found it necessary to make use of Tambu in their transactions with Tolai. Noting that the amounts in circulation were inadequate to meet the demand for it, some of them conceived the idea of having Tambu manufactured in Europe. The venture was unsuccessful. The Tolai recognized the introduced shells as counterfeit and refused to accept them. Unfortunately, Pfeil does not tell us to what features of the manufactured shells the Tolai objected.

length, but minor variations do not appear to worry the Tolai. Presumably these balance out over a series of transactions (cf. Salisbury, 1970, p. 288). More pertinently, the units are not immediately convertible among themselves; units of different length cannot be totted up in one's head to yield a total in fathoms. This can only be done by placing all the pieces together and measuring them off against a strip of vine.

At first glance then it would appear that, despite certain deficiencies, Tambu has a close generic resemblance to money as understood among ourselves. But my concern here is not to measure the attributes of Tambu against a model of a monetary system derived from quite different socio-economic conditions, an approach against which Dalton (1965) has rightly cautioned. Nowadays, as it happens, Tolai operate with both cash⁸ and Tambu, and there will be an opportunity to discuss the relationship between the two in a later section. The present task must be to describe the varying uses to which shell-money is put, the different spheres of relationship and social context into which it enters, and the attitudes that are held in respect of it.

The situation in which a visiting European is first likely to encounter the use of shell-money is at one of the main market-places:

Rabaul or Kokopo. While he will pay in coin for his choice among the wide variety of fruits, vegetables and other local produce on display, he will discover that Tolai may hand over Tambu in exchange for the same items. Closer familiarity with the area would reveal that any transaction between Tolai in respect of goods or services can be mediated through shell-money: today, as in the past, everything has its price, be it food, goods manufactured by another, such as a drum or a canoe, or the services of a man who has cured one's sickness or designed one's dance costume. The major difference in this regard as between past and present is that whereas formerly the Tolai only had Tambu, nowadays they have a choice of currencies.

Such a picture suggests a highly "monetized" economy, an impression which is heightened by the presence of concepts concerned with regular ways of dealing in Tambu: borrowing; lending, pawning, and so on.⁹ An acute commercial sense is also revealed in the concept

⁸ Papua New Guinea now has its own currency, the basic unit of which is the kina.

⁹ According to Danks (1887, p. 308), the people of the Duke of York Islands had a clear concept of interest (ivawaturu), but he noted that among the Tolai the idea was less fully developed. Indeed, having described Tolai practice, he then adds, "But the idea in the native mind does not seem to be so much interest, as an expression of thanks for a favour." Here again we have an excellent instance of the need for extreme care when we take a concept which is used in a technical sense in one system and seek to apply it in another.

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of the *vuvuvung*, an "account" or "fund". Thus a man who purchased, say, a new canoe would hire it out to others, including his close kin, for a fee in Tambu; all that he received in this way went into a separate canoe "account". The expression *pal na vuvuvung* refers to the house in which a man stores his own accumulated stock of shell-money together with that of others who may deposit with him.

Tambu was also used in a variety of ways that are non-commercial. Mention has been made of the lack in traditional Tolai society of any differentiated institution for the enforcement of law and order. Danks (1887), however, has described how exchanges of shell-money served to restore peace after fighting had broken out in which people had been killed or injured, as well as a general means of making atonement for wrongs. Even today in some Tolai communities, as I have myself observed, the handing over of Tambu by way of atonement or compensation remains the appropriate way of settling certain kinds of dispute.

Such uses point to the role of shell-money in adjusting social relationships that have become disturbed. There is also a wide variety of contexts in which the passage of Tambu operates to redefine or change the character of an existing relationship, as in the case of the adoption of a child or the removal of the avoidance taboo between a man and his wife's mother. There is also the institution of the *turguvai* (literally, a "standing together") whereby a person who regularly helped another in his enterprises by contributions of shell-money might come to be regarded as a member of that other's descent group despite the fact that such a claim could not be substantiated on genealogical grounds. But above all it is in marking the change of status as the individual passes through the various sequences of the life cycle that Tambu figures most prominently: birth, initiation of boys into the cult of *dukduk* and *tubuan*, marriage and death. Around these events there revolves a rich ceremonial life, in which all the sense of pageantry and the artistry of the people in song, dance and the carving of painted figures can find full scope for expression. Most of these ceremonies require on the part of their sponsors a heavy expenditure of shell-money, and they are also accompanied by complex distributions of Tambu among the participants.

For Tolai it is the part that Tambu plays on these occasions that marks off the value of shell-money from that which attaches to cash. "*A mani ure ra nian, a Tambu ure ra minat*", they say; money pertains to food, that is the secular or profane, Tambu to death, to what is sacred.

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So far as shell-money itself is concerned, the passage between these two

realms is marked in the most tangible way. As we have seen, the natural shells are transformed into Tambu by being specially treated and threaded. In this form the average Tolai is likely to carry a fathom or two around in his arm-purse for small everyday purchases. Larger amounts in the form of skeins are kept at home, or are deposited for safekeeping with a trusted kinsman or elder, against heavier outlays. What the Tolai most ardently desires, however, is that his stock of Tambu should accumulate rapidly to the point where it can be bound into a large round coil called a *lolo*. Once in the form of a *lolo*, which may contain anything from fifty up to a thousand fathoms, Tambu no longer circulates in the ordinary way. Instead, the coils are carefully stored away until, on the occasion of a major ceremony, they are brought out to adorn the specially erected scaffolding called a *leo*, or they are publicly "cut" and the shell-money within distributed.

In former days the desire to accumulate Tambu was bound up with doctrines about the afterlife. When a person died the corpse was wrapped in the fronds of a coconut palm, the orifices were plugged with pieces of Tambu, and shell-money was also strewn on the grave. The explanation offered for these practices was that the spirit was now equipped to make the appropriate responses when it arrived finally at the Abode of the Dead. In the traditional view, without the accumulation of shell-money during one's lifetime and its cutting up and distribution on one's death, there could be no entry to the *matana kaia* or *tingena tabaran*, the Abode of the Spirits; instead the spirit of the deceased was doomed to an existence of everlasting wretchedness in the land called *laKupia*.

Describing Tolai funerary customs, a Roman Catholic missionary, Winthuis (1926, p. 58), records the lamentations of a mother bewailing the death of her son:¹⁰ "Oh my son, now you have died leaving me. Oh, where have you gone?... You wonderful dancer, the plumage in my head-dress, now I will never see you dance again, leaping as though on glowing coconut embers. My body is torn with sorrow and pain. Who will now bury me when I come to die? Who will scatter Tambu over my grave? All will revile me, for I shall have no shell-money left. Oh, woe is me, woe is me." It is as though the woman's grief is divided: mourning the loss of a beloved son, she laments too the prospect of her own death without a son to "cut" Tambu at her burial.

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Winthuis adds an explanatory gloss. The last sorrow, he points out, was a particularly heavy one because it was the desire of every Tolai to accumulate as

¹⁰ All translations of German texts offered here are the responsibility of the author.

much shell-money as possible so that his death would be followed by the finest mortuary rites imaginable, and the giving away of large quantities of Tambu. "This is the greatest longing of every native, the central thought which occupies him every day of his life. All his life is nothing less than an attempt to amass shell-money: in this way he prepares himself for his own death." Nowadays, profoundly influenced by the teaching of Christian missionaries for close on a century, there are many Tolai to whom the older doctrines are no longer known. Nevertheless, the desire to accumulate Tambu towards one's own death, or that of a close kinsman, remains a powerful incentive, even in those communities such as Matupit where social and cultural change have proceeded furthest.

Danks associated the propensity to hoard shell-money with habits of frugality and industry. These values survive, though the activities which generate wealth are much more varied now than in the past. On Matupit, where a high proportion of the population has long been accustomed to work away from the village for wages, local leaders try to impress upon young people the importance of maintaining those activities that yield Tambu. In these circumstances one might easily imagine that accumulated wealth in shell-money is due directly to unremitting labour at traditional tasks, and the sale of the produce through market-trade. In fact, as Salisbury (1966) has demonstrated, the amounts yielded by such trade are paltry compared to the sums required to stage the major ceremonies known as *balaguan*. How then are these latter ends achieved? The answer is that Tambu is not merely to be saved, it is to be worked with.

We touch here on the role of the entrepreneur who, as recent analyses make clear (for example, Epstein, T. S., 1964; Salisbury, 1966, 1970), is at once a financial and a political figure. The entrepreneur here makes his mark by his capacity to persuade others that because of his organizing skills and trustworthiness they should cooperate with him in some enterprise. Once successfully launched in this way, he may eventually graduate to the point where he can contemplate more ambitious ventures, such as acquiring a tubuan of his own and sponsoring the ceremonies associated with "raising" it. These ceremonies have a profound religious significance, yet Salisbury (1970, pp. 301-304) has shown in detail how it is possible to

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discuss *tubuan*-ownership as a business. And, indeed, it was in precisely these terms that my own informants at Matupit referred to it:

"*raising*" the tubuan, they would say, was an activity that involved a heavy outlay of shell-money, but one from which in due course the sponsor could hope for a profitable return. At the same time it was in organizing these and other major ceremonies that one also staked out a claim to be recognized as a leader. The ceremonial ground was preeminently the domain of the big-man,

the arena in which he sought to assert his dominance. A successful balaguan is an immense source of prestige; but more, it is the means of converting prestige into power through the deployment and distribution of Tambu. The giving away of wealth is a most notable feature of these occasions, and is accompanied by tremendous excitement. Salisbury describes how, for each dance, a roll or coil of Tambu is taken from storage and publicly cut before lengths (*pidik*) are thrust into the hands of each dancer. Giving, indeed, is the order of the day and it "reaches frenzied proportions in the evening as the dances finish" (1966, p. 121).

Power lies in the gift (*a tinabar* or *di tabar*) because it imposes an obligation on the recipient to make return in due course and because, by the same token, it represents a challenge. Hence at a *matamatam*, to cite Salisbury's account again, "normal Tolai penny-pinching is in complete abeyance" (1966, p. 121). "Any important man seizes the opportunity to tabar all and sundry, but especially other important men. He throws a fathom or so at the feet of a friend/rival, and his followers hurl *pidiks* onto the pile for the recipient to gather up. The latter then seeks out another friend/rival to *tabar*, and waits for the next *matamatam*, when he will reciprocate (*bali*) the gift he has received." (ibid.) Nowhere does the close association between command of wealth in Tambu and political authority emerge so clearly as in these ceremonies, and nowhere is the point more clearly demonstrated than in a comparison of the two communities of Vunamami and Matupit. For the former area, Salisbury records twenty-six *matamatam* in the period 1937-62. Nine of these were initiated by three individuals who held the highest political office in the area during this time. The remainder were given by a number of Village Councillors and others who were, or who became, clan heads (*lualua*). At Vunamami the big-man has remained a familiar figure. By contrast, many years have now elapsed at Matupit since the last major ceremony was staged there. Partly because of their involvement in wage-labour,

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partly for other reasons, the Matupi have become paupers so far as Tambu is concerned. This is not to say that they have abandoned the pursuit of shell-money. On the contrary, as I shall discuss in a later section, many continue to skimp and save in order to raise the bride-wealth, to obtain certain foodstuffs such as taro from inland communities who insist on payment in Tambu, or to purchase the canoes without which they cannot easily reach their gardens. But they lack the resources to pursue the ceremonial life in any but a skeletal form. In these circumstances, matrilineage elders may continue to play a role, while at the same time new kinds of leaders emerge, but there can be no more big-men cast in the traditional mould (see Epstein, A.L., 1969, pp. 241-245).

At this point, having set out with minimal comment a certain amount of ethnographic data relating to shell-money, it may be useful to try and draw the

threads of discussion together in a preliminary way. I began by asking what there was about shell-money that led to its verbal association with the category Tambu (taboo). We are now in a position to move part of the way towards an answer. We have seen that traditionally Tambu was intimately bound up with views about the afterlife. In this connection Winthuis (1926, p. 8) comments that for the Tolai Tambu is not just ordinary money, but rather "divine" (Gottes-geld). Some of my oldest Matupi informants sometimes spoke in a similar vein. Tambu, they would say, was our God; it gave us life (Tambu a kaiou kamavet; i ga valaun avet)¹¹ Yet, as we have seen, while the conscious rationale has almost entirely disappeared, since almost every Tolai today belongs to one or other Christian congregation, the pursuit of Tambu continues unabated. So let us approach the matter first from a sociological perspective.

Traditional Tolai society was what we now term a "stateless" society; it lacked any centralized organs of authority. The various local communities who now speak of themselves as Tolai shared a common tongue, as well as many customs and -institutions, but they guarded their independence jealously and none regarded itself as subordinate to another. However, they were also linked in overlapping and intricately criss-crossing networks forged by ties of marriage and reinforced by participation in joint ceremonies organized and spon-

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sored by ambitious big-men. In all of these activities, as indeed in the defining of any new social relationship, *Tambu* was a *sine qua non*. At the same time, no society exists in the present only; it has to have the means to define relationships between the generations. Among the Tolai land provides an important link of continuity. Land is held to vest in the *vunatarai*, a descent group whose living members enjoy it during their lifetime, holding it on trust from their matrilineal ancestors for future members still unborn. It is in celebration of the dead of the *vunatarai* that the ceremonies of the *tubuan* and *matamatam* are held. From one point of view then *Tambu* emerges as the lynch-pin of the social system, the crucial mechanism defining and maintaining the bonds between various social groups as well as providing the nexus between the realm of the living and the realm of the dead. From another point of view, it is possible to speak of *Tambu* as lying at the heart of the traditional Tolai system of values, the central component in their conception of the moral order. In either case, if we adopt the Durkheimian view that the origins of religion lie in the apotheosis of society itself, then, in the Tolai context, what could be a more appropriate symbol of the sacred than *Tambu*?

¹¹ Kaiou is a Fijian word introduced by the first evangelists and subsequently adopted by the European missionaries as the word for God. Valaun means literally to cause life, hence also to save. The expression a Una ualaun is heard most frequently with reference to Christ the Saviour.

Unfortunately, the matter is not quite so easily disposed of, for too many questions are still left unanswered. Radcliffe-Brown (1952, p. 134) has noted the ambiguity of the Polynesian term *tabu* (or *tapu*) from which the anthropological usage taboo derives. On the one hand it can be applied to any sort of prohibition; on the other, it refers specifically to what Radcliffe-Brown calls ritual avoidances, violations of which are likely to be attended by mystical dangers. In precisely the same way, the Tolai word *Tambu* covers not only simple interdictions, but also more complex situations. Thus the casual visitor around Rabaul will frequently come across signs bearing the words "*I Tambu*", meaning simply "Keep off this property" - and this is fully in accord with Tolai usage. Again, many Tolai-owned village stores prominently display a notice "*I Tambu ra dinau*" advising customers that credit is not allowed. However, the same term *Tambu* is also used to refer, for example, to the prohibition on the husband of a pregnant woman approaching the beach where his fellows are engaged in seine-fishing. In this last case, it is said, violation of the taboo would affect the behaviour of the fish, and the catch would be lost. It is difficult at first sight to see what these three situations have in common beyond the fact that in each instance there is something that is for-

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bidden. Closer analysis, however, shows that they rest upon a more complex underlying idea: all exemplify the concept that taboo serves as a pointer to boundaries that should not be crossed. In its most elementary form, as in the first case, *Tambu* means simply "Don't trespass". In the second it is a reminder to customers not to introduce considerations of kinship, neighbourliness or friendship into what should be strictly a commercial transaction; quite different sets of social relationships are involved here and they should be kept quite distinct if trouble is to be avoided and good relations preserved. The same point emerges no less clearly in the third example. Here the taboo expresses on the symbolic plane a relationship between categories which have been brought into association through some common property - in this instance pregnant women and bonito fish (*a tun*) are said to be heavy with blood - but which properly belong to different compartments within the conceptual system; if they are brought into conjunction there is a confusion of categories from which certain harmful consequences can be expected to follow. In all of these situations the use of the term *Tambu/taboo* at once expresses or points to some latent source of conflict and provides the means for avoiding or resolving it.

Adopting this perspective, what is of immediate interest is that if one scrutinizes carefully the data relating to shell-money one becomes increasingly conscious of a number of seeming discrepancies and contradictions within the *Tambu-complex* as a whole, that shell-money itself is a focal point of conflict. For example, in their everyday life Tolai give the impression of being quite pragmatic in regard to their use of shell-money; if one's observations were

confined to the marketplace one might conclude that they used it simply as a form of currency. In fact the most casual inquiry would quickly reveal a more compulsive interest in it, that it is invested with a degree of affect that would be quite out of keeping with its function simply as a medium of exchange - *Tambu*, one soon discovers, is not to be parted with lightly, even if it is only a matter of making a purchase; as far as possible it should be saved.¹² Then again, we are told by Danks (1887, p. 308)

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that children were taught, almost as soon as they could understand anything, that the acquisition and retention of wealth was an important, if not the most important, duty of life, yet its central purpose was directed towards the celebration of death. It is indeed in contexts relating to death that the emotional intensity that surrounds *Tambu* is most closely to be observed. Most of the major *balaguan* are mortuary rites of one kind or another, and in their performance we discover the curious pattern of alternation so characteristic of behaviour in regard to shell-money, a sharp oscillation between clinging on the one hand, and lavish, even abandoned, giving on the other. Yet even on these occasions the giving is not done without evidence of conflict: those who "cut" the coils of shell-money prior to its distribution arm themselves with a magical device (*a vaimkor*) to ensure that the entire coil is not given away, and some of the wealth of its owner is saved. Finally, we may notice that if *Tambu* serves as an appropriate symbol of solidarity, it is no less a symbol of individual and group pride and assertiveness, as evidenced in our earlier reference to behaviour in the context of a *matamatam*.

All of these seeming contradictions are contained within the symbolism of *Tambu*; in a sense, indeed, they are cloaked by it. Viewed as a symbol, shell-money serves as a pointer to various conflicts within the Tolai system of values, some of which I hope the ongoing discussion can help to illuminate. Behind these, and congruent with them, are other kinds of conflict of an intrapsychic character. My point of departure here is the view of the symbol offered by psychoanalytic theory, according to which the power of the symbol derives from the fact that it is rooted in the unconscious. Like the symptom, the symbol represents a compromise-formation, the outcome of a struggle between impulse and repressing forces. I want to suggest that, in its symbolic aspects, *Tambu* represents a formation of this kind in the sense defined by Ferenczi (1913), that

¹² My wife learned this lesson very early in her fieldwork. Discovering that certain items could be acquired for either cash or *Tambu*, and that there was no parity of purchasing power between the two currencies (see further, p. 193ff.), she once sought to purchase a chicken with shell-money she had already managed to acquire, which seemed to her the better bargain. She was at once severely admonished by her Tolai companion, who proceeded to give her a lengthy lecture on the proper use of *Tambu*, she should have made her purchase with cash, and saved her shell-money.

is, it owes its affective overemphasis to unconscious identification with some other thing (or idea) which has been repressed and to which the surplus of affect really belongs. In adopting this approach I hope in the remainder of this essay to be able to clarify certain features of the Tambu-complex as well as to reveal threads of connection with other aspects of Tolai ideology and behaviour not hitherto remarked.

Tambu and anal erotism

As it happens, mine is not the first attempt to examine Tolai shell-

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money making use of psychoanalytic insights, for Geza Roheim, so far as I am aware the first to combine the practice of psychoanalysis and anthropology, considered it many years ago in his paper *Heiliges Geid in Melanesien* (1923).¹³ Roheim raised there, and sought to answer, a number of the questions with which I too am concerned, and to some of these I will return in due course. In general, however, the paper appears to me to illustrate well a dictum of Freud (1918, p. 97) that it is a methodological error to seize on a phylogenetic explanation before the ontogenetic possibilities have been exhausted. In this instance Roheim's concern with Tambu was to trace the phytoeny of money, that is, to seek its psychic origins as a universal institution. A number of questionable assumptions underlie this particular approach, some of which have been noted by other psychoanalysts and will be considered again later; for immediate purposes its major defect is that it leads Roheim to ignore many of the particularistic features of shell-money, how these are interconnected to form a coherent system or complex, and how this complex in turn contributes to the Tolai ethos. To this end I find it more profitable to begin with the classical exposition of the concept of anal erotism.

This concept has to be understood in the context of Freud's theory of infantile sexual development. Sexuality, he holds, is not an eruption which suddenly makes its presence felt with the onset of puberty; it is seen rather as developing in a sequence of epigenetic stages, in the infantile phase each stage being associated with a particular zone of gratification: the mouth, the anus, and then the genitals. Each stage affects the way in which succeeding ones are experienced, and in turn contributes in varying ways to the pattern of adult sexuality eventually achieved. Psychoanalytic attention was early drawn to the importance of the anal region, not simply because of the interest that infants

¹³ The paper does not appear to have come to the attention of anthropologists. At any rate, it is not listed in the two standard bibliographies of the area, Taylor (1965) and An Ethnographic Bibliography of New Guinea (1968).

display in their faeces but because the excitation of the anal canal was seen to be a source of pleasurable sensation; in a word, the zone was libidinized. The infantile interest itself takes a number of different, though closely interconnected, forms: the endeavour to derive as much pleasure from the act of defecation as possible; the effort to exercise one's individual control over the act; and fascination with the product itself. These experiences of pleasure, however, are repressed very early in life, and the original impulse is deflected into

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other directions through the mechanisms of reaction-formation and sublimation. In the case of adult individuals psychoanalysis has frequently been able to show how distinctive character traits can be traced back to their origins in unresolved conflicts centred on the anal zone (for example, Jones, 1918; Abraham, 1921).

What has all this got to do with Tambu? For answer we may refer briefly to Erikson's concept of the organ mode. The child's earliest encounters with his environment are mediated through the organs of the body; depending on the stage of psychic and motor development, each of the erogenous zones becomes in turn the focus of a mode of approach that gradually becomes generalized. Thus, from this point of view, for example, the anal-urethral sphincters are the anatomic models for the retentive and eliminative modes, prototypes of a great variety of behavioural forms (Erikson, 1963, p. 52). For the child the act of defecation is a yielding of part of himself, and the infantile experience of that act, and the wishes and fantasies which accompany or are woven around it, may come to colour his reactions to subsequent situations that appear to involve giving or retaining. It is in this way that, as Freud (1918, p. 72) has observed, "one of the most important manifestations of the transformed erotism derived from this source [that is, the anal stage] is to be found in the treatment of money, for in the course of life this precious material attracts on to itself the psychical interest which was originally proper to faeces, the product of the anal zone."

In a paper of particular interest in the present context Ferenczi (1914) has traced the steps by which the child passes from the original idea of excrement to the seemingly remote one of money, and shows how that which is so often regarded with distaste comes to be symbolically associated with what is most treasured. At first the infant finds great satisfaction in playing with his faeces. This soon becomes disagreeable because of the smell, but the original interest is still revealed in the pleasure found in making mud-pies. A further development occurs when substances which, because of their stickiness, moistness and colour are apt to leave traces on the body and clothing, become despised and avoided as "dirty things". The symbol is dehydrated, and the child's interest turns to sand, a substance which while the colour of earth, is cleaner and dry. Sand in turn is replaced by more acceptable substances which

lack odour but are dry and hard: pebbles, stones and then marbles or buttons, which are not only col-

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lected but are used in childish exchanges. The transformation is complete when the original interest comes to focus on money: "an odorless, dehydrated filth that has been made to shine" (Ferenczi, 1914, p. 276).

Ferenczi's paper offers a number of suggestive leads into a discussion of the symbolism of Tambu. The shells themselves used to be gathered in Blanche Bay but, it will be recalled, the main source for many years has been Nakanai on north New Britain. There the shells are collected by wading in the shallow waters at various points along the coast. There is then an immediate association of Tambu with mud.¹⁴ This at once serves to remind us of Brown's observation that when originally fished the shells have a dull brown colour and only acquire value as Tambu when they have become bleached. It is also of interest to note that the childish practices and games referred to by Ferenczi are also a source of pleasure among Tolai children. In a game played by very small boys, called a *varpo*, one of the boys makes a number of little heaps of sand in which he hides something, as a seed, which the others then have to find. There is another game, called a pip¹⁵ of which Powell (1883, p. 184) has given an early account. Here the participants mould in their hands small oval cakes of sand which they throw into the air so as to land in the water. The point of the game is to see who can throw most cakes into the water without breaking apart; if they drop whole into the water they do so with a hollow sound and gain the thrower a score. Powell also mentions that he often saw grown men and women playing the game for hours on end. Children have also been observed making "toy" Tambu from shells which they use in play among themselves, according to Romilly (1886, p. 25) driving as hard bargains with each other as their fathers would do with the genuine article. At the same time it should perhaps be mentioned that children are introduced to the uses of Tambu at a very early age and in my own experience if children were present on the occasion of a distribution of shell-money they would be included among the recipients.

It is in dreams, fantasies and myths that symbolic equations or identifications are most readily detected. Unfortunately, not suffi-

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¹⁴ Although I did not hear the word used in this particular context, it may be worth noting that the adjective *pipia* which means sandy, as of the sea bottom, also means dirty. The same term is also used as a noun meaning rubbish or refuse.

¹⁵ A pip also means a heap or mound. I am unable to say if there is an etymological link with the word *pipia* mentioned in footnote 1, above, or with another word *pipi* discussed in footnote 2, p.173.

ciently alive to the issues at the time, I did not collect a great deal of material of this kind. However, the Tolai traditionally enjoyed a rich oral literature, a good deal of which has been collected by Meier (1909) and Kleintitschen (1924). One myth recorded by Meier, and cited by Roheim (1923, p. 399), is of particular interest because it relates to the origins of Tambu. It tells of a small boy who once asked his parents for food. They replied: "Go and eat your own excrement and that of the other children with whom you play." Deeply offended, the child left. He took off on a journey carried on the back of a talking tree-trunk. At length they came to a foreign land where a hen was hopping on the beach. The hen asked the tree-trunk where the boy came from, to which the trunk replied that he hankered for the ejecta (auswurf) of the sea in Nakanai. Then, with thirty baskets filled with shell-money, they returned to the boy's home. The death platform and sacrifice had already been prepared. The huge expenditure of shell-money had impoverished the parents, but the lad was able to repay them and became rich. Since then, it is said, "We all yearn for the ejecta of the sea at Nakanai".

Our task, however, is not simply to establish a particular symbolic identification, but to understand it. Following psychoanalytic theory, where behaviour in regard to money shows strong emotional overtones it usually suggests that money has come to serve as a private copro-symbol, pointing in turn to the likelihood of contradictory attitudes in regard to the act of defecation. The theory indeed indicates a number of sources of conflict surrounding the act. There is, in the first place, the problem of balancing the pleasure of retention as against the pleasure of elimination. Linked with this is the effort to retain control over the act as against requirements to yield demanded endo-genously or from the outside. Control here is associated with the development of the sphincters, as well as the general muscle system, giving the child, as Erikson (1963, p. 82) puts it, greater power over the environment in the ability to reach out and hold on, to throw away and to push away, to appropriate things and to keep them at a distance. There is, then, in the act of defecation a sense of achievement, a form of gratification that reinforces the child's narcissism, his pride in his own powers. By the same token, it is this very sense of achievement that is likely to bring the child into conflict with his environment - interference is apt to be met by fierce resentment, if not violent rage. Thus the act of defecation becomes the focus of a struggle for

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autonomy, ushering in the stage of anal sadism. Faeces, the product of the act, now become an expression of power, which may be used productively or destructively; displaced on to copro-symbols, these may be manipulated creatively or serve as instruments of hostile aggression.

A number of the best-known discussions of anal erotism in the psychoanalytic

literature (for example, Freud, 1908; Jones, 1918; Abraham, 1921; Menninger, 1943) have taken as their central theme the importance of the anal zone for character formation. Although my own concern here is not with delineating the dimensions of Tolai personality - a task in any case it would be absurd to undertake by focusing simply on one stage of libidinal development - it may nevertheless be instructive to follow up a few of these leads. It was Freud who first drew attention to the regular combination of a number of character traits displayed by many of his patients, all of which appeared to belong together and to be linked to anal erotism: the analysands were especially orderly, parsimonious and obstinate. In considering this now classical triad of traits in the Tolai context, it is convenient to begin with parsimony, a caution in the use of one's products or possessions that readily shades over into miserliness. Among the Tolai, as we have seen, the retentive impulse is especially marked. "No man is held in greater contempt than a spendthrift ..." "To let money go for nothing in return or to pay a shell more than is necessary for an article is considered the height of folly." (Danks, 1887, pp. 315, 308.) Even today there are still many individuals who maintain special houses or rooms where their accumulated wealth in shell-money is stored; to be invited to inspect the wealth, usually a matter to be kept secret, counts as a great privilege; to enter the *pal na vuvuvung* is to be reminded of the treasure-house of Midas.

A tendency towards miserliness is said to be essentially characteristic of the aged. I was present at the hearing on Matupit of one very bitter and protracted dispute between an old crone and her grown-up grandchildren. The dispute erupted because, the latter claimed, they had been "driven away" by their grandmother who had spoken harsh things of their deceased parents, and was clearly unwilling to contribute shell-money for the "purchase" of brides for her grandsons. After the hearing, which was brought to an inconclusive halt by an outburst of hysterical sobbing throughout the audience, one man explained to me that everyone knew the grandmother as an angry old

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woman who was always scolding those who went near her coconut trees. Another added that she was a *tamuk* or a *lagodo*, a grasping greedy woman who, as she approached death, was anxious to keep all her Tambu to herself.

This is an extreme case, but it helps to illustrate how fine can be the line that separates parsimony, which is socially approved, from stinginess, which is socially condemned. The Tolai resolve this potential source of conflict by allowing the retentive impulse full play, but insisting at the same time that at some point it should be matched by an act of giving. As Salisbury (1970, p. 279) remarks of the process of making shell-money up into a coil - an act which removes it from circulation - it implies a promise that the coiler will eventually freely donate his Tambu to all and sundry. In psychological terms what this means is that the primary injury to narcissism suffered by having to yield one's

faeces is compensated for by expressions of approval accorded to the act of giving: one gives as an act of love and in return for love. In sociological terms, too, social approbation is given in fullest measure to him that gives most lavishly; giving, indeed, is the act around which the whole social system revolves. That both psychological and sociological processes are equally involved, that they reinforce one another, and that they have to be taken equally into account is, I believe, shown very clearly in the culturally denned attitude towards niggardliness. Tolai values in this regard have been well stated by Brown (1910, p. 252):

Niggardliness, especially with regard to food, is always wrong. A man of good conduct must make plenty of feasts; he must buy dances both for his own benefit and for the pleasure of the people; he must be loving to his friends; he must look well after his children, and he must be a good fighter. A bad man is a stingy man, one who takes no interest in his children, is quarrelsome, one who speaks evil of others, and one who kills another without cause.

Now what is of particular interest here is the fate of the niggardly in the afterlife. In general, ideas about conditions in the Abode of the Dead are extremely hazy, save in one notable regard - the treatment of the niggardly. Brown (1910, p. 195) comments: "So far as I could gather, the punishment for this was the only kind of which they seemed definitely assured." Niggardly people had their ears filled with filth, and their buttocks were dashed against the buttress roots of a chestnut tree. In another context Brown (1910, p. 399) expresses

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puzzlement why the buttocks are selected as the most suitable part for punishment. I do not know what symbolic significance attaches to the chestnut tree;¹⁶ nor can one be certain that the symbolism of afflicting the buttocks has not been over-determined. Nevertheless, in terms of the preceding analysis, one meaning that can be reasonably inferred seems fairly patent: in his mortal life the victim had refused to part with his faeces (his possessions); now, to adopt the common vulgarism, they were beating the shit out of him.¹⁷

¹⁶ Danks (1909, p. 454) has recorded similar ideas, but he specifies the tree as a banyan (a giau). This tree, unlike the chestnut, is very rich in symbolic associations. In particular, it is regarded with great fear as a source of illness and death. The afflicting of the buttocks is also referred to by Parkinson (1907, p. 79).

¹⁷ In daily life the observer is likely to gain the impression that Tolai are rather indulgent of their children and that they do not impose strict discipline. This impression was confirmed at a number of village meetings on Matupit when the question of upbringing of children was discussed; on these occasions various speakers referred to the need for firmer control. Nevertheless, it would be wrong to assume that children are never chastised. On one occasion I observed a young father switching his five-year-old daughter across the buttocks when she threw a temper tantrum, while nearby an old man expressed his approval. I have also seen the mother of a very small babe instructing it in what it might and might not

A second set of traits which derive by way of a reaction-formation from anal erotism relates to orderliness and cleanliness. Early observers on the Gazelle Peninsula were struck by these characteristics, all the more so perhaps because in so many other respects the Tolai appeared so irredeemably savage. Villages were made up of clusters of tiny fenced-off hamlets, each occupied by a small domestic group. Brown (1910, pp. 23-24) remarks that the interior of these compounds was kept scrupulously clean, while outside evidence of taste and appreciation of the beautiful was revealed in the planting of dracaenas, crotons, and coleus plants of the brightest colours.

Similarly, according to Powell (1883, p. 252), the strictest sanitary laws prevailed, all offal being removed by the women and either thrown into the sea or, if in the bush, buried some distance away. Yet it is clear that behind this behaviour there also lay considerations that have little in common with modern notions of hygiene. I refer here to the concept of *puta*, *ejecta*; excreta, nail clippings, the shell of an areca nut which one has thrown away and so on, should they fall into the hands of another, immediately leave one open to attack by sorcery. Sorcery, however, is not simply an expression of individual malevo-

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lence; the capacity to control anti-human magic was also seen as an important attribute of traditional Tolai big-men. Before taking up, then, the broader theme of aggressive behaviour, of which sorcery is but one aspect, and the relevance of anality to it, it is necessary to take a closer look at the nature of power in Tolai society, its connection with wealth, and the ambivalence that attaches to its use both at the sociological and psychological levels.

I have mentioned earlier the impression made on Danks by Tolai frugality and industry, the way they devoted their energies to productive activities that would yield wealth in Tambu. In this regard Tolai ideology has remained unchanged, and encouragement to work hard and produce new wealth by planting coconuts or cocoa trees is still a constant theme of elders' speeches at village assemblies. What Danks did not fully grasp, however, was the nature of the connection between wealth and power. That there is a close link is immediately suggested by the expressions that Tolai elders use when they are exhorting the young men to greater efforts: *ongor* or *dekdek*. These terms can be translated as "work hard", but more usually they refer to power or strength. Sometimes the connection emerges even more explicitly. Once, for example, an elder at

touch by lightly switching the buttocks with the leaves of a plant lying to hand. The act of switching is referred to as *pipi* [*di pipia*). Although I cannot be sure whether it has any significance, it may be worth mentioning that *pipi* is also the word for lightning. In the traditional belief, a flash of lightning was said to mark the entry of a recently deceased person into the *matana kaia*, the Abode of the Dead.

Matupit was delivering one of these harangues, urging the people to labour more intensively in order to raise their living standards. At this point he referred to the position of the small, immigrant Chinese community. "In our day", he said, "we have seen the Chinese grow wealthy. They live well with their wealth. We too should be strong (should work hard) so that it is we who rule them, not they who rule us." Here, as in more purely indigenous contexts, the underlying idea is clear: hard work improves one's standard of living, but even more important, to produce wealth is the guarantee of one's autonomy, enabling one to proclaim that he is beholden to no man. Associated with this attitude are a number of behavioural characteristics commonly noted of the Tolai: self-willed-ness, obduracy, assertiveness, ambition and pride, all adding up to an aggressive individualism.

All of these qualities are socially esteemed and they are most frequently exemplified in the person of the big-man. Traditionally, as we saw earlier, the big-man was essentially an entrepreneur who converted command of wealth in shell-money into political power. His contemporary counterpart engages in more varied business enterprises of a modern kind, but in terms of temperament, modes of opera-

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tion and goals there is remarkable continuity. Scarlett Epstein (1964) has provided an account of ToDugan, a prominent figure in the inland community of Rapitok, who is also fairly representative of the Tolai big-man of today. ToDugan conveys the impression of a restless man of seemingly unbounded energy whose every moment appears to be dedicated to the sole task of building up his various businesses and making money. The owner of a large truck and a copra-drier, as well as many cocoa trees, he puts the profits of each enterprise to work to finance the latest scheme he has conceived that will further increase his wealth. Yet all of this has been accomplished without any sacrifice of his "traditional" interests. On the contrary, ToDugan has remained as avid in the pursuit of Tambu as he is of cash and, as a man who aspires to be regarded as a local leader, he has been an ardent sponsor of a number of major ceremonies. That he enjoys indeed a powerful position within the village is immediately evident. For, despite the fact that his multifarious interests and activities keep him constantly on the move and involve his frequent absence from home, few major decisions affecting the local community are likely to be reached without being referred to him. Routine matters of village government could be left to others; there was little doubt who the real big-man was.

Yet there is another side to all this. For there is an inherent contradiction within a social system that, on the one hand, encourages the emergence of big-men and, on the other, endorses an egalitarian ideology. Salisbury (1970, p. 287) has argued that a Tolai variant of the Horatio Alger myth serves to cloak the conflict; the way of advancement is open to every Tolai provided that he works

hard and accumulates Tambu. This is fine so far as it goes, but it does not get to grips with the problem of aggression. For if social value attaches to personal assertiveness and aggrandizement, we must also expect a high level of competitiveness and belligerency. Two examples here may serve to illustrate the conflict of values. The first relates to the handling of anger, a *kankan*, the second to envy or covetousness, a *varngu*.

In their interpersonal relations Tolai can be warm and friendly, but they also tend to be prickly and quick to take offence. Older people in particular can be highly sensitive to slight, real or imaginary, and are given to outbursts of anger. The term *a tena kankan* is used disapprovingly of those individuals who are known for their irascibility and hot

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temper. On the other hand, it is said, if one is annoyed with another one should speak out, purge one's anger, for in wrath stored up (*a kankan ivai*) are the seeds of sorcery and death. Frequently in speaking of their forefathers, the *ngalangala* or great ones of the past, Matupi would refer to them as *aumana tena kankan*, men of fierce disposition who were quick to anger. But the ambivalence conveyed on these occasions was unmistakable. On the one hand, the expression put a distance between themselves and their ancestors by contrasting their own mildness and reasonableness with the latter's ferocity. What was no less clear was the admiration that tinged their remarks, for that anger was also a mark as well as a source of their power. The big-men of the past are recalled not only for their lavish generosity and the great ceremonies they sponsored, but also as men who inspired fear, in particular the fear of sorcery.

We find a similar picture in regard to envy. Tolai themselves do not always appear to distinguish carefully between the concepts of jealousy and envy. Thus the expression *a varngu* may sometimes be used in a situation of sexual jealousy, but the contexts in which I most commonly heard it rarely involved reference to women. Rather they were situations in which envy was generated by another's enterprise and prospective success.¹⁸ Thus, one case that I recorded at Matupit was overtly a dispute over land, but it was soon transparent to many of those present at the hearing that it was an attempt, inspired by covetousness, by two older men to prevent a younger one from putting up a new store on a site that promised the development of a lucrative business. Afterwards one of my Matupi friends commented:

¹⁸ For some discussion of the distinction between the concepts of jealousy and envy see Klein (1957). She defines envy as the angry feeling that another person possesses and enjoys something desirable - the envious impulse being to take it away or to spoil it.

"Such are our ways [*kaveve mangamangana damana*] ... It's just the same with cocoa. A man plants cocoa and when you see that his plants are beginning to bear fruit you step in and claim that he has planted on your land. It is the spitefulness of the people [*a varngu kai ra tatrai*]." Suspicion (*a uartakun*) is the handmaiden of envy and jealousy, and while it is generally rife in everyday life it is on the occasion of death that it becomes most evident. Despite their long exposure to Western ideas, the Tolai still find difficulty in assimilating the concept of death through natural causes. Today on Matupit the immediate explanation of a death is likely to be a naturalistic one, but

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rarely is there a lengthy passage of time before the first murmurings of sorcery are heard, and the "real" causes of death are sought in the machinations of some envious rival. Yet what is so striking in these cases is that it is precisely those qualities which inspire envy and jealousy that are also the most admired, and which successful big-men are said to embody.

Tolai do not appear to be consciously aware of these various conflicts in their system of values. On the other hand, their culture does provide them, I believe, with an unconscious model by reference to which the contradictions are resolved on the plane of symbolism. In Tolai mythology there is a whole series of tales relating to two brothers, the culture heroes ToKabinana and ToKarvuvu. ToKabinana is recalled as having introduced everything good and useful, the founder of every art and craft; he is the personification of wisdom and cleverness. ToKarvuvu, by contrast, is credited with all the barren and stony land and everything evil, hurtful, ugly or ill-formed. ToKabinana, that is to say, uses his energies creatively, he is the prototype of the man who works productively, so that if one has performed a task particularly well it will be said of him: "ToKabinana did [or made] it." ToKarvuvu, on the other hand, cannot undertake a job without bungling it, or worse, bringing utter disaster in his wake. Thus the two brothers may be seen as representing the two faces of aggression, the one associated with life-enhancing qualities, the other with destruction and death. In reality of course the creative and destructive aspects of aggression are so intricately interwoven as to be inseparable. From this point of view ToKarvuvu appears simply as the alter ego of his brother. The myth faces the problem, and resolves it, by making use of a simple "splitting-mechanism".

The use of myth as an unconscious folk model is illuminating, but I do not believe that the task of the anthropologist finishes at this point. It is also important to ask why the indigenous model takes the form that it does. In the present instance I believe that we can make some progress in this direction with the help of certain psychoanalytic insights. Thus one might say, in psychoanalytic terms, that ToKabinana represents a man who has sublimated

his anal erotism and become a mature artist, whereas ToKarvuvu still "smears"; in the latter's efforts, that is to say, the original impulse is still direct and undisguised (see Fenichel, 1946, p. 153). This view receives some support from other comments I recorded about the two brothers.

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ToKabinana, I have remarked, was the wise one. Before he spoke and acted he considered the matter. By contrast, ToKarvuvu was a man of quick temper, easily roused, who ranted and stormed first and only asked questions afterwards. For the Tolai, as I have said, ToKarvuvu represents man's capacity for destruction, and it is to him that responsibility for introducing death is attributed, but what is especially interesting is the way in which this capacity is consistently perceived in anal terms.¹⁹

A view of faeces as an instrument of hostile aggression emerges in a variety of contexts. It receives its most open and direct expression in verbal abuse. In disputes, or when tempers are roused, people will curse one another shouting u a taka (you shit), una peke (you will excrete), i ang ra bitim (your anus stinks) and many other expressions of a similar kind. One of the most abusive insults of all is to call a person a lup taka²⁰ which is equivalent to accusing him of indulging in homosexual practices. Verbal abuse is frowned upon, and sometimes the guilty party will be brought before the village assembly or uarkurai (see Epstein, A. L., 1974) and ordered to pay a sum of shell-money by way of atonement; but it is not intrinsically dangerous. Sorcery is quite another matter. Tolai doctrine and practice in regard to sorcery are much too complex for extended discussion here. The point of immediate relevance is the importance of the concept of puta mentioned earlier. Puta refers to anything which has been closely associated with one's person, which one has cast away, and which can be worked upon by the sorcerer to achieve his nefarious

¹⁹ Or occasionally urethral, as in the following myth I recorded. One day ToKabinana said to ToKarvuvu that he should lead the people to weed the gardens. (The word for weed used here was mimic, to clear the ground, which in earlier days was done with a digging-stick.) So ToKarvuvu went off with the people, but when he gave them instructions on what they should do he used instead the word mim, which means to urinate. So, from the top of the garden to the bottom, they urinated. At last ToKabinana arrived to see how the work was progressing, but he saw no evidence of mimic, only of minim, and he upbraided ToKarvuvu for his stupidity.

²⁰ Lup refers to a particularly strong liking or propensity for something. Thus a lup man is literally a lover of food, that is, a glutton. By the same token a lup laka is a lover of excrement. Matupi sometimes spoke as though homosexuality was wholly unknown to them in the past, and only learned of through the introduction of prisons. There is some suggestion of homosexual practices in the earlier literature discussing the iniet. This was a society of sorcerers which the Germans quickly extirpated, and on whose activities it is now difficult to establish anything with much certainty. The extreme distaste with which Tolai respond to any expression of homosexuality might suggest an early and severe repression; the practices mentioned below (see p. 179) may offer further evidence in support of this view.

purposes. Excrement is the prototype of *puta*, but any kind of *ejecta* may serve - as I discovered when I was once cautioned against the casual throwing

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away of a cigarette. In this context then *faeces* are seen as a weapon of potentially destructive power.²¹

There are other connections of a direct kind between sorcery and anal sadism. Winthuis (1926) reports that when, after a number of attempts, a sorcerer has failed to achieve his ends by the use of magic, he may resort to more plainly physical means. The victim would be assailed in some isolated spot by the sorcerer and his assistants. They would then thrust a knife into his thighs or a spear into his rectum; the spear was then broken off, leaving the head lodged in the anus. Then the man was beaten and had his throat twisted until he no longer had the use of his voice. Thus he would die shortly afterwards without being able to disclose the manner of his death, which would be attributed to someone's powerful sorcery.

Sometimes the cloacal theme appears only thinly disguised, as when a man seeks to ensorcel another by casting a *lika*, a small stone or pebble formed of volcanic waste, over his victim's house. In other cases it is concealed behind a more complex web of symbolic associations. Thus Brown (1910, p. 195) reports, for example, the alarm that was felt if one had been sitting under a tree from which a flying-fox (*a ganau*) had been disturbed. "If anything should drop from the bat or from the tree on which it was hanging, it would be regarded as an omen either of good or bad fortune, according to the nature of the article which fell upon or near him. If it were useless or dirty, he would certainly apprehend some very serious results." These curious ideas become more explicable when related to others that are held about the flying-fox. Because the *ganau* inhabits caves and becomes active only at night, it is held to have close connections with the spirits of the dead. In particular, those who died without wealth in Tambu, instead of being admitted to the *matana kaia*, might be left to take up their abode in a flying-fox. According to Danks (1909, p. 454), should this creature be disturbed during the day and fly across country, the people are full of fear until it settles somewhere; should it happen to do so on a tree overhanging a village, that village is greatly perturbed,

²¹ ' It follows from this that the act of defecation is attended by a good deal of secrecy. The privacy of the act ensures that one is undisturbed, but even more that no evildoer will discover and thus be able to make use of one's *faeces*. One of the village sections on the island of Matupit is called Kilingalingen. This means literally to sit casting one's eyes back over one's shoulder. The section acquired its name because, before people started to build their houses there, it had been an area of bush which was sometimes used for purposes of defecation. But because it was also a somewhat exposed spot, they had to squat casting their eyes around against the presence of intruders.

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especially if the villagers had recently taken part in killing and eating a person. In this instance the droppings of the *ganau* clearly represent the means by which the dead exact their vengeance.

Beliefs about sorcery or ideas held about such creatures as the flying-fox afford us a fleeting glimpse of the Tolai world of projective fantasy. To trace the structure of that world would be a major undertaking in itself, and one which may no longer be possible. For present purposes, however, it is enough to remark that for the most part it is the habitat of a bewildering variety of creatures or spirits, usually referred to collectively as *tambaran* or *kaia*. Sometimes these are perceived in human form, though with certain clearly distinguishable features, like the *tutana vurakit* which has four sharp instruments like nails in its mouth instead of teeth and so lacks the power of speech; sometimes they are envisaged as creatures of the most grotesque and bizarre kinds. Invariably they are malevolent and always to be feared as a source of danger and death. There is evidently a deep and pervasive fear of death which is associated (unconsciously) with both oral and anal aggression. There is at the same time, on the conscious or cultural level, a similar preoccupation with death, but phrased, as it were, in positive rather than negative terms: death remains a fearful thing, yet much of one's life is devoted to preparation for it by working towards the accumulation of Tambu. What then is the relationship between these contrasting attitudes and behavioural patterns? More particularly, why is shell-money so intimately associated with death? It is to these questions that we must now turn.

Tambu and death

The question of the close relationship of shell-money to the cult of the dead was one of those to which Roheim (1923) chiefly addressed himself. Briefly, he found the answer in the drama of the primordial parricide; funerary rites, he argued, have their origins in the identification of the sons with the dead father to whom they offer by way of atonement their anal products (originally excrement, later money) in return for oral gratification (the body of the mother, that is, food). Roheim's fuller analysis offers a number of interesting suggestions, but his phylogenetic and pseudo-historic approach leads him to take little account of the riches of the ethnographic data, and away from

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any attempt to trace out their ramifications, psychological and sociological, for any particular social group. Just as the first responsibility of the psychoanalyst is to the primary, and in a sense unique, data produced by his patient, so the first responsibility of the anthropologist is towards the ethnographic material.

What is so striking about the Tolai in this regard is the special importance they attach to death and the central position it occupies in their culture. From one point of view of course death is a simple datum of existence; in the words of the Talmud, "for all creatures, death has been prepared from the beginning". Mortality therefore is something with which individuals and groups alike are all compelled to come to grips, to which they must seek to define a relationship. Hence, despite the universality of death, the responses and solutions arrived at by different peoples are often highly variable. The Matupi, for example, used sometimes to contrast their own attitudes towards death with those of the Japanese with which they had acquired some familiarity in the days of the Second World War. A Japanese, it was said, preferred death to the experience of pain. For themselves it was otherwise; death was what they feared above all. Aware of this general attitude, I was particularly interested to observe Tolai reactions one day when they were preparing a grave. The soil at Matupit is of volcanic origin and, having little to bind it, collapses readily. On this occasion one side of the grave suddenly fell in, exposing part of a skull. Somewhat to my surprise, this produced no marked reaction save to draw my attention to it in the most pragmatic way. I was made to realize that it was not so much the physical fact of death which is the source of fear as the ideas and fantasies that are woven around it.²² In the absence of more direct evidence, these are best approached through those social contexts in which they chiefly find expression - funerary and mortuary rites.

As in other societies, the scale of the funerary ceremonies was a function of the social status of the deceased, and the most elaborate rites were for those who had achieved wealth and prominence in the community. A death was announced by the beating of the *garamut*, the slitgong drum whose origins are attributed to ToKarvuvu, and a wild

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outburst of lamentation among the women and children. Winthuis (1926) describes how women would throw themselves to the ground, tear their hair out, fill their mouths with earth and dirt and behave altogether as if they had been overpowered by sorrow. Winthuis adds that all this is usually show only. But if there is much behaviour on these occasions that is culturally enjoined, there is also much that is spontaneous, an expression of genuine grief and loss. At one funeral I attended the young widow was quite hysterical with grief, and it was

²² A somewhat similar observation is made by Parkinson (1907, p. 81). Seemingly, in the past, the skull of a dead man might be produced at certain ceremonies, but it was no more than a visible sign of the presence of the deceased at the celebration in his honour. As evidence that no particular emotion or value attached to the skull, Parkinson records that after the celebrations he was able to buy the skulls for practically nothing without any difficulty.

only with the greatest difficulty that she could be restrained from throwing herself into the grave of her husband. I also knew one couple who went into a prolonged period of mourning on the death of a favourite child; during this time they appeared dressed only in black, the traditional colour of mourning, and observed a number of self-imposed taboos. Moreover, the concept of *niligur*, grief or sorrow, runs very deep in the culture, and its expression is not confined to formal occasions.²³

In earlier days, when death was seen to be approaching, two structures were erected, one in which the corpse would rest and where he would finally be buried (*a pal na minat*), the other a small cook-house nearby. After interment, a task formerly allotted to the brothers or uterine nephews, that is, members of the *vunatarai* of the deceased, a group of "watchers" were "locked" in the *pal na minat*, where they were attended in all their needs by a number of women who otherwise remain within the house of the deceased. Of this particular aspect of the rites it is said *A tarai dia gugu ma a varden dia ua palai*: the men make merry and entertain the people while the women "sleep in hiding" and only emerge to serve the "watchers". Meanwhile, within the *pal na minat* two fires had been lit, one on either side of the grave. These were said to warm the dead person (*vamadir ra minat*) as well as to remove the foul odour that filled the hut. On the fire were also cast the maggots that emerged from the grave; when they ceased to appear this part of the rite came to an end. Then there was a feast for all those who had taken part, and a distribution of shell-money.

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However, this was by no means the end of the matter; in the case of someone of particular prominence it was merely the prelude to a series of ceremonies that might go on over a period of years. These might include a *balaguan*, held from three months to a year after death, when the house of the deceased was ceremonially destroyed to the accompaniment of dancing, feasting and yet further distributions of Tambu. Some time later there might be a performance of the *tatabar*, an offering of food to the spirit of the deceased. This was placed high on a tree, near the spot where the dead man reposed. Then all the people departed the place and went to stay in the bush, leaving the spirit of the dead man to regale himself on the repast prepared for him. The rite, known as a *vinamu*, was brought to an end by the appearance of a, masked figure known

²³ Here, as in other regards, my own observations amply confirm those of Parkinson (1907, p. 80). The men, he notes, are by nature uncommunicative and deem it improper to display their grief openly but, he goes on, "I have seen tears rolling down the cheeks of old men when { showed them photographs of sons or wives who were dead for some time. Women were much freer in the expression of their feelings, and one often came upon them in the gardens or in the bush shedding tears for the dead." Similarly, when I paid a return visit to Matupit after a lapse of eight years, many of the women who saw me immediately started weeping. It was then explained that this was because of my association with their husbands who had died in the meantime.

as a *tubuan na kurakuradui*, to whom offerings of shell-money were made. Finally, perhaps some years later, there might be a great festival of remembrance, a *balaguan na warwanuknuk*, to honour not only the dead man but all the members of his *vunatarai*. It should also be noted here that the *tubuan*, referred to frequently in, passing, has particularly strong associations with death, and may appear at a number of the rites; in this connection it will be recalled that the *matamatam*, the climactic rite in the cult of *dukduk* and *tubuan*, is always in commemoration of the dead.

Even in the past there was considerable variation between different Tolai communities in regard to mortuary customs, but the underlying themes and concerns were universal. Today in many of the villages a number of customs and practices have fallen into desuetude, but even in places like Matupit, where the entire ceremonial life has been seriously eroded, strenuous efforts are still made to ensure that the dead are properly honoured in the traditional fashion.²⁴

All of these ceremonies contribute to what Goodenough (1955), describing a somewhat similar situation in Nakanai on north New Britain, has aptly called the pageant of death. For the Tolai death is feared above all, but within the framework of their culture they have made it a major focus of celebration. I have noted the theme of grief, a *niligur*, and this is given expression on every ceremonial occasion. Whenever the *tubuan*, which always carries the name of an ancestress

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of the *vunatarai*, or even a representation of the figure,²⁵ appeared publicly I always observed that while it was greeted with loud exclamations of triumph [*dia kabinge*), numbers of women would at once burst into weeping. The appearance of the *tubuan*, I was told, recalled to memory a close kinsman who had died.

In the major ceremonies, however, grief is subordinated to the expression of emotions of quite a different kind. The *balaguan* is preeminently an occasion of triumph and pride, in which personal assertiveness and competitiveness are allowed the fullest expression. Brown (1910, p. 86) describes the boastful

²⁴ For an account of the rites which followed the death of one prominent Matupi while I was on the island see Epstein, A. L. (1969, pp. 232-236).

²⁵ At Matupit they perform a ceremony known as a *namata* for a young man about to be married. He is required to spend some time living secluded in the bush, attended only by a number of his companions. Then, on the appointed day, he is led back to the village under a kind of tabernacle, a *pal na mamankai*. A great deal of artistry goes into the construction of the tabernacle, which is often topped by a carved representation of the *tubuan* figure. The design immediately identifies the name and the *vunatarai* it represents.

behaviour that is a mark of these performances. At one point the big-man, the sponsor of the ceremony, will stand up and *ababut*, that is "show off in fighting attitude, will speak and brag, tell of his wealth, of the men he has killed, of the dances, charms, songs, etc., which he has brought, etc., and will also tell of what he intends to do". When he has finished, he presents some small portions of Tambu to the other big-men present who proceed to boast in similar fashion. This may be followed by a challenge from the sponsor to all present to try and remove his *butur*. The *butur* is a small tree on which in the past the big-man would have placed his offerings to the dead. Now, prancing around and brandishing a spear, he would invite his audience to challenge his supremacy. Only those who were wealthy in Tambu could rise to the bait, for if they were successful in removing the *butur* they would be presented with Tambu and other gifts which would have to be returned at some future date; it was in effect a challenge to stage a *balaguan* of equal splendour.

I myself never heard the term *ababut*, which appears to be peculiar to the Duke of York Islands. At Matupit the word associated with this kind of boastful behaviour was a *varpin*. If a man felt he had been slighted or insulted he would exclaim angrily in terms of self-aggrandizement: "U toia upi u tata ure iau? lau a lap. Pata tikai i taun iau" ("Who are you to talk about me? I am the fire that burns. There is none who surpasses me"), and much else in similar vein. In everyday life such boasting is strongly condemned. A braggart, a *lup tinata na varpin*, it is said, does not live long. In the context of the *balaguan*, how-

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ever, such behaviour is not merely permitted, it is an integral part of the ceremony and a *varpin* attached to every aspect of the day's events: the number of dances put on, the skill of the dancers, the beauty of their decorations, and the amounts of food and Tambu distributed. It is as though what is forbidden in secular life becomes legitimate in the context of rite and ceremony. Ceremony "tames" the impulse, transforms it by specifying the conditions under which what is ordinarily illicit becomes socially acceptable and even enjoined.

The symbolism of the *butur* must remain obscure, for many years have elapsed since the custom was practised at Matupit, and I was unable to explore the matter very far. Consideration of the role that Tambu plays in these ceremonies as a whole suggests, however, that among the impulses that find their expression on these occasions are those particularly associated with anal erotism. I have mentioned that the anal phase of infantile development, in psychoanalytic theory, is the focus of a variety of intrapsychic conflicts: as between the demands of retention and elimination, and in regard to the struggle for autonomy and the handling of aggression. We may see Tolai ceremonies, I suggest, as a projection and resolution of these conflicts through their expression in disguised form. I have argued that Tambu is a copro-symbol, a

displacement of the original infantile interest in excrement. By means of this cultural device, which emphasizes the importance of accumulating Tambu, Tolai are able to gratify the retentive impulse to the maximum extent possible: until death, when it is yielded up and distributed to the accompaniment of praise and acclamation in the rites that mark one's passing. Through Tambu, too, they are provided with a means of giving expression to the aggressive impulses that have their sources in anal erotism, as well as resolving the conflicts associated with that phase. Freud (1918, p. 81) points out that "faeces are the child's first *gift* [italics in original], the first sacrifice on behalf of his affection, a portion of his own body which he is ready to part with, but only for the sake of someone he loves. To use faeces as an expression of defiance ... is merely to turn this earlier 'gift' meaning into the regative." We are confronted here with the two faces of aggression. Both find their full representation in the context of the mortuary rites.

Faced with a case of conflict over the modes of retention and elimination, the psychoanalyst will expect his patient to entertain, as Erikson (1963, p. 59) puts it, peculiarly messy fantasies and violently

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hostile wishes of total elimination against selected individuals, especially those close to him who by necessity are forced to make demands on his inner treasures. Erikson goes on to comment that while the patient's deeds of passive and retentive hostility often remain unrecognizable to him and to his intended victims, he would be constantly compelled to undo, or to make amends, to atone for something done in fact or fantasy. We have seen something of these "messy fantasies" in Tolai preoccupations with sorcery. Such notions, however, are essentially the projection of one's own hostile impulses and a measure of one's own guilt. It is wholly appropriate therefore that death should also be the occasion of sacrifice, the final act of atonement, the yielding up of one's Tambu which alone ensures acceptance into the Abode of the Dead.

That Tambu is also a symbol of hostile aggression, a transformation of the anal impulse, is evident in a number of ways. The cutting of the coils of shell-money is held to be mystically dangerous, and those who are to undertake the task protect themselves by daubing the body with a *matatar*.²⁶ In cutting up a coil the

²⁶ The basic substance is a tar. This is described as a *pia na pikai*, mud which is deposited as a result of volcanic activity, or as the Tolai would prefer to express it, a product of the *kaia*, the demon associated with a volcano. Gathered by the women, tar is burned until it acquires a reddish colour. In this form it is used as a kind of paint on a variety of ceremonial occasions. It is also said to be used to medicate shell-money when it is being made up in the form of a lolo or coil. Tar itself appears to serve as a copro-symbol. If this is so, the idea underlying its use in the last Instance would seem to be analogous to the immunity conferred by the use of a vaccine to activate antibodies or, more colloquially, setting a thief to catch a thief.

man hacks at it furiously (Fig. 1). Then he moves round the assembly, breaking off small lengths of shell-money which he casts contemptuously at the feet of the recipients. They, for their part, studiously ignore the "gift". In these acts there is a plain hostility, but its sharpness is blurred as it becomes fused with a more positive expression of competitiveness.²⁷ We may also recall here the custom relating to the removal of the *butur* Salisbury's account of the *matamatam* where the big-men and their followers move around casting *pidik* at the feet of their friends/rivals by way of challenge. However, the *balaguan* is more properly to be regarded as a whole, and in this regard, like the *moka* exchanges of the Western Highlands described by Strathern (1971, 1974), it is an elaborate form of "ritualized conflict". Recalling such an occasion, a man will speak

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proudly of his own moiety: "We, the Pitalaba, stood together so that the Marmar should see our strength." In its thematic structure the *balaguan* is, from our point of view, merely a variation of the prototypical game called a *pip* which described earlier; the *baluguan*, how-

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ever, is a "game" for men, a great competitive event fought out with *Tambu*. The greater the amount of shell-money expended and distributed, the greater the success of the ceremony, and the more widespread and lasting the fame of its sponsor. In this context, then, *Tambu* expresses the creative aspects

Fig. 1. Cutting up a coil prior to distribution

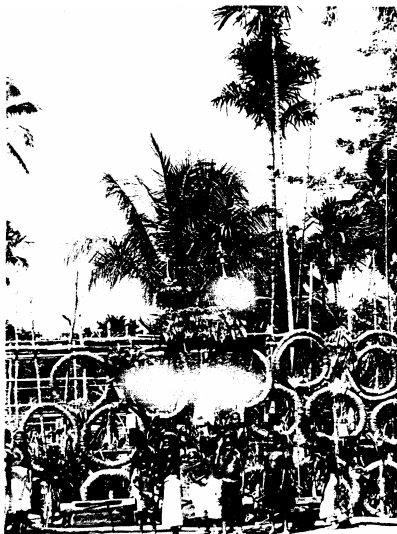
of aggression and pride, the sense of power and achievement that legitimately belong to the man who, through his own efforts and enterprise, is able to stage a successful ceremony. ;

All of these contending motives and impulses are given their most concentrated expression, and find their reconciliation, in the symbol of the *leo*. An essential prop in the staging of any ceremony designed to leave a mark on the memory,

²⁷ Since at Matupit my opportunities to observe the major ceremonies were necessarily restricted, I cannot say whether one would be able to detect in the course of a ceremony that transformation of the symbol from one pole of meaning to another that Turner (1967) has postulated.

the *leo* is a huge scaffolding made of bamboo supports, surmounted by carved representations of *dukduk* and *tubuan*, and hung, for all to admire, with numerous coils of Tambu (Fig. 2). In the light of the whole of the preceding discussion, it appears to me not too fantastic to suggest that the *loloi*, in appearance like a great wheel, is a transfigured representation of the anus. In this way, holding the centre of the stage, the *leo* stands as a supreme symbol, affirming and reconciling the conflicting values of triumph and contrition, dominance and submission.

In his account of the case of Wolf-Man, Freud (1918, p. 72) remarks: "We are accustomed to trace back interest in money, in so far as it is of a libidinal and not of a rational character, to excretory pleasure, and we expect normal people to keep their relations to money entirely free from libidinal influences and regulate them according to the demands of reality." Crucial here is the final reference to reality. For if the Tolai display in their behaviour traits that might strike the outside observer as characteristic of certain obsessionals, it is important to stress that their reality is not that of the neurotic individual of Western society who requires psychiatric help. If much of their behaviour in regard to Tambu appears compulsive, it is at the same time socially prescribed, necessary to the maintenance of their social arrangements, and in full accord with their social values. We may state the issues in rather different terms by saying that their social system appears to demand the development of certain anal characteristics. But if this is so, then at the same time ways have to be devised for handling the conflicts, both intrapsychic and social, that must



accompany such a development. In the main this is achieved, I believe, through the ceremonies that surround death. On the socio- (p. 189) logical plane these have obvious functions in maintaining the economic and political system. On the psychological plane they provide the occasion for an expression of the intrapsychic conflicts, and their transcending, in symbolic terms. On both levels they (p. 190) provide simultaneously, to adapt the language of psychoanalysis, an elaborate mechanism of defence²⁸.

My account has necessarily failed to answer many questions of detail. It also raises other

Fig. 2 Coils of Tambu garlanding the *leo* at a *balaguan*.

²⁸ Dr Don Tuzin has pointed out to me in a personal communication that my argument here comes fairly

questions of a more general nature. To draw attention to some regular pattern or set of relationships in the data is not to explain them. If it is the case that certain Tolai social arrangements are closely linked to the development of anal characteristics, how is such a development achieved? What has been the mechanism by which it is generated? To such questions I cannot give any certain answers, but it is important that at least some attempt should be made to discuss them. Before doing so, however, it is necessary to consider the status of shell-money under contemporary conditions.

The persistence of Tambu

Gluckman (1964) has pointed to the traps that await the anthropologist who is tempted to stray across disciplinary boundaries and is thus led beyond "the limits of naivety". The dangers lie not simply in moving out of the field of one's own professional competence, but in the likelihood that one will be led into confusing different frames of reference, for example, by offering psychological explanations of "social facts" or vice versa. The psychoanalyst for his part, is no more immune to such temptations, and the psychoanalytic literature is unfortunately replete with examples that testify to the weight of Gluckman's argument. Roheim's article on "holy money" is a case in point, for it will be recalled how he sought the origins of the social use of money in terms of intrapsychic processes that were phylogenetically given. However, the objections to which this particular kind of approach leaves itself open have not escaped other psychoanalysts, most notably perhaps Fenichel, who also points the way out of the seeming dilemma of employing psychological concepts in sociological contexts. Fenichel (1938) castigates those who would derive the origins of complex social institutions, such as money or capitalism, from instinctual impulses associated with anal erotism. Anal erotism produces the desire to collect, he points out, but an irrational desire

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for possession merely occupies itself with money, it does not itself create money. To deduce, as Roheim does, the function of money from anal sources, Fenichel remarks, would be like drawing from the secret sexual meaning of walking in the hysteric, shown by psycho-analysis, the deduction that we walk for the sake of sexual pleasure and not in order to get from one place to another. Nowhere then among the "instinctual" goals does money appear as such; "only the presence and the function of money in the social system furnish these unspecific instinctual drives with this specific object." Thus for Fenichel impulse and social reality are seen as mutually interacting; his view, indeed,

close to certain ideas proposed by Spiro (1965). I was not familiar with Spiro's paper at the time I drafted the passage. Professor Spiro, who was kind enough to read an earlier version of my essay, was presumably too courteous to make the point himself.

envisages a relationship that we would now describe in terms of a mechanism of negative feedback. Thus, for a child brought up in a modern capitalist system, "not only does an interest in money arise from the primitive conflicts of anal eroticism, but the interest in money which is and must be instilled in the child also increases his anal eroticism and in turn arouses the conflicts which formerly raged about the latter" (1938, p. 103).²⁹ This interplay of sociological and psychological factors is well illustrated in, as well as being essential for the understanding of, the continuing use of shell-money under contemporary conditions.

Almost from the earliest days of contact, Tolai became accustomed to Western money, at first in the form of German marks, then the pounds, shillings, and pence of Australian currency, more recently Australian dollars, and now the kina of Papua New Guinea. Over the years the experience intensified as they became increasingly involved in wage-labour and cash-cropping, and developed new wants that could only be met by the possession of money. Today the Tolai count as an affluent people, certainly by New Guinea standards; their command of cash is immediately visible in the large numbers of cars and trucks they own, in the way in which they throng the stores, offices and banks of Rabaul, or in the modern style homes that they now build in their villages. Money is as indispensable to their modern way of life as it is to the Europeans or Chinese resident among them. Alongside of money, however, they also continue to make use of Tambu in traditional ways.

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If I am correct that attitudes towards Tambu express a transformed anal eroticism, then we might expect that these attitudes would be readily transferred to money. And it is evident that in some regards this has indeed occurred. The opening of savings accounts with banks is of interest in this connection. I have no information about banking facilities in German times, but it appears that Tolai had commenced to hold such accounts quite early on in the days of the Australian Mandate (Ainsworth, 1924). In 1969, according to information collected by my wife, there were more than 35,000 Tolai accounts held with the Commonwealth Savings Bank at Rabaul, and total deposits at all banks were estimated at around \$A4 million (Epstein, T. S., 1970b, p. 21).³⁰ The very high

²⁹ Although Freud himself recognized from time to time the importance of social or cultural factors, in general he was content to take over the concept of instincts then current in intellectual circles. Fenichel's approach represents a departure from the classical view in that the "instincts" are no longer seen as being simply biologically determined, but also as depending to a large extent on social factors. For a more recent discussion of "instinctive behaviour" along these lines see, for example, Bowlby (1969).

³⁰ In addition to such savings, a certain amount of money was simply hoarded (Epstein, T. S., 1968, p. 102). Bank managers in Rabaul frequently complained of the shortage of coin, which they attributed to Tolai hoarding.

proportion of accounts (in a total population at that time of around 60,000) is explained by the fact that many Tolai hold multiple accounts with separate books for each member of the family, including the children. This is in full accord with the traditional practice of setting a special basket aside for a child some time after its birth. The parents might then plant, as many frequently still do, a crop of groundnuts which would be sold for shell-money. This would go into the basket, an opening of his "savings account" in Tambu, to which further contributions would be made from time to time as the child grew up, and to which he too was expected to add whatever shell-money he happened to earn or acquire.

There are other regards in which contemporary Tolai economic behaviour appears to me to reflect continuity with the past and reveals the same underlying motivation. Thus it has been noted that while production has both diversified and expanded and income regularly increased, the pattern of wants has not always expanded in line with growing wealth. In this connection, for example, Scarlett Epstein (1968, p. 92) has recorded of Rapitok, an affluent inland community, that the prosperity of the village in 1960, founded on the marketing of copra and cocoa beans, was still unmatched by any significant improvement in living standards. Indeed, as the same authority comments elsewhere (1970a), a decreasing marginal propensity to consume, so clearly exemplified among the Tolai and other New Guinea groups, is a feature that serves to distinguish the economy of contemporary New Guinea groups from that of so many other under-

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developed countries. Sometimes, if one asked one's informants what they proposed to do with their money savings, they would speak of providing appropriate funerals for all the members of the vunatarai. Such responses again reflect traditional ideas, but they also have to be read in the context of opportunities available for investment. Just as Tambu was not simply to be hoarded, but should be worked with, so too now in their use of money Tolai are not only "conspicuous savers", they are also "conspicuous investors". However, as the local demand for retail stores and transport has become almost saturated, a major problem has been posed for the Tolai by the dearth of alternative avenues for investment (Epstein, T. S., 1970b, p. 22).

Yet if the evidence points to some transfer of attitudes, it is equally plain that money and Tambu are not psychological equivalents. If they were, cash, with its more varied uses and stronger purchasing power, would by this time have displaced shell-money. The two currencies cannot be equated psychologically because they cannot be equated sociologically; they have their roots in quite different sets of economic and social arrangements, the one in an integrated market economy, the other in a particular cultural and social system. Hence, in the one case, one cannot hope to purchase a car or a transistor radio with

Tambu, while in the other, up to the time of my fieldwork, the Tolai still adamantly refused to acknowledge that money could be used for the *varkukul*, the "purchase" of the bride,³¹ or the garlanding of the *leo* at a *balaguan*.

The fact that the Tolai operate simultaneously with two currencies raises immediately the question how the two coexist. Moreover, as shell currencies elsewhere have often shown little resistance once Western money has entered the economy, there is the further problem of accounting for the remarkable persistence of Tambu. The two issues are closely connected and I shall discuss each in turn.

Tolai today operate in a number of different, and to some extent distinct, fields of relationship, in which money and Tambu have separate roles. Those, for example, who are in wage employment outside the villages receive the rewards of labour in Papua New Guinea

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currency, and no store in town of course accepts shell-money. On the other hand, there are certain transactions involving only Tolai where, as we have seen, cash is regarded as inappropriate and only Tambu is acceptable. Between these poles is an area of overlap in which cash and shell-money serve as alternative media of exchange or may be used in combination. One curious feature of this situation is that different "conversion" rates may operate for different items. Thus for taro or fish the equivalent rate for a fathom of shell-money might be 20 cents, for slaked lime 30 cents, and for a chicken 50 cents. However, there is no attempt to manipulate these different exchange rates. This is partly due to the small size of the Tambu market, and the ensuing risk of loss involved (Epstein, T. S., 1964, pp. 57-58). Beyond this is the fact that direct competition between the currencies is avoided by the lack of convertibility between them. Relating to different spheres of social value, the balance between them is maintained by individual acts of choice. So a woman concerned with finding a bride for her son will insist on receiving Tambu for her produce, while the owner of a lorry who is preparing for a ceremony may stipulate that for a particular journey his passengers pay the fare in shell-money only.

³¹ I did come across a couple of instances on Matupit where money was used in this way, suggesting yet another area where the traditional system was coming under strain. One of these concerned a man around thirty who, having been married and divorced a number of times, was now unable to win the support of his kinsmen in acquiring another bride. Accordingly, he undertook the marriage arrangements himself and, having no Tambu of his own, offered the *aarkukui* in cash. This confirmed the popular view that he was a thorough scapegrace, but no less angry expostulations were directed at the parents of the girl who accepted the money.

On the other hand, even though money and Tambu are not usually brought into direct competition, there are very real sources of conflict between them, well illustrated in developments on the island of Matupit. Older people there constantly deplored their poverty in shell-money and, contrasting their position with that of more prosperous communities, would discuss endlessly possible schemes to remedy the situation. All of this was so much whistling in the dark, for in reality there was little they could do to halt the decline, still less to restore Tambu to the importance it formerly held in their lives. Most of the younger people worked away from the village for wages - many of them in remote parts of New Guinea - and had few opportunities for engaging in those activities which traditionally yielded shell-money. In any case, as they would frequently point out, few of the things they now wished to acquire could be purchased with Tambu. As for the older men themselves, for all of their exhortation of their sons and nephews to be "strong for Tambu", they too were compromised by their own dependence upon cash. To give but one example: fishing at Matupit is one of the main traditional sources of Tambu revenue there, but during my stay on the island there was a pressing need for cash to buy the materials for the completion of a new church. The people were urged

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to form small fishing cooperatives to help raise the funds: the catches were therefore sold for money, not for Tambu. The Tolai live in a real world which often confronts them with difficult choices, and where a choice made in one area sets up constraints on behaviour in others. In this way, as seen in a community like Matupit, the balance appears to be swinging rapidly against Tambu.

Yet prediction of its early demise could well prove foolhardy, for Tambu has shown remarkable resilience. From the earliest days of contact it has been subjected to pressure from various sources. The Roman Catholic missionaries have consistently preached against it, seeing in the passing of shell-money possibilities for the improvement of family life (Salisbury, 1970, p. 278). Again, the Germans were at one point compelled to introduce a decree prohibiting the use of shell-money in trade by Europeans, and would have liked to eliminate it altogether, though in this they signally failed. Later, the Kenyan official, Ainsworth (1924, p. 20), called in by the Australians to advise on "native policy", also argued for its abolition on the grounds that it was harmful to the general progress of the people. Today the pressures against Tambu are of a rather different kind, but even where its decline is most evident, as at Matupit, what is no less striking is the way people continue to make strenuous efforts in order to acquire it. Clearly, Tambu refuses to die easily.

Discussing the tenacity of primitive currencies in the face of Western money, Mary Douglas (1967, p. 142) suggests that those types of primitive money which display vitality are those which have what she calls a coupon function in

controlling status in the social system.³² Her point appears to be that while their medium-of-exchange function may be easily replaced, they survive as long as they retain their importance for determining social status. What is interesting about Tambu is that it has retained its medium-of-exchange function and, for my part, I find it difficult to imagine how it could survive if that function were lost completely. One of the reasons why Matupi are compelled to continue the pursuit of shell-money is that other Tolai groups upon whom they are dependent for brides or for the satisfaction of other requirements still insist on payment in Tambu. But behind such rational calculation it is not difficult to detect the pre-

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sence of other, more emotional, considerations which touch the sensitive issue of Tolai identity.

In the past, as we have seen, the local groups which today make up the Tolai community were independent and often mutually hostile. Yet in their language, and in the social ties forged through participation in shared institutions - marriage, trade, and the cult of dukduk and tubuan - as well as in their relations with other groups indigenous to the Gazelle Peninsula, the seeds of an ethnic identity already existed. Thereafter contact with the outside world fostered the awareness of their common bonds, generating an increasing sense of their own distinctiveness as a people in relation to other indigenous groups within the wider society of Papua New Guinea created by colonialism. I have discussed this process of identity formation elsewhere at some length (Epstein, A. L., 1970, 1978). What needs to be emphasized here, as both Salisbury (1970, p. 278) and I (Epstein, A. L., 1969, pp. 311-317) have noted quite independently, is the way Tambu has come to serve as a symbol of the new Tolai identity. This is not merely an inference on the part of an observer, but something of which Tolai are consciously aware and of which they frequently speak. I have cited elsewhere (Epstein, A. L., 1969, p. 317) the comment of an English-speaking Tolai who in the course of a conversation once spontaneously remarked: "You have read the book *Treasure Island*? Well, Tambu is our treasure. If we didn't have Tambu, we would not be Tolai; we would be a different people." Sometimes indeed they formulated the idea in quite explicit sociological terms, referring to shell-money as the skeleton or bones around which their whole social system was built, and without which the entire structure would collapse (cf. Epstein, T. S., 1968, p. 95; Salisbury, 1970, p. 278).

When therefore young wage-earners at Matupit go out of their way to purchase

³² In fact Douglas offers only two examples in support of her view, one the Tambu of the Tolai, the other the use of manillas in the Cross River area of Nigeria. My impression is, certainly within Melanesia, that shell currencies have shown less tenacity than she supposes.

rice out of their wages so that it can be sold in exchange for shell-money, or when they spend part of their weekends fishing or collecting megapode eggs which will yield Tambu, they are expressing quite deliberately their profound desire to be and to remain Tolai. Tambu serves here as a peculiarly appropriate symbol expressing the retentive impulse in a new guise: the desire to cling to their ethnic identity. Yet, as we might by now expect, this is only one side of the picture. For, particularly among younger Tolai in the various communities around Rabaul, talk of shell-money can arouse quite hostile responses reflecting what Erikson would call a crisis of identity.

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The complex and contradictory attitudes held by these younger people towards shell-money are revealed in a variety of contexts. Many of the more thoughtful will argue that the pursuit of Tambu should be maintained so that one can fulfill one's obligations on the death of a near kinsman or for the proper payment of bridewealth. But what happens if, for example, the bride is not Tolai? During the course of my fieldwork the announcement of a forthcoming marriage between a Matupi lad, who had been to school in Australia, and an Australian girl aroused a great deal of discussion within the village. Among the more conservative, both young and old, there was strong opposition to the union on various grounds. Among a number of the younger people, however, including those who spoke in favour of retaining shell-money for the *varkukul*, there was a feeling that inter-marriage between black and white should be encouraged. In this way, it was said, the cultural standards of the Tolai would be uplifted and their transition into a modern society eased.

Sometimes these conflicts are expressed in more forceful terms. Once, for example, I was having a long, meandering conversation with a man called ToPirit, with whom I was very friendly. ToPirit at the time was a man in his middle thirties, employed as a clerk in one of the government offices in Rabaul and beginning to make his mark within the village, where he frequently served on the "committee" when disputes were brought for hearing before the village assembly. Previously, I had always known him as a quiet man of equable temperament with a pleasant and easy-going manner. Now, as we chanced on the topic of shell-money, something within him seemed to snap, and he burst out: "*lau hate go ra Tambu*" ("I hate this Tambu"). The conversation was in Tolai, but he interposed the English word presumably because he could not find a vernacular term sufficiently strong or apt to express his feelings. Shell-money, he went on to explain, was one of the things which stood in the way of achieving their political independence. Its continued pursuit divided their attentions, preventing them from raising their living standards. As long as young men stayed at home and worked for Tambu the old customs would continue, and as long as they continued the old men would retain their power. For ToPirit then Tambu was an obstacle to their development as full citizens in a modern society, which ought to be removed. Yet these convictions were not always

consistently reflected in his behaviour. In other contexts he often appeared as a spokesman

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for traditional values. He was also one of those who would seek to convert part of his wages into shell-money, and he himself already possessed a *lolo*, a coil of about 100 fathoms, which he stored with a maternal uncle in another community lest, he once explained, it was stolen at Matupit.

ToPirit represents the dilemma of an increasing number of younger Tolai. They are at present attempting to face in two directions at the same time. The processes of social change have generated on the one hand a strong sense of Tolai consciousness, but those same processes have resulted at the same time in increasing Tolai involvement in the wider society of contemporary Papua New Guinea. Imbued with a deep love of their own part of the country, and a pride in themselves as Tolai, they yet look to horizons beyond those of the village. Clinging to their Tolai identity, they seek at the same time identity as citizens of a new nation. These conflicts in their scheme of social values are immediately reflected in their contradictory attitudes towards shell-money: on the one hand, to make great efforts to retain it; on the other, as one Tolai once put it, to collect it all together and deliver it into the hands of the tourists who call at Rabaul or, more simply, to dump it in the sea. This tug-of-war at the level of behaviour and overt attitudes is sharpened, however, because it also represents processes at work within the psyche, reviving in a new form earlier infantile sources of conflict. I have sought to show how in the past sociological and psychological processes worked in tandem, mutually supporting one another. Tambu, on this view, provided a cultural device whereby the energy generated by the conflict between the retentive and eliminative impulses or the struggle for autonomy was harnessed to socially approved ends, reconciling the oppositions on both the social and the intrapsychic planes. For the present, however, as the traditional social system crumbles, Tambu becomes rather the focus of a fierce ambivalence for which existing institutions and social arrangements provide no resolution.

Conclusion

The focus of this essay has been on Tolai shell-money in its affective dimension. This has led us into many highways and byways of Tolai behaviour, both spontaneous and enjoined, in secular and ceremonial

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contexts, as well as aspects of their ideology and symbolism. At a variety of points, and on different planes, I have drawn attention to the conflicts within their system of values. Yet these conflicts reveal a striking consistency; they

express in disguised forms, I have argued, the contradictions that surround the infantile experience of defecation. Anal erotism runs like a thread through so much of the data I have presented.

The psychoanalyst, confronted with a patient who displays evidence of a fixation at the anal phase of psycho-sexual development, is accustomed to trace its roots to some early injury to infant narcissism brought about by toilet training that was too early or too rigid. Applying these ideas cross-culturally, some anthropologists, using Rorschach and other tests of personality, have observed that the postulated relationship between infant training and adult structure is not supported by their data (see, for example, Straus, 1957). Some of these studies seem to me, however, to be misconceived in that they assume simple causal relations where psychoanalytic theory stresses complexity. As Menninger (1943, p. 162) has observed, merely to relate a particular symptom to, say, the anal phase is too general, because it is never possible to differentiate in an adult clear-cut examples derived exclusively from a particular phase of infantile development. No character is purely oral, anal, or genital. Moreover, insofar as such studies rely simply on projective techniques they ignore the importance of social context; they do not examine the actual behaviour of those who instill toilet-training, how such behaviour is experienced by the child, nor in particular the ideas and fantasies woven around the experience, in a word, its phenomenology.

Unfortunately, having become alive to the problems with which this paper deals only after I had completed my fieldwork and began to ponder the data, my knowledge of Tolai infant-training is woefully inadequate. So far as the act of defecation is concerned, for reasons mentioned earlier, Tolai parents are careful to remove the child's excreta, but until the child has passed its first year it is not reprimanded if it is found playing with its faeces or smearing them on its body, because it has not yet learned that faeces are "bad" (*i kaina*). However, according to one of my informants, from the age of about eighteen months the child is expected to be clean. Should he wish to defecate in the night he should call his parents to take him outside. If, having been instructed in this way, he misbehaves he will be punished

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by being lightly switched across the buttocks. But what is important in all this, as I have previously stressed, is less a matter of a particular act (or acts) performed by the parent so much as the way in which the child is handled, how he interprets the experience as well as the social context in which it occurs. In the absence of any hard data on these matters, I can only venture a few very tentative suppositions.

I have repeatedly stressed Tolai concern with death. If I may be permitted to twist a line of Keats, they appear at times as a people half in love with fearful

death. The concern is evident in their secular life, but it is above all in the ceremonial context that it finds pre-eminent expression. It appears to me that the balaguan reveals a conjunction of a number of major themes: mourning and loss, atonement, and triumph. Out of what experiences are these various emotions born and brought together in this way? It is not enough to point, with Roheim, to the primordial parricide, for the oedipal situation, and the castration fears associated with it, are experienced within a specific natural and cultural environment. Recent work on mourning and loss offers some clues. Thus for Bowlby (1961, 1969, 1973) the prototype of grief is to be found in detachment from the mother: once the child has formed a tie to a mother figure, which ordinarily occurs by the middle of the first year, its rupture leads to separation anxiety, grief and anger and sets in train processes of mourning. The relevance of this in the Tolai context is that there is an increasing detachment of the mother from the child as she becomes pregnant again, and finally gives birth, a sequence of events that will ordinarily coincide with the period in which anal erotism achieves maximum intensity, between the eighteenth and twenty-fourth months.

A Tolai child at this time is familiar with the fact of his mother's pregnancy. One young father once referred to his first-born son, then about twenty months, and still unable to talk. The mother was now expecting another child and sometimes, playing with their son, they would ask: "Where is your brother? Where is your sister?" The child would then toddle over to his mother and pat her on the belly.

It would be extremely interesting to know how the child responds to these events, in particular how it fantasies the facts of conception and birth. What does seem clear is that the mother's pregnancy introduces a new regime that demands a variety of adjustments on his part. Tolai themselves recognize that this is so for they say that when the mother conceives again, *a bul i malakak*, the child begins to pine or

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languish.³³ It may also develop a variety of complaints, for example, a pal a

³³ A couple of Tolai practices relating to birth may be worth mentioning here. It is forbidden to sever completely the umbilical cord (bitono); part of it remains attached to the child. This part, I was told, becomes hard and black like a stick of trade-tobacco until it finally falls off. The mother then takes it and stores it away carefully where none shall discover it. A couple of weeks after its birth they perform what is called a *nirarang na bul*. This consists of passing the child over a tire. In this way, it is said, the child is cleansed of sputum and black faeces (meconium), and thus freed from disorders of this kind. Such practices hint perhaps at the presence of a cloacal theory of birth (see, for example, Jones, 1918, pp. 694-695), but I lack direct evidence on the point.

kovakovo, a kind of rash which is said to be very painful and irritating. Such symptoms the Tolai explicitly relate to the child's awareness that his parents are no longer lavishing the same attention on him as before. The outside observer may see in them the expression of more complex forms of conflict arising from the coincidence of pregnancy, the emergence of a sibling rival, and the onset of toilet-training, all of which are carried forward into the oedipal situation. R6heim has, I think, made out a case for the Tolai response to death in oedipal terms; what I believe emerges more clearly now is the reason that they respond to loss in an anal way. According to Bowlby the child responds to loss by grief and anger in an effort to recover the beloved object. But because, as I have suggested, detachment from the mother tends to coincide in time with the child's attempts to assert its autonomy in the matter of defecation, separation also fosters its sense of guilt towards her, which can only be assuaged by an act of atonement: through the proper yielding of his faeces the child recovers the mother's love. Such a view helps to shed further light on the symbolism of Tambu. For the Tolai, the coil of Tambu, which I earlier discussed as a transfigured representation of the anus, may now be seen too as a symbol of the vagina, through which one achieves rebirth. Earlier in this essay I drew attention to the way the concept of Tambu/taboo serves as a boundary marker between different realms, social and symbolic; Tambu not only indicates the areas where trespass is forbidden but it also serves to mediate the passage between these realms or to make reparation when the taboo is violated. This applies no less to the most fundamental prohibition of all: the incest taboo. Hence, just as the "cutting" of Tambu in the mortuary rites affirms the taboo, so in a sense it abrogates it at the same time. In these rites the Tolai finds his triumph over death as, purged of guilt, he is able to enter a new life in the Abode of the Dead. This, I suggest, is the most profound significance of the loloi, the great wheel of Tambu, that in death one is finally able to return to the mother and be born again.

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