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## Reconfiguring Life and Death

### A New Moral Economy in 'Pentecost'

#### The Point of Departure

The sun had broken briefly through the clouds as Michelle and her adoptive father, Matadoya, made their way to the northern end of Kiriwina Island in late June 2013, but dark skies threatened. After turning off the main road, they first cycled along a rutted airstrip, built by American soldiers during World War II and later abandoned to the elements and overgrown with weeds. Heavy rains the previous days meant that the mud track into Boitavaia, a small village some distance from the main road in northern Kiriwina, was nearly impossible to navigate by bicycle. The track continued past the old airstrip known as the 'North Drome' during the war, through deep mud, and by the time they reached the village of Kaurikwau, they decided to leave the bikes and continue on foot to Boitavaia. They were making the excursion because Michelle was keen to attend a mortuary distribution, the general term for which in the local Kilivila language is *sagali*. After nearly two years of fieldwork in the Trobriand Islands, Michelle had attended dozens upon dozens of such events. This one, however, promised to be different from most she had attended. Boitavaia and several neighbouring villages, as well as others scattered across the largest of the Trobriand Islands, Kiriwina, had made collective decisions to change the way such mortuary distributions were done. Specifically, these villages had decided that they would no longer manufacture or exchange *doba*, the bundles and skirts made from banana leaves made famous thanks to Annette Weiner's work

in the 1970s, and which had for generations been the primary object of exchange following a clansperson's death. So far, only a few villages had given up the use of doba wholesale, but many villages throughout Kiriwina regularly debated the merits of continuing the practice.

This debate is a key entry point into understanding what is happening in Pentecostal Kiriwina. Pentecostal churches in Kiriwina and other Trobriand Islands are a relatively recent phenomenon, following a long history of missionization by Methodists (now the United Church) and Catholics. In recent decades, the Pentecostalization of the Trobriands has created new moral as well as economic imperatives to reorient exchange activities and domestic economies. In using the concept of moral economies, we keep the concept intentionally broad, encompassing both economic decisions that consider exchange in evaluative moral terms (that imply a value judgement about what is 'good', what Carrier (2018: 23) refers to as 'economic morality') as well as in the sense of the mutual obligations that a moral economy entails (Carrier 2018). The arrival and establishment of this new form of worship, and the discourses that emerge from it, have had flow-on effects that belie the number of congregants who actually attend churches that are designated 'Pentecostal'. As one United pastor put it, the island has been 'hit by a Pentecostal wave'; most United Churches in the Trobriands now consider themselves to be 'Revival' churches, in contrast to the Catholic Church, which maintains its own discourses and forms of worship (and yet, in many ways, has also been influenced by the so-called Pentecostal 'wave'). People have thus increasingly been concerned with the significance of sagali ceremonies in this new context.

Let us return to the specific event in June 2013. When the distributions got underway, it was easy for Michelle to see the ways in which this sagali differed from others she had attended. The size and scale was much reduced; the only things given away were lengths of fabric (*laplaps* in Pidgin, or *karekwa* in local vernacular), woven mats, a few store goods and cash notes and coins. While women were still the main participants in these distributions, the only goods being exchanged that were actually manufactured by women were mats; the rest either were cash itself or required cash to obtain, unlike the banana leaf textiles that women elsewhere make and exchange in vast quantities, on a scale quite unlike the weaving of mats. It was surprising to see the large amounts of money distributed in the Boitavaia sagali; people carried sticks with kina notes affixed to the branches, often in excess of 200 kina (about USD 75 at the day's exchange rate). It was an easy assumption to make that people in these villages must be high achievers, pursuing work and education in the cities, such that those living in the villages relied heavily on

remittances sent home by employed relatives, but this was not the case. In fact, few residents of these villages are educated beyond elementary school, and village residents receive few remittances. Instead, they rely on their own business sense and ability to save a bit when they find good money – for example, by selling a large carving when a cruise ship arrives. Some Boitavaia women also pointed out that because they no longer ‘waste their time’ making *doba*, they can sell the *wakaya* leaves (the kind of banana leaves used in their manufacture) that grow in their village for money to those who persist in using *doba* in *sagali*, or, better yet, they can exchange these raw leaves directly for calico cloth. What is more, in Boitavaia, the *valova* exchange, which in other villages is a non-cash based direct exchange of small goods for banana leaf bundles, is here replaced with cash transactions. The people of Boitavaia were quick to point out that their lives were better without the drain created by making and exchanging *doba*, which ‘*gala mokwita ipilasi okauweda*’ (doesn’t really help our households).

### Talking about ‘Waste’

The discourses of Trobrianders about the shift away from the use of *doba* often revolves around the need to focus not on extended kinship obligations with those clan members who may be more distantly related or geographically situated but on a redirection of resources – time, money, material goods – towards members of the nuclear family. In discussing *sagali* and the use of *doba* with Trobriand interlocutors, a number of concepts consistently reappeared in conversations with people who both embraced and eschewed its production and exchange: with pastors or church leaders, with the ‘grass-roots’ people in villages across the islands and with urban-dwelling Trobrianders or those who had spent their entire lives in the islands. Most frequently, the time, energy and material investment required to produce *doba* is referred to, by men and women alike, as ‘wasteful’ or ‘useless’ – e.g. ‘*sena iyomada taem*’ (it is a real waste of time). In the local vernacular, *yomada* is usually translated as ‘waste’, carrying negative connotations, and the term recurs frequently in discussions about *sagali* and the use of *doba*. *Doba* is often referred to as *pupagatu* (dirty) and *maena gaga* (smelly).

For those in Trobriand villages or clans that have chosen to stop using *doba* in exchange practices, a similar refrain is reiterated over and over again by almost every Trobriander (male or female, pastor or layperson, urban or rural). The following excerpt is from a conversation with Pastor Steven of the Rhema Church in the village of Obwelia,

but it is almost verbatim what literally dozens of other Trobrianders would say:

It's good, we [in the church] don't say *doba* is demonic. But it's *pupagatu* [dirty]. *Tomota gala bisikamsi, kikoni bimesa bikamsi, bimeyasi maena gaga* [People can't wear it, rats will come and eat it, it smells bad]. And a lot of time is consumed in this process. *Laplap boimeyasi dimdim* [White people already brought cloth pieces], and with this we can sew it, wear it, make pillowcases, or what[ever] – not like *doba*. *Doba* is a waste. It's better we just switch it out with *karekwa* [calico cloth]. (Michelle's field notes, interview in a mix of English and Kilivila, translations Michelle)

The concepts of the *dala* (matriline or sub-clan; relatives on one's mother's side going back to a common female ancestor) and *baloma* (spirits of the ancestors) figure prominently,<sup>1</sup> as people talk about obligations and the need to 'pay' something back (*mapu*), which is often contrasted with 'gift' (*bobwelila*). *Momova* refers to life and *kariga* to death; the latter is much more commonly used in conversations about *sagali*, since it is a feast in honour of a deceased relative, and death is celebrated in more dramatic ritual fashion than virtually any other event in the life course in the Trobriands. But somewhere in all of these conversations emerges, inevitably, a reference to focusing on living a good life and directing resources for the wellbeing of one's family in the here and now, rather than orienting production and exchange towards the deceased.

Based on these perspectives from a Pentecostal Kiriwina, it seems that in 'Pentecost', waste might be a significant concept. We will now look a little closer at what this concept implies.

## Life

If one of the most often repeated terms with regards to the pitfalls of a focus on the production and distribution of *doba* centre around 'waste' or 'wastefulness' (*yomada*), as this chapter will draw out through ethnographic description of contemporary Kiriwina, what does this mean in practice, and, as importantly, what does it mean for people's understanding of what is useful and productive? On a larger scale, can it even tell us something about how people understand what is important in life and death? The rumblings of change in the practice of *sagali* began as early as the mid 1980s, people in Kiriwina say. Within the United Church, there was already discussion about the need to update these old customs, which stood outside of Christian belief and devotion.

In Pentecostal Kiriwina, the focus is on the here and now and the way forward, in keeping with Biblical principles as exemplified in the following verses from Luke: ‘But Jesus said to him, “Let the dead bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God”. Another said, “I will follow you, Lord; but let me first say farewell to those at my home”. Jesus said to him, “No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God”.’ (Luke 9:60–62). The discourses and changes in ritual practice in contemporary Kiriwina reflect a literal reaction to the Lord’s message that those who dwell on farewelling the dead, which is an act of looking backward, so to speak, cannot claim to be ‘fit for the Kingdom of God’. If people are to move forward – spiritually but also materially, in terms of development and prosperity or finding a good/better life – they must be fully devoted to discipleship and living in a Godly way. The arrival of a new wave of churches, most of which emphasize direct communication with God, the power of the Holy Spirit and the importance of being born again in the faith, mean that such sentiments are growing in strength and conviction. It is, as this chapter will show, a matter of life over death, as played out through the moral economy and acts of exchange.

### **‘We Can’t Eat Doba’**

George is a highly educated Trobriander who, after many years living and working in Port Moresby, is now living back in his home village of Obwelia, one of the first villages in Kiriwina to completely cease using *nununiga* (banana leaf bundles), now more than twenty years ago. George told Michelle very early on during her first stint of fieldwork about how members of the Revived churches often refuse to support or participate in *sagali*, again because it is seen as wasteful, especially when there is scarcity – that is, during times of the year when food is not plentiful. George explained that the church creates new demands by imposing holidays that do not follow the timetable for traditional feasting. For example, when Easter rolls around and the church calls for a community feast, people may have to harvest their *kaymata* (ceremonial) gardens before they are really ready. Analogously, Christmas falls at a time traditionally marked by food scarcity, which means that today such celebrations demand supplementing with trade store foods, especially rice. And rice can only be obtained with money, so the need to focus on ‘productive’ work becomes more and more linked to that which produces a cash income. Similarly, Annelin reports that in 2014 the village of Ranon, on the island of Ambrym in Vanuatu, decided not

to celebrate Christmas, as so many people had died and death ceremonies had exhausted resources. This made the town migrants in Fresh Wota very upset; how could they not celebrate the birth of Jesus but instead spend their time and garden produce on their dead?

In Boitavaia, the village described at the beginning of this chapter, Michelle was told that people ‘didn’t want/need doba because we can’t eat it’ and instead would focus on more ‘useful’ things like money, mats and bolts of fabric. People pointed out, as they did in Obwelia village, that God wanted them to change their ways. God ‘spoke to people’ and revealed his plan. People should stop using magic (*megwa*) of all kinds; ‘*avela bikatoula, bitapwaroru*’ (whoever gets sick should pray), not resort to ‘bush medicine’ or magic. While the entire village of Boitavaia as well as the neighbouring villages of Kaurikwau and Tubuwada have stopped using doba completely, they have not actually stopped holding *lisaladabu*, the major mortuary distribution that usually follows many months or even years after a death, so the kinspeople of the deceased have time to amass the great wealth needed to make a good distribution. Instead, they have changed the nature of it. It is no longer compulsory, but for those who wish to honour their deceased relatives with a *lisaladabu sagali*, they will not wait so long after the death. Given the shorter time span between a death and the major mortuary distributions, one has to keep some fabric and money available in case a relative dies, whether by holding it oneself or by having enough other people indebted to oneself that one can quickly claim favours from those who may have such things at the needed time. People will quickly deploy the resources at their disposal – wood carvings, yams, mustard and betel nut, for example – to exchange in the market for cash. Because the ceremony is simplified and does not include the distribution of hundreds or even thousands of bundles of banana leaves, it takes much less time to carry out. The *lisaladabu sagali* described in the opening paragraphs of this chapter took only about an hour, easily accommodating a delay due to a heavy rain shower. Meanwhile, such distributions in other villages that still use doba take a full day, with some even continuing on to a second day in ever-escalating competitions to amass and distribute more and more.

No one suggested that participation in *sagali* or the manufacture of banana leaf textiles was in any way evil, sinful or demonic in the way this was described in the context of healing in the previous chapter. Instead, a comparative exercise starting in Kiriwina opens up another dimension of ‘Pentecost’. Here, focus is not so much on good/evil as a key binary but rather productivity/unproductivity or forward-looking/backward-looking. In Pentecostal Kiriwina, where the Holy Spirit is

paramount, it is important to focus attention on providing resources for one's own veranda or household (nuclear family), while it is pointless, useless or unproductive (though not 'evil') to 'waste' time and energy on wide-ranging clan-based obligations. We might further suggest that the perception of *doba* as a rotting, decaying organic material that fills large baskets in small houses or is strewn across the village centre during *sagali* reflects an almost physical presence of the effect of 'Pentecost'. In people's complaints about the dirty, smelly *doba*, we can detect a tangible manifestation of how Pentecostalism becomes 'Pentecost'; how the expectation of a 'Pentecostal world' creates the presence of a moral order that is already here.

Thus, as outlined in the introduction, the coming of the Holy Spirit – that is to say, the expectation of the Pentecost – has visible, social effects: it creates 'Pentecost'. In this world, in 'Pentecost', the unproductivity of *doba* and *sagali* turn into a pungent smell, a distinctive sight: that of rotting banana leaves. Strips of leaves that lie in the road or in peoples' yards while they dry, filling up verandas while new bundles are being made, is a concrete manifestation of a problem in 'Pentecost' – a moral problem of 'waste'. In this chapter we will look at the significance of this focus on 'waste' and the turn towards life and close kin at the cost of a cyclical perspective on life and death that seems to be important for life in 'Pentecost'. Calling something 'wasteful' in Kiriwina is consequently part of a moral discourse that redirects attention away from death and kin obligations and towards life and the 'here and now'. This transformation, from the dead to the living, one might say, is also echoed in Port Vila and the Palanca. In the sections below, we take a few circuits through each field site to compare the specific ways in which such transformations are manifested in each setting and what this can tell us about life in 'Pentecost'. In doing so, we also point to the specific ways the presence and expectation of the Holy Spirit creates social moral imperatives.

## **Extending the Context: Moral Imperatives in Fresh Wota and the Palanca**

In Port Vila, waste is a category in frequent use. '*Yu no wastem taem*' (do not waste your time) is very commonly heard. It refers to the literal meaning of being efficient, but it also connotes a subtler moral attitude of not being lazy. This concept has in more recent times gained another layer of significance. It indicates not only the moral obligation to be efficient, not to be lazy (and thus to work and be productive), but also

the way in which the potential for productivity should be seen and understood as well as grasped. For instance, Annelin was surprised by the growth in numbers of local household stores in Fresh Wota and Ohlen on her visit in 2014. Whereas about a decade ago there might have been a few locally run stores for every block, there is now a store in nearly every other household. There seems to be a moral imperative to have a small shop or store in virtually every household in the Fresh Wota neighbourhood. Rose, one of Annelin's long-time interlocutors, told her, 'To have a store is an easy way to make money. Everyone *should* have a store.' Such stores comprise little more than a shelf in one's kitchen near a window through which one can sell staples like rice, tinned fish and instant noodles to one's own relatives and neighbours and even to members of one's own household. Stocks are small and quickly exhausted, but the potential for a small profit to be made from buying wholesale and reselling at a slight mark-up means that not to do so is lazy, even close to immoral.

Maggio (2016) reports on similar phenomena in peri-urban Honiara in the Solomon Islands. He describes how keeping money inside the household through the sale of store goods, even between husband and wife, avoids the drain of resources outside the household. People will sell goods to themselves in order to clearly conceptualize the obligation to make money. Maggio shows how economic activities in Pentecostal households are not just moneymaking strategies but an example of the redefinition of family relationships in order to overcome the contradictory values of kinship and money, learned through church-sponsored sessions on domestic economy. In the context of Port Vila, and also in Honiara, 'waste' is thus a central category but not in the exact same sense as in Kiriwina. Whereas in Kiriwina waste is primarily understood in its association with *doba* production and implies a 'backward', traditional and even immoral attitude to life (because of its 'death-centrism'), in Port Vila waste is associated with the lack of understanding of the opportunities for potential profit and finding a way to seize these opportunities.

In the Palanca neighbourhood of Luanda, Ruy describes conversion testimonies that invoke an economic argument embedded with ideas of reciprocity and compensation that are moralized in terms of being either purposeful or wasteful. As in Kiriwina and Port Vila, material things become indices of moral righteousness and operate through contrasting ideas of wasteful or purposeful behaviour. For instance, Ruy was confronted with the conversion story of a young man in the Bom Deus, a Bakongo evangelical church, who had been unemployed, smoking marijuana and visiting sorcerers to heal his constant physical and mental



problems. For him there needed to be an explanation for his ailments in the external agency of sorcery or envy. He eventually found Jesus, entered the Bom Deus and was then able to present his own conversion testimony as a process of healing through modification of his conduct from wasteful to purposeful, which in turn found material manifestation in his subsequent acquisition of a house and motorcycle. Ruy heard a similar story from a pastor in the EKWESA church, who explained how, after growing up in the Kimbanguist Church in Kinshasa, in his teenage years he decided to 'stay at home' and live a 'worldly life'. Eventually he began having dreams of a more purposeful life and a vision of a specific church space. After the third dream, he began looking for this space and only stopped when he found it. He made the church his 'home' and is now one of its most prominent pastors, living off the contributions of his followers and patients.

This story suggests that the individual, the household and the public are configured to correspond in terms of moral and ethical behaviour: what a person does, and how one behaves, reflects on the organization of one's household. But if buying and independently managing your own house is indicative of achievement in places like Luanda, this 'achievement' can be a morally double-edged sword because it often implies 'moving away' from the church. Oftentimes, Ruy heard the phrase 'staying at home' as a euphemism for 'not belonging to a church', thus implying ideas of laziness, lack of productivity and so on. Therefore, belonging to church implies 'leaving home' to join in the collective endeavour of church worship and also letting the church 'enter the home' and direct the ways in which family members participate in the domestic economy in a purposeful way. The fact that the young man from the Bom Deus church was able to buy himself a motorcycle might therefore be understood not as a product of professional success and financial accumulation but rather of a rationalizing of time and conduct towards a less wasteful, morally approved situation.

### **The Moral Domestic Economy in 'Pentecost'**

To return to Kiriwina, the concept of waste points to a moral turn towards a specific idea of productivity, as we have seen also in Port Vila and Luanda. Eschewing sagali and doba as wasteful is seen by most Trobrianders as also a move away from looking to the ancestors and the temporally and spatially widespread kin linkages that connect members of the same dala, or matriclan. The focus and concentration of resources and energy are instead directed inwards, such that the nuclear family

is the epicentre, and the significant 'extended family' becomes centred more on one's church congregation or fellowship group than towards obligations to the dala. To extend this a bit further, such a reorientation means no less than a reconfiguration of the meaning of life and death. If the significance of the dala and maintaining links to genealogical ancestors are severed by cutting sagali and forgoing the use of doba, a product of women's labour that symbolically represents the dala and the very milk that links mother to child, what does death mean? Death is no longer understood as the time in which obligations from members of the same clan as the deceased have to make repayments to members of other clans in order to send the spirit of the deceased peacefully to Tuma, the island where all dead ancestors reside. In Pentecostal Kiriwina, death is the end, as the soul goes to heaven at God's discretion based on the deceased's moral behaviour during his or her life; there is nothing a clan member can do once their loved one has passed on except pray for the departed soul. A focus on 'life' instead of 'death', then, means a focus on ensuring material wellbeing and spiritual wholeness in the here and now and looking to the future rather than the past.

Today, some of the social functions of sagali as a communal event of redistribution and sharing are replaced, in a way, with feasts for church events such as Easter or Christmas celebrations, church openings and the like. And rather than clan members coming together after a death to amass resources for distribution to affines and other non-kin at sagali, fundraising events called *semakai*<sup>2</sup> are regularly held at many (primarily United) churches, wherein various groups – women's, men's, youth fellowship groups, Sunday school children as well as groups by hamlet – must give collective donations of cash in support of the church pastors, deacons and general infrastructure. Reminiscent of the part of sagali called *deli*, in which woven mats, cloth and other goods are brought by groups and set down to then be redistributed, in *semakai* a number of people representing one of the groups mentioned above assemble facing the church leadership, who sit at the centre of the proceedings. The group members sing and collectively advance towards the leaders to drop their individual offerings, on behalf of the group they represent in this case, into large dishes or baskets. Each group tries to outdo the next with more generous offerings, and tallies are made for each group and announced so that everyone will know which group has been able to amass the most resources to give away in *semakai*. What is more, I was told that in some parishes, a church leader will sponsor a *kayasa* – a competitive challenge traditionally done when planting new yam gardens, to encourage gardeners to work hard and plant many yams. His immediate family or hamlet will donate

a sizable amount of money in the next semakai and challenge others to beat it, offering a pig, clay pot or money as a prize to whoever can beat him. Trobrianders themselves compare these events and point out that church activities are in many ways constructed as parallels or substitutions for earlier exchange practices, providing new stages for community engagement and directing/redistributing resources. This is in a sense a way in which, as we have argued, the notion of living 'in Pentecost' is played out in a social landscape and permeates many forms of social activity.

### **'Kusapu, Kutayoyowa' (You Sow, You Reap)**

The concept of seed money and the reciprocal returns anticipated from tithes and offerings is part of the Trobriand discourse and demonstrates another way in which people might make better use of their resources than worrying about *doba*. For example, Thelma, a young woman who leads prayer groups and sing-alongs in her CRC congregation in the village of Kwebwaga, told me, 'Tithing is necessary. You have to give your 10%, but you should try to give as much more as possible as "free offerings", which will be paid back (*mapula*) in blessings from God.' Thelma told her parents and community that she will not participate in *sagali* in any capacity because '*sagali gala yaubada lapaisewa*' (*sagali* is not God's work). Instead, she spoke about how the work she does must be to the glory of God, as she sees her future in God's hands. She claims that she provides 'living testimony' of how a woman can dedicate her life to God and forego traditional obligations.

Similarly, Pastor Michael says not giving tithes and offerings is like 'stealing from God'. And Pastor Cedric of the Restoration Church in Lalela, a village on the island of Kitava, told me that individual offerings are the 'seed' you plant: 'God pays you according to the measure you put into it.' These should be as generous as possible and are given from the heart. One also has an obligation to pay tithes, which should be one tenth of one's earnings. Giving well and freely to the church requires discipline and self-control; one must honestly give as much as one is able, even if that means sacrificing other things. During the church service, two plates are passed around, one for each kind of offering. According to Cedric, '[spiritual] prosperity comes from giving [one's] life [to Christ], being baptized already in the Kingdom of God. To prosper in the physical realm, you need to give something to God. What you give, you receive; what you sow, you reap.' Tithes can (and should) also be given in yams.

They should represent a sacrifice, as it was for Abraham, who gave his son as an offering. God promises wealth, not only in money but in a big family and other ways. Giving ties God's hands to you. If you give from your heart, you will receive a reward. The pastor will pray for those who give freely, and blessings will come from God. (Pastor Cedric as quoted in Michelle's field notes)

This turn away from kinship-based exchange and distribution ceremonies to church-based fundraisings and an importance placed on tithes and offerings has gained significance across 'Pentecost', especially perhaps as fundraising gains a new character, as observed by Annelin in Port Vila. She observed that lotteries are now the new and popular way of fundraising. This is an easy way to make a profit. To make this point more obvious it can be useful to contrast the way in which people in the village of Ranon, on the island of Ambrym in north central Vanuatu, where Annelin did fieldwork in the early 1990s, organized their fundraising activity relative to the way it is done in the urban contexts today. In Ranon, women would to a large extent take charge of the fundraising activity, which was usually organized within the framework of the Presbyterian Church. These fundraising events usually involved a lot of work. Women would work their gardens, collect the harvest, cook meals (for instance, *laplap*, a pudding made from grated starchy vegetables and coconut cream<sup>3</sup>) and bring beautifully decorated puddings to the church (or often the area just outside the church, where these events usually took place). The amount of work the women usually put into these events, however, by far exceeded the kind of money they would bring in to the church. The fundraising would usually consist of women buying food from each other but at so low a price – for instance, 10VT for a piece of *laplap*, which is perhaps about a tenth of the going market price, at least in Port Vila – that selling elsewhere would of course have brought in much more money. In other words, it was clear that profit was not at all the main purpose for these events. Rather, it was the social event itself that was of worth. Bringing people together on the ceremonial ground and eating together was the main purpose.

However, these kinds of events are rarer in the urban context. Lotteries are much more common. For instance, in July 2014 the Bible Church in Port Vila applied to the city council for a lottery permit that would allow them to organize a grand lottery scheme, with the first prize of 200,000VT, the second prize a TV and the third a mobile phone. They sold lottery tickets within and outside of the congregation. Each ticket was sold at 1000VT. The committee in charge of the lottery made sure that enough tickets were distributed among members for them to

sell in work places as well as among neighbours and kin. However, after deducting the cost of the main prizes, not much was left for the church, according to the chairperson of the lottery committee. A couple of years earlier a similar proceeding had brought a lot of money to the church. Lotteries might have become too popular, and too many churches used them as fundraising schemes, he reasoned. In any case, the lottery in Port Vila is radically different from the kinds of fundraising taking place in villages such as Ranon. Whereas the lottery scheme does not involve much social effort, the fundraising activity in the village was almost entirely a social event. The lotteries seem to be purely economic. It is a scheme that allows for profit without much social effort. If the traditional kinship ceremonies were, to some extent, replaced by the fundraising events for the church, the lottery in town marks perhaps a more radical break with the kinship obligations of the past.

Thus, in the new moral economy of 'Pentecost', lotteries have become almost the opposite of 'waste'. Lotteries open up the possibilities for the future. Lotteries represent what kin obligations cannot: the possibility of an immediate, economic return here and now. In Kiriwina, this logic also embraces *doba*, which has become a metaphor of looking backwards, of extended kinship and a lack of development and prosperity. It does not represent 'the good life' in terms of material satisfaction, as preached not only in prosperity gospel theology but in a general sense in Pentecostal Kiriwina. *Doba* is inextricably linked to death while the 'new economy' is focused on life. There must be a clear connection between church and home/hearth, wherein domestic behaviour should reflect church teachings.

In 'Pentecost' economic activity is not separate from Christian life. This is not only the case in Kiriwina and Port Vila but is also evident in the other 'neighbourhood' that comprises this comparative endeavour. Ruy has observed how informal economic networks of small-scale ventures or mutual aid endeavours penetrate the social fabric of church communities in the Palanca in Luanda. These networks are often used as hubs and spaces of exchange beyond the liturgical activity of the church. One such example are the *kixikilas*, informal micro-saving ventures wherein groups of five to ten women associate and create micro-enterprises through mechanisms of small-scale accumulation, investment and the circulation of money and goods. Such informal, grass-root forms of mutualism are visible in pretty much any street in Luanda, where one can see *quitandeiras* (women selling in stalls), *kinguilas* (women who exchange dollars for kwanzas, the local currency) and even small shops. Ruy notes that this focus on mutualism is in many ways engrained in Bakongo culture, but it is also part of a specific

theological understanding that highlights the horizontality of spiritual community organization. In other words, there is a spiritual or moral value in individual labour, and the work one is morally responsible for extends to both obligations to the church and congregation and being financially responsible and caring for one's own domestic sphere with spiritual and material/economic provisions.

## **A Turn to Life**

We have now seen that ideas of waste seem prevalent in all of the areas of 'Pentecost' presented here, although in slightly different ways. The question is whether the idea of waste signals a concern with a greater cosmological shift, one that reflects not only a break with the 'wasteful' but also an absolute break between life and death. We have seen, in all three locations, how ideas about wastefulness might be related to larger cosmological issues of life and death and/or reorientations in terms of kinship obligations. We can begin to see, as we work our way through these varied descriptions of the neighbourhoods, the contours of a theory from 'Pentecost' in which a form of life-centredness is the key. In all three cases, certain moral imperatives are implicit in ideas about waste, especially wasting time on things that are not considered important or productive, however this might be defined. Doba is an obvious material example, but idleness is seen across the neighbourhoods as a recipe for moral failure. Wasting time not only does not bring one results, in terms of spiritual and material rewards either here and now or in the afterlife, but it opens up room for diabolical influences to penetrate the body, the mind or the family hearth.

We can also begin to see, in each of these cases, a certain redefinition of obligations to kin and family organization. In the Trobriands, this may be a refocus on the nuclear family instead of the ancestors, a reorientation of looking forward rather than backwards in terms of both socio-economic development and kinship obligations. In Port Vila, obligations to family change when small stores in each village become the moral imperative, meaning that instead of giving 'freely', one instead buys from and sells to neighbours and even one's own family members. In the Palanca, Ruy describes how church ideals enter the home and restructure domestic life, imposing new schedules and order. Indeed, if believers are now 'children of God', this in itself implies a certain reshuffling of the kinship order.

Let us now make another circuit, so to speak, through these neighbourhoods with an eye to the specific connection between waste and

death. We will try to draw out the way in which waste and productivity signals a turn to life or a 'life-centredness' and therefore a redefined relationship to death in our respective contexts. This time we shall focus on funerary practices.

## Death, Waste and Funerals

### *Sagali (Funeral Feasts) in Kiriwina: 'Death Is the End'*

The 'Pentecostal wave' mentioned earlier in this chapter originated with the arrival of new churches, many of which are identified theologically with Pentecostal denominations, which began to appear on the Trobriand religious landscape in the 1980s. For nearly one hundred years, the Methodist (later United Church) and Catholic faiths were the only church communities. In the late 1980s and through to the present moment, new movements have proliferated, with frequent rifts and breakaways. The first of these was the Christian Revival Church (CRC), which built its first congregation in Kwebwaga village and now has four churches across the island of Kiriwina. Other ministries soon followed, such as Rhema, Four Square, Word of Life Ministry and Assemblies of God. As a variety of new churches arrived in Kiriwina with a focus on engaging the Holy Spirit, the necessity of being born again (*kalobusivau*) and receiving spiritual gifts, the process of establishing 'Pentecost' began, often referred to locally as the 'Revival'.

Pastor Thomas, a Revival United Church pastor, considers himself an 'evangelical', having trained alongside those who are leading more strictly defined Pentecostal churches. He gave me his opinion of sagali as it is presently practised:

Sagali consumes a lot of energy. It looks towards the *baloma* [spirits of ancestors]. In the old days, people believed that without proper sagali, there will be sickness and other problems, because the *baloma* won't be happy. But now, you see that sagali is about pride, fame and status. We have lost the real focus, which was to settle the spirits peacefully in Tuma.<sup>4</sup> Now, sagali has grown out of hand; it affects the local economy. All of these *beku* [stone axe blades], clay pots, pigs, huge baskets of *doba* – it's about outdoing others; it's about each *dala* [matriclan] and their own pride.

Thomas does not suggest that sagali should be abandoned altogether but that people need to set their priorities properly. First, the focus should be on paying children's school fees, having enough to eat and so on. He does not feel that people should be pressured to participate beyond



**Figure 2.1** A *sepwana*, a large and orderly stack of *nununiga* destined for a particular non-dala family member of the deceased, such as his/her father, supplemented with calico and kina notes. Photo by Michelle MacCarthy.

their means or expend the vast resources of time and energy (and even money) that it takes to acquire sufficient *doba* to make a *sagali* (Figure 2.1). Why, Trobrianders say, should they put all of this time, energy and even expense into producing these dirty, smelly bundles only to get such a small return? Better to use those resources – the cash to buy the lollies or balloons, the cooking oil, the betel nut – for one’s own family in the first place. What is more, a day spent travelling to a distant village to collect *nununiga* though *valova* (direct exchange of small goods for banana leaf bundles) is a day that is *not* spent working in one’s garden, cleaning one’s house and yard, cooking for one’s children or sewing or mending clothes. That time is also not spent in any cash-generating activity. It is, in other words, a ‘waste’ and a non-productive use of time.

It should be noted that *sagali* is not a single event. *Sagali* refers in general to feasting, most commonly associated with mourning the dead and making distributions across clans. There are a number of stages of *sagali* for each death, often spanning several years, though these have been condensed in recent years. First, usually on the day following the death, *keymeylu* or cooked food (ideally yams and pork, but alternatively tinned fish, rice and/or biscuits) will be brought by male affines to the clan members of the deceased. This will later be repaid in the form of *doba*, called in the men’s names at *lusaladabu sagali*. On the following day or so, a fairly large distribution called *yawali* will be held with whatever resources can be mustered at short notice, but



they should include all of the elements of the later, larger sagali: doba, yams, betel nut, pork, calico cloth, rice, kina notes and coins and so on, though the amounts available are generally much less due to the short time available to collect them. The yawali is the first of the distributions from clan members of the deceased to non-clan relatives and unrelated individuals who are nonetheless close to the deceased. In times past, though less so today, the yawali would be followed by another distribution called *kitaulaka*, which usually involves only pigs, betel nut, and possibly taro (but no yams). These foods are brought uncooked from the relatives of the widow of the deceased to the deceased's kinsmen, sometimes with banana and sugar cane to supplement the presentation. If the 'real brother' of the widow is still alive, he should bring a live pig to his sister's in-laws. If, however (as is often the case), no pigs are available at such short notice, there may be no *kitaulaka* (Michelle never saw this particular distribution actually happen, in nearly two years), though there is an expectation that it should happen later; in that case, whenever a pig becomes available. It is also possible to use smoked fish as an alternative, though this is not as prestigious as a pig. After this, some months will pass while the clan members work hard to amass the resources they need to give away at *lusaladabu*, the major distribution and the one that is most frequently the target of criticism for its wasteful nature. In many cases, this is effectively the end of obligations on behalf of the deceased, though for high-ranking chiefs or leaders further distributions can reflect the status and wealth of such individuals. This digression serves to emphasize just how onerous the traditional obligations are after the death of a relative, such that the impetus for finding reasons to put them aside perhaps becomes rather clearer to the reader.

Many Trobrianders – women and men, pastors and laypeople – stressed that doba and sagali were no longer of such importance because people had realized that it was more important to focus attention, resources and energy into those in their immediate families and communities rather than looking to ancestors of the dala and those who had died. 'Death isn't important. We need to work and use our time and resources for the living, not the dead,' Michelle was told by Cedric, the pastor of the Restoration Church (a Rhema breakaway) on the small island of Kitava. Cedric continued, saying, 'My father already looked after me when I was small. I don't have to pay anything back after I look after him when he is sick. Death is the end [of obligations]. These things [sagali] drain resources from the living.' This echoes almost exactly the sentiments of several women from the village of Obwelia, who told Michelle, 'We prefer to concentrate on the living, not the dead.'



**Figure 2.2** Casket of a deceased girl returned from Port Moresby for burial, and her mourning relatives. Photo by Michelle MacCarthy.

In June of 2013, a young girl who Michelle's adoptive mother, Vero, would call her sister (the granddaughter of one of Vero's mother's sisters) died of leukaemia. As is the custom, the girl, who had lived and died in Port Moresby and rarely (if ever) visited Kiriwina, would have to be buried in her ancestral village, that of her mother's clan. When the coffin arrived at the airstrip, Vero, her sister (by the same mother) Daisy and Michelle were among the mourners ready to 'cry' (*valam*) for the girl. The casket was loaded into the back of a truck and they piled in with the other mourners, wailing and crying for the dead girl (Figure 2.2). Michelle was reminded, listening to (and participating in) this wailing, of hearing the collective prayer and even the speaking in tongues as

practised in many of the 'Revived' churches across the islands. Much of what was being uttered was guttural and nonsensical but expressed clearly the collective anguish of the group. At other times, mourners spoke directly to the girl, calling out their relationship to her and expressing their grief. Vero, for example, wailed with gusto, saying, 'O, *bwadagu, gala lagisi migim!*' (Oh, my small sister, I never even saw your face!). The coffin was taken to Vero's uncle's home, where the yawali – a distribution on a smaller scale than *lisaladabu* that takes place within a day or two of a death or the arrival of the deceased from elsewhere – would take place.

Uncle Isaiah, the one brother in a family with many women, saw his burden in this regard as *mwau*, or heavy. (He was the only male, and as such it was up to him to secure the 'men's wealth' of pigs, yams and rice when a relative died.) He had decided some time earlier, and told his clan members, that there would be no more *lisaladabu* when a family member died, just a short yawali (the first and immediate feast after a death). He had not, so far, decreed entirely against the exchange of *doba*, however. Those who had cried on the truck (Michelle included) would stay at Uncle Isaiah's house for several days as *nigabubu*. *Nigabubu* are close relatives of the deceased who stay inside the mourning house, more or less, for three or four days following a death, taking it in shifts to wail and cry for the dead. While they perform this service, the affines of the deceased, known as *sinvalam*, must collect firewood, cook, clean dishes, make tea and so on to serve the *nigabubu*. The economic burden for feeding the *nigabubu* falls on other relatives of the deceased, who must cook food daily and bring it to the mourners, with an especial burden on the host in whose home the mourning takes place. This responsibility is also seen as *mwau*, or heavy, and is another reason often given for why *sagali* should be eliminated or drastically reduced. Once again, the idea that this practice is a 'waste' of one's resources, and the act of sitting in the house for several days crying instead of working in the garden or taking care of one's own family is not only unproductive but even counterproductive. If, conversely, Trobriand people could follow Jesus' exhortation to 'let the dead bury their own dead', such burdens would be lightened or made 'easy' (*gagabila*), and believers could focus instead on 'proclaim[ing] the kingdom of God' (Luke 9:60).

In the Trobriands we can thus see a radical movement away from extended kin-based obligations following clan lines (honouring one's dead ancestors and the spirit world) in favour of the more immediate concerns of the living and the family hearth and through this the seeds planted to reap material and spiritual blessings. Let us now turn to Port Vila to compare funerary practices in urban Vanuatu to those just

described and see if echoes of this focus on 'life itself' might resonate in this instance.

### *Dying in Port Vila: No Time to Cry*

In Port Vila we can observe a move away from the importance of kin obligations in funerals, parallel in many ways to that just described in Kiriwina. Eriksen (2008) has pointed out that in Port Vila obligations to repay an 'ontological debt' to relatives – to one's mother's brother, for instance – has been replaced with a more direct transaction between sister and brother, thus redirecting kin obligations towards a more household-centred economy. A decade ago, in the village context of Ambrym in Vanuatu, the repayment of one's mother's brother was understood as something everybody did, and the lack of fulfilling these obligations was talked about with a certain moral condemnation or even disgust. The mother's brother was the key to a well-functioning social life. Furthermore, he was the most important person to connect one to future marriage partners. However, in Port Vila, people from Ambrym to a much lesser extent acknowledge the necessity of repaying the 'debt of life' to the mother's brother. These ceremonial payments, which in the past consisted of garden produce and woven mats, and perhaps some pigs, have also to some degree been replaced by consumer items, such as plastic containers, saucepans, mattresses, bed sheets and towels. There is thus a clear parallel to Kiriwina in the way in which people appreciate the use value of objects at the cost of the more symbolic value of regenerating kin relations. Not repaying the mother's brother indicates both a decrease in importance of the place where your blood comes from (the place of one's mother's brother) and less significance in the notion that throughout life, and particularly at death, these relations need to be emphasized. Clearly, there is also in Port Vila a shift in focus towards more immediate concerns – towards the living more than the dead. In Port Vila this is perhaps more of a silent transformation. It is less discussed and possibly less dramatic than in Kiriwina.

Death ceremonies in Fresh Wota or Ohlen are rare events. This does not mean that people are not dying, of course. Rather, it implies that people avoid emphasizing death to the extent they do on the islands. On Ambrym in the mid 1990s, a death would stop everyday life for a long period. It would start by the sudden sound of wailing spreading through the normal soundscape of the village. It would rise and fall with regular intervals for several days as new groups of people arrived and other

groups left the crying area outside of the dead person's house. Cooking would be ongoing, around the clock, to feed relatives arriving to give their respects, in many ways similar to what is described for Kiriwina. When the body was in the ground, a couple of weeks after death, major ceremonies with pigs and garden produce were organized. Men would not shave or cut their hair. This would go on for weeks and months. After the first three months, there would be a new ceremony, again with pigs and yams. This would be repeated after six months, and again, a final ceremony after twelve months. For a major chief, the last ceremony would involve several villages and the exchange of large amounts of yams, taro and several full-circle tusked pigs. In town the contrast is apparent: one will still pay respects for a dead relative, but often only for a short while. The mourning period is significantly shorter. In Fresh Wota and Ohlen Annelin never experienced a death ceremony organized the way it is done in the village.

In Pentecostal Port Vila, the main focus and concern is on everyday life, even when someone dies. Crying is not only time-consuming but non-productive. This might be part of the reason but does not fully capture the sentiments involved. People in 'Pentecost', we might suggest, have not become pure, rational, maximizing actors who are primarily interested in making money. Rather, the move away from the significance of death (or away from large-scale death ceremonies) might also reflect a change in what is important on a wider, cosmological scale – a move from focus on the long-term relationships to kin and the reproduction of the larger kin group to a focus on the living, on life and the here and now.

A short account of a case from Port Vila in 2010 might reveal this logic. William, a man from Ambrym who had lived in Port Vila for at least a decade, was dying. He had been hospitalized for weeks, diagnosed with stomach cancer. He was now being sent back to his house to die. As is normal, he was sent to his matrilineal relatives' place to die. His mother's brother took him in, and a group of relatives gathered around him to pray. One of Annelin's Ambrym friends, a woman in her late thirties, was among them. As the friend and Annelin were approaching the house of the dying, the friend told Annelin that it was essential for her not to become too involved. 'They will probably want me to bring him back to my house, since I am his classificatory mother,' she said. She went on to point out that it would be best for the family to send him back to the village while he was still alive; dying in town is too much of a burden for the family, she said. Annelin asked if this was not slightly cynical (the idea of sending a dying man, in pain, on a very rough journey on a cargo boat, in order to prevent kin in town of

taking on the expenses of his death). She seemed surprised by this. This was not, to her, an economic argument. Rather, it was a clear statement about the lack of significance of a death in town. In a Pentecostal landscape, where the focus on healing, life and commitment to immediate family relations are more important, death no longer signals a regeneration of kinship – the ceremonial giving back of the lost life to the mother's family and thus opening the future possibility of new relations and new births. Death is no longer vital for the regeneration of life. Death has, to some extent, become burdensome, not (only) because it is costly but (mainly) because it is no longer cosmologically important.

We can see a clear pattern here in the accounts from Port Vila and Kiriwina. In 'Pentecost', death is still a significant event but no longer because it represents a context of cosmological significance. In other words: death is no longer an event in which the constitution of life shows itself, where gifts represent the necessity of paying back an ontological debt that secures the regeneration of life. Rather, death is to a greater extent an absolute end. Let us now move into the city of Luanda and see how death is handled there.

### *The Palanca: Funerals for the Living*

As we have pointed out, the Palanca is a place of plurality, which (as we will elaborate on in the next chapter) we can see as a key characteristic of 'Pentecost'. The many different churches and denominations operating in this neighbourhood have somewhat different approaches to death and funerals, some more elaborate than others. The more extensive traditions can be found among the Tokoists. Let us therefore look specifically at Tokoist funerals in the Palanca in order to establish whether denominations that are less concerned with breaks with the past and more focused on local Bakongo traditions are 'life-centred'. In other words, is death in the Palanca also about life and more immediate concerns, and can this thus, on a more general level, indicate that in 'Pentecost' death is losing significance as a cosmological event?

Ruy often heard his friends in the Palanca complain that funerals have become a burdensome endeavour in the urban space, with kin and friends struggling to find time and resources to pay respects and bid farewell to the deceased. He also observed how churches often play a key role in negotiating the concerns for kinship obligations on the one hand and the limitations of the urban condition on the other. For example, funeral liturgies struggle to respect ancient formulas and tend to accommodate current concerns. A focus in the funerals is often the

living 'spiritual community' cultivated among those who lost their kin or friend.

In November 2015, a Bakongo elder living in the Palanca passed away. He was one of the hundreds of inhabitants of the neighbourhood who were born and had kin connections with Ntaya Nova, a small village in the northern province of Uíge known for the fact that its inhabitants belonged exclusively to the Tokoist Church. Like many others of his generation, he grew up in the village but eventually wound up in Luanda to pursue a professional career (he worked for several years in the airline sector). He also lived in Portugal for several years but later returned to the Palanca to work and watch his children and grandchildren grow up.

Ruy had spent some time in Ntaya Nova a few years earlier and had visited the house of the deceased's father-in-law, the elder Moni, in the Palanca. Due to this connection, he was invited to attend the *óbito* (funeral ceremony) and pay his respects to the family, which took place in the house of the elder Moni (the family was still living in Ntaya Nova). As soon as the news of the passing spread throughout the family of the deceased, the death quickly became a multitudinous act. Members of the extended clan, as well as neighbours, friends and business partners, gathered around the house, paid respects and mourned the body for several days before the body was buried in the cemetery. The *mfumu a nkanda* (leader of the clan) hosted the visitors and prepared the ceremonies. The widow sat in one of the rooms, grieving and being consoled by a host of women from the lineage, while making efforts to greet those who arrived to pay their respects. Food and drinks were prepared, and monetary offers were received to help with the funeral ceremony. Here, as is expected, mourning, crying, lamenting and wailing were part of the scenery. The visitors sat in the house and surrounding streets, chatting and waiting for the arrival of the deceased's body from the morgue, which would remain under a tent-like structure until its transposition to the cemetery. The members of the Tokoist Church, in full attire, stood beside the tent and, every now and then, sang and performed collective prayers to 'envelope' the deceased's soul into the afterlife. Interestingly enough, none of the Tokoists cried. This envelope is part of what is described as the 'spiritual programme' of the funeral, which is complementary to the 'familiar programme'. During this moment, the body 'belongs' to the church until it is returned to the family, who will proceed to take it to the cemetery.

The liturgy that Ruy observed was a product of a negotiation between 'families': the 'blood family' that follows the traditional rule and the 'spiritual family' that responds to the deceased's soul. Within this framework,

there is an interesting convergence in which Christian faith and traditionalist practice team up to safeguard the passage of the soul to the afterlife. In this process, the presence and activity of the church will vary, depending on the deceased's involvement in the church in his or her lifetime. In this case, the deceased was not a high-ranking member in the church structure but had been 'born in the church' and came from Ntaya Nova. His family all belonged to the Tokoist Church, and many of its members are considered 'historical figures' in the institution. Thus, the funeral unsurprisingly became a multitudinous event in the Palanca, mobilizing the neighbourhood in different ways: from those who stopped by to pay respects to those who were involved in the different aspects of the funeral organization. The ceremony was a public, disseminated liturgy, occupying several streets in the Palanca and culminating with the public reading of the deceased's biography by the master of ceremonies, followed by the final prayers that initiated the transfer procedures to the cemetery. The Tokoist Church became responsible for this final transition of the body into the cemetery and of his soul to the realm of the spirit world. This enacts a spiritual mechanism of 'assurance', of making sure that the deceased's soul will be transported out of this world. For instance, in the cemetery, while the casket is lowered into the grave and the final farewell prayer is performed, several hymns are sung – hymns about promises, the future and the afterlife. This is therefore not just a remembrance but a preparation for what is to come.

We can thus see that death is not purely an 'end'. We can observe the key notion of an 'afterlife'. However, we can also observe that the funeral liturgy includes practical mechanisms that assure that the deceased leaves everything 'sorted out' behind him, namely economic and patrimonial issues. This is expressed in the particularities of the funeral organization, which culminate in the final reunion that takes place after the visitors finally leave and the closest kin circle remains, closing the meeting and dealing with practical issues: patrimonial redistribution, debt solving, financial accountancy, re-establishment of familial hierarchies and so on. This reunion will also account for the expenses of the funeral itself. Presence in the funeral will not only make explicit the degree of respect for the deceased but will also determine future relationships and alliances. This became clear to Ruy when learning that his Tokoist friend Maturino, although ill and bedridden due a serious case of malaria during the weeks of the funeral, made an extraordinary effort to be present in some parts of the ceremony because the deceased's family was akin to his. We can thus see that in addition to the opening of the 'afterlife', the funeral is an event that recentres focus on the living, on those that remain behind.



Perhaps the most illustrative marker of this vital recentring effect is that the Tokoists do not cry at funerals. In this *óbito*, Ruy was struck by the fact that, unlike other family members who could not contain their grief, the Tokoists remained solemn, respectful and sober throughout the liturgy. On another occasion, Ruy had asked a Tokoist why this was so and was told that, for the believers, death was a 'passing' to another stage as well as a reward for a life of sacrifice and dedication and thus required dignified celebration rather than mourning (Blanes 2014). From this perspective, the death of a church member was framed as an occasion to think about his or her life and his or her contribution to the church and to 'this world' in a collective, communitary fashion. Usually, the hymns chosen for the liturgy, sung in the moment in which the deceased's body leaves the premises and when it is prepared for burial in the cemetery, reflect this reflexive process that, at the end of the day, is about celebrating life.

But precisely by negotiating a complementary participation in such traditional liturgies, we realize that the church operates a vital recentring by creating an effect of collective involvement and participation that magnifies the importance of life and exposing what could be described as 'a funeral for the living'.

## Conclusion

This ethnographic journey started with the observation that funerals are less important than they used to be in Kiriwina. People spend less time preparing and performing these events, and they no longer signify a crucial regeneration of life but rather an 'end'. Therefore, elaborate death ceremonies have become 'wasteful'. This pattern was also found in Port Vila, where funerals have become burdensome. In the Palanca, we find a similar sentiment, but the Tokoists have found ways that seem to both involve notions of spiritual afterlife as well as a focus on 'closing' and recentring the focus on the living. Elaborate death ceremonies are not seen as 'wasteful' and draining resources from the living (as in Kiriwina and Port Vila), yet a crucial effect of the death ceremonies is nevertheless a focus on relations between those who are left behind. Thus, also here (although to a lesser extent) we can see that funerals tend to create an 'end'.

We could have visited other parts of Pentecostal Palanca that could have given us versions of funerals that would to a greater extent mirror what we found in Port Vila and Kiriwina – for instance, by looking more closely at neo-Pentecostal denominations. However, we wanted to stay

true to the idea that we could ‘find’ ‘Pentecost’ in the neighbourhood itself, beyond the ‘self-consciously’ Pentecostal churches (as outlined in the introduction). We wanted to see how a key phenomenon, identified in one of the Pentecostal contexts (Kiriwina), can be found in general social orientations of the other neighbourhoods (in Port Vila and Palanca). Although we cannot characterize our ethnographic descriptions as manifesting a conclusive ‘turn towards life’, where death is an absolute end, we can conclude this chapter by pointing out that there at least seems to be an emerging pattern in ‘Pentecost’, where concern with the immediate social relations of economic and material character are gaining significance over the mode of cosmological, kin-based notions of the regeneration of life. In other words, in ‘Pentecost’ – that is, in places where Holy Spirit churches and denominations of different kinds dominate – the social significance of death is declining.

In Chapter 5, these cases will form the basis for an analysis of how this ‘theory from Pentecost’ about ‘life-centredness’ relates to major debates in the anthropology of Christianity concerning moral economies, the prosperity gospel, ‘occult economies’ as well as the neoliberal economic approaches of Pentecostalism.

## Notes

1. Mark Mosko (2017) has recently published an important book emphasizing the role of *baloma* (spirits, ancestors) in the lives of Trobrianders. While our foci and interpretations of the role of revival Christianity in Trobriand cosmology are very different, Mosko’s emphasis on the role of *baloma* fits well with my understandings of ‘traditional’ (i.e. non-Pentecostal) Trobriand cosmology.
2. The convener of the United Church for the region, Samuel, explained to me that *semakai* comes from the verb *seki*, to give, and *makai*, an adverb meaning ‘freely’ or ‘for nothing in return’, though, of course, there is the hope and expectation of spiritual if not material rewards for giving ‘freely’ to the church.
3. Note that in Vanuatu, *laplap* refers to a food, while in Papua New Guinea it refers to a length of calico cloth.
4. Malinowski writes extensively about Tuma in his 1919 essay ‘Baloma: The Spirits of the Dead in the Trobriand Islands’. It is an island in the Trobriand archipelago that is believed to have an underworld, which is a sort of copy of the islands of the living, where the spirits of the ancestors reside after death. It is often compared with the Christian heaven.

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