The Unintended Consequences of Clarification: Development, Disputing, and the Dynamics of Community in Ranongga, Solomon Islands

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Abstract. Outside agencies working in the Solomon Islands—whether a postwar land commission or a late-twentieth-century global environmental organization—have consistently called for the clarification of property rights as the necessary starting point for any form of economic development. Many residents of Ranongga, a small mountainous island in the Western Solomons, are eager to have their territorial rights recognized by national and international organizations and by other islanders. Yet transforming complex, crosscutting, localized relationships into abstract rights that are commensurable, predictable, and knowable to outsiders raises major political and ethical dilemmas for Ranonggan leaders. As in other Oceanic polities, the true people of the land are supposed to generously welcome foreigners. Aggressively claiming exclusive rights for oneself or one's group would effectively alienate those others who are necessary for a properly functioning polity. Clarification—however necessary for the workings of a capitalist economy—thus threatens to undermine the tenuous achievement of unity that Ranonggans see as the prerequisite to peace, prosperity, and (as they understand it) development.

The difficulty of articulating indigenous regimes of land tenure with the legal apparatus of a colonial and postcolonial state has long been considered a major impediment to economic development in the Solomon Islands. The legal articulation of property rights in the Solomons might be considered a "rationalization of means" in Max Weber's sense, a rationalization that may not be the inevitable counterpart to a capitalist political economy but is, as John Kelly puts it in this volume, "highly favored by capital" insofar as it makes it possible to enforce contracts and predict the outcomes of enterprise. The project aims to transform complex, crosscutting, localized relationships into rights that are commensurable, predictable, and

Ethnohistory 52:1 (winter 2005)

knowable to outsiders. It is an endeavor that has made little headway in the Solomons.

We might interpret the failure of this project as the tenacious resistance of local social forms and indigenous subjects to global initiatives and colonial agents. There are some grounds for such an interpretation (e.g., the 2001 student protest at the University of Papua New Guinea against bank privatization and compulsory land registration schemes). Yet, as other contributors to this volume argue, assuming that the only way that local people can react to global forces is by resisting them reduces the complexity of situations and disregards the desires of those involved.[1] In the Solomons, it has not only been British colonial administrators, functionaries of international monetary institutions, managers for multinational corporations, consultants for nongovernmental organizations, or even Solomon Islands politicians who want to straighten out property rights and get them down, once and for all, into legal instruments. Many Solomon Islanders of all walks of life would like to use legal means to secure their customary rights to property and land—sometimes because they hope to start projects that will tap into translocal flows of cash, but sometimes because they worry that their children and grandchildren will have no garden land. In any case, active local resistance to global initiatives is not the whole story.

More compelling would be an explanation that attributed the failure to inadequately and inconsistently formulated and implemented land policy. This is especially relevant for explaining the current tenure mess in the urban and peri-urban areas of Honiara, the capital city of the Solomon Islands on the island of Guadalcanal. In late 1998, a Guadalcanal militia commenced attacks on a migrant population (primarily from the island of Malaita), many of whom were living on land to which they had no legal title. Throughout 1999, ten or twenty thousand residents evacuated Guadalcanal. A Malaitan countermilitia formed and, in cooperation with the Solomon Islands police force, deposed the elected government in coups in June 2000. Despite a series of formal peace accords, the country experienced a severe and escalating crisis of law and order (see Dinnen 2002). This crisis, along with increased fears of global terrorism, provided the impetus for an Australian-led regional military intervention in July 2003.

In this article, I do not focus on the crisis in Guadalcanal or on inadequacies in policy formation or implementation. Instead, I focus on how available policy has been taken up in rural areas, an investigation that should give pause to those who see the solution to the national crisis in codifying and clarifying individual or group property rights (e.g., Hughes 2003). To the extent that a state legal apparatus has been available, it has been used as a means in distinctly local ends that are incongruent with,

though not necessarily contradictory to, the ends of a global project (i.e., the regimentation of social relations to create an environment conducive to capitalism). I focus primarily on Ranongga, a small island on the western edge of the New Georgia Group in the Western Province of the Solomons.[2] Western Province was an important center of the pre–World War II plantation economy as well as the postcolonial logging, fishing, and (to a lesser extent) tourist industries. Ranonggans are involved in this regional economy (as independent copra producers, company employees, and sellers of produce in the market of the provincial capital), but Ranongga is not the site of any large-scale commercial development. Thus, most of the impetus for legally clarifying property rights has come from Ranonggans themselves, and not from outsiders' initiatives.

My discussion aims to shed some light on the consequences of legal clarification, consequences that are not anticipated by policy aimed at making the Solomons safe for capitalism and are not intended by the Ranonggans who utilize this foreign means to regiment local kin and property relationships. Even though many people want to make property rights permanent, predictable, and secure by using the legal apparatus of the state, such an endeavor proves problematic in light of their ethical understandings of the way people ought to live together in communities. In local theories of polity, both asserting and *denying* rights to land is necessary for peace and prosperity.

In indigenous modalities of clarification, Ranonggans implicitly articulate differential property rights through the transaction of material objects at the same time that they explicitly deny the significance of such differences in speeches made at these exchange events. Legal procedures, in contrast, require the explicit statement of rights. Yet in both modalities—locally meaningful ritual and globally comprehensible legal adjudication—articulating property rights proves to be a tricky proposition for Ranonggans. When people assert differential rights to the land, they are also understood to be asserting a corresponding social division between themselves and all others who might have a connection to the land. For those claiming to own land, cutting off other people in this way is not only politically risky—it is also counter to the ethics of landownership. In a Ranonggan variation on a pan-Pacific theme, the people of the land ought to be loving and generous to those other people who live under their care. I was often told that only usurpers fight about land in courts, because the real landowners are happy to welcome foreigners and would not aggressively assert social hierarchy.

After a brief discussion of postwar land policy in the Solomons, I consider the ethical and political implications of articulating differential prop-

erty rights in indigenous and legal modalities. The final section of the article presents a case study of the problems that arose in the context of a conservation and development project begun in 1997 on Ranongga by WWF (the World Wide Fund for Nature).

Postwar Progress and the Extinction of Custom

Prior to World War II, land policy in the British Solomon Islands Protectorate (established in 1896) focused on the land being used by expatriate British, Europeans, and Australians rather than by inhabitants of the islands. Expatriate planters had acquired a considerable amount of prime coastal land, and they employed Solomon Islander laborers to produce copra, the most important export of the Solomons until well after the Second World War. Land was acquired for these early ventures in an ad hoc manner, and much of it had never been formally registered with the Western Pacific High Commission in Fiji, which was responsible for administering the protectorate. Prewar land commissions were occupied with clarifying expatriate rights to this questionably alienated land and were little concerned with the majority of land, which remained in "customary tenure," that is, largely outside of European control or governmental regulation (see Bennett 1987: 125–49; Ruthven 1979; Scheffler 1971). With the Japanese invasion of the Solomons in 1942 (which followed a devastating decade-long depression), most expatriate planters fled and abandoned their plantations. The war highlighted the potential of the protectorate's forest resources, and in the postwar years, logging and other resource extraction industries came to replace the plantation-based economy (Bennett 1995). The details are complex but the crucial point is this: after World War II, it was becoming clear that Solomon Islanders, not expatriate planters, would control the natural resources necessary for the development of a viable colonial economy.

In the report of the 1953 Special Lands Commission of the British Solomon Islands Protectorate to the Western Pacific High Commission, Colin Allan (1957: 47) argued that the land policy could no longer be exclusively concerned with matters of land alienation, but ought to provide structures for articulating customary tenure in ways that would encourage Solomon Islanders to participate in commercial endeavors. The Allan Commission did not advocate codifying and preserving customary rights as had been done in Fiji in the nineteenth century (Kaplan, this volume). Allan cited the expense and difficulty of such an enterprise in the politically fragmented and culturally diverse Solomons. But he was also well aware of the subversive potential of custom when codified as an alternative to

British law: Maasina Rule was then at its height in the Eastern Solomons. Adherents of this anticolonial movement were writing down custom law, setting up custom courts, and holding custom councils at the same time that they boycotted plantation work and brought the copra economy to a standstill (see, e.g., Akin 1993: 287–430). Unlike Fiji, the Solomon Islands had no population of indentured laborers who would provide labor for capitalist enterprise. Indigenous Solomon Islanders were expected to be full participants in a capitalist economy, and so their system of kinship and land tenure could not be cordoned off and protected from the forces of the market. The Allan Commission recommended "a policy which takes into account the present continuing need for the customary system, but which at the same time guides it along progressive lines toward the emergence of a modern tenure system, based on adjudication and registration of individual title" (Allan 1957: 277). The commission foresaw "the ultimate extinction of native custom" as "progressive" Solomon Islanders would voluntarily register their property rights (217). In the meantime, as a necessary prerequisite to this registration, courts would have to adjudicate claims on customary land.

In the 1960s, policies were introduced that provided for voluntary "land settlement,"[3] whereby customary tenure was converted into individual or group title. By the 1970s it was clear that settlement schemes, where they had been carried out, had not led to the economic development that was supposed to follow this rationalization of tenure practice. Part of the problem was a lack of capital for investment, transportation infrastructure, agricultural expertise, venues for marketing, and other factors (Hughes 1979). Moreover, as one administrator wrote of these schemes, "in the 1960s we underestimated the degree of group resentment which could be created by separating off the holdings of such farmers from the rest of the group" (Hughes 1979: 236; see also Totorea 1979a, 1979b; Maenu'u 1979).

The site where local tenure has been articulated with a state legal apparatus has not been these voluntary land settlement schemes but local land courts, which adjudicate cases according to customary principles that have not been codified or formalized in law. That is, it has occurred through precisely the institution that Allan saw as a temporary stopgap measure and a mere precursor to legal registration and the extinction of the "customary element" in land tenure (Allan 1957: 278). Well before the Second World War, when the government was not much interested in matters of customary tenure, Ranonggans brought disputes before colonial officers for adjudication. In the late 1930s (when schemes of indirect rule were first introduced) and continuing in the decades following the war, native courts with local justices adjudicated claims. With independence from Britain in 1978,

local courts replaced native courts. This continued until funding for local government was cut in the late 1980s and only big claims that concerned logging operations made it into the formal court system.

The reasons why Ranonggans took land disputes to court are not as transparent as they might seem: few of the property disputes that I learned about over the course of my fieldwork in 1998–2001 were remembered as contests over scarce resources. Rather, disputes commonly arose when one disputant planted a garden or built a store on land that the other thought he owned. The offended owner often did not object to the other using the land in this way, but was offended because he failed to ask permission. I believe that legal courts provided a new means of sorting out and asserting otherwise tacit hierarchical relationships during a historical period when claims about land were becoming the major site of articulation of these social hierarchies. Rather than attempting to *exclude* others, Ranonggan disputants saw themselves as fighting for the right to *invite* others to share in the property. The right to invite others implies the power to cut them off, but I take the difference in emphasis as significant.

Legal adjudication has not, by and large, led to the permanent clarification and legal registration of individual or group rights on Ranongga or, as far as I know, in other areas of the Solomons. As the land settlement administrator's earlier comment indicates, clarifying differential property rights causes social conflict because it foregrounds boundaries of social groups and highlights the differences between social subjects. Under the global rules of economic liberalism, such clarification of boundaries is necessary to minimize risk, distribute profit fairly, and ensure the success of business enterprise. In local theories of polity in Ranongga and elsewhere in the Solomons, the same type of clarification undermines the cooperation of different kinds of people that is thought essential for the success of all community work.

Modalities of Asserting Property Rights

The legal apparatus of the colonial and postcolonial state is not the only forum in which people may assert differential rights to property. Before turning to the legal articulation of rights, I consider the nonlegal forums where Ranonggans articulate property rights, particularly in funeral feasts and other events where goods are ritually transacted. Many of my informants described these transactions as the "custom" equivalent of legal contracts or wills, and some even suggested that such prestations actually constituted a purchase of the land or property (this was not, as we will see, the way anyone talked about it during the events). This calquing of indigenous

forms onto Western legal instruments is possible but problematic because of crucial differences between these two modes of articulating the relationships among people via property. The transactions that I discuss below do not constitute the alienation of property from the original owner to a new owner in a single definitive event. Rather, they are to be repeated at every generation, very much like life-cycle rituals that they are often part of. Rather than accomplishing a one-time alienation, they serve as an ongoing commemoration of the relationships among people and between people and land.

All discussions of land on Ranongga begin with *butubutu*, which I gloss as *matrilineage*.[4] People belong to the butubutu of their mother, but it is important not to overemphasize the genealogical basis of the category. As Hviding (1996: 136–37) has argued for Marovo, butubutu must be understood in relation to territory (*pezo* in Ranongga): it is not so much that the butubutu owns the land but that the two are mutually constituting (see also Scott 2001). As I will discuss further, Ranonggans emphasize bringing other people into productive relationships with the people of the landholding butubutu. Large Ranonggan villages are often composed of people from a dozen or more different butubutu—all of whom make connections to the territory by clearing garden lands, planting trees, building settlements, and burying their dead. Villages chiefs ought to be of the landholding butubutu, although many contemporary chiefs say that they are caretakers for their father's butubutu. People today frequently complain that the autochthonous butubutu are progressively losing control over the land and chieftainship; they claim that this is counter to a custom law by which the butubutu owns the land and cannot alienate it. I am inclined to think, however, that the return of power and priority to the butubutu is not as automatic as this would suggest (as Weiner 1980 argued for an analogous situation in the Trobriands). Rather, over the course of the twentieth century, mechanisms by which the butubutu could reassert power over the territory have attenuated (these mechanisms include the ritual installation of chiefs and worship of ancestors at shrines on butubutu territory). At the same time, mechanisms by which non-butubutu members assert control over their property have been elaborated.

One such mechanism is *pajuku*, which could be glossed as *transfer*.[5] In pajuku, non-butubutu members give cooked food (including nut puddings, pork, and bonito), uncooked garden produce (taro, potatoes, and yams), live pigs, purchased food and household goods (rice, sugar, tea, tinned tuna fish, noodles, and soap), and money (Solomon Islands currency and *bakia*, large rings of fossilized clam shell used only in transfers of rights in persons and property). This kind of prestation is often made by children to

their father and his butubutu (or by a woman to her husband's butubutu on behalf of their children) with the permission and participation of the original landholding butubutu. The prestation ensures that the children may continue to use the products of their father's labor, such as the nut groves that he planted, the settlement sites he prepared, and the garden land he cleared out of the primary forest. By accepting the pajuku gifts, the butubutu of the father and of the landholding lineage can no longer 'talk about' these things. The ceremony does not, however, ensure that the descendents of the presenters automatically control the property. At each generation, the prestation must be repeated by those who want to use the land that their paternal grandfather had worked. In this second-generation ceremony as in the original, the people of the landholding butubutu must give permission for such an event and be included in the distribution.

The historical status and ritual protocol of pajuku is ambiguous. Some of my consultants questioned its legitimacy by suggesting that it was a recent innovation. They speculated that men who had been educated at the Methodist mission before World War II introduced the practice. Unlike the uneducated population of the island, these men understood that land had commercial value and so they used the apparently traditional means of pajuku to extend their copra holdings.

Regardless of the historical basis of pajuku, it is easy to see how it could be convenient in reworking traditional land tenure into more capitalist models: it is not a matter of coincidence that most land transferred by pajuku is in areas with the most extensive coconut plantations. These blocks are treated very much like alienated land, even if they are, in principle, still under the control of the landholding lineage.

When pajuku is understood as an alienation of property, it becomes problematic for practical and ethical reasons. One critic of pajuku told me that everyone is better off when land is held by a lineage that is responsible for keeping everyone who lives on the land. He explained that small blocks are more likely to be destroyed by natural disasters like cyclones or earthquakes and that a family with a large block might have few descendents, whereas a family with a small block might have many descendents. In fact, some butubutu refuse to permit pajuku prestations on their ground. One man told me that he did not attend a pajuku ceremony that was held on an area of land within the territory of his father's butubutu (in which he is an important chief). Had he taken any money from that ceremony, he explained, he would no longer have the authority to intervene in the ethical affairs of the people living on the block (they were his relatives by virtue of their patrilateral ties to the butubutu of his father). If the children of the people living on that land committed incest or got into some other trouble,

he claimed that he would no longer have the authority to "straighten out" the transgressions.

The problems of articulating property rights and group boundaries are particularly clear in pajuku ceremonies, but the same dynamic is to be found in rituals that are not marked as property transactions. Primary among these are mortuary rituals,[6] and I outline one that I witnessed in late 2000. One year after the death of an old man who had been particularly energetic in clearing the uninhabited bush and planting coconuts, his sons (he had no living daughters) built a large cement structure over the old man's burial plot. During the feast that was held when the structure was complete, they presented vast quantities of food along with currency and shell valuables to their father's butubutu, to the lineage that held the land where their father had worked, and to other people who were connected to him or the places he worked. By making these prestations, they hoped to ensure that they would have the use of the settlements, gardens, and plantations that their father had made. (This was particularly important for these men because they had no claims on the land of their mother, who was from a distant island and had abandoned them when they were children.) In fact, before he died, their father had announced that his sons were to be considered part of his own butubutu, instead of their mother's lineage. During the event, when a senior woman of the deceased man's butubutu made a speech accepting the food prepared by the dead man's sons, she recalled the words of the old man and warned that although the gift of food "was all right because people can consume it," she would not accept money: "If you give us money, we can't take it because then you will separate yourselves from us." This woman's refusal to accept money, like the refusal of butubutu leaders to accept prestations in pajuku, illustrates that demarcating property rights via transfer of material objects also demarcates the boundaries of social groups.

Individuals or family groups who want to clarify their differential rights to property face a challenge: they must simultaneously assert these rights and deny them, lest other people refuse to accept the prestation and thus refuse to recognize the rights being asserted. This double movement of assertion and denial may be accomplished in different ways in different genres of exchange and interactions. The situations I have discussed so far—mortuary rituals and pajuku—are generally considered to be matters of custom. This domain is distinguished from *lotu* (church) and from law (the legal apparatus of the state) as alternative paths to articulate social relations and to settle disputes. Custom allows the implicit articulation of differential property rights and boundaries between kin groups through the transaction of material goods. This differs from church contexts, because

church feasts enact a community that is undifferentiated and united in worship of God, not differentiated vis-à-vis their rights to land. It differs from legal forums in the way that relationships are articulated.

When differential property rights are articulated via exchange, very little is explicitly stated about who is who and who owns what. Such differentiation is accomplished implicitly, through the poetics of ritual exchange. Material goods have their own meanings (see Keane 1997: 65–93). In the funeral rituals and pajuku, certain foods—for example, bonito, pork, live pigs, and puddings made of root crops pounded with canarium nuts—are considered custom food and are necessary for these exchanges. They may also be prepared for church and community feasts, but in these contexts, the food is laid out on banana leaves so that everyone eats together and thus enacts communal cohesion and unity. In contrast, in these funeral and pajuku exchanges, food is carefully parceled, counted, and distributed to named family groups which, by virtue of "holding" this food, implicitly recognize the rights being asserted by those distributing the food. Yet, even when it is carefully presented as signs of particular relationships, food is polyvalent. It can be used to mark divisions, but it remains the quintessential symbol of relationships based on love and nurturance. Food alone cannot cut off relationships: either the recipients or the presenters could refigure its symbolic meanings by declaring that it is "just food" given by children to their parents or by younger siblings to their older siblings. Such relationships are hierarchical, but the hierarchy is one based on obligation and relationship. Currency and shell valuables are much more unequivocal signs of separation: they are appropriate in exchanges and interactions between those who consider themselves to be different people.[7] It is only with difficulty that money can convey a relationship of mutual give-and-take appropriate to close relatives: it would be possible to give currency as a substitute for food, but not so with shell valuables, which cannot be used to purchase food. By giving money to those who ought to be kin, people may actually performatively cut off those kin relations (see Robbins and Akin 1999; Valeri 1994).

Because Ranonggans are reluctant to cut off people in such a manner, they must mitigate the too-clear assertion of differential rights implied by the presentation of material things. Hence, when presenting material goods at funerals, pajuku, or other ceremonies, the givers generally downplay the significance of the material objects being presented. Even vast quantities of food and significant amounts of money are figured as "just a little something." Speakers do not refer to the objects as payments that alienate the property from control of the recipients. Instead they are represented as tokens or signs of the appreciation, kindness, or regard felt by the givers for

the recipients. Speeches thus emphasize the entanglement of the two parties to the exchange vis-à-vis the property in order to ensure that all present will continue to live and work as one people for the indefinite future. By presenting symbolically significant material objects, people implicitly but unambiguously (for those who recognize the signs) assert differential rights to property. In the speeches that accompany such presentations, they deny the message of the gift. The importance of such denial is most visible in its failure. During the funeral I mentioned above, the wife of one of the sons presented a shell valuable and food to her husband, saying that she wanted to give her children power so that they would be sure that they could stay on the area that their paternal grandfather (the deceased) had cleared. (Twenty-five years earlier, her husband had made a similar prestation to his father's butubutu—an event that was recalled by a man of the deceased's butubutu at this event.) Some attendees criticized the speech she made because she had failed to state that she was not giving the bakia in order to cut off her in-laws and that they were still welcome to share in the property. Without such an explicit mitigation of the implicit assertion she made by giving the shell valuable, her husband's relatives might have hard feelings that would jeopardize the relation of mutual regard and mutual help that ought to prevail between them and his children.

Such a simultaneous assertion and denial of differential property rights would seem to be impossible in legal forums. Legal courts make things explicit by verbal clarification. The clarification is not aimed only at those whose rights are being differentiated, but also to outsiders who would not follow the poetic structuring of local rituals. Anyone—government attempting to set up a school, a logging company attempting to determine which landowners they ought to negotiate with, an anthropologist like myself trying to get a grasp on local tenure practices—could, in theory, understand the interactions that occurred in such legal contexts. A legal apparatus is precisely aiming to make differential rights universally legible; at the same time, it gives little room for disputants to articulate rights without cutting people off. Such disputes were counter to both traditional and Christian moral imperatives (which overlap in this context) that taught people to love their kin and to welcome different people. One old man said he had outlived all of his contemporaries because, alone among them, he had not fought about land: those who had fought over land suffered supernatural retribution in the form of an early death.

Yet when people told me of the particular disputes that they had been involved in, it became clear that Ranonggans used legal forums in ways that did not make it impossible to reinstate harmony and amicable relationships between the disputants. In legal procedure, the differential rights to

property are made explicit, but after the decision that separated them, the disputants often seemed to mend this breach and affirm their kin relationship. More often than not, winners granted the losers exactly what they were fighting for, thus implicitly denying in practice what had been explicitly established in the court hearing. I will give just one example. In the 1970s, a dispute over garden lands arose because a man I will call "Maka" failed to ask permission from a man I will call "Kori" before he cleared land to plant a garden on an area that Kori considered his own (Kori was Maka's father's sister's husband). Kori took Maka to the native court and won. And yet in 1998, Maka and all of his numerous children had their gardens on the disputed land. When I asked my informant (Kori's son), about this puzzling outcome of the dispute, he said his father was "sorry" for Maka, who was his "child," so he told Maka to go ahead and clear the land to make gardens there. My informant then gave an explanation that I later heard from nearly everyone who had been involved in a dispute that was eventually settled amicably: "After all, we are not different people and should not have been fighting in the first place."

From my informant's point of view, the legal dispute reestablished the proper hierarchical relationship between his father and Maka by asserting his father's right to invite Maka onto the land. The assertion had force because the court case established that Kori *could* prevent Maka from using the land, so that his permission was an act of generosity not necessity.[8] Though this dispute would have been common knowledge to people living in the village, no one talked about it. I learned of it accidentally, while walking through garden land with a close friend, the granddaughter of Kori. I am quite sure that she would not have mentioned the dispute if I had not been asking about such things; even with my questions, I doubt she would have mentioned it if any of our other habitual companions (who included Maka's daughter) had been present. To an outsider, it was as if the dispute had not occurred. Imagine, however, that Kori had decided to register his title to the land or had forbidden Maka from using the land. If this were the case, I doubt that the two families would be living and working together as they are now, a generation later.

Unity and Difference in Ranonggan Society

The double move of asserting while denying property rights is not only a politically pragmatic attempt on the part of Ranonggans to maximize potentially beneficial social connections. To understand the ethical importance of such strategies, I consider some of the cosmological underpinnings of Ranonggan society, drawing on Michael Scott's recent studies of the

Arosi people of Makira island in the southeastern Solomons. In relating contemporary land politics to ontology, Scott sheds light on the way that knowledge and ignorance are crucial in constituting and maintaining a viable polity.

In the account by Scott (2000), knowledge of genealogies and lineage histories can be used as a weapon that destroys the precarious union of ontologically different kinds of people. In Arosi (as in Ranongga), the most basic category of identity is the matrilineage. Each matrilineage is thought to have emerged on a particular territory in a unique event. Scott argues that in polyontological systems such as Arosi, different categories of people are considered different types of beings and the first-order cosmogonic task is to achieve a cooperative unity with other categories of being. Although Arosi matrilineages are ontologically bound to the land of their origin, they must become autochthonous on a territory through activities like making villages, burying ancestors, establishing shrines, or even building Christian churches (Scott 2001: 175). Becoming autochthonous thus requires "entanglement" with other matrilineages, most importantly through exogamous marriage and coresidence on lineage land (Scott 2000: 61). While such entanglement is necessary for peace and productivity, there is a danger that original ontological distinctions—the unique and privileged identification of a particular matrilineage and its territory—could be undermined. Thus, a second-order cosmological burden for Arosi is to "find ways to preserve their distinctive identities without rupturing the ties they have formed and reverting to primordial disjunction" (72). Sometimes conflicting and sometimes complementary, these two cosmological imperatives constitute a polarity between stability and destruction that animates Arosi society.

The polarity is articulated in contemporary Arosi on the register of knowledge and ignorance of lineage narratives (Scott 2000). Privately, Scott's informants told him narratives that they considered proof that their lineage was autochthonous on the land (much in the way that Kori's son revealed the story of the court case to me). Yet few would publicly assert this knowledge: instead, they professed ignorance, claiming that the original matrilineage had become extinct in the epidemics of the late nineteenth century and all current residents were migrants. Scott recounts one instance when one man did assert such knowledge in order to clarify his own lineage's privileged status in relation to the land (73–74). At a village meeting, he began to tell other villagers where they had come from, thus implying that he was autochthonous to the place. The villagers became angry and threatened return to their own places of origin if they were no longer wanted by the people of the land. Such a disastrous turn of events was pre-

vented by the intervention of the elected village chief, who was this man's elder brother. He denied the distinctions that his younger brother had asserted and assured everyone that they were equal because the real autochthonous lineage had become extinct. Ironically, he enacted the proper role of the chief of the people of the land precisely by denying the ground for this position.

In comments echoing those of Scott's informants, many Ranonggans told me, "We've all come to Ranongga floating like coconuts." Only a few of the more than twenty butubutu that are present on Ranongga are autochthonous to the island. Most have come from other islands in the New Georgia Group, as well as from Choiseul, Isabel, and even as far away as Malaita. Some of these foreign lineages came to Ranongga to seek refuge from war or sorcery; in other cases, foreigners were brought to the island as war captives. In contrast to Arosi (Scott, personal communication, March 2001), in Ranongga, narratives of lineage histories recount transfers of territory from autochthonous to foreign lineages through outright purchase, as reward for service in war, or when an autochthonous lineage would designate a foreign lineage as its replacement (see McDougall 2000). Although categorical identification with a matrilineage is important, in daily practice, most people seek to maintain a wide network of cognatic kin and a corresponding wide range of options for using land and marine resources (cf. Hviding 1996: 131–66; Foale and Macintyre 2000). In Ranongga, an energetic person will actively seek out her kin by attending distant funerals and weddings, sending gifts of food or money, participating in church or community activities in their relatives' villages, or naming children after the person.

Consistent with the generally expansive tendency of Ranonggan sociality—and, following Scott's analysis, a deeper cosmological imperative to bring ontologically diverse beings into productive congress—much public rhetoric in Ranongga overtly denies the significance of social boundaries and hierarchical privileges. Christianity has provided both a convenient idiom and extra impetus for such declarations: a common refrain in Christian church services is "We are one in the spirit of God." People are reminded that they are brothers and sisters in Christ; when disputes arise, pastors encourage people to forgive one another, overlook their differences, and remember that they are not different people but members of a single family, community, and church. At the same time, however, it would be both impossible and undesirable to achieve a complete and undifferentiated unity. Social boundaries must be periodically reasserted—in local idioms, made "straight" (*tuvizi*)—by chiefs of villages and territories. Incest is the paradigmatic example of a situation in which categories

have been inappropriately mixed and must be straightened—in incest, relatives act as though they are strangers by engaging in sexual relationships.[9] The offending couple is cut off from the kin groups: they are called *nyete* (rotten canarium nuts) and their children are not called by the name of the butubutu. Then chiefs act on behalf of the two now-separated sides of the man and woman and they exchange bakia in order to tie the kin group back together (*varipuku tari soga*). Property disputes are structurally similar to incest violations. By fighting over land, those who are or ought to be united deny that unity by acting as though they were different people. In such cases, articulation of boundaries may be necessary, but it is bound to be dangerous, because it threatens to undermine a carefully achieved unity among diverse categories of people.

Knowledge about lineages and land is subject to various restrictions. In the past, elder chiefs of a lineage shared a betel nut with the man receiving the knowledge (usually a sister's son) and then recited old genealogies and narratives. This ritual (*koi nonogo*) ensured that the recipient of the knowledge would never forget it. Today, the most common way of preserving and passing on genealogical information is by writing it down in school notebooks. This implies a restriction of a different sort, and mastery of a different genre of expressing the genealogical relationships.[10] Ranonggans today often lament the loss of knowledge about genealogy, but it seems that often this kind of information has been actively suppressed. One now-deceased chief deliberately failed to reveal a boundary between the land of his own lineage and the land that his lineage gave to a migrant lineage. According to his son, the chief knew that if people saw the division on the ground, they would enact the division in social life and would stop living and working together as though they were a single lineage.

Like Arosi, Ranonggans are often unwilling to threaten precarious social harmony by telling lineage narratives that assert a privileged relationship to the land. While visiting one of many villages on Ranongga where there is uncertainty over which of two prominent butubutu arrived first and welcomed the other butubutu ashore, a knowledgeable old woman told me about the origin of her butubutu and its arrival on the territory when it was empty of people. After telling the story, she said that she wanted people in America to hear the story, but I did not "need to bother" telling other people in Ranongga. Her reasons soon became clear—during that same visit, I heard a contradictory story from someone of the other major butubutu indicating that his lineage had arrived first. Moreover, in previous years there had been some nasty conflicts in this village centered on accusations that a prominent person of one butubutu had committed sorcery against a person associated with the other butubutu. My informant was

worried that when the others heard her story, they would become angry and cause harm to her family. Besides, she told me, there was no need to straighten out who really came first, because in the past the two groups had lived as though they were "just one butubutu." Fighting about land could lead to death, and, she said, "as long as we have a little ground to plant potatoes on, we'll live."

Articulating differential relationships to land is bound to cause ill-feeling and resentment: it may be necessary, but it is not to be taken lightly. Knowledge of genealogy and lineage histories is essential in straightening categories that become confused, but such straightening does not imply that such matters ought to become common knowledge. Here the contrast to colonial and postcolonial approaches to land rights is clear: clarifying differential property rights is seen as a necessary *prerequisite* to development, rather than a dangerous endeavor that threatens to undermine communal peace and cooperation.

Unintended Consequences

WWF (World Wide Fund for Nature) began working on Ranongga in 1997 with a project that came to be known as the Kekoro Community Resource Planning and Management Program. The project was carried out on what was considered the land of a lineage I will call Kovara, one of the few thought to be autochthonous to the island. By the middle of the next year, the project was embroiled in a heated dispute over the chieftainship of Kovara. The conflicts underlying the dispute had a very long history and this particular dispute had been quietly brewing for several years, but the WWF project provided ideal conditions for making this dispute explicit. Although the project's philosophy did not require the legal adjudication and registration of land rights, the impetus to clarify differential property rights was implicit in the project's structure. First, the project boundaries coincided with a matrilineage territory, rather than any of the church-centered village communities, and thus put questions of lineage chieftainship explicitly on the table. Second, the initial stages of the project were aimed at clarifying the value of natural resources on Ranongga and mapping the various relationships between these resources and the people who used them.

WWF began community-based conservation work in Marovo Lagoon in 1991 with funding from Australia and the European Commission. In 1995, it began a five-year Community Resource Conservation and Development Project, coordinated by the WWF South Pacific Program and based in Gizo, with funding from the UK Overseas Development Administration's

Joint Funding Scheme with WWF (WWF South Pacific Program 2003). This project employed a staff of twenty-two (including field officers who worked in their own language areas) and had a budget of approximately US$240,000 per year (Foale 2002: 44). The program is one of a number of attempts by global environmental groups to strike a balance between environmentally destructive development and hands-off conservation.

The WWF project began at the invitation of some people of Ranongga. Although Ranonggans, like other Melanesians, do not attribute innate value to the preservation of biodiversity and therefore many of the ultimate goals of WWF and other conservation organizations do not really have much meaning for them, they are worried that garden land, marine life, and forest products are dwindling and will not provide for the subsistence of their children and grandchildren (Foale 2002). They are also aware of the environmental degradation and social disruption that have occurred in other areas of the Western Solomons where large-scale logging operations have been carried out. Thus many of the people who joined early project workshops on environmental awareness in Ranongga embraced the idea of working out a plan for managing the resources of the island. Beyond this genuinely shared practical goal, many people were eager to work with WWF because they saw the organization as a link to otherwise unattainable foreign sources of wealth. They know that Western nongovernmental organizations and even tourists put a high value on preserving the environment for its own sake. In exchange for putting a taboo on a particularly delicate reef, communities may expect a payoff in the form of funding for a project (involving, for example, sewing, coconut oil, or transport). Thus the conservation *and* development scheme is often understood by both local communities and WWF staff as a more instrumental transaction of conservation *for* development: WWF works with customary landowners to get biodiversity, and customary landowners work with WWF to get development.

WWF claims to work with existing local institutions and community structures: "Fundamental to the approach is that 'conservation' occurs within a community context; not necessarily within a bounded Conservation Area" (WWF 2003: 2). Foale (2002: 45) has noted that the term *community* in WWF literature conveys a false sense of solidarity, and he suggests that this romanticized vision precludes detailed sociological analysis of the groups involved in conservation projects. Moreover, the boundaries of conservation areas in the Solomons often do not coincide with any actually existing communities. This lack of fit was reflected in struggles over the name of the project in Ranongga; when naming the project after butubutu Kovara proved controversial, participants in the project settled on the

acronym Kekoro, which comprised the names of the three tallest peaks on the island (Kela, Korotina, and Rioroqe), all of which are completely uninhabited. Kekoro community encompassed two United Church villages of more than 300 people each, one Seventh-Day Adventist village of approximately 120 people, and numerous smaller hamlets scattered along the coast whose inhabitants attended church in one of the larger villages. The United Church villages each had their own primary school (and were thus separate foci of activity for the smaller hamlets) and they were part of two different sections of the Ranongga Circuit of the United Church (so they did not regularly work together for major church celebrations). The Adventist village was composed of people who migrated from two large villages on the other side of the island in the 1970s. All of the people living in the area had various crosscutting kinship ties; even the inhabitants of the Seventh-Day Adventist village were related to people of one or the other of the United Church villages, though mostly at two or more generations remove. Such cognatic kin connections do not, however, suggest any clearly bounded social or territorial unit.

Kekoro community was not a village, a church congregation, an administrative unit, or an effective kin group. As I mentioned, the boundaries of the area of the WWF project were chosen to coincide with the territory of the matrilineage Kovara. Matrilineages look like bounded corporate groups of the sort that Western contract law finds convenient. In contrast to cognatic kindred groups, matrilineages have a single membership criterion: a person is the lineage of his or her mother. Aside from this apparently corporate organization, there is another reason why butubutu are the favored unit for conservation—they control the large blocks of territory that are necessary for efficiently protecting natural resources. Smaller parcels of land controlled by extended family groups are not large enough to be useful in conservation efforts. By taking a lineage territory as its conservation area, WWF replicated the categories and practices of the logging companies and other extractive industries that it aimed to oppose. The conservation project also incited the same kinds of disputes that logging projects do.

When the WWF project began, Kovara land had already been subject to a number of disputes. At the core of the conflict was a split between two branches within Kovara that occurred eight to ten generations ago. One branch of Kovara remained on the Kovara land on the northeast side of the island where the WWF project was initiated. The other branch was based on the northwest side of the island. According to a well-known narrative, many generations ago a woman of Kovara living on the east coast married the chief of the autochthonous matrilineage from the other side

of the island. All was not well in that territory; incest and sorcery were rampant and his lineage was near extinction.[11] Because it was clear that his lineage could not run its own affairs, the chief wanted to transfer the chieftainship to Kovara (that is, to his son and then to his daughter's children). His wife and children were crossing over the mountains to join him when they were ambushed by warriors from a neighboring island; the son was slain and the mother hung herself in mourning. Only the daughter survived and was eventually installed as chief of the land on the western side of the island. The question that became pressing in the context of the WWF project was the extent to which this migrant branch retained power over the original land of Kovara. In the first decades of the twentieth century (the time of the grandparents of my oldest informants), there had been free interactions between these two branches of Kovara. The division became a real split in the 1910s when the migrant branch of Kovara converted to Seventh-Day Adventism, while people living on Kovara land converted to Methodism. (In 1968, the Methodist mission became the United Church.) The Methodist and Adventist missions differed on their day of worship, dietary prohibitions, regional lingua franca, orthography, and approaches to traditional practices; they encouraged denominational endogamy; and they were actively antagonistic toward one another.

Sometime in the 1930s, this division between the Methodist and Seventh-Day Adventist branches of Kovara butubutu was articulated in a court case that was heard by a British district officer.[12] Adventists from the western side of the island came back to Kovara land and cut down a tree in order to make a canoe without first asking the Methodist Kovara chief. In oral histories of the case, the confrontation is figured as a battle, in which genealogies and lineage histories were the primary weapons. Descendents of Methodists claim that, even though they were greatly outnumbered by the Adventist witnesses, they were able to win because their only witness was an old man with the ritually instilled power to remember genealogy. My Adventist informants did not question this basic logic (though they did suggest that the colonial government always favored Methodists), but lamented that the strictly anti-"custom" ideology of their mission prevented old men from sharing such information.[13] As far as I know, this court decision was not followed by reconciliation between the two sides as was the case with Kori and Maka. Instead, the legal dispute reinforced a division between these two branches. They were established as different people and the animosity remained.

After the victory, the Methodist chief, a man I will call Vape, granted areas along the coastal and garden areas to nonlineage members, many of whom held pajuku ceremonies to solidify their claims on the areas. Vape

had no sisters or close female lineage mates with living children who could succeed him as chief. Vape was succeeded by his own son, Daniel Vape, who was an old man by the time WWF began its project. Unlike his father, he was not a particularly powerful chief; he lived quietly in a hamlet comprising his extended family, and they had formed their own small branch of a minor evangelical Christian church. Because of this religious conversion, Daniel had lost interest in all matters of custom and rarely joined in the collective activities of the larger Methodist village. In the meantime—and over the course of a number of government-sponsored attempts to bolster the chieftainship—Daniel's nephew was appointed as his "spokesman." This spokesman had much more formal education than most other villagers, and he was thus granted a fair amount of authority by them in contexts in which they were interacting with the government or other outside organizations. Moreover, he claimed to have court records from the 1930s court case supposedly proving that Kovara land was Daniel's own "private family property." Thus the situation was already tense when Daniel Vape decided that he would appoint his own son (Vape's paternal grandson) as a successor rather than seeking a Kovara person not from his immediate family.[14]

It was into this political situation—and I note that its complexity is typical, not anomalous, for the region—that WWF unwittingly entered when it began working on Ranongga. During the first stage of the project, workshops focused on increasing awareness of the environment and mapping out relationships between people and the land. Many of these activities defined lateral ties between lineages, villages, churches, and other community organizations. However, at the same time and somewhat independent of the project, several Kovara people not closely related to Daniel Vape began collecting an exhaustive genealogy, from the first woman to emerge on Kovara territory to the present generation. It would provide a comprehensive history and a list of all of the people in the Kovara "tribe." Given the underlying tensions and the history of disputes over the territory, it is little wonder that this was interpreted as an attempt to regain control of the territory that they had returned to only in recent generations.

In late 1998, Daniel Vape's spokesman wrote two letters to WWF that declared the project closed by authority of the chief (described in Tanito 2000). He objected to "any further enforcement or monitoring the land" by a foreign organization, arguing that "this land remains by it[s] own traditional custom and should not allow any more details over the land or whatsoever, etc." He warned about problems in the community that were arising because there had been "transecting [sic: transacting?] over secret of the land." In responding, the expatriate WWF director focused on the spokesman's objection to WWF as a foreign institution and emphasized

that WWF was only trying to help strengthen the position of the landowners vis-à-vis foreigners who might attempt to take advantage of them. The letter explained that the information collected would be made available to the community, which would ultimately have authority over what was to be done with it. In a second letter to WWF, the spokesman reiterated the demand that the project be ended. The chief of Kovara, he said, had enemies in his own tribe who were trying to dispute his land, and thus "the document of the land should not be . . . [made] public or known to other people." As this letter indicates, he was not, in fact, worried that foreigners might know the secrets of the land. He feared exactly what WWF had promised to do, that is, to share the information with people in the community, some of whom he considered his enemies.

From the point of view of WWF management, the solution to this problem was a meeting to "work out differences" between WWF and the community. During a WWF-sponsored meeting in September 1998, the assembled chiefs declared that territory is not alienable from a matrilineage and resolved that if anyone of Kovara was alive, the chieftainship could not be transferred away from the lineage (Tanito 2000). Branches were deemed irrelevant. A chief from the nonlocal branch of Kovara was declared overall chief of all Kovara land, even though he had not been involved in the WWF project until this time and had little knowledge about Kovara territory. Daniel Vape was described as the "custodian" of Kovara land who looked after it on behalf of the overall chief. Another man of Kovara lineage who lived near the WWF project area was appointed to succeed Vape as custodian. Vape agreed to the committee's decisions and the matter appeared to be settled.

In fact, the situation was far from settled, but the lack of clarity did not actually hinder the successful continuation of the project. The chief's spokesman continued to actively oppose the project. Eight months after the chief's hearing, WWF sponsored another meeting that, in the words of the facilitator, aimed to "get everything out in the open." Vape's spokesman once again argued that questions of land, and the underlying dispute over the chieftainship, should not concern WWF, but he was no longer trying to shut down the project. He was included on a number of committees, though none of the committees that were formed through arduous meetings in 1998 and 1999 actually met in 2000. The stage of the program that was aimed at clarifying community structures and raising awareness was concluded.

The next stage of the project, intended to design and implement a plan for reef conservation, proceeded with little overt controversy for a number of reasons. First, the "awareness" phase of the project was com-

pleted, so questions about land ownership and chieftainship were no longer the focus of overt attention. Second, following the chieftainship crisis, the project subtly shifted its focus away from the village where Daniel Vape and his spokesman lived to another nearby village. Finally, the man designated to replace Vape did not assert the special authority that he was apparently granted during the WWF-sponsored meeting. He and another man involved in the WWF project were well regarded for their skill in customary procedures of dispute management, and they did not attempt to bring latent controversies to the surface and work them out. They deferred authority to the head of the bureaucratically constituted WWF community committee and worked through the village churches. This stage of the project was not entirely without controversy, however. Some individuals worried that they would no longer control family garden areas. As might be expected, Daniel Vape's spokesman did not comply and the reef that Vape controlled was not included in the plan.

The resource management plan was officially launched on 15 September 1999 in a gathering attended by representatives of WWF and a number of chiefs from around the island. (Notably absent were Daniel Vape, his spokesman, and the man who had been declared chief of all Kovara land in the September 1998 meeting.) The leaders who helped to enforce the taboo worked through the church to convince villagers that the resource management plan was important to everyone. The enforcement was generally successful, and by late 2000 many villagers had noticed an increase in shellfish. This increased yield enabled a massive feast in Pienuna in January 2001 when the reef was opened for a New Year's holiday food-gathering competition (an event that undoubtedly erased any beneficial effects on species preservation or long-term yield). Questions of the effectiveness of the project are not my main concern here, however.[15] I aim to highlight the reasons why the project moved forward at all. To the extent that the WWF project on Ranongga has been successful, its success is in spite of, rather than because of, efforts to make the connections between people and the territory explicit.

Controversy arose again when the project moved into its third phase—the phase that was of most interest to villagers because it focused on income generation. In early 2000, visiting WWF staff told the local committee that before WWF could invest in village development, all questions about the ultimate ownership of the land had to be settled. A new controversy arose and threatened to cause serious social conflict in the village that had become the unofficial home of WWF operations in 1999–2000. This was avoided in part because WWF activities were curtailed in the wake of the

coups on Guadalcanal and in part because the leaders of the village actively avoided confrontation and clarification.

Different Visions of Polity

The 1953 land commission saw clear and secure land title as both necessary and inevitable in the progress of the Solomon Islands. Though many things have changed in the last half century, the impetus toward clarification is still very much part of the agenda of government and nongovernmental organizations. It should now be clear that the permanent and explicit clarification of land rights raises numerous practical and cosmological problems in Ranongga and perhaps in many other Solomon Island societies. If Ranonggans adopted a system of legally registered land title, differential rights that are now usually recognized covertly would become overt. Group distinctions that are now overlooked in the interest of shared goals and a harmonious community life would become visible. The permanent clarification of differential property rights would fundamentally change the dynamic articulation of unity and difference that is constitutive of community in Ranongga.

Clarification of differential rights and of social boundaries is necessary on Ranongga and, for much of the twentieth century, Ranonggans have used techniques of Western bureaucracy to articulate these differences. Such clarification may affirm and solidify an already present fission, defining disputants as "different people." Yet clarification may also create animosity between those who have been living together amicably until their differences and divisions were brought under public scrutiny. This kind of animosity and division need not be permanent—in various ways and with varying degrees of success, disputants may reconcile and affirm that they are, indeed, "only one people" and should live together in peace rather than fighting over property. At the same time, however, many Ranonggans *would* like to translate the usually tacit power of chiefs into rights of private property, and to make social hierarchy visible and permanent. Recall the Kovara chief's spokesman who claimed that the matrilineage territory was the private property of the chief—this man later told me of his plans to begin timber harvesting with the cooperation of his European friend who had promised him that his land could make him a millionaire (see Kaplan, in this volume, on Fijian landowners as corporate shareholders). Other Ranonggan leaders frequently spoke of their power in Biblical and royal metaphors. Such individuals do not face active opposition, but neither have they rallied many supporters. Many of those who make such assertions

have moved away from the larger villages and joined one of the splinter Christian denominations that are growing throughout the Solomons. This apparently increasing social fragmentation might be the inevitable consequence of engaging a capitalist economy and its legal apparatus. However, such fission might also be part of a long-term oscillation between unity and division.

When I have talked to Europeans and Solomon Islanders working in WWF and other nongovernmental organizations about the difficulties of administering projects, many tend to throw up their hands in the face of the entropic force of land disputes. They talk about the difficulties of finding communities where there are no smoldering disputes and where chiefs really do represent the interests of the group. Rather than seeking a community where it is possible to map people on property, I wonder whether it would be possible to imagine a project that did not demand such clarification and could let sleeping dogs lie, as it were. Would there be a way to play into the unifying rather than the divisive forces of social life? It might be possible to rethink some kinds of community development projects along these lines, particularly those that are not oriented around profit on a capitalist market (for example, projects aimed at improving village infrastructure, building schools, or conserving resources). Could these be modeled on church endeavors (which usually do not cause disputes) rather than business enterprises (which usually do)? Although I can only speculate about such matters, I think that these kinds of questions highlight the difficulty—and the importance—of imagining alternative ways to integrate local communities into broader national and international polities.

Notions of private property are foundational to most Western liberal democratic theories of state: from Adam Smith to Rousseau to Marx the state is justified to protect the property of individuals. Whether as state of nature or original sin, these theories of polity take for granted that there are "others"—not kin, not families, not friends—who want to take the property away from people. The looting and extortion that plagued the lives of urban Solomon Islanders in recent years testifies to the country's need for a state that can protect property rights. And yet many of the grassroots peace efforts—notably those of women's groups and church groups—that emerged at the height of the political tension articulated a different vision of a peaceful and prosperous community. In articulating solutions, they did not focus on the need to enforce the differential property rights of individuals or of ethnic groups, but on the need to bring together the two sides of a broken national community in a way that would make such differential rights irrelevant (McDougall 2003). In the utopian visions thus articulated, all are "one" in the name of an overarching Christian God. This is per-

haps analogous to the ways that Maori are attempting to reshape a New Zealand public sphere along the lines of what Daniel Rosenblatt (in this volume) calls cognatic nationalism. Both are distinctly Pacific visions of a kind of sovereignty based not on the right to exclude foreign others but on the right to include them. Such a vision may not be easily translated into viable policy. Indeed, the rituals of apology and reconciliation in both the Solomons and Fiji have done little to reinstate a satisfying social order. And yet, it is probably worthwhile to take these alternative visions seriously—especially in contexts such as those that I have described in this article, in which people do actually manage to reestablish harmony by carefully keeping their differences just below the surface of social life.

Notes

This article draws on twenty-three months of research on Ranongga carried out between October 1998 and February 2001. It was supported by an International Dissertation Research Grant from the Social Science Research Council and a Small Grant from the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research. I thank the Solomon Islands and Western Province government for permission to carry out the research. I am most deeply indebted to the many Ranonggans who so generously welcomed me into their communities and shared their lives with me—this includes the people of Pienuna village, where I was based during my research, and people of villages around the island where I visited. Although I would like to acknowledge the particular contributions of individuals to this analysis, I have used pseudonyms for people and kin groups in order to protect confidentiality and ensure that what I write will not provide fodder for future disputes. I also owe much to the staff at the World Wide Fund for Nature in Gizo and in Ranongga for their friendship, generous sharing of information about the project, and stimulating conversations about the problems of development, conservation, and land rights in the Solomons. I am particularly grateful to Simon Foale for ongoing discussions of the issues addressed here. An early version of this article was presented at the American Anthropological Association 2000 Annual Meetings in a session titled "Genealogy Materialized," and it benefited from detailed comments from Michael Scott. I also thank Kung-jin Cho, Kathleen Lowrey, Daniel Rosenblatt, and Danilyn Rutherford for their insightful comments on drafts.

1 In a piece titled "The Melanesian Way of Menacing the Mining Industry," Colin Filer (1998) offers a scathing critique of this "David and Goliath" story of resistance by arguing that mining companies are stymied not because of the active opposition of Melanesians, but because of the disorganization and instability of Melanesian political institutions, both local and national. Far from heroic resistance, this instability prevents Melanesians from working cooperatively toward goals that everyone agrees they want—like the development they hope will result from mining ventures.

2 There are two vernacular languages spoken on Ranongga: Kubokota in the north of the island and Luqa in the south. The vernacular terms I cite are Kubo-

kota variants; in writing these, I use the orthography now being used in a Luqa language Bible translation: *q* for the voiced velar stop (as in English *finger*), *ng* for the velar nasal (as in English *sing*), and *g* for the voiced velar fricative (which is written as *gh* in other orthographies). All voiced stops are prenasalized in Ranonggan languages (thus *Kubokota* sounds like *Kumbokota* and the term *pajuku* sounds like *panjuku*.) The name of the island *Ranongga* is a European mispronunciation of *Ganoqa*, a region on the northeastern coast of the island that was densely populated in the era of European contact and that formerly had a distinct language. Europeans took the regional name *Ganoqa* as the name of the whole island. I retain this colonial misrendering because it is unclear that Luqa, Kubokota, and Ganoqa were part of a single entity known as *Ganoqa* before colonial times and because today most people now pronounce and write the name of the island with an *r* rather than a *g*. I also retain the government spelling for the name of the island, using *ngg* rather than *q* for the voiced velar stop.

3 *Settlement* here means the registration of title, not the settlement of people. The term was used to avoid confusion with previous legislation.

4 *Butubutu* may be used to refer to any group of people who are contextually understood as being the same.

5 *Pajuku* is a transitive verb (it functions rather like *buy* in English); as a noun it denotes the ceremony or event where this action occurs.

6 These prestations occur only in Methodist funerals. Seventh-Day Adventists on Ranongga told me that although they weep out of sorrow because they will miss their loved one, there is no real reason to mourn because they should be happy that the deceased has gone to join Jesus. Some take the elaborate rituals of commemoration in Methodist villages as a sign of a lack of faith in heavenly afterlife.

7 *Kill* [him] and *buy* [it] are both denoted by the word *vai-i-a* in the languages of Ranongga—both are procurement that does not depend on the *vari-roqu* (love or mutual regard) of the parties to the interaction.

8 It is entirely likely that Maka's interpretation of the court case contradicts the story I got from Kori's son, but I did not talk to Maka about the dispute because I did not want him to suspect that Kori's son was reasserting his own rights to the garden land by telling me about the case.

9 What counts as incest is contextually determined. The boundaries of exogamous kin groups are reckoned according to genealogical relationship but also according to whether the people have habitually acted as relatives. Minimally, however, all butubutu are exogamous, and people may not marry into the butubutu of their father or of any of their grandparents; they may also not marry cognatically related kin up to two generations removed. Violations of such exogamy rules are frequent and are seen as serious threats to community viability.

10 Written genealogies might seem more permanent than ones passed by memory, but, in fact, these documents have a precarious existence. They may be borrowed and not returned, used as cigarette rolling paper, eaten by cockroaches, or destroyed by mold.

11 It is said that those who obtain sorcery power must direct it against their own relatives before killing enemies. Thus both of these offenses involve a fundamental confusion of identity categories, where people of one lineage act as though they are different.

12 According to Allan (1957: 207), sectarian division led to a number of court cases during this period. I was not able to locate any record for this court case, which is unsurprising because most prewar documents from the Western Solomons were lost during the Japanese occupation.
13 In the eyes of the British district officer, this genealogical information was probably completely insignificant, in light of the fact that one branch of the lineage had not occupied the territory for hundreds of years. He had to rule in favor of the resident branch or risk contradicting the basis of all prewar land alienation under a wasteland regulation.
14 As the narrative about the transfer of chieftainship from Tono to Kovara indicates, there is clearly a precedent for such a transfer. However, equally clear is that the appointment and installation of chiefs in the past was never simply the choice of the old chief: there was an elaborate ritual procedure that required chiefs from all over the island and region to contribute shell money and other goods in support of the new chief. These practices were abandoned in the 1930s or before. The validity of Daniel's choice was thus questionable, and particularly so because of the other circumstances.
15 I would note, however, that there was little awareness (beyond what I tried to foster) that completely cleaning out the reef for the New Year's celebration was a bad idea. Had the WWF project been designed to focus less on teaching communities how to run themselves and more on teaching them how shellfish reproduce, the result might have been better.

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