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The Potters of

Espiritu Santo

A socio-historical study of survival and loss of tradition

> A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

> > of

Doctor of Philosophy in Anthropology

at

The University of Waikato

by

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THE UNIVERSITY OF WAIKATO Te Whare Wananga o Waikato

Abstract

The Potters of Espiritu Santo : A socio-historical study of survival and loss of tradition.

This dissertation looks at the traditional pottery of the Cumberland Peninsula on the island of Espiritu Santo in the context of its relationships with its makers, their history, traditional institutions and contact experiences, and also with other pottery in Vanuatu, in particular, the different pottery made further south on the same coast, that of the people of Wusi. The relationship between potteries is a persistent theme, starting with an attempt to trace their inheritance from the Lapita pottery believed to be made by the first colonisers of the region, and going on to compare the two technologies with each other and other ethnographically known potteries in Oceania. With doubt remaining about their precise relationship, the roles of contact history and cultural practice in the environments of the two areas are looked at to account for first an enhancement and then a decline of pottery making on the Cumberland Peninsula, while the comparative environmental harshness of the Wusi area has, in similar cultural and historic conditions, actually acted to help preserve pottery making there.

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The idea of doing a project on the pottery and potters of Vanuatu was first conceived when I visited the west coast of Santo in 1993, so has been over 25 years in the making. Several of the people who gave me help and encouragement have since died: Professor Roger Green, my first supervisor, Pasta Bill Camden, who facilitated my first visit to the Weskos, Chief William of Tuturu who hosted our first visit to the villages of Big Bay, linguists Terry Crowley and Daryl Tryon, and my friends and wonderful hostesses Rovo Tavue and Lako Molissa. And since my last visit to the Notwes I am grieved to hear of the death of the last potter from the Pelia, Olfala Pala.

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Glossary of Terms in Langwis and Bislama

antap	Above, in the hills, inland, away from the sea. Also used in West Santo to mean
	towards Kanal. See also daon.
basa	Fund-raising sale, "bring-and-buy".
bed	A bench or platform used for working, sitting, or lying on, in the village, or
	drying copra in the plantation.
blak paoa	Black magic, sorcery.
bonem	Set fire to, cook, fire (pottery).
bubu	Grandparent, grandchild.
dakbus	Uncultivated land, usually covered with forest.
daon	Below, low, towards the sea, away from Kanal. Opposite of antap.
dei	Day.
dok	Any structure where goods, usually copra, can be housed while waiting for a ship.
dresa	Paramedic at a clinic or local hospital.
gamal, gam	ali The men's houses of Santo
graon	Land, soil, clay.
graonpot	Clay pot.
jif	Chief.
kabis	Any green leafy vegetable that can be cooked and eaten
kago	Goods gained by magical or supernatural means.
Kakae	food, to eat.
kapa	Corrugated iron roofing.
Kastom	Culture, tradition.
Kastom Jif	A traditional chief, one who holds a grade in the Sukwe.
kato	fried doughnut (from French "gateau").
kinda, kindy	v Preschool.
kopra	Copra.
kot	Court, village justice session.
kumala	Sweet potato, kumara.
laen	Matrilineage
lafet	Celebration, usually involving communal feast.
langwis	Local language
laplap	Dish made of grated root vegetable or banana with a coconut milk sauce.
mana	Spiritual power or authority.
man ples	local person, landowner.
man Santo	A Santo person

manbus A	A pei	son	from	an	inland	area.	Epithe	t for an	ignorant	or	stupid	person.
									0			1

Mangki The Bislama name for the Malekula graded society.

mansolwora A person from a coastal area.

- MeleCycas palm used as a name for the graded society in some places, such as Wusi,
also makes up part of the name Nagriamel. Symbol of peace.
- *Menrot* Main road. On the west coast and the Cumberland peninsula, the path used by men and horses between villages.
- *Model kindy* "Model kindy" a public preschool funded and maintained by the village and teaching to a prescribed curriculum See explanation in Chapter Six.
- Mol, Moli Chief, usually a man of rank in the graded society.
- *Midelbus* Locally used name for the inland inhabited area of south west Santo.

Naflak Matrilineal system of Efate and the Shepherd Islands

- *nakamal* Traditionally, men's meeting house., now the village hall and also the chief's kava house.
- nakatambol Dacontomelon vitiense. A large local tree with large straight root buttresses which are often used to provide a strong flat surface, especially for traditional pursuits like drumming or making pottery. Also produces a little orange edible nut.
- nambas Formerly a penis sheath worn in parts of Malekula, word now used, at least inSanto Bislama, to designate any loin cloth or men's "native" costume.
- *naora* Fresh water crayfish.
- nasara Traditional dancing ground.

natanggura Sago palm thatch.

nogud bad, wrong.

Notwes Northwest political district of Santo, and name generally used for the district where I did most of my research.

pamplemus Sweet grapefruit (from French).

- Pasta Minister, Pastor.
- *pein* Paint, red clay used as slip for pots.
- pepe Baby, also used to mean "pot" at Wusi
- *pikinini* Baby or small child, also *graonpot* at Wusi
- *Pitabliu* Name of the village guest house supported by the Presbyterian Women's Missionary Union, PWMU, or "PW".
- posen Sorcery, substance used in sorcery.
- posen pot very small simple pot, said to have been used by men in the interior of Santo for mixing materials for spells or witchcraft (Kirk Huffman, pers.comm., 2 jul 2012).There is a sample in the VKS

povile	Sweet yam species
rang	A step or grade in the Sukwe.
Sakao	People originally from the island of Sakao off the north-east coast of Santo, now
	occupying most of the north-east peninsula
saed	Side or moiety.
Selgrup	Prayer Group
simen	Concrete or cement.
Skul	Church, something to do with the church (Presbyterian).
skul	School.
slip	red clay wash for pots, applied before firing.
slipa	Sandal, "flipflop" ("jandal" or "thong") usually the cheap rubber sandals held on
	with a strap between the toes that most villagers wear.
solwora	Sea, salt water.
stesen	Hamlet attached to a village, separate area of a village
Sukwe	The Bislama name for the grade or ranking system of the northern islands of
	Vanuatu.
Supwe	The north-west Santo version of Sukwe.
Suque	An older spelling of the Bislama Sukwe.
tabu	A prohibition with a spiritual force, or an admonition to children – "Forbidden!",
	"Don't!" Often used to protect ripe crops or as a conservation measure.
Tabu Faea	Sacred Fire, belonging to a man who has taken a rung in the Sukwe.
Tamana	Name given to an (imagined?) anti-European coordinated cult movement in
	inland Santo.
tamtam	slit gong
transpot	Village owned boat.
trova	Small oval dish of wood or clay for grated coconut. Seemingly found throughout
	Oceania. Also 'ov, jova
uro tano	Wusi word for (Bislama) graonpot
vilaj	Village.
waetgras	Reeds, open grassland.
waetman	European, "white man".
waelyam	Semi-cultivated and uncultivated yam species.
welep	Notwes word for Bislama graonpot
windo	Window. In Weskos Santo, a floor-level hatch which can be propped open to let
	air into a house.
wok	work, make, do.

Glossary of Pottery Terms

apply	(of decoration etc) place on surface of finished pot
appliqué	Decoration that has been applied
calcareous	chalky, containing calcium
calcite	calcium carbonate
coil	a roll of clay that is used to build a pot
coil-building	making a pot by spiralling a roll of clay on itself
dentate stamping a distinctive decorative technique achieved by punching fine combs or	
	stamps onto the surface of a pot – patterns are usually dense and complex
fat	a soft sticky clay
fire	to put a pot in a fire or oven to induce a chemical reaction that turns the clay
	paste into a durable non-plastic heat and waterproof material.
incise	decorate pot by scratching fine lines in the surface.
insert	(of handles) attach though holes punched in the side
lime spalling	cracking of the surface of clay containing calcite if water gets into pot while
	firing – can be countered with salt
mould	work by shaping over a form
paddle	flat shaped piece of wood used to beat surface of pot, to thin, form or
	sometimes decorate
padde-and-anvil technique of paddle-forming against a (usually shaped) object held on the	
	other side of the pot
paddle-beaten	thinned by hitting with paddle
paste	clay and water mix ready for making pots
prove	test, usually of a pot after firing
restrict	(of pot neck) narrowing
ring-building	placing coils of clay on top of each other in rings to make a pot. This process
	is often also called coil-building.
sherd	piece of fired pottery from a broken pot
slab –building	paddle-beaten pieces of clay are worked together to form the body of the pot
	and then beaten. This method is very fast and can be used to form very large
	pots, but requires a good quality plastic tempered clay.
slip	a wash of fine clay and water painted on the surface of the pot before firing.
	In vanuatu this is always made from a clay that will give a red exterior to the
	pot
sorting	clays are usually formed from materials that have eroded from rocks and
	been washed into deposits in rivers. This process separates the particles into

sizes – larger pieces of stone and sand are separted from finer clay particles.
The more a clay has travelled, the more sorted it is likely to be.
non plastic material, usually sand but sometimes some other materials such as ground-up pot-sherds. This is added to clay in lesser or greater quantities
depending on the heat of the fire that is available and the size and purpose of the planned pot. Some clays are self-tempered with non-plastic material
already included but obviously the potter has less control over the quality of the clay.

temper

Abbreviations

ANU	Australian National University
Aus	Austronesian (of language)
AusAID	Australian Government Aid Agency
BDA	British District Agent
CCNH	Compagnie Calédonienne des Nouvelles-Hébrides
Fr.	Father
IRD	L'Institut de Rechereche pour le Développement (previously ORSTOM)
LMS	London Missionary Society
MANH	Mouvement Autonomiate des Nouvelles Hébrides
Mgr	Monseigneur
Mt	Mount
NAN	Non-Austsronesian (of language)
NHBS	New Hebrides British Service
NMP	Native Medical Practitioner
NZAID	New Zealand Government Aid Agency, formerly NZODA.
NZODA	New Zealand Overseas Development Agency (became NZAID).
ORSTOM	Office de la Recherche Scientifique et Technique Outre-Mer
PNG	Papua New Guinea
PR	Public Relations
PWMU	Presbyterian Women's Missionary Union
QJNH	Quarterly Jottings from the New Hebrides
RSTP	Rural Skills Training Programme
SDA	Seventh Day Adventist (Church or Church member).
SFNH	Societé Francaise des Nouvelles-Hébrides
TB	Tuberculosis
UCNH	Union des Communautes des Nouvelles- Hébrides
UN	United Nations
VCHSS	Vanuatu Cultural and Historical Sites Survey
VKS	Vanuatu Kaljoral Senta, also called Vanuatu Cultural Centre.
WPHC	West Pacific High Commission

Note on Place Names and Spellings

Names of places are often inaccurately placed on maps and spellings vary. Even recent maps are often inaccurate in location and naming of places. Bush villages from former times, such as Tapuna and the villages of the Pespia River, are often not able to be located with any accuracy at all.

French spellings differ from English and local spellings may not be the same as either, and furthermore, may change as pronunciations change over time. Several places have more than one name – e.g. the main town of Santo is officially Luganville, but this is the name of the original small French settlement on the west side of the Sarakata River. The present town is mostly on the East side, the location of the World War II American camp. It is locally called Kanal, Santo Town or just "Santo".

The village of Nokuku is generally and locally spelt "Nogugu". Recent place maps show both forms in different locations, neither of which is accurate for the present village which is mis-labelled "Penaoru". Despite local custom, I have used the spelling "Nokuku", because that is the name used for the language of the district. Elsewhere I have tried to use local names, spelled as they are currently pronounced, or as local people prefer. Despite the recent spelling of the name of Olpoe vilaj as "Olpoi", I have reverted to the spelling used by missionaries and older texts, because that is the way the people prefer, and linguistically it is more correct: "the place of the pigs". Similarly, for the village usually called "Hokua", the villagers say it should be "Hakua" so that is the spelling I have used. The settlement Jimmy Stevens founded for Nagriamel has been spelt Fanafo, Tanafo and Vanafo. The usual pronounciation seems to be "Fanafo" but members appear to still call it Tanafo, the name Jimmy Stevens said was correct (Beasant 1984: 18), so I have stayed with this spelling.

Bislama names for districts in common use on the west coast of Santo are Notwes, Weskos and Saotwes, for respectively, the coast north of Tasmate, the strip from Tasmate to Wusi, and the area from Linturi to Cape Lisburn. Notwes is used when I am talking about only the west side of the Cumberland Peninsula. Although the other two probably also define cultural areas of the west coast, I have used them as seldom as possible. Because they are place names they do not appear in italics.

I have located places on maps as accurately as possible but there are errors and omissions. Luganville and Kanal are too far apart and both located too far inland on Figure 3, Map of Santo. They are opposite each other at the mouth of the Sarakata River. Beleru on the outskirts of Luganville appears as Belaru and again, a touch too far inland. Tanafo near Butmas has been omitted completely. Other place names that have been omitted from this map appear on either the Cumberland or the Wusi maps.



Figure 1: Pala of Olpoe



Figure 2: Islands of Vanuatu

Introduction

On Espiritu Santo¹ in the western Pacific archipelago of Vanuatu (Figure 2), the tradition of pot-making survives in two places on the west coast: the village of Wusi in the southwest and the Pespia River area on the Cumberland Peninsula in the northwest. Although archaeological pottery sherds are found on nearly every island of the Vanuatu group, in most islands pot-makers appear to have given up their craft from one to two thousand years ago (Bedford 2006: 173) and early outside observers recorded no pottery being made anywhere in Vanuatu except on Santo. Furthermore, the two places have different techniques for making pottery. In Wusi women make small moulded pots, whereas the Cumberland Peninsula tradition is one of large, coilmade pots and men are the present-day potters. Although pottery is the main indicator of the first peopling of Remote Oceania², the west coast of Espiritu Santo is the only place, other than Fiji, that makers of traditional pottery are known in Remote Oceania today.

A central question for this thesis is cultural transmission: how did the people of west coast Santo retain the ability to make pottery into the historic period? Were there unique qualities of the culture that preserved the practice or was it down to peculiarities of history, environment or diet? And why has one of these groups largely given up making pots during the course of the twentieth century, having survived all the incidents of pre-history as well as initial European contact and subsequent influences of traders, missionaries and the joint administration of two European powers? Today only the people of Wusi regularly make traditional pottery in Vanuatu and it is possible the ability to actually make pots may soon be lost on the Cumberland Peninsula.

¹ Usually known just as "Santo"

² The part of the Pacific which could be reached only by humans possessing knowledge of navigation and sailing technology is designated in Pacific prehistoric studies as Remote Oceania, comprising all the Pacific islands south and east of the main Solomon Island chain. The Remote area includes the Temotu province of the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, New Caledonia, Fiji, all of Polynesia, and most of Micronesia. Near Oceania is the designation for the part of the Oceanic region north and west of this line, where islands were larger and intervisible so could be reached with simpler craft and little knowledge of navigation (see map Figure 12).

Background

Pottery in Oceania

People are believed to have been in the large islands of Near Oceania, at least as far as the northern Solomon Islands, for around 40,000 years, but there are no ceramics found older than the settlement of Remote Oceania. With the apparent influx of speakers of Austronesian languages beginning about 4000 years ago, pottery first shows up in the Bismarck Archipelago of Papua New Guinea (PNG). Using strands of evidence from different disciplines, researchers have identified these Austronesian people as coming from the west, most likely South East Asia (Bellwood 1978; Kirch 1997, 2002; Spriggs 1997). Among the technologies they are thought to have brought with them was that of pottery, which developed, in the area of the Bismarck Archipelago, into a distinctively decorated ware that archaeologists call Lapita. From around 3800 years ago the makers of this pottery moved out to become the first people to settle the vast area of Remote Oceania (Kirch, 1997:60-61).

Lapita pottery, still not found further west than the Bismarck Archipelago, is known in Remote Oceania from the Reef-Santa Cruz (Temotu) area of the Solomon Islands, through Vanuatu and New Caledonia, to Fiji and Western Polynesia. In these places it is the oldest evidence of human presence yet found, and the dates, all in a narrow range around 3000 to 3500 years ago, suggest that the travel and subsequent settlement took place in an amazingly short period of time. These "Lapita people" are thought to have been the ancestors of almost all the indigenous peoples in the Remote Pacific at the time of the European explorations of the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries (although recent DNA studies suggest the picture is more complicated). Today, however, pottery, the defining archaeological marker of their settlement, is created in only a couple of places in Remote Oceania: Fiji and Vanuatu in Melanesia, and nowhere at all in Polynesia or Micronesia³.

Potters on the West Coast of Santo

In Santo, the craft is still known in two areas on the same coastline and the methods of pot-making appear quite different, although the places are only around 60km apart.

³ Although Lapita pottery was not found in Micronesia, several of the western islands had other pottery traditions dating from the same era and, at least in Yap and Belau, pottery making persisted into the historic period (Bellwood 1978; Kirch 1997).

Pottery along this coast was first described as a continuum of style and practice (Macdonald 1892: 48; Steel 1880: 332) but in 1910, when Basel Museum collector Felix Speiser observed Santo potters at the villages of Wusi and "Pespia"⁴, he described the two places as having different techniques. Pots were coil-built in Pespia, and moulded in Wusi, suggesting to Speiser that two groups of potters from different sources must have settled in the area (Speiser 1990⁵: 231). Speiser's descriptions were used by German anthropologist Margarete Schurig in a 1920s library and museum survey which concluded there were two types of pottery throughout Oceania, an older coil-built style (*Wulst*) associated with "Papuan" people, and a modelled or beaten style (*Treib*) associated with "Melanesian" people who migrated into Oceania from the west (Schurig 1930). The argument has been used to support the idea of two prehistoric migrations of peoples into the Pacific, but this dissertation will argue that two introductions are not necessary to explain the two different techniques for making pottery in west coast Santo.

The potters of Wusi are well known and their technique has often been described, both in ethnological literature (Speiser 1913, 1923; Baker 1929a; Guiart 1956a, 1958) and by more recent archaeological investigators (M.E. Shutler 1968, 1971; Galipaud 1996a & b). The pottery of the Cumberland Peninsula (which has been variously called Pespia, Nogugu and Olpoi pottery)⁶, is less well known. The inland pottery villages of Pespia were abandoned when the last people moved to the Christian villages on the coast after the Second World War, and pottery making was thought to have died out in the area. Despite some later suggestions of potters still practising in the northwest (Garanger 1982: 17; M.E. Shutler 1971), by the 1990s Wusi was thought to be the last remaining pottery village in Santo (Galipaud 1996a: 97). But when I first visited the potters of the northwest, I found that not only was pottery still being made occasionally in Olpoe⁷, the village where the descendants of the Pespia

⁴ This is the name of a river. There may never have been an actual village by that name. The inland Pespia villages were abandoned when people came down to the coast. If there ever was an actual village called Pespia no one can now say which it was. Nojima (2011: 160) looked for it and could not find it.

⁵ Speiser's *Ethnographische* was published in 1923 but Stephenson's English translation was not made until 1990. Where I am using the English translation I therefore give a 1990 publication date.

⁶ These names are all from older spellings of the names of villages where this technique has been found ⁷ The spelling of this place name varies – I use the spelling that was used in the older maps and by Miller (1990) and M.E. Shutler (1971): *Olpoe*. Recent maps have it as *Olpoi*, the spelling used by

potters live (Nojima 2003), but that the tradition is still claimed around northern areas of the Cumberland Peninsula, where even people who no longer make pots retain knowledge of the practice.

What I will call the Cumberland tradition was first seen by outsiders on the Big Bay side of the Cumberland Peninsula, then at Nokuku and other villages on the northwest coast, then at an inland village on the Pespia River (Speiser 1990: 232; Harrisson 1937: 353), and recently at Olpoe near the mouth of the Pespia River. This is where I did preliminary studies for my research proposal, and discovered sporadic attempts being made to either retain or revive pottery making in different villages of the area. Today, on the Peninsula, there are at least five villages where present or former potters live, or lived, or where the traditions are remembered.

Research Question

The social context of pottery loss and survival is the focus of my research. In studying these two groups of Santo potters, I examine the processes and fluctuations of the indigenous potters' craft as it is practiced in a village setting; the way the craft is integrated with the economy, culture and the environment, and the influences of social change.

Modern studies of traditional potters are often of groups who are involved in the market economy to the extent that their pots and practices have already changed to fit with a commercial production imperative (Arnold 1985: 200). The potters of Santo are part-time pot-makers in a physical setting that would not allow them to make a fulltime living from pots, and only in Wusi do potters attempt to get any regular income supplement from their craft. Traditional techniques and materials are still used in both Wusi and Cumberland, despite the many changes brought about by more than a century and a half of European influence. Changes wrought by contact and colonisation can still be traced in historic records and through narratives of local informants: most of the villages I visited were only established on the coast after the Second World War and there was a clear local recollection of life and traditions in former bush villages. The question is how this traditional craft survived into the

Galipaud, who first gave the name to the pottery. Local people say it should be *Olpoe* and this appears to be linguistically more correct, since it means "place of the pigs"

twentieth century and why it now seems doomed to disappear from the cultural repertoire in the northwest of Santo. My approach owes as much to historical and ethnographic information as it does to either archaeology or material culture studies.

I first ask where the pottery of Santo came from and how the two technologies fit with each other and with other indigenous pottery in the Pacific, from first archaeological and then ethnographic sources. I then look at early reports of Santo and documentation of the contact history of the island to find an answer as to why pottery in Santo has outlasted not only all other traditions in Vanuatu but also those in most of the Remote Pacific. With this background I finally attack my first question from both a historical and ethnographic perspective, combining other sources with my own observations of the pottery and people of the west coast to seek an answer as to whether, and if so why, pottery in the Notwes seems to be grinding to a halt. Why don't the potters of the Cumberland Peninsula make pots?

Literature of Cultural Transmission

One of the problems with such a broad approach is that there may not be a discrete and easily available body of theory to feed into. Recognising the need to look beyond the studies of pottery in Oceania I looked for previous research in other parts of the world that looked at pottery and transmission of material culture from the perspectives of both archaeology and cultural anthropology.

Pottery studies

Much of the academic research on pottery comes from archaeology, where it is important as an enduring marker of past cultures and change within them, although change in pottery has not been found to correlate well with other cultural changes (Arnold 1985: 1-2). Pottery was once thought to be intrinsically bound with farming communities but more recent discoveries of its use among hunter-gatherers in Europe and Asia have inspired work on why it suddenly becomes archaeologically visible around 16,000 years ago and not before (Jordan & Zvelebil 2009). Cooking was one widely reported early use, and Hayden (2009) suggests that pottery was developed for

cooking and serving specific foodstuffs for ritual and feasting in semi-sedentary hunter-gatherer societies, such as those in the American Pacific Northwest. In Oceania, it seems cooking was the main (and in some places the only) function for pottery.

Most anthropological interest in present-day pottery making concerns factors other than survival and loss of the art although, in the Americas, Africa and Asia, there are some descriptions of these aspects of traditional pottery and processes of change, particularly in response to westernisation. Recently there have been studies of the social aspects of particular pottery technologies, especially from Africa (e.g. Gosselain 1994; La Violette 1995: 170-180; Posnak 2018: 23-30), and anthropologist Dean Arnold has brought together a wide sample of ethnographic literature on pottery making to construct a theoretical framework that speaks to the interests of archaeologists, relating manufacturing practice to environmental and cultural change, among other factors (Arnold 1985, 2008). Arnold's fieldwork concerned commercial potters in urban and semi-urban settings in Latin America, but in his 1985 study he surveyed the work of other pottery researchers to identify processes that not only applied across present-day pot-making cultures but could be used to "... provide a solid empirical (as opposed to speculative) base for interpreting ancient ceramics" (Arnold 1985: x). Arnold's further claim is that the "cross-cultural regularities" found in his study relate ceramics to other cultural processes and can thus predict how and why pottery making develops in certain areas (*ibid*).

While some researchers in the Pacific (Bellwood 1978; Irwin 1981; Leach 1982) suggested single factors, such as limitations on soil types or available foodstuffs, to explain pottery change and loss, Arnold has shown how a complex of influences can work to promote or suppress pottery and shape the practices differently in similar regions. He sees cultural and environmental factors as interacting with the chemical processes of pot-making, applying systems theory to make generalisations (Arnold 1998: 12-15). I have taken this approach to Santo pot-making, but have added colonial historical influences to my analytic matrix, and broadened the cultural component to include not only the culture of pottery making but also the influences of leadership ideologies on practice.

Studies of learning and cultural transmission

The recent anthropological and archaeological literature on cultural transmission is extensive. Both disciplines have theoretical and ethnographic angles of approach. The study of cultural transmission in the *longue durée* is one of the central themes of archaeology, but this is restricted by the paradox that long-term theory is constructed principally from the examination of the detritus of what are often micro-events. To investigate problems that cannot be answered by archaeological evidence alone, and to inform some of the questions that this evidence throws up, ethnographic studies are often used and pottery and potters are often subjects.

In a review of studies of learning in material culture, Stark, Bowser and Horne confirm my impression that there has been limited interest in learning as a central topic for anthropology until recently, with more interest being shown in areas of language acquisition and archaeology than by cultural anthropologists (Stark Bowser and Horne 2008: 2-3). But an early study by social anthropologist Fredrik Barth (1975), looked at the hazards threatening transmission of ritual culture in a small Melanesian society in the West Sepik Province of Papua New Guinea (the Baktaman) and the role of secrecy and esotericism in limiting the transfer of knowledge. His studies of constraints on transmission have influenced both anthropologists and ethnoarchaeologists, and his findings on mechanisms of loss are relevant for the present study.

Before the 1960s, study of material culture techniques was looked at by archaeologists as one method to relate artefact distribution to the organisation of the societies producing them, but the rise of New Archaeology in America and the *Chaine Opératoire* approach in French anthropology enhanced the theorisation of studies of artefactual traits. Pottery decoration, thought of as a voluntary means of social expression, was seen as an ideal focus for these approaches (*ibid.*). Stylistic patterns could explain learning structures and means of transmission.

Lemonnier (1986) advocated the collaboration of archaeologists and anthropologists and the use of the *Chaine Opératoire* analysis in ethnographic studies as essential for the method of differentiation through choice of aspects of technology, so that useful comparisons could be made between different pottery traditions. He saw decoration and choice of techniques as expressing ethnic identity and therefore transmitting a portrayal of culture. Lemonnier also speculated about the role of trade as a means of maintaining intertribal relations in situations where people import items that they could make themselves (1986: 176). Clustering of apparently unrelated technical traits models the necessity of considering artefacts in their cultural context to obtain information about societies, as in his example of the Enga of the Papua New Guinea Highlands (Lemonier 1986: 179).

The applications and limitations of ethnoarchaeological studies for informing archaeological problems were discussed by Carol Kramer:

Many of these studies focus particularly on manufacturing techniques, and sometimes describe vessel functions as well. Some of them touch briefly on other matters of potential interest to archaeologists, such as learning routines, aspects of division of labour and social organisation of production...

(Kramer 1985: 77).

Kramer referenced studies of reasons for potmaking, causes of change, ranges of markets and the effects of trade on ceramic styles as well as relations between learning and other social factors such as kinship, residence, and the life stage of potters (Kramer 1985:78-85). A number of the ethnographic studies she cites act as warnings to archaeologists against hasty generalisations, finding previous assumptions about practice and meaning not to be typical in the field (Kramer 1985: 87-88). The conservatism of potters made changes in technology meaningful but they could be caused by factors that were not apparent in the archaeological record (Kramer 1985: 92). Variation in design and decoration was seen as conveying several possible messages including standardisation of pottery for trade.

The post-processualism and cultural determinism of the 1980s was replaced by a concept of agency and a recognition of the role of "historical contingency" (Stark Bowser and Horne 2008: 4-5). This has spawned different schools of thinking on ways to tackle cultural transmission such as situated learning theory and ethnoarchaeological studies of individual learning. My study relates best to dual

inheritance approaches which consider the role of history and cultural conditions in long term learning (Stark Bowser and Horne 2008: 6).

Transmission of culture is usually understood as something that happens between generations and archaeological studies tend to take that premise as a basis for study, seeing the vector as either vertical (parent to child) or oblique (older to younger) transmission. This has been challenged by, among others, Morin (2016) who supports the superior effectiveness of horizontal transmission, from a central argument that wide dissemination is the most effective means of propagating traditions. Although he does not explicitly address inheritance in small societies, or the influence of restrictive mechanisms such as esotericism and *tabu*, Morin's theories have implications for understanding societies where these concepts dominate the transmission of knowledge. His focus on children's learning and transmission also has relevance for my study, as discussed in Chapter Nine.

Some practical support for Morin's position comes also from studies discussed by Ellen and Fischer (2013: 1) who consider that cultural transmission "remains underplayed in many areas of anthropology where it might be thought to have an application". They identify three levels for the study of cultural transmission, ranging from the "micro-level", which considers how knowledge is passed from one person to another, through the middle range, which looks at social institutions "as contexts for perpetuating transmission and ensuring its fidelity" (Ellen & Fischer 2013: 3) to the macro-level of cultural history. My study considers transmission on all three levels. However, on the micro-level, the studies presented by Ellen and Fischer still mostly consider who people learn from rather than how they learn, albeit with more sophisticated methods than older works. In a study of ethnobotanical learning, Reyes-García et al. (2013) very neatly show that knowledge and skills are different modes of learning that travel by different paths. Several studies consider vectors of transmission, and evidence emerges that the influence of social restrictions on these can be changed by political and historical events (e.g. Tehrani and Collard's 2002 study of textile designs of Turkmen weavers, quoted in Tehrani and Collard 2013: 149-50), and that different methods of transmission may be more successful under different conditions. Most of the studies presented by Ellen and Fischer (2013) are of larger populations where traits could be examined using statistical and cladistic

methods⁸, but their results can be seen as relevant to small isolated populations such as those of western Santo.

Pottery and Cultural Transmission in Oceania

Theories on how pottery came to be abandoned in most of the Pacific are often speculative, or contribute only partial answers, failing to explain how pottery also persisted in some areas. Most interest has been in Polynesia where the inhabitants, believed to be the direct descendants of the original Lapita pottery makers, were the only people in the Pacific to give up making pottery entirely before European contact. A lack of suitable clays seemed an obvious answer, and although this has been to some extent discounted (Bellwood 1978: 329; Kirch 1997: 160-61), clay qualities are more important than non-potters realise and have been shown to influence pottery practice in several other parts of the Oceanic region (e.g. Intoh 1990; May & Tuckson 1982; Rye 1976).

The main work on recent Oceanic pottery was a survey undertaken by art historian Patricia May and potter Margaret Tuckson (1982, 2000), who, in the 1960s and 1970s, attempted to look at every extant pottery community in Papua New Guinea; watching and describing the pot-making region by region, classifying it by manufacturing style, but also drawing comparisons between groups and putting the traditions into social and historical contexts. They examined over 60 industries in the Melanesian area, leaving out only the Remote Oceanic potteries in Fiji and Vanuatu (May & Tuckson 1982, 2000). Their work (Tuckson & May 1975) was used by geologist Owen Rye (1976) in his analysis of the relationships between the nature of clay and the techniques used to work it in New Guinea potteries (a study I refer to later when discussing techniques used by Santo potters) and their survey of pottery techniques also underpinned a couple of studies (Kaufmann 1999; Pétrequin & Pétrequin 1999) that group and map the potteries, postulate relationships between groups and suggest incursions of new technologies.

⁸ These methods were not available in a situation where few pots were available for inspection. Over nine years, in the whole Cumberland I saw a total of eleven completed and fired pots in different places and from different periods. Only the oldest pots were decorated.

The decline or abandonment of pot-making is discussed by May and Tuckson (e.g. 2000: 13-14) for several of the industries they describe, but the first focussed attempt to consider the question for Polynesia, where pottery was completely lost by at least 2000 years ago, was by archaeologists Geoff Irwin (1981) and Helen Leach (1982), who postulated changes in cooking methods as the cause. Irwin suggested that an aceramic settlement of Eastern Polynesia fed back cooking techniques to the west that did not need ceramic pots and caused Western Polynesia to abandon pottery in response. Leach's argument, repeated by archaeologist Yoko Nojima (2008) was essentially that once grains had been lost from the pre-Oceanic food inventory, pottery was not needed for cooking. These utilitarian lines of thinking do not explain other factors in the archaeological record, such as the loss of decorated pottery centuries before cooking pots; and turn the onus of explanation onto why pottery has survived for up to another 2000 years in several other parts of the Pacific. More analytical studies have emerged from Micronesia: in Yap Michiko Intoh (1990, 1992) found that changes in pottery working techniques corresponded with changes in availability of clay; and, in an interesting parallel to traditional Santo hierarchies, Christophe Descantes (2002: 233-37), also in Yap, argues that the Yap caste system contributed to both the persistence and the demise of cooking pots.

Cooking is undoubtedly important – in nearly every place in Oceania that pottery survived to the contact period, not only were most vessels used for cooking, but there were few traditions where vessels were designed for anything else. This supports the third explanation – that pottery vessels were superseded by European cooking pots. This was undoubtedly a contributing factor, but as Descantes (*ibid.*) illustrates, there were usually others. But it is notable that the only place in Remote Oceania other than Santo where pottery survived European contact was Fiji, where cooking pots were only a part of a pottery inventory that included water bottles and varied serving dishes. The Fijian potteries, unlike those of Santo, have been studied extensively (Dickinson & Sykes 1968; Geraghty 1995; Palmer *et al.* 1968; Rossitto 1990, 1995; Roth 1935; Sorovi-Vunidilo & Vusoniwailala, 1999) and are discussed in Chapter Four. Most studies are principally descriptions of manufacturing technique, style and decoration but Rossitto, who discusses the effects of the tourist economy on Fijian pottery industries losing traditional meaning and consequently some forms and abilities (notably those required for larger pots), and predicts an

almost complete loss of traditional pottery except as a ritual of remembrance or "a personal hobby" (Rossitto 1992: 186) in Fiji. A later ethnographic study (Le Blanc 2011), attempting to use observation of techniques and statistical comparisons to trace means of transmission, encountered problems similar to my own: not only were pots hardly ever being made in her field area (Yawe on the island of Kadavu in Fiji) but there were very few pots in either villages or museum collections, few designs on pots and the communal methods used by the potters did not allow for individual variation.

Diet and choice of cooking method are obviously influenced by cultural norms and practices, but these are a source of information not directly available to the archaeologist or prehistorian. Several researchers have studied present-day potters or potting societies of the recent past to try to close this gap. Archaeologists Intoh (1990, 1992) and Descantes (2002) use historical and cultural factors to explain the demise of pottery in Yap and Belau, and May and Tuckson (1982) commented on these in their survey of PNG potters. The present study contributes to the comparative studies of traditional Pacific pottery with an additional focus on historical, social, and environmental factors, to which May and Tuckson could not devote any more than passing mention, given the huge scope of their task. The particular contact and colonial history of Santo, its effects on social structure and economic practices, and the physical environment of the west coast of Santo all contributed to the development of differing practices and outcomes for the potmaking in the two different areas of this study, and this is what the body of this dissertation will explain.

Santo

Previous work that contributes to the topic of cultural transmission in Santo is centred in the west and south west. After early ethnographer Felix Speiser described and speculated on the origins of Santo pottery, the techniques of Wusi were reported by anthropologist Jean Guiart (1958), who surveyed inland populations of the south west of Santo and reported on political and religious movements, including the graded society. Valuable information on belief systems and social organisation came from the study by Tomas Ludvigson (1981) on healing practices in the southwest inland. Archaeologists Mary Elizabeth Shutler (1968, 1971) and Jean-Christophe Galipaud (1996a, 1996b) compared the Wusi and Cumberland pottery techniques; both

suggested pottery was declining in the north. Galipaud also conducted a survey of archaeological sites of western Santo (1996c) and contributed several attempts at both pottery sequencing in Santo and suggested links with pottery elsewhere in Vanuatu and in the Pacific (1996b, 2011). This is the entire corpus of anthropological work pertaining to cultural transmission prior to the late 1990s. After Galipaud however, two anthropological studies explicitly studied transmission of culture on the west coast: archaeologist Yoko Nojima (2008) included Olpoe in a comparative study of oven technology and suggested diffusion and replacement mechanisms including the replacement of pottery by earth ovens in the Cumberland area; and social anthropologist Fabienne Tzerikiantz (2006) looked at relationships between the inland and coastal people of the Elia area, between Wusi and Olpoe, and studied the oral transmission of beliefs, skills and legends. Her findings on the way knowledge was handed down on the west coast informed and clarified my thinking on this topic.

Field Method and Limitations

My original interest in the potters of the Pacific was in whether any inheritance from the Lapita tradition still existed in the Pacific today, and if so, whether it could be traced and measured. At the beginning of my research, there were said to be potters in Fiji, New Caledonia, and Vanuatu, as well as the many and varied pot-making industries already surveyed in Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands (May & Tuckson 1982). Pottery making turned out to have long ceased in New Caledonia, so in 1993 and 1996 I visited potters at Yawe in Kadavu, Fiji, at the village of Wusi, said to be the only place people were still making pots in Vanuatu and for purposes of comparison Pagutan, one of the few places in Lombok, Indonesia, where pots are still made by traditional methods (Pascal 2000).

When I visited the potters of Wusi in 1993, the pots were generally admitted to be of poor quality, and local people told me about other, better, potters further north. In 2001 at the Vanuatu Cultural Centre (VKS) I met the fieldworker from the Cumberland Peninsula, Chief Alty Ezekiel. His grandfather had been a potter and he
invited me to Olpoe, the last recognised pot-making village of the Notwes⁹ of Santo. In 2004 I had the opportunity to visit the village and speak with the potters, and in 2005 I returned with my husband, linguist Ross Clark, who became interested in doing his own project on the languages of the area. We visited Olpoe every year until 2009, but the pot-making demonstration I had been promised in 2004 did not take place until 2007 and was not repeated. It seemed that although the people of Olpoe had the local reputation of making the best pots on the west coast, they did not make pots with any frequency and had quite possibly not produced viable pots for several years or even decades (Galipaud 1996b, Nojima 2011), nor even attempted potmaking between 1985 and 2000 (Nojima 2010).

My focus of interest consequently shifted to why pottery was not being made in the villages of the Cumberland Peninsula, particularly as, contrary to my predictions of ten years earlier, the pots of Wusi, generally agreed on the coast to be inferior, were still being made and sold in both Luganville and Port Vila. I got approval from the people of Olpoe and from the Vanuatu Cultural Centre and in 2008 I enrolled at the University of Waikato to write a Ph.D. dissertation on this topic.

Fieldwork

My first plan was to watch potters at work, record what they did and elicit the terms they used when making pottery. However, most of the time people were not actually working on pottery so apart from talking to the few remaining people who knew about making pots, I went where people wanted me to and saw what they wanted me to look at. I found people were happy to have me take part in their work and daily lives. Becoming an accepted part of village life was the best way to find what was actually happening, day to day. I think this was easier because, as a female, I could work in the gardens, help prepare meals, look after babies, entertain children and learn to make mats and sew *natanggura* (thatch for roofs). I also attended church services, school functions and other village occasions. When I went anywhere it was usually with women on women's paths. I kept a diary and a record of family members, language phrases and photographs. In 2006 I began taking detailed notes of my

⁹ The Bislama term for the northwest political district: geographically the western side of the Cumberland Peninsula from Hakua round to Tasmate. This is the usual term people on the northwest coast of the Cumberland Peninsula use for their area, which was where I did most of my research.

observations and recording information people gave me about aspects of their lives. Although they knew my prime interest was in pottery, a number of the chiefs and elders of the villages were very forthcoming in sharing information concerning recent village history, origin stories, children's tales and other legends pertaining to the landscape and traditional practices, as well as their kinship perceptions, marriage customs, land ownership, the making of chiefs and political influences both local and national. In conversation with other people, current events, medicine and their kids' education were favourite topics. Although most people were interested in past and traditional practices, very little of this information related to pot-making, although I did hear the same pottery stories previous researchers had collected (Galipaud 1996b: 115-16; Nojima 2011: 161). On the three occasions I actually watched people making Cumberland pottery, I asked questions about the names and details of the processes I was observing, but in other areas I did not introduce topics¹⁰. I tried to construct a picture of what people actually did, rather than record the "culturally embedded ideals" (Nojima 2008:24) of the informants. This experience in Notwes served me well when I returned to Wusi in 2009 and 2010, as I believe I saw much more than I would have if I had just gone in with a questionnaire and without prior knowledge of the *tabu¹¹* surrounding traditional practices.

In the same year I enrolled to begin formal study, a plane crash in the mountains to the south closed the Lajmoli airfield and transport became much more difficult (see Pineda 2011: 9). Despite this, I spent most of April to November 2009 undertaking fieldwork in Santo, coming out only to attend a conference and to renew my visa. I travelled almost entirely by sea, and the weather that year was so bad I was never once landed at my planned destination but had to walk in from varying distances.

While waiting for a ship for Wusi in October 2009, I visited Butmas, an inland village on the other side of Santo, where I had heard pots were also made (MacClancy 2002: 23). I expected the traditions, along with those of Wusi to give supplementary information to build up a unique picture of pot-making in a region. But the elders at Butmas said they had never made pottery and that their soil was no good - not

¹⁰ I had previously found in New Zealand that elders gave information when they were ready to impart it, not when their students wanted to receive it.

¹¹ *Tabu* means forbidden or prohibited – there is a supernatural element to it, so misfortune will befall anyone who disobeys.

surprising, as Butmas is an inland village on the limestone side of the island where soils are not suitable for pot-making. On the other hand, my Wusi visit, and subsequent reading and research on Wusi provided a lot of information, including four historic snapshots of the techniques practised at different times through the twentieth century (See Chapters Three and Eight) and reports from both local and written sources on a recent revival project undertaken after my first visit. Therefore, the Wusi tradition has equal weight with the Cumberland Peninsula in this dissertation, despite the different nature of the data: my Wusi material relies very much on published sources, while the Notwes information comes largely from ethnographic data and my own fieldwork.

Other than for the first demonstration at Olpoe, I never asked people to make pots; observations at both Ravlepa and Wusi were made when people were actually making pots for their own purposes and invited me to be present. I paid for my first interview with Pala, the old potter at Olpoe, for the collection of the clay for the demonstration of pot-making at Olpoe in 2007, and I offered the tourist fees to be shown the workshop and firing ground of one of the potters at Wusi in 2009. Other than that, I did not pay for any of the pot-making activities I saw or took part in. I completed my fieldwork tasks by visiting Wusi again in 2010, and managed a last trip to Olpoe in 2012 to try and answer outstanding queries. However, my dissertation depends less on fieldwork observations and more on library research than originally planned.

Approach

The study is of pottery in a social and historical context, in the belief that the interaction of these factors with the environment and the culture is the likely cause of the present-day pottery situation in west Santo. It is the story of the people making the pots, rather than that of the pots, as Arnold said of his ceramic theory:

Rather than the pottery itself, the focus is on the ceramic producing population which is the interface between culture and the environment on

the one hand and the actual pottery on the other.... [It] is less concerned with analysis *per se* and more concerned with the interrelations of populations of potters with their environment and culture.

(Arnold 1985: 17)

I have followed the approach described by Arnold, but where his attention was mainly on the influences of physical environment, resource availability and demand on the culture and economy of the potting community, I have added emphasis on the interaction between exogenous historical factors and the particular culture of the people of the west coast on the other. In doing this, I have taken a wider look at the society, including the particular politics of such things as leadership and marriage practice. Although the focus of the dissertation is on the pottery and potters of today, the approach used is historical, with answers sought in local oral histories as well as writings from and about the past, including information from early travellers and missionaries in the region, as well as archaeology, ethnography and colonial government records.

This approach could be categorised as historical ethnography in the sense of a synthesis of "the field experience of a community with an investigation of its archival past" (Sahlins 1993: 1).

Since I am posing a question to which the informants themselves do not know the answer, the synthesis must come from the combination of several often very indirect avenues of enquiry. My participant field work included observation and informal discussion and I have supplemented these with intensive research into the few historical sources available for Santo. These were missionaries', travellers' and explorers' accounts from around the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century. From the beginning of the First World War right through to the political disturbances of Independence (1980), there were few accounts of Santo and almost none of the west coast. Other than Guiart and Shutler, both mentioned in the Santo section above, Tom Harrisson of the Oxford Expedition (1936, 1937) was the only anthropological observer to leave any relevant comment. Local district agents of the colonial government almost never bothered with the west coast of Santo: I could find no record in the Western Pacific archives (1875-1978, held in Auckland University Library) of any government agent visiting the area before the Second

World War, and subsequent official visits, up to the time of Independence, may be counted on one hand. After Independence the moratorium on social science research prevented anthropological investigation until 1994, after which, researchers Jean-Christophe Galipaud, Yoko Nojima, Fabienne Tzerikiantz and Annie Walter investigated aspects of archaeology, pottery and food on the west coast, with Tzerikiantz (2006) giving a wider account of the lifestyle, beliefs and viewpoints of the local people.

Structure of Thesis

The research question, essentially how the two different pottery industries have survived, can be broken into several component parts, considered sequentially in the thesis and tackled individually using combinations of different disciplinary approaches. Chapter One introduces some descriptions from geomorphology and geology, history, archaeology, linguistics and ethnography to give a background to Santo and its people.

It has been asked whether any of the Santo pottery is traditional Oceanic pottery. This is briefly considered in Chapter Two from the perspective of archaeological information. Although the archaeological information is scant, and there is not yet secure dating for Santo, indications are that at least the Cumberland pottery has been found elsewhere in Vanuatu, with dates comparable with similar styles in other islands. There is little information from archaeology on the Wusi pottery, which appears to have arrived or been developed more recently.

Another part of this question is how are the different techniques used in the two areas of the study related to each other? In Chapter Three, an analysis of the practice of pot-making in the two focus areas brings inconclusive results: the potteries could have come from one ancestor but alternatively, having come to exist in neighbouring areas where arguably related peoples have similar cultural practices, they could have converged. In Chapter Four, ethnographic examination of other potting methods in the Oceanic region not only finds styles and technologies similar to both Wusi and

Cumberland, but also suggests that the division between coiled and paddle beaten pottery is not as complete as has been thought, and that both Schurig's methods can be found to have been practised in every island group where the pottery has been described. Divisions may fall more accurately between men's pottery and women's pottery or between ritual and mundane pottery. However, it is also suggested that environment and clay type may affect techniques.

The idea of ritual pottery is considered in Chapter Five with a look at the allimportant institution of ritual in northern Vanuatu, the grade taking society. This chapter also attempts to construct a feasible answer to the important question of how pottery has managed to survive in this one area, while in the rest of Vanuatu, as well as most of Remote Oceania, pot-making either became extinct before European contact, or died out as soon as European goods became reasonably widespread? Evidence presented in this chapter is taken from a wide range of sources, including local informants, missionary records and historical, linguistic and ethnographic observations. The importance of the graded society in northern Vanuatu, the strictness of its practice particularly in Santo and, above all, the advent of sandalwood traders in selected parts of western Santo, seem to have combined to preserve and even enhance the felt need for pottery while it became obsolete in other areas.

The last question is the most interesting to answer: how did pot-making then decline in the Cumberland Peninsula to such an extent that it has been considered moribund, if not completely defunct? This question on its own has many component parts and occupies the rest of the dissertation. Chapter Six continues from Chapter Five in examining historical factors and suggests that the contact influences that supported the rise of pottery and the graded society in the west of Santo also contributed to the decline of both. The influences of European contact and colonisation are followed through to 1980, when the archipelago gained Independence as the nation of Vanuatu.

Chapters Seven and Eight look at present-day practice in the three villages where pots can still be made. Here a large component of the information comes from my own fieldwork observations and conversations with informants. In Chapter Seven the history, practices and lifestyle of the Cumberland villages of Olpoe and Ravlepa are examined in relation to the present place of pottery and attitudes towards it. The

definition of what is a pottery village is called into account. Which is more important, reputation or practice? Are people still potters if they don't make pots?

Chapter Eight looks at Wusi potters and puts together the historical and ethnographic information from previous researchers to discuss claims and assumptions about Wusi pottery. In addition, material on both practice and transmission of pot-making comes from a recent intervention and attempted "improvement" of Wusi pottery by aid funded European potters. The outcomes of this and my own subsequent observations of pottery working today, together with the work of other researchers in the same area raise some interesting aspects on the transmission and survival of traditional practices in general and pottery in particular, as well as a possible answer to the ongoing unanswered question of where the Wusi pottery actually came from.

In Chapter Nine the factors of the working of pottery and the influences of environment, history and social practice for both pottery areas are put into the model developed by Arnold (1985) to generalise ethnographic information for archaeologists. From the differences between the two areas a theory is developed that explains the differences in pottery survival, and another perspective on what makes a viable pot is considered.

The conclusion discusses the outcomes and finds that pottery retention and loss cannot be considered single factor outcomes, and that a combination of environmental, cultural and historical factors forms a complex melange of interacting influences on the viability of making pots. The likely future for pot-making in the Notwes and the applications for the story of pottery in the wider Pacific are considered, and directions are suggested for future research, both anthropological and archaeological, in the west of Santo.

Chapter One: Background to Santo and its People

Espiritu Santo is, at over 3950 km², the largest island in the Vanuatu group and the northernmost of the main island chain; only the small islands of the Banks and Torres groups are north of Santo (see Figure 2: Map of Vanuatu). It is the home of the second largest town in Vanuatu, Luganville (also called Santo, Santo Town and Kanal). Santo is horseshoe shaped, with the long, narrow Cumberland Peninsula in the northwest on one side of Big Bay, and the lower, shorter limestone Sakao Peninsula forming the eastern side and terminating in Cape Queiros (Figure 3). The Cumberland Peninsula is where pottery making in Santo was centred at the time of European contact and where most of my research was carried out. After a brief summary of known history, this chapter gives an outline of the geography and peoples of Santo, and a brief description of the island today as a background to the events that shaped the present-day lives of the potters of the west coast.

Archaeological evidence for the region, discussed in Chapter Two, suggests that Santo was first settled about 3000 years ago. This likely took place in Big Bay where Lapita sherds have been discovered (Bedford & Spriggs 2008: 103). From there it is surmised people spread round the small islands to the east and south, and did not move inland until about 2000 years ago (Galipaud 2011: 470), although the later practice of setting mainland villages back from the coast may have been in force before European ship visits became regular.

Santo's European discovery was by a Spanish fleet commanded by Portuguese explorer Pedro Fernandez de Queiros, who sailed into Big Bay in 1606 and, undoubtedly deceived by the size of the bay and the mountains, thought he had found the great southern land, so named it *Australia del Espiritu Santo*¹² (Dickie 1981: 112), the great southern land of the Holy Spirit. Over a century and a half later Bougainville identified Santo as an island (Jolly 2009: 78), and Cook defined the archipelago and named it as the New Hebrides (Beaglehole 1988). Santo was left

¹² Like many of the subsequent place names of Santo, this name is subject to various spellings and renditions. Jacomb (1914: 9) has it as *Tierra Australe del Espiritu Santo*, MacClancy (2002: 38) as *Terra Austrialis del Espiritu Santo*.



Figure 3: Map of Santo

largely alone for nearly eighty years after Cook's visit in 1774 – it was not on the main whaling routes (Shineberg 1967: 130), and early exploiters and missionaries began with the southern islands. But in 1853 sandalwood was discovered in west Santo just when stocks in the southern islands had become depleted (MacClancy

2002: 44), and Santo was dragged into the world of international trade. Sandalwooders focussed on the west of the island, but the labour recruiting that followed occurred all around, and on the small coastal islands at least, there was no escape either from the raids of the early blackbirders or from the diseases introduced by ships' crews and returned workers. The Segond Canal area and southeast coast, including the small islands, were depopulated early. But after the turn of the nineteenth century the small islands were reoccupied by people from the southwest coast islands, as well as people from the mainland (Miller 1990: 40).

Missionaries followed the sandalwooders and blackbirders in the 1850s but the earliest Presbyterian mission station on mainland Santo was not until 1890 at Nokuku on the west coast (Miller 1990: 230). Other traders followed the missionaries; planters, first English, then French, began acquiring land, mostly in the depopulated southeast corner of Santo, in the 1870s and 80s (MacClancy 2002: 70); and the navies of England and France became involved in settling labour and land disputes between colonists and indigenous New Hebrideans.

A Joint Naval Commission was activated (Jacomb 1914: 11) and eventually the Condominium, agreed upon by these two powers (each controlling their own citizens but neither taking responsibility for New Hebrideans who had no citizenship and only *de facto* land rights), was established in 1907 to administer the New Hebrides (Miles 1998: 36). After the Second World War when American troops fighting in the Pacific Campaign effectively took over Efate and Santo (MacClancy 2002: 116), the changing international attitudes to colonialism finally affected the New Hebrides. The country gained independence as the state of Vanuatu in 1980. The effects of contact are covered in more detail in Chapters Five and Six.

Geography, Geology and Climate

Santo falls into two geological halves – the eastern side of the island is terraced limestone from old coral reefs, with gentle slopes, plateaux and a few small rivers, while the older western side is dominated by the Cumberland Mountains, a rapidly rising range of high volcanic mountains that run the entire length of the island and feature precipitous slopes, deep valleys, and razor-back ridges (Pineda 2011: 8; Tzerikiantz 2006: 22). Towards the southern end is Mt Tabwemasana (Figure 24), at over 1800m, the highest peak in Vanuatu (Nojima 2008: 37). The Cumberlands contain some of the oldest rocks in Vanuatu; only Malekula has rocks of similar age. This side of Santo is close to the intersection of the Australian and Pacific Plates¹³, and the height and steepness is the result of constant up-thrust, with attendant downcutting rivers running through gorges on both sides. As the Swiss ethnologist Felix Speiser noted in 1910, the topography is such as to isolate each individual valley system from its neighbours (Speiser 1990: 20). The west coast, where the study is centred, is cut off from the rest of the island by this mountain range which also provides it with more complex soils, including veins of clay suitable for pot-making (Claridge 1985: 35), and the only soils and climate in north Vanuatu where sandalwood grew naturally (Gilleson *et al.* 2008: 16; Lui 2014: 4-5).

While the eastern side has a shoreline of small coral islands, inlets and harbours, the west coast has no islets except the occasional rock standing out to sea, and very few sheltered coves. Between Valpei and Tasiriki there are probably none that can be used in all weathers and there is certainly no safe harbour for a ship, despite this being the leeward coast. The sea in Big Bay can be rough and the bottom is deep; the only good harbour for large ships on Santo is the Segond Canal, between the southeast corner and the neighbouring island of Aore. The town of Luganville stands on this sheltered channel.

The geomorphology of Santo, as well as its location in the archipelago, meant that early European influence and exploitation was sporadic, settlement came later than in the southern islands and the effects on different parts of the island were very different. So, while the southeast corner with the most accessible harbour saw European settlement, alienation of land and almost total loss of indigenous population by the end of the nineteenth century (Speiser 1913: 37), on the west coast where this study is focussed, there has been only intermittent contact with European missionaries, administrators, and government officials to this day. It is possible that there were

¹³ At this latitude the Australian Plate is passing underneath the Pacific Plate (Pelletier & Simeoni 2009: 106-110).

more Europeans on the west coast during the sandalwooding period than there have been any time since.

The Cumberland Peninsula and west coast

Around 60km long and averaging about 20km wide, the Cumberland Peninsula is the tongue of land that forms the west side of Big Bay and constitutes around 20-30% of the land area of the island of Santo. Striking features of this region, in common with the whole west coast of Santo, are the inaccessibility and uncompromising terrain. These features are interrelated, have a prime influence on the lives of Cape Cumberland people and contribute to the status of the west coast as the last place pottery is made in Vanuatu.

The peninsula is the northern end of the Cumberland Range, which has heights from about 600m at the north end to over 1500m toward the south. Clouds carried by the predominantly southeast winds come up against the ranges with the result that while the eastern Big Bay side of the peninsula is continually covered with cloud and there is frequent rain and many large and swiftly running rivers (Terry 2011: 46), the west is comparatively dry and sunny and many rivers are small and tend to dry up in the winter months. At other times, the west coast can be humid and it was regarded as the "fever coast"¹⁴ in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Harrisson 1937: 373; Miller¹⁵ 1990: 234). In the wet season rivers on both sides can be too high to cross except by boat or on horseback, and in earlier times it was easier to travel up and down the river valleys than along the coast.

Wusi is further south on the west coast, in the rain-shadow of the highest mountains of the Cumberland Range. This makes the climate very arid for Vanuatu, and the steepness of the hills leads to erosion and poor soils (Tzerikiantz 2000: 177). Whereas at the northern end of the west coast, hills are lower, slopes are gentler and there is more rainfall, Wusi is at the other extreme. It lies in one of the most

¹⁴ By living in the hills, the Cumberland people avoided the malaria on the coast.

¹⁵ Graham Miller who headed the Presbyterian College for training local pastors in South Santo from 1947 to 1952 was the author of an extensive history of the Presbyterian Mission in Vanuatu, (*Live* Vols 1-8, 1978 -1990)

tectonically active¹⁶ areas of a very active region and the coastal platform it shares with the village of Linturi is uplifted from the seabed by a seamount on the north D'Entrecasteaux Ridge passing underneath as part of the down-plunging Australian Plate¹⁷. A narrow coastal shelf, possibly under 3000 years old (Galipaud and Walter 1997:29), extends north of Wusi, so one can walk more or less at sea level all the way to Cape Cumberland, but south of Linturi the hills rise straight out of the sea with only a few steep-sided river valleys opening out on the coast before Tasiriki (see map of Wusi area, Chapter Eight). This end of the west coast may have been uninhabited before the middle of the nineteenth century (Galipaud 2011: 472-73).

People, Language and Culture

The people of Santo were described as varied in appearance, custom and language by observers such as Speiser (1990: 54) and Harrisson (1937: 382-3). De Queiros thought there were three groups, the coastal people, the plains people and the bush or mountain people (Glaumont 1890: 71-72), possibly the same groups distinguished later by linguists and anthropologists (see below). The Cape Queiros people were seen by the missionaries and others as different from other people of the island in physical appearance and dress (e.g. Steel 1880: 346), and the people on the west coast of the Cumberland Peninsula at the end of the nineteenth century were thought to be most closely related to the inland people (Galipaud and Walter 1997: 28; Glaumont 1890: 71-72). Groups were described as "Polynesian" at various times (e.g. Joly, 1904: 368), but no Polynesian languages have been identified in the northern islands of Vanuatu (see Lynch and Crowley 2001). In fact, there is no linguistic evidence for more than one area of origin for the people of Santo. However, the peoples on each of the two peninsulas can be seen as culturally and linguistically distinct from the people of the island.

¹⁶ The rate of uplift in the Wusi and Mt Tabwemasana area of western Santo is over 5.5mm per year, the highest in Vanuatu (Taylor, *et al.*, 1990: 402).

¹⁷ I first got this information from IRD seismologist Wayne Crawford in October 2009 when we were both attending a dance at Linturi. It is confirmed by several papers, including Ballu *et al.* (2012: 1348). Pelletier and Simeoni (2009: 108) support previous descriptions of the Wusi platform as "alluvial", despite rivers in this region being smaller, rather than larger, than those on the rest of the west coast. This different suggestion for the geological origin of the Wusi platform is important in the context of the Wusi clay type, which will be discussed in Chapter Three.

The languages of Santo all belong to the same sub-group within the North-Central Vanuatu group of Oceanic languages. Within Santo, the language groupings suggest the island was settled by one group of colonisers who split early into three independent populations, those of the two northern peninsulas and a large group comprising the population of the rest of the island. There is no linguistic suggestion of further migrations or intrusions of people – the closest neighbours of a group of people are almost always their closest linguistic relations, suggesting that small groups of people colonised different parts of the island and spread from those locations. But Wusi and related languages that today occupy the area between Tasmate and Tasiriki on the west coast have their closest linguistic relations in the languages of the Big Bay hinterland rather than the languages of the southwest inland and coast (Clark: 1985: 222).

The languages of the Cumberland Peninsula have been categorised as simply dialects of the same language (Lynch and Crowley 2001: 44-45), and Speiser (1990: 82) thought there was one language area around the whole coast from Wora Point to Wusi. In fact, the languages of the Cumberland Peninsula appear to fall into two separate groups. The languages of the northwest are closely related to each other, and the languages of the southeast or Big Bay side group with Tasmate (Clark 2007). The relationships of the languages on both sides of the peninsula argue against the ideas either that bush people and coastal people have separate origins, or that more than one group of people settled the peninsula in recent prehistory; the people on the Big Bay side of Cape Cumberland are the same people as those on the west coast. The account given by the people themselves, that they lived in the hills and some came down to the east and some to the west, is supported by the linguistics - and the archaeology (Galipaud 2007: 20-21).

Tryon gives the languages of the Cumberland Peninsula as Valpei, Nokuku, Vunapu, Piamatsina, Tolomako and Tasmate (Tryon 1996a: 177). Tolomako or Big Bay language, spoken in the southeast corner of the peninsula, is not part of this subgroup (Clark 1985: 222). Piamatsina is spoken by Big Bay villages from Piamaeto to Piamatsina. After that Vunapu language extends from the village of Pirau to Vunap, Valpei language is spoken around the top of the cape and down as far as Molpoi on the western side, and Nokuku language is spoken after that as far as Petawata or

Sulesai. The rest of the west coast speaks Tasmate language as far down as Elia where Wusi related languages begin.

The people themselves think they speak different languages but they would subdivide the five accepted dialects even further. The local ethos is that each village has its own language, whether it is actually spoken or not.

Other features that distinguished the Cumberland people from those of the rest of Santo were mentioned by various early observers. The people themselves were seen as physically smaller and slighter (Speiser 1990: 54), women were thought to have higher positions and more independence (Speiser 1990: 151, 269; Steel 1880: 346) and a number of artefacts were unique, such as the boomerang, which Rivers associated with the *Supwe*¹⁸ (Rivers 1915: 108), and fletched arrows¹⁹, which Speiser, who spent two years touring Vanuatu and recording and collecting artefacts and customs, associated with "Pygmies" (Speiser 1990: 196). Some were shared only with the Banks and sometimes Malo (pestles, eating knives - Speiser 1990: 127-29). Tattooing patterns in the Cumberland area were shared with the Banks Islands (Speiser 1990: 171-2). People of western Santo wore fewer clothes than anywhere else in Vanuatu, and did not make mats, although they did have shell money (Speiser 1990: 242,244). There was of course also pottery and a higher development of *Supwe* ceremonies, which, like the language, may at one stage have extended as far as Wusi.

Santo Today

The official 2016 Census lists the population of Luganville as 15,865, and the rural population of the island can be calculated as around 32,000 (subtracting figures for Malo, Aore and Luganville from the overall total for the Sanma Province). This is one of the lowest population densities of the Vanuatu group. Efate, much smaller with an area of 899.5km² (about a tenth the size of Santo), has 44,000 in Vila, and nearly 22,000 people living on the rest of the island (Vanuatu National Statistics Office 2012, 2017)

¹⁸ This is the Cumberland Peninsula name for the graded society which is discussed in Chapter Five.

¹⁹ The chief of Olpoe, Tavue Malmal, showed me some fletched arrows he made in 2012.

Luganville was initially a small French settlement on the west side of the Sarakata River, acting as port and commercial centre for the French planters who, prior to Independence, monopolised the southeast corner of the island. During the Second World War, the Segond Canal was a base for thousands of troops fighting in the American Pacific Campaign. Santo acquired roads, airfields, and a transformed economy. The military settlement on the west side of the Sarakata River had cinemas, stores and extensive accommodation and administrative buildings, and when the Americans left it must have been like a ghost town, with empty and rusting Quonset huts the intermittent remains on either side of the wide and deserted streets. Today it is developing rapidly as a tourist town servicing the dive industry, based on opportunities provided by a wartime American shipwreck and a massive goods dump left in the Segond Canal. A Second World War museum is being built in the town; but the original Luganville on the west side of the river has become a quiet residential backwater on the road to the Tangoa landing. Most townspeople in Luganville are from other places: a mixture of Europeans, Chinese and Vietnamese, immigrants from other northern islands of the group, and secondary school students from rural areas and other islands. The Santoese (man ples) live mainly in small villages dotted around the rest of the island.

Outside Luganville, the road constructed during World War II runs over the more accessible limestone terrain along the southern and eastern sides of the island. It has been extended so now in good weather there is truck access as far as Tasiriki on the west coast and Matantas on Big Bay. These two villages are in the landing places for boats travelling north, to either the west coast from Tasiriki or the west side of Big Bay from Matantas. To get to the Notwes is of similar distance and difficulty either way and depends on weather, sea conditions - and a network of contacts. The northeast road is only sealed to Port Olry; but the road into Matantas, which enables town access for the whole of Big Bay and most of the people of the Cumberland Peninsula, remains a steep and muddy track. The road to the southwest landing at Tasiriki is in even worse condition; past the Tangoa landing the rutted track can only be negotiated by a good truck in good weather. Since Cyclone Pam in 2015, this road has usually been reported as closed.

In the interior, on the eastern side, there is a small network of roads that connects to foreign-owned plantations, and some villages. Most of the rural population are Christians living near to the coast or to the vehicle roads. The rest of the island is served only by temporary logging roads and coastal walking tracks where these are possible. North of the little sheltered bay at Tasariki, that acts as the landing for the truck road along the south coast from Luganville, the mountains are too high and close to the sea even for walking tracks. Any villages in this area are high in the hills and invisible from the sea, and it is necessary to either climb steeply or take a boat to travel to Tasiriki and the south road head, a distance of nearly 30 km or at least four hours by boat from Wusi.

There are few tracks across the high Cumberland range, a journey that takes two days for all but the fittest and fastest. The northwest coast, where my research is focussed, has a lack of infrastructure or amenities, as does the high land called *Midelbus*²⁰ in the interior (see Figure 3). In the southwest there are still inland villages where *Midelbus* people have a historic hostility to white people; today more are accepting schools and clinics in their areas and sometimes becoming Christian.

Prior to European influence the people of the Cumberland Peninsula lived mostly higher in the hills. Today they live on the coast in a series of small villages and settlements, but there are still no road connections on the whole peninsula:

The difficulties of access by sea and the closing of the Lajmoli airport following the plane crash in December 2008 make the West Coast of Santo the most remote area in Vanuatu (even more than the Northern Group of Torres).

(Pineda 2011: 9)

None of the very few vehicle roads on the Peninsula connect with Luganville. Other than for the logging companies who bulldoze a road into the forest and sprinkle a light dusting of *korel* (gravel made from local rock) on it to enable it to last the few weeks of their operation, there is no motorised land transport. There are foot and horse tracks round most of the Peninsula, interrupted by the rivers and by steep hillsides

²⁰ *Midelbus* as used by the people of western Santo denotes the inland inhabited area in the southwest, but there may be a specific district in the eastern highlands of Santo, around the area of Butmas, called *Medelbus*. There is also a *Medelbus* in Tanna. But *Midelbus* as used by most people just means any inland inhabited area (Kirk Huffman, pers.comm., 18 March 2014).

where the only alternatives are either to walk along the beach or to climb, sometimes many kilometres, inland. Young men own and ride horses which are used as local carriers; essential on the Big Bay side of the Peninsula where for parts of the year rivers are almost impassable on foot. A weekly plane used to fly into Lajmoli, just south of Olpoe but since the above-mentioned air crash, has been effectively discontinued. The copra ship (which calls intermittently depending on weather and the possibility of more lucrative shipments elsewhere, sometimes not for several months at a time) is used for trips to and from town and bringing in stores as well as taking out produce (Figure 4). Several villages have their own boats, but these are expensive to run and many individuals cannot afford to hire one. If there is not a boat party already going their way that they can hitch a ride with, they walk.



Figure 4: Waiting for the *Havutu*

Villages of West Santo

The population of the Cumberland Peninsula is almost entirely indigenous, although there have been occasional European traders and loggers since the last expatriate Presbyterian missionary left Nokuku in 1926 (Miller 1990: 20). All villages north of Elia are coastal (see Tzerikiantz 2006: 128, 267, 276), and most are very small, often fewer than 100 people (Nojima 2008: 43) related to each other within the village and to people in other villages of the Peninsula.

The villages of the Cumberland Peninsula are all fairly traditional (see Figure 5), more or less so according to age, wealth and proximity to town. Sizes range from one house settlements to a couple of hundred people, but to qualify as a village there are usually both land rights and a chief. Some villages have several chiefs. Several villages have stesen (stations) - outlying settlements that may or may not consider themselves under the chief of the main village. Valpei and Tasmate may be the only old villages that were on the west coast of the Cumberland peninsula before the mission villages of Jureviu and Nokuku were established. All are still there but have been overtaken in size by newer villages. Until the 1960s or possibly even the 1970s, villages were formed by people coming down from the bush, first in response to the mission presence, but more recently because of epidemics in the bush (discussed in Chapters Six and Seven). Today, most new villages are breakaways from other coastal villages in response to religious differences, other disputes, or a desire to live closer to some inherited land. Villages often have a group of uterine brothers as the core. A village is typically founded when a group of family members choose to establish their own settlement. This is usually on coastal land, most likely a plantation that they already own, but if not, it must be purchased

Most people in any village belong to one denomination, usually Presbyterian on the west coast, but there is a tiny Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) village at Lajmoli by the airfield, a one family SDA settlement just south of the village of Nokuku, and again a small enclave between Valpei and Petani. The village of Petawata is in 3 sections – Catholic up the river, Praise and Worship²¹ across the river, and a tiny Presbyterian remnant in the place of the original village on the coast on the north side of the river. The Catholics are said to have come from the east coast of the Peninsula where Catholicism prevails between the SDA villages of Malao in the south, and Vunap in the north. A small Presbyterian strip extends northwards from the village of Jureviu and takes in Tuturu, Piamaeto and Pialalup, but the French (Catholic) school is between Jureviu and Tuturu. North of Vunap the Presbyterian regime starts again.

²¹ Probably Neil Thomas Ministry – an Australian based Christian sect that is quite widespread in Vanuatu today.

A village of any size will have, as well as a church, a *nakamal*²² which can vary all the way from an area of roofed tables and benches with a sheltered fireplace nearby for a kitchen, to a wooden floored hall of western shape and design. If the village is Presbyterian, there is often a guesthouse run by the Presbyterian Women's Missionary Union (PWMU, see Tzerikiantz 2006: 120), made at least partly of modern materials and supplied with mattresses and mosquito nets. There is likely to be a *model kindy* (preschool – see below) distinguished by its fence and play equipment but built from any sort of material ranging from falling-down *natanggura*²³ and bamboo to the fine sawn-timber building in the middle of Olpoe. There are often also, or instead, private preschools of varying standards. There will be several stores as well, but these are not obvious, often being operated from private dwellings, and usually closed until there is a customer. Primary schools are not in the villages but on separate sites, usually having dormitories and teacher accommodation, and serving several villages. Very few schools above the kindergarten level are day schools; usually the children arrive on Sunday evenings and leave again on Friday afternoon.

Households

Traditionally in this area, people ate and cooked in the house they slept in. For the men this was the *nakamal*, the house for all men of the *Supwe* (graded society), while wives each had their own house. In the colonial style encouraged by missionaries, the villages of the coast today have separate sleeping and cooking houses. The size of a village is locally tallied by the number of kitchens, which represent households. Young couples may share a parent's kitchen for a while, but sooner or later they build their own and are then counted as a separate household. To complicate matters, a household will often have more than one kitchen: an enclosed one for storage, eating and perhaps sleeping, with a fire for warmth and light cooking, and an open kitchen where most of the heavy-duty cooking is done. There is no electricity or piped water to the home, cooking is on open fires, and lighting is by kerosene lamps or, more

²² The word *nakamal* is used in the towns mainly to denote a kava bar, a small commercial enterprise set up for selling and drinking kava, which is purchased by the "shell". In Vila and Santo there are also "Chief's Nakamals" – large buildings to traditional plan for meetings of the Council of Chiefs, who are the representatives of their districts. This meaning of a solemn meeting place may be closer to the traditional meaning of *nakamal*. In the village today a *nakamal* is usually a village hall where community events such as feasts and meetings take place. But there might also be a *Jif nakamal* where the chief and his associates drink kava of an evening.

²³Sago palm thatch, *Metroxylon warburgii*

recently, solar lanterns. The village may have a water tank, supplied by a local river and sometimes even with water piped to taps located in various parts of the village, but some villages still bucket their water from streams.

People may sleep in a kitchen, particularly during the cooler months, but usually own at least one sleeping house as well, with lockable areas for storage. Still often built from traditional materials, these are typically small, woven bamboo sleeping houses with *natanggura*-leaf roofs, sometimes with a woven bamboo floor raised on wooden piles, or alternately a platform inside to lift sleepers off the ground. Traditionally, people sleep on pandanus mats but most people who can obtain them will have foam mattresses and pillows. The only other furniture usually will be a set of shelves or cabinet and maybe some trunks for storage of clothes and prayer books.



Figure 5: Household in Olpoe Vilaj

Increasingly, particularly in wealthier families, houses are being built in the town style, with concrete slab floors, partial or fully concrete block walls and corrugated iron roofs all making an appearance. Sawn timber from the mill is used at Wunpuko, and to a lesser extent, at nearby villages. Cement and corrugated iron are other imported materials – beach sand and gravel are used to make concrete floors and

block walls, which may or may not be reinforced with steel rods. Indoor kitchens with gas stoves and generators for electric light and playing videos are now starting to be found in Big Bay.

Land ownership

Village and plantation land is all owned, although the signs are sometimes subtle. While descent is reckoned matrilineally, in most of the Cumberland Peninsula, land is owned by individual males and passed down to their sons. A boy must live in his father's village to claim his land, even if the father has died and the mother has remarried and moved elsewhere. Quite small boys can be sent to live with distant paternal relatives in order to claim land. Some rights to land and resources are handed down though the matriline. This works in larger, mainly endogamous villages, but can also have the consequence of a man having to live in a place away from the bulk of his land holdings. Women do not own land in the Cape Cumberland language area (Chief Alty Ezekiel, Valpei, pers.comm.), although their neighbours in the Tolomako area of Big Bay, like the people of the Banks Islands and Malo, allow land to be left to daughters, according to informants from those places.

This system has some social repercussions. The ideal number of sons is two, and today, with family planning available, and increased pressure on the cultivatable land, people will often stop having children after two sons. The number of daughters is unimportant. If there are more than two sons, unless the father has a lot of land, some may be required to get an education so they can work in town, instead of depending on the land.

Gardens

In a few villages there are small gardens of either flowers or edible plants or both, owned by individual households. But most economic gardens are on land designated for the purpose. Outside the village there are three categories of land in the Notwes – garden, plantation and *dakbus* (uncultivated forest land). All offer resources to be used by villagers. The uncultivated bush is the home of wild pigs and plants that offer leaves that can be used for medicine, spiritual protection or magic, but there may also be cultivated trees such as *pamplemus* (sweet grapefruit). The plantation is the commercial land. It is owned by the individual, usually an adult male, and features

mainly coconut trees, but there are also smaller plantation areas of cacao and in some areas, kava is commercially grown. Occasional fruit trees in the plantation provide refreshment for workers. Plantations are also used to tether horses and cattle, and some people build their houses inside their family plantation area. A plantation often covers land that was formerly village or taro terrace. Like any other fruit, coconuts can be harvested for personal use without permission (unless there is a *tabu* mark on it) but one can also get permission to make copra for profit from someone else's coconut trees.

In the Notwes the irrigated taro (Colocasia spp.) garden is the horticultural feature of pride (Figure 6). These are large, terraced gardens belonging to either the individual or the village and irrigated by channelling part of a stream. The chief and his family usually have extensive gardens, in some cases bigger than the communal village garden. Other individuals in the village may own gardens of their own or have their own area of plants in the communal gardens. A lot of work is put into these gardens which produce food all year round. New gardens are formed by digging out the slope to form a shallow pit behind a retaining wall, usually above existing gardens. The irrigating stream is rechanneled to flood the new garden. The retaining walls are planted with ornamental and useful plants – crotons, bananas and umbrella plants for leaves. There will always be some coconuts in the gardens, either left from a previous plantation or planted specially to provide leaves for baskets to carry produce. The whole effect, of trickling water, with dragonflies, butterflies and other insects flying about and the varied plants among the large fields of nodding taro leaves, is exceptionally beautiful and peaceful. As in the plantations, there are places where fruit and shade trees provide a pleasant place to rest or cook.

Also cultivated are other kinds of root vegetable, green leafed vegetables of several kinds, sugar cane, bananas and various tree fruits and nuts. Of these, only yam (*Dioscorea* spp.) really warrant clearing and planting a garden, usually on higher and dryer slopes than the taro can be grown on. Other plants may have little more attention than being planted in an appropriate place and harvested when required. Into this category comes *waelyam* and possibly *povile* (a much-appreciated sweet wild yam that is said to just grow by itself). Fiji taro (*Xanthosoma* spp.) and watercress are grown by streams; other green leaves such as pumpkin are grown in handy places in

the gardens, plantations and village; nuts and fruits are harvested in season. Green vegetables, usually *kabis* (*Abelmoschus manihot*), are eaten as a garnish, generally only when there is no meat available. Manioc seems to grow easily on any type of ground but is not much used, both because it is seen as a poverty food, and because it is attractive to pigs so it may be a waste of time to plant it in the usual unfenced and unprotected garden areas. *Kumala* (sweet potato) is also grown (see below) but I have never seen this plant in a garden.



Figure 6: Notwes irrigated taro garden

Rivers and streams are a more reliable source of food than the ocean which is often too rough to fish. Children dive for *naora* – small freshwater crayfish, people build dams to attract and trap eels, and two other varieties of freshwater fish²⁴ are regularly caught. The resources of the streams are husbanded. A local *tabu* may be placed on fishing a species for a period of time so numbers can build. Before the school holidays a stream might be *tabu* so there is plenty available for the children to catch on their break. As well as eel dams, other interferences in the streams may be building of fish pools and then draining them to get the fish.

²⁴ Local names for these fish are *ih* and *maj*. I do not know what the species names are.

Fish dams are also constructed in suitable places along the shore but these are few on the Cumberland Peninsula; the sandy beaches of the west coast are too exposed and the east side beaches are steep and stony. Occasionally a river mouth or small reef will serve. People fish in the sea when the weather is calm enough; women with lines from the shore and men and boys from their outrigger canoes, and crabs and shellfish are also collected from rocky outcrops, usually by women and children. Whenever there is a boat trip, a couple of fishing lines are always fed out from the stern of the outboard dinghy. Some villages employ a man to fish for the village, and the village of Tuturu, in Big Bay, owns a fishing boat and a freezer run by a diesel powered generator, which enables the men to fish commercially for the Luganville market (but being within half an hour of the Matantas landing and road-head, Tuturu has a proximity to the town that most other villages on the peninsula cannot match).

Other animal protein is supplied by tinned fish or meat if the family can afford it. Young boys with slingshots try for birds which are sometimes raised in cages to be eaten, and children will catch insects such as grasshoppers, roast and eat them. In season flying foxes are a reliable contribution to the diet and most evenings see nets slung across their flyways. Fowls are kept most often by older women who are not so busy with their families and have time to feed and raise batches of young chickens. This is a good way of supplementing cash income as a fowl is usually killed and cooked as the customary way of thanking someone for a favour (the household will share the bird, but the guest of honour gets the legs). A pig is killed for a ceremony, and in this case gifts of cooked meat will go to people outside the immediate family, or it will be as part of a larger feast. Today, other than in SDA villages, everyone raises pigs, so someone will usually own a pig of suitable size when it is needed. A bullock is usually killed only when the village is hosting people from outside; it too must be purchased from its owner.

Trading activities

Garden produce and gathered foods are usually brought back to cook and share among the immediate family, that is, the members of one kitchen. If there is a surplus, or someone is away or sick, women will cook for other family members as a matter of course, children may wander from kitchen to kitchen and unmarried young men may be attached to the kitchen of their parents or that of a sister-in-law. Food is

shared among related households if there is a surplus or if there is something special, such as meat or home baked goods. Bread is baked and sold in some villages and *kato*, a doughnut-like fried bread, is a popular fund raiser.

There is an ethos that food is free, but in fact there are several unofficial categories of food, and whether it is consumed alone, shared freely or sold depends on what it is. Garden produce is almost never purchased, neither are fruits or smaller nuts, and nor are things made from them. However, drinking coconuts are usually found in a fundraising sale, as would be $laplap^{25}$ and other cooked foods. Foods that are eaten raw are often picked for individual consumption, but cooked foods are shared among the household. Rice and tinned foods that are store-bought are shared among the household, but bread and kato are purchased and consumed by or for the individual. Food is given to guests and to the pastor and his family – a difference being that it will be cooked for guests while the pastor's wife is often given produce to cook herself. People can take fruit from other people's trees for their own consumption, even coconuts from the plantations. However, if one wants to make copra on someone else's land, or from their trees, permission must be asked. It would probably be the plantation of another family member who would therefore not be paid: the results of the work would belong to the worker. People who do not want other people to take their crops will put signs to tabu the tree or the plantation. A rationale for the classifications might be whether items are seen as part of the monetary economy. Flour, sugar and rice are purchased items, beef and coconuts are saleable outside the village. Food sold at fundraisers always includes some of the purchased or saleable items. Chickens can be sold but their rearing results from individual efforts.

There is a similar division in classification of labour. Individuals are not generally paid for working in each other's gardens, clearing grass, helping with a traditional house or even for making *natanggura* roofing. Usually, however, the people assisting are close kin, but a youth group may fund-raise by doing exactly the same tasks. Someone building a house might hire a young man as assistant, and professional carpenters often work on cement block houses and are paid. The owner of a horse will usually hire out its services in carrying goods.

²⁵ A pudding made from mashed tuber or banana cooked with coconut milk (Crowley 1995: 131).

Most means of subsistence are owned by households, except for the village taro plots. The SDA church owns cattle or goats, but Presbyterian villages do not seem to have church-owned assets – the church is built on land owned by the village. This is possibly more a difference in the way people speak or think about ownership than any legal possession: in both tiny SDA villages I have stayed in, the pastor has been a member of the village, while despite the much larger size of the Presbyterian villages the pastor usually comes from outside and always has a number of villages under his care; so the distinction between church and village is probably more felt and more important.

Cash economy

The village economy is based on subsistence agriculture and some cash cropping. By far the chief cash crop is copra, obtained by husking coconuts and drying the meat. Cacao is the second export crop in most areas and when the price of copra is down becomes the favoured export. In recent years there have been times when the price of copra is so low that it is not worth the efforts of the villagers to prepare the crops or the copra ship to collect them. Cacao is an important crop for revenue, fetching better prices and requiring less hard physical work to produce, although more care and attention. It is relatively easily grown and dried in the Notwes, and most families have several trees. Older people who can no longer put the hard physical work into making copra can ferment and dry cacao, and women often have some on a mat on the beach close to their homes.

The only other commercial crop is kava which requires a wetter climate so is grown for market mostly on the Big Bay side of the Cumberland Peninsula. Cattle raised may be consumed domestically unless there is a drive to collect them by ship and take them to Luganville for slaughter. Smaller local crops may be taken and sold in Luganville markets opportunistically by villages with road access; elsewhere boat fees and weather unpredictability precludes regular trips to town.

People are involved in the monetary economy partly so that they can afford storebought goods, but the main reason cited for needing cash income is to pay school fees. While these are as little as 2000 vatu (about NZD25-30) a term, they are a big expense in this cash-poor society. People also need money for church collections and

to buy building materials – either for a new house for themselves or for public buildings. There are also the demands of public occasions, of which there are many – families are asked to contribute items, usually store-bought goods such as rice or sugar, or money towards the purchase of a major item like a bullock. Some will be able to contribute a fowl they have raised. While a lot of families still live almost entirely on what they can harvest or catch, a *lafet* (feast or celebration) requires rice and bullock, or at least chicken, as well as the taro, *kumala* and yams that are grown and contributed. Pigs usually are killed only for special, defined occasions, such as a christening or wedding, or to honour a guest.

Discussion

Most of this chapter has described the island of Santo and people of the west coast and the Cumberland Peninsula as they were when I was studying them, but there is also an important indication that the people of the Cumberland Peninsula form a discrete cultural, as well as geographic, group that has likely been distinguished from other people of the island for possibly a couple of thousand years. Since these people are the traditional pottery makers, before leadership institutions and other practices are discussed in more detail the next chapter will describe the archaeological findings that relate to pottery in Remote Oceania. Where did this Santo pottery come from and can it be related to other pottery in the Vanuatu archipelago, or anywhere else in the Oceanic region?

Chapter Two: Origins of Santo Pottery

Ceramics are unique items of human manufacture, both very durable and at the same time, very fragile. Pottery sherds are unmistakeable markers of human activity that can be found in places where all other traces of this have been lost; and because the artefacts or vessels they come from had usually short lives, they form a constantly changing and, therefore, often very datable record. Before absolute dating methods (radiocarbon and argon-potassium), were able to be accessed in the twentieth century, comparative dating was often the only method of assessing age for sites of past human activity, and pottery was ideal for this.

Pottery is a vital part of the story of the first settlers of the remote Pacific. This chapter outlines the conclusions archaeological research has so far come to on how pottery came into this area, and asks whether the pottery made today in Santo can be linked to the Lapita pottery that is the oldest found in Vanuatu.

The Spread of Lapita

The distinctive "dentate stamped" ²⁶ pottery known as Lapita was first found in the early twentieth century on Watom, an island off the coast of New Britain (Spriggs 1997: 67), then on the west coast of New Caledonia in 1910, in Tonga in Western Polynesia in 1920, and on the Isle of Pines in New Caledonia in 1948, when its similarity to the Watom pottery was noted by Avias (1950: 131). Gifford's 1952 re-excavation of the New Caledonia Lapita site recognised the same pottery found in Tonga (Kirch 2002: 27-28), and with the advent of radio-carbon dating, it was established that this pottery belonged to a time period between three and a half thousand and two thousand years ago (Bellwood 1978: 244). Further investigation revealed other sites, all within the area of the Oceanic group of Austronesian languages (See Figure 7). Both the dates and the association of Polynesian and

²⁶ Dentate stamping was described as decoration by small toothed combs similar to tattooing chisels, to produce a fine even pattern. Other distinctive characteristics of this pottery were elaborate decoration, coating with red slip, and sometimes highlighting of designs with white infill (other pottery terms are defined in the glossary).

Melanesian sites were surprising news at a time when archaeologists thought Polynesian migrations had come through Micronesia (Kirch 2002: 28).

By the 1990s Lapita pottery had still not been found outside the Oceanic area but suggestions of connections to the west continued: related dish shapes were found in Taiwan sites of a slightly older period, dentate stamped bowls and jars were dated to about 4500BP in the north Philippines, and stamped and lime-infilled designs on red-slipped pottery in the southern Philippines came from a site dated to about 3000BP. Often this pottery was found in association with a suite of other artefacts designated "Lapita type" (Kirch 1997: 48).



Figure 7: Lapita Sites

The Lapita complex is now known to extend from Manus and Mussau in the northwest to New Caledonia in the south and Samoa in the east, over distances of around 4500km (Figure 7). The earliest Lapita dates in any area range from 3550BP in the Bismarck Archipelago to 3200BP in Western Polynesia and 3000BP in New Caledonia, suggesting that "...the Lapita diaspora was one of the most rapid of such events known in world history" (Kirch 1997: 62). More pottery was discovered, mostly on small islands but spread and time depth did not increase; East Polynesia remained aceramic and pottery found in archaeological sites in East Micronesia post-dates Lapita.

Dentate-stamped Lapita ware has been found in Samoa, East Futuna, Fiji, several islands in Vanuatu, and in the Reef and Santa Cruz islands south of the main Solomon chain. In some places such as the Reef Islands it must have been imported, as local clays are lacking or unsuitable for pot-making (Spriggs 1997: 113, 126, 134). Lapita-related pottery has now been found on the mainland of PNG in the Port Moresby area (David *et al.*: 2011), and in the western Solomons (Felgate 2007: 125-26), but here there are no stratified sites yet. The few sherds found were in intertidal sites and dated by their late Lapita style to around 2500BP (Sheppard & Walter 2009: 81, 84, 96);.

Although the dates are older in the Bismarck Archipelago than further south, there seems to be less dentate stamped pottery in the northern area. In the intervisible islands of the Solomons chain, there are few dentate sherds apart from in the rich Buka site in the north (Sheppard & Walter 2009: 79, 84). Dentate stamped pottery seems to contribute a higher proportion of sherds and be easier to find in the important Reef-Santa Cruz sites and beyond. Walter and Sheppard (2009: 54), after extensive further investigation in the Solomon Islands, see the rapidity of the spread of Lapita as due to a leap-frogging of the main chain of the Solomons to the Temotu Islands, which were used as a springboard to colonise the uninhabited islands to the south and east. The Lapita sites still mostly occur in the area of the Oceanic languages.

Later Pottery in Oceania

The distinctively decorated dentate pottery died out quickly, sometimes immediately after first settlement (Kirch 1997:148). Decorated bowls and stands disappeared (Galipaud 2006: 231), and at later sites, as the expansion moved to the south and east, the decoration became coarser and less elaborate and the variation in vessel forms decreased (see Spriggs 1997: 70). By about 2700BP dentate stamped decoration had ceased in most places in the west, and none has been found in sites younger than 2300 years old, except possibly in New Caledonia (Spriggs 1997: 118,144-46). In most places it was replaced by what is thought to be a closely related tradition, "Lapita

Plainware²⁷, but several observers, including Kirch (1997: 151), recognise that the plainware was made by a different technology and for different purposes. There are some "late" Lapita sites that have mostly or only plainware, such as Tikopia and New Georgia (Spriggs 1997: 136, 172).

By about 2000-1500BP, the regional diversity of pottery traditions suggests longdistance contacts and communications were no longer holding the Lapita community together (Kirch 1997: 78; Spriggs 1997: 161). Lapita was either replaced by other styles or pottery stopped being made. In most of the Bismarck area, pottery disappeared altogether by about 1500 BP (Spriggs 1997: 166-69). A brief period of pottery post-dating Lapita has been found in the western Solomons and may indicate a later Meso-Melanesian spread that stopped before the southeast islands were reached (Felgate 2007: 126). Today the lack of pottery in the rest of the main Solomons chain is believed to be real, not due only to insufficient investigation (Walter and Sheppard 2009:53).

Pottery ceased to appear in sites in the Santa Cruz group 2000 years ago and any pottery found later in Tikopia and the Banks is thought to come from the larger islands of North Vanuatu (Spriggs 1997: 175). In Western Polynesia pottery cessation was also early – the short-lived Samoan sequence was over by 2800 BP and in Tonga no pottery seems to have been made after 2000 years ago (Spriggs 1997: 70). But in Fiji, pottery continued and diversified and there is still more than one tradition extant today (Le Blanc 2011: 7-13). The only other place this has happened in Remote Oceania is in Vanuatu, on the island of Santo.

Thus, in the period of early European contact, pots were still being made in the Solomon Islands (Choiseul and Bougainville, and the Shortland Islands between them) and in New Caledonia as well as the Vanuatu Islands, Fiji, and various parts of Papua New Guinea. Ceramic industries were also found in parts of Western Micronesia, but there was no pot-making anywhere in Polynesia.

²⁷ There is a lack of definition of exactly what "plainware" is - at different locations completely plain, notched rim, incised and appliquéd pottery seem to be included. Kirch (2002: 148) designated the paddle impressed Podtanéan pottery of New Caledonia as Lapita plainware.

Pottery Finds in Vanuatu

Vanuatu is positioned strategically for the Pacific colonisation story, between the Solomon Islands to the northwest, New Caledonia to the south and Fiji to the east. It is the nearest chain of substantial islands beyond Near Oceania – between the main islands of the Solomons and Vanuatu there are only the small islands of Temotu and the Banks and Torres groups. As such, the islands of Vanuatu could be expected to play a role in the Lapita dispersal.

Pottery had been seen by the Spanish both in the Solomon Islands and on Santo (Markham 1904: 269). De Queiros reported pottery in Big Bay in 1606, and the pot makers of the west coast of Santo were noted at least by the 1870s (Codrington 1972 [1891]: 315; Steel 1880: 344), but the other islands of the Vanuatu archipelago were thought to be aceramic. Felix Speiser, the first ethnologist in this area, found sherds of pottery on the islands of Vao (off Malekula), Ambrym and Efate during his 1910-1912 visit, but decided it could all have come from pots made in Santo where he thought the craft had either been learned from the Spanish or copied from the "Pygmies" (Speiser 1990: 84-85, 231). Other investigators, such as the missionary Michelsen and the French archaeologist, Gustave Glaumont, credited the sherds they found beneath volcanic ash layers on the islands of Tongoa and Ambae to a previous civilization (Bedford 2006a: 13). Sherds were also collected from the Shepherds-Efate region by Peter Milne, another missionary, and these, along with pots from Santo, formed the basis of an early museum analysis (MacLachlan 1939). In the 1930s French geologist Edgar Aubert de la Rue (1945) found sherds on several islands including the first pottery found in the south of the country, on Aneityum.

Most finds were plain or "incised and applied relief" pottery but Bernard Hébert, a French administrator, recognised decorated sherds at the site of Erueti on Efate in the 1960s, and was able to relate them to the Lapita pottery found in New Caledonia and Tonga (Bedford 2006a: 13-15). As part of the Pacific Area Archaeological Programme that started in 1963, the French archaeologist José Garanger excavated the site and found a large number of plain sherds but only a few with dentate stamping (Garanger 1972).

In the same programme, American archaeologists Richard and Mary Elizabeth Shutler surveyed or dug in several islands of the archipelago but found decorated Lapita only at Erueti. However, their student, John Hedrick, found nineteen Lapita sites on the island of Malo, just south of Santo (Hedrick 1971; Hedrick & Shutler 1969). As in Erueti, the Lapita pottery was in a disturbed context²⁸ and firm dates could not be obtained (Bedford 2006a: 21, 26). Other islands were looked at through the 1970s and 1980s, but the Lapita situation remained the same in Vanuatu for the next 30 years. Despite local fieldworkers site-surveying most islands in the archipelago, Lapita sites were reported at only Malo and Erueti (Spriggs 1997: 139-40).

A moratorium placed on foreign researchers shortly after Independence, was lifted in 1994, and new research projects began, mostly under the auspices of the Australian National University (ANU) in collaboration with the VKS. Further Lapita pottery was found on Erromango by Matthew Spriggs and his student Stuart Bedford, and on Malo and Aore by Galipaud. At Atanoasao on Malo, Galipaud (2006: 235) found the first undisturbed Lapita site, which he saw as a fishing camp of short duration, with dentate stamped pottery, artefacts and faunal remains, dated to 3200-2700BP (Bedford 2006a: 26-27,). Both Aore and Malo sites are thought to be related to the Reefs-Santa Cruz Lapita sites (Galipaud & Swete-Kelly 2007: 157). Galipaud has found Lapita sites on other small islands to the south of Santo in his work since 2000 and thinks there is evidence of a maritime event that altered activity in the area to the extent that the practices that called for Lapita pottery ceased (Galipaud 2006: 255). On other islands dentate sherds have occasionally been picked up but few Lapita sherds were found in a datable context.

But in 2003 a VKS fieldworker in Efate identified Lapita pottery coming out of a bulldozer cut. This was the Teouma site on south Efate which turned out to be a Lapita site of huge consequence, not only for Vanuatu but for the whole Lapita investigation. Working through the VKS from 2004 to 2006, Spriggs and Bedford uncovered exceedingly fine Lapita pots, more closely related to those of the Banks and Bismarck Archipelago than to the eastern and southern Lapita sites, in

²⁸ If soil layers have been disturbed since they were laid down it is often impossible to date material, because dating elements (such as ash) cannot be guaranteed to have been deposited at the same time as the artefacts. This is unfortunately the case for a lot of Vanuatu archaeological deposits.

indisputable association with a burial ground (Bedford *et al.* 2006; Shing *et al.* 2007). Eventually over 100 Lapita pots were excavated (Bedford & Spriggs 2008) in association with 68 burials and the cemetery was dated to around 3000BP (Petchey *et al.* 2014: 227). Most of the pots were found to have been made locally, although nine came from different parts of New Caledonia and three from the north – either Malekula or Santo or even the Bismarck Archipelago (Dickinson *et al.* 2013: 1-2).

During the same period a VKS team, under Richard Shing, surveyed sites in the northern islands and conducted test pitting on the Small Islands off the coast of Malekula. A few dentate sherds were found on Motalava in the Banks Islands and at Big Bay in North Santo, and plainware and Banks Islands obsidian were found both at Big Bay and at Port Olry. On the Small Islands, Lapita period burials have also been found (Bedford *et al.* 2011), and Lapita pottery on the island of Vao included a dentate sherd with a painted coat of lime on the outside (Shing *et al.*: 2007), similar to the lime infilling on Lapita in other places (Bedford 2006b: 549).

Post-Lapita Sequences

Later-made pottery has come from excavations in the Banks Islands (Ward 1975), Malekula (Bedford 2006a), the Shepherd Islands and Efate (Garanger 1972), and Erromango (see Bedford 2006a), as well as further work conducted by Bedford and Spriggs on Efate (2008). Bedford has put the results of these together with some of his surveying work in Malekula and Hedrick's Malo results to produce a coordinated sequence with Lapita as the starting point in each of the six reported locations (Bedford 2006a: 157-73, and see Figure 8 below). But neither Ward in the Banks Islands nor Garanger in the Shepherd Islands claimed Lapita finds or dates; dentate pottery was only in secure context in Malo and possibly Erromango. Elsewhere, the few dentate sherds were in disturbed or secondary deposits or there was only plainware (Bedford 2006a: 133-156).

Bedford thinks the Banks ware is closest to early Erueti, which he sees as continuous with Lapita plainware (Bedford 2006a: 24-25, 171). There is no suggestion that it is



locally made in the Banks Islands, where no pottery has been found in secure association with dates more recent than 2000BP.

? = sequence uncertain Lapita ? = assumed but as not yet identified

Figure 8: Proposed Vanuatu Pottery Sequence (after Bedford 2006a: 173)

Although the pottery found at Malo was mostly Lapita, Hedrick also found pottery belonging to the incised and applied relief tradition, both on the surface and in his excavations. Without good stratigraphy, he could not date it or define its relationship to the Lapita tradition, but it may be what Bedford has classed as Chachara ware (Bedford 2006a: 22-23, 172-73).

In northwest Malekula, there was early pottery, Malua ware, associated by Bedford with Lapita, and then a long gap until the late pottery, Chachara ware, for which the
only date is around 500 years ago (Bedford 2006a: 151, 172). No evidence has been found for habitation in northwest Malekula between 1200 and 600 years ago; Bedford thinks this could be because northwest Malekula was abandoned for a period, and the Chachara pottery could be associated with a later intrusion, possibly from somewhere near New Britain (Bedford *ibid*.).

Real sequences were found further south. Starting in 1964, Garanger uncovered large amounts of ceramics in the Efate and Shepherds areas, although only in the Shepherd Islands were these undisturbed and therefore datable. There were Lapita sherds at Erueti but everywhere else the pottery was incised and applied relief, which Garanger eventually named Mangaasi and divided into an Early Phase, dating back to 2600BP and a Late Phase which only died out about 600 years ago (Bedford 2006a:19). Later work by Spriggs and Bedford, on the Mangaasi and Arapus sites on Efate, revised the stratigraphy, with earlier material at Arapus and then another type, identified as Erueti ware, found under a layer of tephra that separated it from the Mangaasi (Bedford 2006a: 18-20, 46-48, 173). Here enough material was found to construct a sequence showing local styles developing early, with changes in pot shape and decoration that developed through the Erueti and Mangaasi periods (Bedford 2009: 30-33).

A local sequence could also be cnstructed at the two sites of Erromango excavated by Spriggs and Bedford. Pottery was made first at Ponamla and then at Ifo, between them occupied for about 800 years. Since 2000 BP the southern islands of Tafea Province region of Vanuatu appear to have been aceramic (Bedford 2006a: 157-161).

Bedford suggests that regional variation began very early in Vanuatu and that the southern islands were completely separate from the north after the end of the Lapita phase, dated about 2700 BP as in New Caledonia (Bedford 2006a: 180). Plainware (Arapus) showed up in Efate within 200 years, and by 2700 years ago plainware also appeared in Erromango (Ponamla) and Malekula (Malua ware); but by 2500 years ago it had died out. Incised and applied ware (Mangaasi) followed in Erromango, Efate and the Shepherd Islands, but similar material has not been found in datable context in Malekula or Malo. By 2000 BP the Banks Islands were also aceramic, but the incised tradition continued in Efate and the Shepherd Islands until 1200 years ago. Bedford (2006a: 169) has Chachara appearing as a new style 600 years ago in Malekula and

Malo, and postulates that it endured for around 400 years; to be succeeded in Malekula by the similar Namboi, which continued until the ethnographic present.

Bedford and Spriggs (2008: 111-12) make the suggestion that European contact was a cause of the late decline of pottery manufacture and trade in northern Vanuatu, but there are no eye-witness accounts of pot-making in any island (including Malekula) other than Santo, during the last 200 years (Nojima 2011: 169). Speiser (1990: 230) was told that the fathers of "natives in the central islands" had made pottery but dismissed the idea out of hand. M.E. Shutler (1971: 82-3), however, thought it had been made recently in most of the northern islands between Ambae and Efate. Pottery has been found in association with historic materials in the Maskelynes (Bedford and Spriggs 2008: 111) but, since it is difficult to source Malekula pottery from tempers, and other sherds in that region have been attributed to possible Santo origins (Dickinson *et al.* 2013: 8, 15), it is not impossible that the sherds are from a pot imported from Santo (Huffman 1996: 184-85).

Most of the islands that have had no excavations are either southern islands that showed no signs of having pottery, or eastern islands where there was too much volcanic disturbance. The island of Santo is neither of these and yet no serious attempts at establishing sequences have been made on the mainland other than by Galipaud (2011).

Pottery and Archaeology in Santo

Today potters in Santo are only found on the West Coast. But the first reference to pottery in Santo comes from de Queiros' 1606 visit to Big Bay, when "well worked" black clay pots were described (Markham, 1904:269). Pottery was again seen in the Big Bay area in the 1870s (Goodenough 1876) and around the mid-1890s (Festetics de Tolna 1903 p251). The Tolomako speakers of the Big Bay area say that the western hills are full of pottery that was not made by their ancestors. Further up towards Cape Cumberland there are other groups of people who still own whole pots, made by their ancestors using methods they can still describe.

Earlier archaeological surveys were conducted by Glaumont, Speiser, and the Shutlers. Glaumont in 1890 visited Tolomako at the head of the Bay where the de Queiros expedition had moored (Markham 1904: 264). He purchased pottery and saw the source of the clay, but said the potters were inland people (Glaumont 1890: 62; 1899). Glaumont also excavated at Pelol, about 50km further north on the western shore of Big Bay where he found fingernail incised sherds that he described as cruder than the pottery of Tolomako. Lower in his excavation the pottery was even cruder plainware (Glaumont 1890: 36), a finding at odds with most reported archaeological results from other places in Oceania, which have pottery deteriorating from older standards (see Best 2002: 53; Kirch 1997: 160; Nojima 2011: 170; Spriggs 1997: 161-62). Speiser excavated in several places in the northern islands of Vanuatu, but found nothing on Santo except fire remains near Port Olry (Speiser 1990: 83). On Vao off the coast of Malekula he found pottery sherds that he thought came from Wusi, but there was a different pottery at Ambrym, which he described as "superior" (Speiser 1990: 83-5). The Shutlers surveyed around the east and south coasts of Santo from 1966 to 1967, noting surface pottery at several sites. They excavated at Hog Harbour, the islands of Araki and Tangoa, off the south coast, and the nearby larger island of Aore (R. Shutler 1970). No analyses or dates appear to be available from their findings.

From 1992, the west coast of Santo was surveyed by the Vanuatu Cultural and Historic Site Survey (VCHSS). Many sites known to local people and surface collections of pottery were investigated under the direction of archaeologist Jean-Christophe Galipaud, and test pits were dug in several locations. Surface sherds were found everywhere in a survey area which extended over most of the length of the west coast and around Cape Cumberland to the Pesena River in Big Bay. A concentration of sherds was discovered at Pelol (see map of Cumberland Peninsula, Figure 19), supporting the local and archaeological tradition that it was formerly a centre of pottery manufacture (Galipaud 1997: 13). There was also evidence of old villages, *nakamal* and *nasara*²⁹.

²⁹ Men's houses and dance grounds. These would have been sites named by local informants.

Galipaud excavated two rock shelters near the northwest coast in the Hakua area and obtained a date of 1000BP from the deposits in one of the caves, in association with ovens containing food remains, including taro. More extensive excavation uncovered evidence for irrigated taro terracing and cultivation, both 1000 years ago and 300 years ago (Galipaud 2004: 63). These are the only dates for settlement of the Cumberland Peninsula available so far, but they bracket a time period for which there is little evidence of human activity from any of the excavation work yet undertaken in the whole of Vanuatu (see Figure 8 above). Later, during the Santo 2006 Expedition, human bones associated with pig remains and pot sherds were found in caves in the same area. The red-slipped pottery suggested an age within the last thousand years and a pig's molar dated to within the last three hundred years (Wirrmann *et al.* 2011: 281-82).

Galipaud found few sub-surface sherds either in the Hakua rock-shelters or anywhere else, and none were in secure datable context (Galipaud 1996c: 3-15). However, his analysis, which includes the abundant surface pottery, distinguishes three separate pottery types on Santo. The most recent is found in sherds resembling the Cumberland style, suggested to be related to the recent Namboi pottery in Malekula, mainly because both display exposed coils as decoration (Galipaud 1996b: 123). A second, older style that was incised and painted with red slip, similar to pottery in the Banks Islands and Ambae and possibly related to Sinapupu ware from Tikopia, was found in several places. Temper analysis defined it as locally made on Santo³⁰ (Galipaud 2004: 63). There was also a third, finer, incised pottery in a few places that appeared even older and more like the Mangaasi and Pakea pottery (Galipaud 1997: 23-24). Most pottery found in archaeological context could be related to the Cumberland pottery of the Notwes today. Galipaud did not think the pottery style changes indicated population replacement.

Pottery related to the Wusi manufacturing style was rare and found only between Wusi and Tasmate (Galipaud, pers.comm., 8 April 2014). Galipaud himself thinks that people only started using Wusi clay in the nineteenth century. He originally saw Wusi pottery as related to nothing else in Vanuatu but recognised the manufacturing

³⁰ The similarly painted pottery found on Vao (see above) was dated to around 3000 years ago.

techniques as Oceanic (Galipaud 1996a: 97-99; 1996b: 116). Later, he suggested it might be related to Chachara ware (Galipaud 2011: 475), although Chachara ware is coil-made (Bedford 2006a: 143), like Cumberland and older pottery throughout the region (including New Caledonia and Fiji, see Chapter Four) while Wusi pottery is not.

The plentiful Lapita deposits on Malo and Aore (Galipaud 2011: 472) suggest Santo was also associated with first settlement. More recently, Bedford and Spriggs, site surveying and excavating in the north of Santo, have found and dated decorated Lapita ware in Big Bay and plainware in Port Olry (Bedford and Spriggs 2008: 103) with tempers sourced in the western hills of Santo (Dickinson et al. 2013: 14). Lapita-related pottery has also been found in association with Banks Islands obsidian in Natanara near the island of Aese on the southeast coast of Santo and Shokraon, a ravine washout at the east end of Luganville. In both these sites, most sherds were plainware and not found in primary deposition so could not be dated, but the quality of the pottery and the presence of a couple of dentate stamped sherds suggested dates as early as 2800BP for human presence in the area (Galipaud et al. 2007: 7, 19). An important non-ceramic feature of the Shokraon site was the presence of large amounts of pig bone associated with the plainware, which Galipaud sees as indicating settlement in the area (Galipaud 2011: 472). This was the first indication pig was present before the Sinapupu period (Galipaud & Walter 1997: 31), and it still has not been found with decorated Lapita.

From this type of evidence, Galipaud constructs a prehistoric sequence for Santo of first settlement just after 3000 BP, with initial Lapita, followed by an extended period of plainware to around 2000 years ago, then, after a short gap, painted and incised Sinapupu pottery. This entire sequence, until about 1100 years ago, was shared as part of an exchange network over an area stretching as far north as Tikopia, (Galipaud 2011: 472, 475). Galipaud suggests Wusi or Chachara ware was then present in all the western islands from Malekula to the Torres Islands until at least 500 years ago, and longer in Malekula, Malo and Aore (Galipaud 2011: 475 Fig 551), as well as Santo.

Bedford and Spriggs (2008: 107) think that Vanuatu ceramics diversified soon after the end of the Lapita plainware period. But connections seem to have been retained in the northern islands such as Santo, through the Banks Islands to Tikopia, and this is supported by features such as red slip on Pakea sherds (*ibid.*), and Banks islands obsidian found in the Luganville site (Galipaud *et al.* 2007: 16). From this type of evidence, Galipaud and Walter (1997: 29-32) propose an exchange network around 2000 years ago, extending from Tikopia and Santa Cruz to western Santo.

The earliest evidence for human settlement of Santo is on the coast and offshore islands, but Galipaud says these sites were abandoned and people moved inland about 2000 years ago, possibly in response to changes in environmental conditions (Galipaud 2011: 472). In Galipaud's reconstruction of that period, people in the Big Bay area were moving up the rivers into the hills; occupation of the west coast was a later development, beginning not much more than 1000 years ago (Galipaud 2004: 84). At this time also, the Sinapupu pottery vanishes, "Olpoi" pottery appears, and there is evidence of taro irrigation. Galipaud postulates that this is when pigs were introduced to the Notwes, as their teeth were found in association with pottery at the Malasoba shelter (Galipaud &Walter 1997: 32-36; and see above). People came down the river valleys to settle the west coast (Tzerikiantz 2006: 162), a process that was still going on until very recently.

From the archaeology and the sequences published by Bedford (see above) and Galipaud (2011: 475) there seems to be at least circumstantial evidence not only for early and continuing human presence in Santo, but also for continuous making of pottery in the western hills. Although most sites have poor stratigraphy and the best evidence for Lapita settlement is found on the offshore islands to the south and east, it seems there was a definite and early presence, with dentate pottery followed by plainware, and then other types. Long after the southern islands of the group had diverged on their own separate paths, Santo retained links with islands to its north and south, as evidenced by ethnographic information linking Santo pottery (in exchange for pigs, dye and shell money) with Malo, Malekula and the Banks Islands (Huffman 1996: 184-5), as well as to Ambae (Galipaud & Walter 1997: 23). West coast pottery manufacture might have been a late development, but the Cumberland tradition was well established in the Notwes and Big Bay.

As well as the above indications, support for a Lapita heritage comes from decorative aspects of present-day pottery. First is the red clay slip, an important aspect of both Wusi and Cumberland pottery. I could not find references to this distinguishing character of Lapita retained past 1000 years ago anywhere else in Oceania. Second is the aesthetic of the decoration, particularly on the Cumberland Peninsula. Like Lapita, the concept is of using the whole pot as a single canvas – decoration is conceived as a pattern for the individual pot and older Cumberland pots have a regularity and complexity of ornamentation not seen elsewhere in the Vanuatu area since the Mangaasi period.

Discussion

With now at least two good Lapita sites in Vanuatu, and no evidence of earlier settlement, Vanuatu can be counted as one of the places first settled by the Lapita potters, around three thousand years ago. Pottery was widely made in the country over the first millennium after settlement, but during the next thousand years it seems to have been abandoned in most places and archaeological evidence for recent manufacture is hard to come by. After 1200BP there is a period where there is no dated evidence for pottery. In Malekula, where it does reappear, it is not clear whether it is the product of a local revival, a later influx of potters from elsewhere, or the reappearance of a technology that has been practised all along, but is so far archeologically invisible.

A dated archaeological sequence has not been constructed for continuous pottery making from the time of first settlement until the historic period, anywhere in the archipelago of Vanuatu. The evidence for pottery continuity to the ethnographic present is as good for the pottery of the Cumberland Peninsula as it is for any of the pottery of Vanuatu. There is Lapita pottery on Santo's neighbour, Malo, and some evidence for early pottery having been made on the island of Santo itself, but the dated sites found by Galipaud are no older than 1000 years ago, and the next dates for pottery on Santo are from the de Queiros expedition four hundred years ago (It must be noted that Galipaud's more recent date from his Hakua excavations could very likely post-date de Queiros' visit). Glaumont's pottery has not been dated, Speiser found no pottery, and Galipaud and his associates found only recent pottery in excavations (Galipaud 1996c: 21, 2004: 63). Clearly the Big Bay Lapita finds need further excavation, and Glaumont's sequence at Pelol should be reinvestigated. At present, activity in the Santo area is suggested from around 3000 BP, as evidenced by the finds on Aore and Malo and the occasional sherds that have turned up on other islets to the southeast and on the mainland.

There are no very old sites on the west coast of Santo, but different pottery types found in surface collections appear to indicate different periods of occupation. It has been suggested (Galipaud 2011: 475) that the Wusi pottery was associated in Malo with the Chachara ware from the late period of Malekula. It is less likely that Cumberland pottery could have been a result of recent introduction, because of the amount of pottery and the progression of styles, albeit with some abrupt breaks. And where an influx of pottery could have come from is somewhat puzzling, as the nearest place from which a different people with a different technology could have come is the Solomon Islands, where the southern islands remain aceramic (see Chapter Four). The other nearest neighbour, New Caledonia, now has good sequences from Lapita to the historic period (Sand *et al.* 2011), but language differences make it unlikely that a pottery-working people from that area recently invaded some northern islands of Vanuatu.

There are indications of contact with Fiji in the early period (post-Lapita findings of Banks obsidian in the Fiji group: Best 2002: 30) but also possibly very late, since the Nara pottery found at contact in Viti Levu resembled the Namboi of Malekula and had no antecedents in the Fiji group (Bedford and Spriggs 2008: 108). Galipaud has also suggested a population influx about 1000 years ago as a cause for the intensification of agriculture, which he believes would have been facilitated by the introduction of a hierarchically organised society, perhaps from Polynesia (Galipaud & Walter 1997: 37-39). However, by this time there was no pottery being made anywhere in Polynesia.

There is no linguistic support for any suggested inflow of population. The people of the pot-making areas of the Cumberland Peninsula belong to a common group of

languages, but their closest relations are other languages of neighbouring areas of Santo, and then the other Northern and Central languages of Vanuatu. Recent work citing genetic evidence for population replacement gets round the linguistics question by proposing the incursion was gradual and that there are subtle features shared only by Vanuatu and "Papuan" languages (Posth *et al.* 2018: 736). However, most of these linguistic features have a restricted distribution³¹ in Vanuatu and few are found in the Cumberland area (although interestingly the people of Wusi today use the quinary numbering system suggested as one of the pieces of linguistic evidence).

With the paucity of excavated sites, particularly on the mainland of Santo itself, and the frequency of pottery sherds found on the surface in places where no excavations have been done, at present the default assumption, at least for the Cumberland pottery, must be that it is an indigenous technology, handed down from the earliest settlers of the islands of Vanuatu. Later chapters of this dissertation will support this argument from the position of the Cumberland pottery in the culture and practices of the area. There is no archaeological support for any depth of duration for Wusi pottery in Santo – Galipaud estimates 1000 years but there are no dated sites to support this, and its range is limited. The relationship between Wusi and Cumberland pottery will be discussed in the next chapter.

The gap in pottery findings all over the Vanuatu group may never be explained. It is clear that most islands of the archipelago had pottery at one time or another, that Lapita influence was widespread and, where dates can be obtained, that humans were present from about or shortly after 3000 years ago. It is equally clear that pottery was completely lost in the southern group and probably the Banks and Torres islands by about 2000 years ago but persisted in the central islands for another thousand years, and probably longer in most of the northern group. With difficult conditions in most of the group for anything beyond test-pitting, few areal excavations have been attempted and, possibly because of this, no settlements have been found. Surface pottery is taken as evidence for recent pot-making, but most Lapita pottery before Teouma was found as surface sherds, and a lot of excavation has not been able to

³¹ This is also true for the cultural innovations proposed – "large nasal piercing ornaments penis sheathes [and] head binding are features mainly found in Malekula, coincidentally one of the two main areas the modern genetic sample was drawn from (Posth et al 2018: 738).

come up with datable material because of disturbance and mixed deposits. In Santo there is evidence of Lapita plainware at least, followed by two to three phases of incised ware, but almost none is found in a dated context. Indications of pottery nearly 3000 years ago, pottery associated with sites of 1000 years ago, and eyewitness accounts 400 years ago suggest the antecedents of the west coast pottery of the nineteenth century. The next chapter will compare the two pot-making techniques of the west coast to see how the pottery of Wusi can be fitted into this tradition.

Chapter Three: Comparison of West Coast Pot-making Techniques

Speiser was mystified by two features of the pottery of Santo: that it was (at his time) made only in two villages on the west coast, and that "entirely different methods" were used in the two areas (Speiser 1913: 182). From the previous chapter it appears that Wusi pottery was archaeologically almost invisible, and may have originated from a different source, since it seems to have arrived on the west coast of Santo more recently than the pottery of the Cumberland Peninsula. This chapter describes and compares the pottery techniques of the Cumberland Peninsula and Wusi, in an attempt to discern any relationship between them. But before Speiser's visit, the two techniques do not seem to have been distinguished by anyone else; if older accounts mentioned any variations in method, they did not ascribe them to any particular location.

Early Reports of West Coast Pottery

The first description of pot-making techniques comes from A.H. Macdonald, a Presbyterian missionary at Nokuku from 1890 to 1893 (Miller 1990: 230-235):

A shady tree is selected and a large flat stone placed at the foot of it. Then the woman (for it is always made by women) takes a middling-sized stone in her hand, and after receiving the clay, she beats it until it is of the proper consistency. Then she shapes the pottery, and after imprinting a few marks by way of ornamentation, it is put out in the sun to dry, and afterwards burnt.

(Macdonald 1891: 22)

The decoration was done immediately, which is the case today in the Cumberland tradition, although pots are not put in the sun to dry. The following year, Macdonald travelled the whole of the west coast and found that the pottery-working area extended south to Wusi. He sourced all the clay to "a large deposit" near Nokuku, and suggested a sort of continuum along the coast, although he said each village had its own "trade mark" and the local people could tell instantly in which village a pot was made (1892: 48). This time he also mentioned the red slip: "After they have formed and dried the article in the sun, a reddish clay, much like a raddle, is rubbed

on to give it gloss" (*ibid*.). But Macdonald saw the pottery as being superseded by "articles of European origin" (*ibid*.), the only indication I have found that trade saucepans could have already been on the coast. Today no pots are made in any of the villages between Penaoru and Wusi, a distance of over 40km.

The next Presbyterian missionary, J. Noble Mackenzie, who spent more than 14 years from 1894 at Nokuku, described coiling as the pot-making style of the region as a whole and only considered the Wusi style as a simple way of making a quick crude pot. From Mackenzie's description, the distinctive use of the knee as mould was not essential – a stone could be used:

...The Santo pottery is made almost exclusively by women. The clay used is of a dark colour. It is pounded into fine powder on large flat stones, and then mixed with water and kneaded until it is of the consistency of putty when ready for use. A rough and ready way of making a dish is to take a lump of this worked clay and mould it on the bent knee or on a stone, but a vessel made in this way is always coarse and liable to fall to pieces. The best kind of pottery is made in the following manner:

Small pieces of well kneaded clay are taken between the palms of the hands and rolled out into strings about ¼ inch in diameter. These are wound round a piece of small bamboo, held firmly between the knees, each round being stuck to the last and smoothed down by the finger and thumb. Round after round is added in this way, the shape of the vessel being determined as the builder goes along. When the building of the vessel is accomplished attention is paid to ornamentation. This is done by sticking more of these strings of clay on the outside of the vessel, various markings being made also by a sharp stick. The vessel is them set to harden for two days, when it is smeared over with a solution of red clay. This is allowed about five days to dry. The vessel is then scraped with the sharp edge of bamboo until it is quite smooth. It is then baked by being placed on three stones set end on end in the earth. A slow fire is kept up under it for half an hour, the sound given out when tapped with the finger telling the experienced ear when it is sufficiently baked.

(H. Mackenzie 1995: 69)³²

³² Missionary J.Noble Mackenzie's biographer was his daughter Helen. He also had two brothers in the mission, one of whom took over Nokuku at a later date. I identify by initials where I think there is a chance of confusion.

Mackenzie does not say exactly where pots were made this way but his description of making "the best kind of pottery" fits the technique still known by the people of the Cumberland Peninsula today, from Piamatsina in Big Bay around at least as far as Petawata on the west coast and possibly as far south as Tasmate. This "coiling" method is that used for traditional pot-making in several parts of Oceania, as Speiser also noted (1913:182).

Making a Pot

Before proceeding with a comparison of Cumberland and Wusi pots I will explain some basic principles of pot-making. To make a ceramic pot whose pieces will endure in the archaeological record requires a knowledge of chemical techniques – unsuccessful potting attempts do not survive (and neither do unsuccessful experiments in a new environment, as Rye (1976: 135) points out). The durability comes from changes induced in the chemistry of the clay by firing to a temperature high enough to fuse the components of the clay paste. This holds the pot together and makes it able to be used for a number of tasks that the raw materials would be unsuited for – holding water and cooking over fire being two of the most useful. For this transformation to take place the right sort of clay must be available, but not all clays contain the basic ingredients needed:

The ultimate test for a ceramic clay is whether it can be moulded to the required shape, dried without undue shrinkage and fired to yield material with appropriate fired strength.

(Claridge 1985: 27)

Clays are formed from the weathering of sedimentary rock and are not very common in the young soils and coralline and volcanic environment of the Pacific. They must have enough plastic material that they can be formed and moulded, they must contain minerals that will fuse at the low firing temperatures that pre-kiln pottery makers can achieve, and they cannot need to absorb so much water to be workable that they will expand and shrink too much in the firing process.

This is probably why in most of Polynesia there is no evidence for pottery – within the "ring of fire" young rocks contain a limited range of minerals, and there are no large rivers or other weathering processes to produce good clays. Minerals already changed by volcanic action become ashes or sinters and are not plastic. Claridge, working in conjunction with craft pottery makers, assessed the clays of Vanuatu for both traditional type ceramic suitability and potential for manufacture of commercial products such as bricks, drains and tiles (Claridge 1985: 15), and found that some Efate clays had commercial potential but few other islands had any soils that could be used for making any kind of ceramics, as most islands were coated with volcanic ash and often had coral substrates. The western coast of Santo had small deposits of usable clay and Malekula may have had some potential – Epi had been expected to have suitable clays but was found not to (Claridge 1985).

Clay must essentially contain the right minerals to undergo the chemical reactions required to become a hard permanent material, but its malleability and firing properties can be adjusted by adding "tempers" – which usually introduce larger, more inert particles to open out the structure of the clay and reduce shrinkage and other processes that cause cracking. The potters of Santo, however, are unusual in that neither group tempers the clay at all – despite the marginal nature of the clays they work with, they rely upon the natural tempers (i.e. non-plastic elements) already present in the clays. This means the manufacturing process must be more precise and the potters must work within a narrow range of tolerances to be able to produce pots that can be both fired and used.

After gathering, the clay must be prepared, usually involving pounding, mixing with water, and often being left to rest. Then it is usually kneaded one or more times and worked over until it is ready for the potter to use. This is a crucial part of the process – several descriptions of both western Santo techniques refer to the care with which clay must be prepared.

The stages of making a pot can be carried out all at one time or over a period of days (I saw different stages carried out on different days at Wusi, while in Olpoe the pot was made and decorated in one session). The first stage is "starting" the pot, forming the clay into a preliminary shape on which a pot can be built. In traditional pottery, starting techniques can be quite idiosyncratic. The body of the pot is then built up by either shaping or adding clay to the base. Then the pot is finished, and either put aside to rest and dry out, or decorations and handles may be added on the spot. The pot must then be dried sufficiently before it is fired. Other preparatory techniques can be used to enhance the chances of a successful firing – painting the pot with slip and burnishing the surface with a *snekbin*³³ or shell operculum are standard techniques in Santo. The firing takes place on a platform of preheated stones and is rapid in both locations. After firing pots are usually tested in some way to make sure they are sound, and then will be ready for use.

Although several parts of the process can be very quick, making a pot can take several months as proper drying is crucial –if a pot is put in the fire before it is ready, it will just explode. For this reason, pottery is a seasonal activity in Santo – pots are only made and fired during the winter, dry season.

Cumberland Pot-making

Since Mackenzie's account of pot-making, there have been only a handful of descriptions of the Cumberland method, none with more than minor variations from Mackenzie. Speiser visited Pespia and Wusi in 1910 and wrote descriptions of both (Speiser 1990: 232). It is from his work that Schurig (1930) designated the two potteries as originating from different sources, "Papuan" and "Melanesian" (Thompson 1933: 381). M.E. Shutler visited Wusi and Olpoe³⁴ in 1967 but does not actually describe the Cumberland technique³⁵, merely referring to it as "tedious" and "complicated" in comparison to the Wusi method (M.E. Shutler 1971: 82). Galipaud summarises Speiser's descriptions but does not offer any additional material of his own, although he watched pot-making in the Cumberland Peninsula village of Ravlepa (Galipaud 1996b: 117). Nojima both described pot construction at Olpoe and filmed it (Nojima 2001; Nojima 2011: 164-69). Speiser and Nojima's accounts are reproduced in Appendix A (Part i).

³³ "Snake bean", (Entada phaseoloides; Crowley 1995: 224)

 $^{^{34}}$ By this time, in 1967, the people of the Pespia River had moved to the coast.

³⁵ According to Galipaud (1996b: 118), Shutler only watched pot-making at Wusi.

Speiser (1990: 234) saw the clay prepared by being pounded on stone tables in 1910. Nojima in 2001 saw clay worked on a *nakatambol*³⁶ slab, as did I in 2007. In each case the pot was formed on a short thick section of a bamboo stem, which acted as a sort of wheel that could be turned as the pot increased in size. The pot is built by winding the coils around this stem and then later in the process a disc of clay is fixed inside as a base, a little way up from the starting coils. At the end of the manufacturing process, the pot is cut off the bamboo, and the coils below the inserted base are folded under the pot. This makes a pointed double base (see Figure 9 below) that seems to be unique to the Cumberland method of manufacture and distinguishes the pots in appearance from the broad-bottomed Wusi pots.



Figure 9: Tarpoililvanua, a very old pot found near Vunap

Speiser only describes seeing female potters (1913, 1990), but between his visit and that of Nojima, who gives the most thorough description of Cumberland pot-making, the inland villages were abandoned and the potters on the coast were both male and female (Nojima 2010: 64). In 1993 when I first visited the area, the named potters of the Notwes were all male and this has been contrasted with the female Wusi potters to

³⁶ *Dracontomelon vitiense*. A large local tree with large straight root buttresses often used where a strong flat surface is required.

link the coil-worked pottery with inland, "Papuan", male potters, and paddle-worked pottery with coastal, Austronesian, female potters (May & Tuckson 2000: 6-7), despite there being no record of male potters at the inland Cumberland villages, and no evidence for any "Papuan" incursion in the area.

There is a picture of consistency over more than a century. It appears that formerly the clay was thoroughly cleaned and pounded on stones. In Olpoe the cleaning seems to have survived (M.E. Shutler 1971: 82) but the pestle used is a piece of a *nakatambol* buttress. All descriptions have the pots built up in coils on the turning bamboo cylinder and smoothed out (only Nojima mentions the use of water) and similar methods are described for forming the double base, adding handles and decoration and finishing off the pot. All observers mention the coating of red slip before firing; Nojima notes that drying seems to take longer in more recent times.

Nojima's is probably the only eye-witness description of a firing and she records a fast fire using $burao^{37}$ wood as fuel:

Firing takes only about 25 minutes. Although Shutler (1971: 82) writes that 'the pots are fired in a slow smouldering fire and left in the ashes until completely cold,' I observed firing done with a strong, flaming fire.

(Nojima 2011: 168)

M.E. Shutler (1971: 82) contrasted the slow fire at Olpoe to the Wusi "hot bamboo fire" (*ibid.*). But Speiser and I were both told firing was fast in the Notwes and this is what Nojima witnessed.

Table 1 (below) shows a comparison of the pot types and names collected by Nojima and myself at Olpoe (see also Appendix B). Speiser supplies photographs of several types of Cumberland pot without descriptions or local names (Speiser 1990: Plate 65). His last illustrated pot (Plate 65/25) falls completely within the size range of Wusi pots and could easily be mistaken for one.

³⁷ *Hibiscus tiliaceus*. According to Nojima (2011: 168) it traditionally should have been *navenu* (*Macaranga sp.*) wood.

Table 1: Cooking pot names at Olpoe

Nojima 2008	Pascal 2009	Description	Function	Word meanings (in Nokuku language unless otherwise indicated)
weanlan	we anlap	wide mouthed pot with 4 handles (ears) on rim	for cooking <i>mit</i> (or <i>kabej-</i> Nojima)	anla-n 'its ears'
wepwat mot	we pat mut	same basic shape as <i>weanlan</i> ; probably no handles	for cooking <i>mit</i>	p(w)at 'head', mot 'broken' This may be because this pot has no formed rim
wepatpat		same basic shape as <i>weanlan</i> but with pig tusk markings, a chief's pot.	for cooking <i>mit</i>	patpat = 'pig's tusk' (Nojima). 'platform' (Clark)
weaotot	we'alotot	cooking pot with lid A big bellied pot with a small mouth. The name describes the shape.	for taro (Pascal) <i>kabe</i> j (Nojima)	'alo 'neck, throat' This pot narrows more at the neck than any other
we pran		has a neck and out- curved rim.	for taro	
	we repran ³⁸	open dish	for frying	Bislama <i>p(a)raepan,</i> POC* <i>palaŋa</i> 'frying pan' (Osmond and Ross, 1998)
	we ol mwa	probably similar to Ravlepa <i>kirinolma</i> , pot with a rope design appliqued around shoulder	used for cabbage	olmwa (or ormwa?) = <i>Pipturus argenteus,</i> a plant used for making rope
ov		shallow dish, probably oval	for making coconut milk	<pre>'ov(e) 'dish for making laplap; surface on which clay is pounded'</pre>

³⁸ This dish is a completely different shape from *wepran*.

Pottery-Working at Wusi



Figure 10: Wusi Pot in Liverpool Museum, showing the mouth described by Mawson

Wusi is known as *the* pottery village of Vanuatu and is certainly the village where the process has been most described. Pot-making was viewed by Mawson in 1903, Speiser (1913, 1990) in 1910, then Harrisson (1936a: 249) in 1933, Guiart in 1954 (1958: 54-58), M.E. Shutler in 1967 (1968), and probably Galipaud in 1996 (1996a: 97). Good descriptions of the process of building a pot come from Mawson (1957), Speiser (1990: 232) and Guiart, but Shutler's is the most accessible account as well as the most complete. The pottery display at the VKS is still based, at least in part, upon her work and it is this, supported by Galipaud (*ibid*.) that is responsible for the general belief that pottery in Vanuatu is only made at Wusi.

Like Shutler, Speiser viewed both Wusi and Cumberland pottery, but his published comparison was only available in German until 1990, and the description by Guiart (*ibid.*), who passed through Wusi in the early 1950s, was only ever published in French. But the geologist Douglas Mawson passed through Wusi in June 1903 (Mawson 1904: 213, 214) and wrote a description of the pot-making process which was not published at all for over 50 years (Mawson 1957):

The novelty of the pottery industry at Wuss [Wusi – see footnote 94] was of so much interest that observations of the process of manufacture were recorded as outlined below. All operations were performed by women.

The raw material employed is a yellow clay. It was broken down to very small pieces, laid on a sheet of bark and sprinkled with water. Then followed a thorough kneading to a uniform doughlike consistency. When sufficiently mixed it was worked up into a ball-shaped mass.

Two other women then took a hand. Taking pieces of clay from the ball they worked on them with wet fingers, kneading them together to make smaller clay balls, each of which was then pressed out into shallow saucer-shaped forms [....]. After making about six such dished pieces they were stacked on top of each other [....] and finally the pack was thoroughly kneaded and rolled up again to form a large ball³⁹.

From this stage on, the operation was performed by one person only. Kneeling on one knee and with the other sharply bent and wetted, the woman pressed the ball of plastic clay down onto the rounded end of the bent knee, while at the same time continuously rotating and patting it. In this way, in about three minutes the clay was moulded to a deeply concave form [...].

Then with a wetted piece of bamboo wood, [...] she scraped and worked over the upper rim portion of the crude bowl, making it smooth, while at the same time thinning out the clay wall and tapering it off. In this operation one hand was held on the inside while the other manipulated the wooden tool. The uneven top edge was then pinched off and made smooth by running the wetted fingers over the surface [...].

The wooden tool was again employed to increase the curvature inside the mouth of the bowl. In this way a double curved lip was developed. Again with wetted fingers working around the lip it was smoothed and given its final form [...]. The bamboo wood tool was also employed to even up the curvature of the exterior of the bowl, and use of this tool was again followed by the smoothing operation with wetted fingers.

³⁹ This is similar to the clay preparation techniques in some parts of Fiji (Dickinson & Sykes 1968: 74)

Exterior ornamentation was then applied, effected as follows. Some of the wellworked clay was rolled between the hands to make elongated pencil-like sticks. These were worked in rib fashion on to the exterior of the bowl as shown [...] and the final impressed markings were done with a stick.

(Mawson 1957: 83-5)

Mawson did not see any further part of the process, but he was told that after the pot had dried to leather hardness over about five days, the walls were thinned by scraping and any cracks in the walls were repaired. Then the pot was dipped in the red clay slip, dried for several more days and fired (*ibid*.).

In Mawson's account the pot was initially formed by moulding on the knee, and the entire height was achieved before it was then turned for the upper part to be shaped using a bamboo sliver (in accounts by later observers the shaping occurs as the pot is drawn up, and the lip is much smaller). The decoration was completed in the same operation as the manufacture of the pot, as is still done in the Notwes (but not in Wusi). However, when Speiser (1990: 232) saw a pot being made at Wusi, seven years later, he said the opening out of the pot and initial shaping were done free-style and with the pot right way up – it was only to shape the mouth that the pot was inverted on the knee. Decorating was not done until later. This may just have been a potter with a different method from the one Mawson saw, but it shows that, at least at that time, the use of the knee was not the only method of opening and shaping the pot. It is possible that Speiser's atypical description of Wusi pot-making was what led Schurig to think this was a method analogous to the beating of plain pots that took place in New Guinea industries (Thompson 1933: 380).

Speiser thought the pots of Cumberland and Wusi looked like each other, despite the different methods – they were similar in shape and appearance, both were coated in red slip, both were made by women, but the coiling method meant that the Pespia pots could be larger and also had pointed bases (Speiser 1990: 232-33). Oddly, he said cooking was done by throwing hot stones into the pot, not by putting the pot on the fire (*ibid*) a claim Nojima (2010: 65) also found strange, as today pots of both traditions are used directly on the fire - in fact that is part of the testing of the pot. Speiser suggested the reason was that the craft was imported, and the imitative artisans of Espiritu Santo did not realise the full usefulness of earthenware (*ibid*).

Comparison of the Techniques of Cumberland and Wusi

In the village of Olpoe I watched a demonstration of preparing clay and shaping and decorating pots. Since none were successful beyond this stage, I did not see further stages of the process, so must rely on Nojima (2010, 2011). At Wusi in 2010 I watched women in their own kitchens working on pots they were already making for sale. Thus, I only got to see some aspects of pot-making - one day it was decorating, another it was forming the pots, another day we went to get clay (see also Chapter Eight). I did not see the mixing of the clay or the firing of the pots, so, like anyone else since M.E. Shutler (1968, 1971) must rely on previous descriptions for comparison.

Differences

Today Cumberland pots are reputedly large and coil-made by male potters, whereas in Wusi small pots are made by women moulding on the knee and pulling up the sides in a way similar to wheel thrown pots. Wusi pots are very quickly made, they are dried before they are decorated, handles are inserted and decoration is mainly appliquéd. They are only used to cook meat and fish, but, at least in recent times, have mainly been made for trade or sale. Cumberland pots are slow to make and can be big enough to cook taro. Decoration is scratched or moulded while, or immediately after, the pot is made and the handles are applied.

Sherds similar to the Olpoe and Pespia pots are found archaeologically and have been related not only to the Mangaasi⁴⁰ pottery found in other parts of Santo (Galipaud 1996a: 96) but also to the Sinapupu tradition found in Tikopia (Nojima 2010: 61). The pots reported by de Queiros in 1606 are the earliest documented evidence of a tradition that belongs to the whole area; other Cumberland villages make or used to make pots in the same style. It seems clear the present-day potters of the Notwes are practising a tradition that belonged to their forebears: they have stories to explain their practices and *tabu* and these are also known in villages that no longer make pottery. It is an inland tradition, the clay comes from the mountains and the potters control the sources. Seawater and anything to do with the ocean is considered to ruin the pots. The ancestors of the Cumberland people are called on to help them, and all

⁴⁰ Bedford and Spriggs (2008: 106-7) would argue against the idea of Mangaasi extending to the north.

observers of Olpoe pot-making describe essentially the same manufacturing style. Cumberland pots from Olpoe are known throughout the west coast as good pots that can be used in the fire without cracking and that make food taste exceptionally good (Nojima 2010: 65). However, in the early twenty-first century the art is seemingly dying out as pots are no longer made regularly and recent attempts have not produced any viable pots.

Wusi pot sherds have only been found in surface collections and not in archaeological context, on the coastal strip between Tasmate and Wusi (Galipaud, pers.comm., 5 Aug 2012). Despite their being assigned to the "paddle-and-anvil" method (see below), the pot- making methods used by Wusi belong only to the village (see Chapter Eight). Pots are not reported as made by moulding anywhere else in Vanuatu, and the technique of moulding on the knee has only been mentioned as a first forming stage in one Fijian technology (Rossitto 1992: 188fn4) and not elsewhere in Remote Oceania. This is a coastal tradition: seawater is essential for mixing slip and is traditionally thrown over the pots after they are completed to "prove"⁴¹ them. But the present-day potters are migrants from mountain villages. They are not the original people of Wusi, their language has changed, and most of the village only came down to the coast around 50 or 60 years ago. Galipaud suggests that it is because of the immigrants' vagueness about the traditions of the craft that the pots are given a supernatural origin – the art is said to have been learned from a "devil" or spirit that married a villager (Galipaud 1996b: 116).

The pottery of Wusi is known to have declined in quality over the years. Harrisson (1936a: 249-50) spoke of the art as decaying and attributed it to the loss of traditional beliefs, and Guiart (1958: 59) thought that aspects of the craft had been lost since the time of Speiser who described the pottery of both places as "sadly deteriorated", compared to older pots (Speiser 1990: 231). Nojima observes that Wusi pots have a poor reputation (Nojima 2010: 70) for cracking and breaking. Despite this, the industry is thriving today: most women of the village know how to make pots and they are regularly seen for sale in Luganville and often even in Port Vila. More recent researchers (Nojima 2008: 128; Tzerikiantz 2000: 192-3) see Wusi pot production as

⁴¹ Proving is testing – Shutler (1968) is the only previous observer to mention this practice.

essentially a degraded, sale-oriented industry, recreated imperfectly for pragmatic purposes, but it is quite possibly this commercial application that has perpetuated the Wusi pottery for so long.

Galipaud used Schurig's 1930 Oceanic pottery classification to put the Wusi potters in the paddle-and-anvil Oceanic "Lapita" tradition, while Cumberland was relegated to the non-Oceanic "Papuan" tradition (Galipaud 1996b: 116). In Papua New Guinea, Austronesian coastal potters work paddle-and-anvil beaten pots from tempered clay, whereas untempered coiled pots are mostly made by non-Austronesian potters, according to May and Tuckson (2000: 22-23). Makers of the two pottery styles of Santo speak languages of the Oceanic family that are closely related members of the North Vanuatu subgroup. It has been suggested that the original coastal people of west Santo all died off from European diseases early in the twentieth century, and the Wusi pottery craft was taken over by inland people (Galipaud 1996b: 117; Guiart 1958: 58-59; Nojima 2011: 171). But the Nokuku language that Gordon recorded on the coast in 1869 (Lynch and Crowley 2001: 50), is still spoken from Petawata to Olpoe, and is in the same group as all the other languages of the Cumberland Peninsula. The present Wusi language, which is said to come from "the eye of the Jordan" (i.e. near the mountain peaks), is a near relation of the Cumberland group. It is not known what language the original Wusi people spoke but there is no indication, either archaeological or linguistic, that settlement of any people other than the present Oceanic language-speaking inhabitants ever took place in pre-European times.

Similarities

In both places, pots are first documented as being made solely by women (Speiser 1990: 232), but today in each place there are both men and women who know how to make pots. Both groups say that with the population losses in epidemics, mothers had to teach their sons to make pots so that the craft would survive. It is interesting that today it is the men that are prominent in the north, to the extent that they seem to have completely taken over in such places as Ravlepa, while in Wusi it is not widely known that there are male potters and have been at least since the time of Guiart, who mentions that one of his informants, Lulu, was teaching his wife from an inland village the craft he himself had learned when he moved to Wusi (Guiart 1958: 59fn).

Neither tradition uses temper in the clay; in both, the pots are painted with a red clay slip before they are fired, and both traditions use a preheated stone platform for firing Figure 27). All these features are unusual in Oceanic pottery. May and Tuckson in their comprehensive description of the traditional pottery industries of Papua New Guinea today, list only one village that uses a slip (May & Tuckson 2000: 41) and have no reference to the use of heated stones as a platform for the firing: .

Both Santo traditions make only cooking pots or dishes for grated coconut ('*ov*, *jova*, *trova*). Shapes, function and decoration are similar, as Speiser (1990: 233) and M.E. Shutler (1973: 82) both noted; even older pots in museums can be hard to tell apart (see MacLachlan 1939).

I collected pot-making vocabularies for the parts of the process I watched in each village but a comparison is difficult as the two pot building processes differed so much that the only term in common I have is that for working the clay. However, for names of pots I was better able to find equivalences and, in one or two cases, term correspondences (see Table 2). But since most names are descriptions of the appearance or decoration of the pot, this is not necessarily helpful, for example the pot with the lugs or handles which are described as "ears" in each case, is called by a phrase meaning "pot with ears".

Tabu Related to Pot-making

Tabu is a very large topic; in Santo, as elsewhere in Melanesia, intrinisically interwoven with the concept of knowledge as a restricted and dangerous thing (cf. Barth 1975: 219-20). *Tabu* connected with Wusi pottery are first mentioned by Harrisson and then by Guiart, M.E.Shutler and Galipaud. Harrisson (1937: 353) described the prohibitions as "elaborate", Shutler (1971: 82) as "few", and Guiart described them without comment. Guiart's list (1958: 58) is longer than Harrisson's but he did not mention the dietary restrictions spoken of by Harrisson. Shutler (1968: 15, 17) said that the ban on watching had been abandoned; but since she was introduced by the Presbyterian pastor Bill Camden, who thought he had disproved the

Olpoe	Ravlepa	Description	Comments	Wusi Equivalent
Pot	name			
name	waa lana	graannet (Dislama)		ura tana
weiap	wea lapa	graunpot (Bisiama),		
We	we sarvo	wide-mouthed not*	anla-n 'its ears'	uro iainai neveihu
anlan	we salvo	with 4 handles (ears)	(NW)	aro jamarneventa
		on rim for cooking <i>mit</i>	()	tano jalina
		(or kabej-Nojima)		
		quite tall in Olpoe,		
		short in Wusi.		
we		cooking <i>mit</i>	p(w)at 'head'	tano/uro vela?
patmot			mot 'broken'	hee apo/uro
				wanapo?
we		cooking <i>mit</i> but with	patpat 'tooth,	uro wari
раграг		pigtusk markings, a	pig s tusk.	
we		cooking not with lid	'alo 'neck throat'	uro/tano turi
alotot		for taro or <i>kabei</i>		
		A big bellied pot with		
		a small mouth. The		
		name describes the		
		shape. v tall,		
		restricted		
we pran	Wetaprami	for taro, has a neck	In Wusi large pot	uro panpan/matiu
		and outcurved rim.	for cooking	panpan
		not restricted, tall	cabbage –	
			similarity of	
we		open dish for frying	cf Bislama	
repran			p(a)raepan	
we ol	Kirinolma	colour of <i>olm^wa</i> rope,	Possibly olmwa	
mwa		used for cabbage	(or ormwa?) =	
			Pipturus	
			argenteus, a plant	
			used for making	
			rope	
we ov	ov patpat	snallow dish for	ov(e) aish for	trova, dova, uro jova
			surface on which	
			clav is nounded'	
-	tanko	cooking pot with	In Wusi a lipped	matamata a uli, mate
		breadfruit design	pot with	uhi lewu
			breadfruit	(lewu=breadfruit?)
			markings	
-	ri'onkato	name refers to hermit		
		crab pattern		

tabu (see Chapter Eight), it is possible the restrictions were downplayed for her. Today potters at Wusi still believe pots should be worked in seclusion, and the firing cannot be watched by men. Galipaud (1996a: 98) points out that the *tabu* are supposed to protect the pots from firing breakage and mentions the use of magic herbs. I collected a list which included, as well most of the previously mentioned *tabu* surrounding firing and working, some additional ones around collecting the clay (described in Chapter Eight).

In 1967 Shutler saw the *tabu* around pot-making as being quite different in the two areas, but today they are very similar. In neither tradition are people allowed to have sexual intercourse when about to work pots, or while a pot is in process. While working, potters may not relieve themselves. The pots must be worked in a quiet place, preferably indoors; both traditions state that this is so the potter can concentrate on the task. Although in both places pots are customarily made in a kitchen, they should not be near food or cooking. There are restrictions on what can be eaten or drunk. Men should not watch the Wusi potters at work and one cannot talk about the pots by name nor count them singly. Gathering clay is ringed with *tabu* – you may not urinate while you are at the site, you should not be talking loudly or joking while you are performing the task and you may not take any food to the site. In Wusi traditionally each potter gathers her own clay; in the Notwes only certain people who belong to the *laen* (clan) of the traditional title holders can get $clay^{42}$. The most fearsome part of the Notwes procedure is gathering the red clay for the slip because this is the blood of the ancestors who have died violently: you must not show fear, but you must call out loudly for their permission and for the spirits of the dead to enter the clay to make it red. A connection with this is that the firing is done at night and so the passing souls of the ancestors can look down and see the fires and their spirits can enter the pots. However, the Wusi people, who now obtain their red clay from inland villages in southwest Santo (for the traditional payment of a pot), seem to have forgotten this connection as during the visit of the Rural Skills Training Programme (RSTP) team (see Chapter Eight) they readily agreed to abandon the

⁴² Landowners can get clay from their own ground (Ted Colin, per.comm., 2012)

custom and fire their pots in the daytime. Like the Olpoe people, though, they only use certain woods for firing and cannot use any other⁴³.

The main difference between the *tabu* of the two traditions, which could indicate a division of long standing, is that while the people of the Notwes may not look at or talk about the sea while they are working their pots, no salt may be eaten and no tool may be used that has been used near the *solwora*, the people of Wusi use salt water to clean and mix the red clay slip. Travelling to Port Vila for the Melanesian Festival in 2009, the last thing the potters did before leaving the west coast at Tasiriki was to collect containers of "*solwora blong Weskos*" (see Figure 29). This further supports the suggestion that the Wusi tradition is coastal while the people of Olpoe have an inland tradition.

The people of Olpoe say that their *tabu* used to be more stringent. Previously potters could not wash for the entire period of pot-making, but now they are Christians (which they have been since at least the 1950s) they have to wash. The time period on the dietary restrictions has also been reduced, as it has in Wusi. But as I observed in both Wusi and Ravlepa⁴⁴, the *tabu* may actually be growing rather than decreasing. It is possible that earlier observers did not record the same list of *tabu* that I did because they did not exist previously.

At Ravlepa there was a lengthening list of tabu, that we⁴⁵ were first told about and then had to observe ourselves. This could be taken as indication of tradition in action. The possibility that tabu are increasing, despite overt attempts to reduce them, and that they may be more similar to each other than they were in the past, suggests a convergence between the two traditions as a possible explanation for some of the other similarities.

When the 2007 pots at Olpoe failed, I was first told it was people not keeping the *tabu* of working inside and then, that some of the workers had not observed the diet

⁴³ In Olpoe the wood is venu (Macaranga dioica); in Wusi pihura (Calophyllym inophyllum).

⁴⁴ In 2009 I visited a second pottery village in the Cumberland pottery area – Ravlepa is a *stesen* of Penaoru village, a few miles south of Nokuku, previously visited by Jean-Christophe Galipaud and Yoko Nojima (see Chapter Seven).

⁴⁵ I was staying at the village of Penaoru and went down to Ravlepa with my hostess, Viran Pwet.

restrictions. Later it was hinted that some people had not kept the sexual abstinence rule, but the following year it was stated definitively that the stick used for pounding the clay had been contaminated by sea water, and that was the problem. When I compared my photographs and observations with Nojima's (2001) video, the clay was clearly of a different quality. Long rolls of clay were formed for the coils in Nojima's time whereas the coils I saw broke when shorter, before they reached that stage. I do not know whether the cause was contamination with salt or whether the clay itself was intrinsically less elastic. It had not been rested for the usual two days before the hasty 2007 demonstration.

Convergence

Two groups of potters on the same coast must have known of each other at least from the nineteenth century, when sandalwood workers would have been traveling up and down the coast. Later, Missionary Macdonald had both pottery areas in his care. If the Wusi potters were originally a different people, have their pots changed to be more like the Cumberland pots? The pots were being made in the same environment, for much the same purpose – cooking and trading. The clays were similar and such features as the lack of temper and the use of a slip could be dictated more by the nature of the clays than by the inheritance of the potters.

Temper

Temper is used to reduce plasticity and is generally considered essential for low temperature firing. But neither group on the west coast of Santo adds temper. This can be explained by postulating that the soils of the west coast are probably tempered enough by the non plastic ingredients that are naturally present in mixed clays (see chapter four). There have been several analyses of the clays of Vanuatu (e.g. Claridge 1985). But in May and Tuckson's (2000: 34) study of Papua New Guinea potters, few potters use tempers and those that do are usually coastal, paddle-and-anvil potters. One can hypothesise that coastal soils suitable for ceramics are probably sediments washed down from the hills and are already, by the time they reach the coast, well sorted. The inland potters are using richer mixed clays and are usually having to remove coarser particles rather than add temper. All inland potters in Papua New Guinea use the coiling technique (see Chapter Four). The industry of the Cumberland people is an inland one, and the soils I have seen used at Olpoe have a fair portion of natural grit.

It is possible that when potters came to use the coastal Wusi clay they had forgotten the use of temper. May and Tuckson (2000: 23) have an example of potters in the Amphlett Islands being forced to change the source of clay and compensating for increased plasticity by means other than adding temper, as possibly also happened in Yap (see Chapter Four). Certainly Wusi pots have long had a reputation (among both local people and researchers) of being poorly fired and easily broken, which may point to techniques unsuited to the clay being used. But although no observers of either technique ever mention the addition of temper, older museum pots appear to have had shell temper added; this can be clearly seen in the *trova* from the Manchester museum (Figure 11 below). In 1993 Wusi potters told me that they did not know how to make good pots as all their old people had died. Knowledge of temper use may have been lost in the epidemics of the early twentieth century, before Speiser's visit.

Red clay slip

The red clay slip is clearly important. Both groups go to quite a lot of trouble to obtain the clay: the Olpoe people must trek quite a long way inland and undertake rituals to get their red clay; the Wusi people, who used to walk even further into the mountains for their red clay, purchase it from inland villages. This could be a convergence, influenced both by environmental conditions and local beliefs. The timing of slip application appears to be crucial (as demonstrated by the Ravlepa potters, see Chapter Eight) and its prime function here might be to prevent the pots drying too quickly. Applying slip and burnishing pots before firing also aids in sealing them for cooking (especially in Wusi where the salt in the seawater would also help reduce permeability), and slip is a decorative feature.

It could also, however, be part of the custom of identifying pots with people, also noted in several other parts of the world (David, Sterner and Gavua 1988: 366-67) including Papua New Guinea (May and Tuckson 2000: 341). In Santo men would paint their bodies with red ochre (Bourge 1906: 179) and today people dressing up as "heathen" (in religious play-acting) will paint their skin red; although according to Speiser this was done only for war in western Santo and for the higher ranks in the *Supwe* in southern Santo (Speiser 1990: 169-70). In both the Cumberland area and Wusi the pots traditionally carried the emblems of the *Supwe* and were important artefacts of the grading system, to the extent that they represented the high men of the society (see Chapter Five for detail). Wusi potters referred to their pots as *pikinini* or *pepe* ("child" or "baby") in their presence.



Figure 11: Trova found in Manchester Museum

Another important aspect is that the oldest pottery found on Santo, the Lapita pottery discussed in the previous chapter, had red slip as one of its distinctive identifying features. Galipaud does not say if the other two pottery types preceding the *Olpoi* type on the island both had red slip, but this feature, found nowhere else in Oceania, could have been handed down directly from the Lapita tradition. The Cumberland pottery could descend from a Lapita ancestor, in that it appears in a region that does not show signs of gaps between traditions, patterns are holistic like those of Lapita and coating with red slip may also be continuous. However, it is not likely that the Wusi use of red slip is copied from the Cumberland, as the slip is mixed with

seawater in the Wusi tradition. It would be necessary to define the origins of Wusi pottery more clearly before any conclusions can be drawn.

Stone hearth firing

In New Caledonia, where pots are coil-worked, they are fired on a stone mound or earth hillock, similar to a small house platform (Leenhardt 1909: 268-69). In other places, potters build their fires on the ground or, in coastal traditions, on the beach. Pots are sometimes pre-warmed by lighting fires or placing hot stones inside them in other places in Oceania, but a pre-warmed hearth is not known. It seems that the New Caledonian similarity might indicate a united origin. But what is the cause of this innovation?

If we take the hearths together with two other unique west coast features, the bamboo building of the Cumberland tradition and the knee-building of Wusi, we could be looking at a sort of economy of space and effort. Most Oceanic potters build their pots on either the ground or a prepared ceramic or vegetation base, a dish or a ring. The techniques of Santo need nothing, except the bamboos and the stones for the hearths. The west coast of Santo is a land of stony inhospitable beaches, and of populations which lived traditionally in the bush of the steep mountains, coming down the rivers to the coast mainly to use the resources. And the mountains of the west coast are famously cool, wet and misty (Marshall 1937: 90,169; Ludvigson 2005 [1981]: Prologue). In many places in Papua New Guinea, potters start a pot in the hand or against the body and then transfer it to a rest or a hole in the ground only when it gets too large. But the pots of the west coast, built on either knee or bamboo, then fired on pre-warmed stones, need never touch the ground. If both groups of potters practiced their craft in the steep bush covered ranges of the inland west coast, it is possible these practices were developed individually, to keep the clay of the unfired pots off the damp ground.

Discussion

Looking at the similarities between the pots, the traditions, and the people, I originally thought the two industries could be parts of the same technology. This hypothesis was supported by the descriptions of Macdonald (1892: 48) and Mackenzie (1995: 69

and see above) which suggested that the whole west coast was one pottery area and that the Wusi type pot construction was just a quick rough variant of the Cumberland industry. Taking into account the lack of any evidence for any more than one group of settlers in Santo, the close relationships of the languages of all the potters of Santo and the suggestion of a much wider pottery industry in west Santo than at present survives, it seems that the onus is on the evidence for difference. Can it be proved that the two groups of potters come from different origins?

The argument for Wusi pottery to be considered part of the Cumberland tradition is that these are basically the same people making pottery with the same unusual features of lack of temper, use of red clay slip, and firing on stone platforms. In both traditions only cooking pots are made, and many of the *tabu* are the same. In both places pots were originally made by women, but the Cumberland tradition was recently taken over by men. The lack of an archaeological context for Wusi could denote a recent, possibly post-historic, offshoot of the Cumberland tradition. Is it possible that during the nineteenth century missionisation and depopulation of the west coast a group of potters were cut off with only part of the Cumberland repertoire?

The historic arguments will be discussed in Chapter Seven; here I am arguing from the technology of manufacture and the appearance of the pots themselves, and here there are two points against the idea that Wusi pots derive directly from the Cumberland tradition: the reversal of the Cumberland seawater *tabu*, and the unique neck on the old Wusi pots. Mawson described the complicated working that produced the sinuous necks to be seen on old museum pots collected in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This feature, which resembles nothing done by Cumberland potters (and would have been hard to emulate using the coiling technique), surely would have taken more than a few years to evolve. The necks of Wusi pots today resemble those of the Cumberland pots more than they did at the beginning of the twentieth century. If the two traditions come from the same source it must surely have been before European times.

The idea of an independently invented tradition can be dismissed, despite the uniqueness of the Wusi pots. The Wusi and Cumberland people were close enough

geographically that they had to be aware of each other, and if the Wusi people were developing their technique themselves, they obviously borrowed several features from the Cumberland tradition. The argument is really one of origins – the languages and the archaeology give one answer to the question, while the pots give, to some extent another. Either the Wusi pots and Cumberland pots are developments from the same tradition or they constitute different traditions. On balance it seems possible to dismiss most of the similarities as deriving from similar environment, demands of the clay and demands of similar cultural use, and this is supported by some indications that the two traditions have become more alike over the years in both techniques and *tabu* associated with the pots, leading to greater similarities in appearance. The suggestions that both techniques might have been used in the same places were answered by Chief Tavue Malmal of Olpoe who told me when I put the question to him in 2012, that the people of Pespia had never made pottery in the Wusi style.

The origin of Wusi clay

A footnote comes from my discovery that the Wusi clay is not, as I had thought, clay developed in the Cumberland ranges or from the seafloor of the Pacific plate. The Wusi platform is patently not alluvial, since there are no exceptionally large rivers in the area and other larger rivers flowing to the west coast have not formed similar platforms from alluvium. It is the landward end of the Wusi Bank, a shallow geological formation off the west coast corresponding with the D'Entrecasteaux Ridge and caused by a seamount plunging under the Pacific plate at that point. I had assumed that the materials of the Wusi clay deposits were therefore derived from Pacific seafloor alluvial deposits thrust up by this plate action. But there is a geological theory that the Wusi Bank is actually material from the Australian plate, scraped off by the clash at this point of anomalous subduction reversal, and is therefore material from the continental plate (Greene et al. 1994: 19). This would give it entirely different properties, not only from the other clays available in the Pacific but also from any clays previously encountered by Oceanic potters. These clays would possibly bear a closer relation to New Caledonian clays than to any other available in the region. The relationship between clays and techniques will be further looked at in Chapter Four.

Chapter Four: A Wider Pacific Comparison

Where did the Wusi pottery technique come from? No other groups in Oceania use the Wusi method, and this suggests one of three possibilities. Either Wusi pottery is descended from a paddle-and-anvil tradition, as has been taken to be the case (Schurig 1930, M.E. Shutler 1971); it is descended from a coil tradition like that of its neighbours in the Notwes; or it is a unique invention in west coast Santo. It seems to have some history as a technique, with its own style and *tabu*, but there is no support so far in the archaeology of Santo for any time depth, so it may be neither descended from the Cumberland tradition nor invented on the spot. Galipaud looks at it as an import that appeared in the last 1000 years, so is it possible to find its place of origin? This chapter looks at other Oceanic traditions known from ethnographic descriptions, in an effort to find relations for the Wusi technique, as well as to more closely define the connections of the Cumberland method.

Considering the paddle-and-anvil traditions known from Papua New Guinea and Fiji, there are similarities in the Wusi use of instruments to shape the pots and the starting technique of punching the clay ball to open the pot, and seawater is commonly used in other paddle-and-anvil traditions as well. One purpose of beating pots is to consolidate the tempered clay but this is not done in Wusi, where the small simple pots use no temper, are not beaten, and do not have the rounded bellies of typical paddle-and-anvil pots. A paddle-and-anvil tradition commonly produces large pots (e.g. Fiji), and the small shells and splinters of bamboo used to draw up the sides of the Wusi pot cannot really be compared to the large formed paddles of other traditions.

Coiling (or ring-building) is a common method of working pots among people who have no potters' wheels. Although time consuming, it seems to be readily learned; and suited to indifferent or varied clay quality. In the Pacific region it has been aligned with non-Oceanic peoples; and was characterised as "Papuan" by Schurig (Avias 1950: 121), but there are groups of Austronesian language speakers making pots by the coiling method in Papua New Guinea (May & Tuckson 2000: 7). Some Fijian potters also use coiling (MacLachlan 1938: 77-79; Rossitto 1995: 2), as did

some potters in New Caledonia (Leenhardt 1909: 268). It seems to be a method favoured by those who decorate pots extensively, as did the Cumberland potters. The unique feature of the Cumberland technique is the building on a bamboo round, which suggests a quite extraordinary tensility in the clay - the body of the pot has no support while it is being constructed, unlike the practice in other coil-working technologies. The fineness of the Olpoe coils would enhance this, but in Ravlepa the coils are much coarser. Therefore, the clay traditionally used in Cumberland must have contained a high proportion of non-plastic material to reinforce the clay.

Cumberland pottery can be taken to be developed in Santo – the pottery found in the hills is similar (see Chapter Two) and coil-made pottery was formerly made in other nearby islands. Galipaud (2011) relates Wusi pottery to Malo and Malekula Chachara ware, but more recent pottery in both places was coil-made and therefore more likely to be related to Cumberland pottery (Galipaud 1996a, 1998; Bedford 2006a: 169, 172). For Wusi it may be necessary to look for relations further afield as nothing like it has been found in other parts of Vanuatu.

By the time of first European observation, pottery was not used at all through large parts of Oceania, and in many other places it quickly died out after contact. It is ethnographically reported from New Guinea and Fiji, and only a few other places. It is hard to find any correspondences with the Wusi pottery-working, but the methods of paddle-and-anvil potters, all women and usually Austronesian language speakers (May & Tuckson 2000: 6), were examined to see if any had any similarity in any aspects, such as starting techniques.

Remote Oceania

The four other places in Remote Oceania that pot-making has been seen and described are Belau and Yap in Micronesia and New Caledonia and Fiji in Melanesia (see Figure 12). Of these Fiji is now the only place pot-making still survives. Several of the Fijian traditional potteries are in decline or defunct, but others are still thriving, usually in places where there is good access to roads and the tourist market. These potteries have often undergone changes both in items produced and in techniques used
to produce them, in response to the changing demand from a different market (Rossitto 1990).



Figure 12: Locations of ethnographically known potteries in Remote Oceania

New Caledonia

In New Caledonia, the languages are Austronesian and the potters were women, but the main technique used was coiling. Pot-making died out in New Caledonia in early historic times. Pottery was made only in the north of the country by the time Europeans were recording (around the beginning of the twentieth century) but geologist Jacques Avias found that as well as signs of mining for clay in the south, at the time of his visit in the 1940s there were still people who remembered pottery being made there (Avias 1950: 113). Pots were traded throughout the country (Glaumont 1974 [1895]; Leenhardt 1909, 1930).

Leenhardt (1909: 268-69) saw coil pots being made out of sand-tempered clay. Avias (1950: 113-14) says volcanic gravels were also used) with a coiling technique like that used in New Guinea. The pots were worked on the ground, and beaten after completion to achieve a rounded shape, using blows of the hands against a stone held on the other side of the clay. They were then supported in hollows in the ground until they had dried enough to hold their shape, and fired on earth mounds similar to small

house platforms. *Kauri*⁴⁶ gum was rubbed on the hot pots after firing. No slip is mentioned by Leenhardt and this is supported by the appearance of old New Caledonian pots in museums.

Decoration is light incising, or figures applied above the shoulder. New Caledonian pots seem to have been very lightly decorated right from the time of the Puen pottery style which dates from over 2000 BP (Sand 1995: 90-94). Decorative motifs on archaeological pottery seem to have been often just applied emblems or figures at the neck to identify the area the pot belonged to, as a sort of "trade mark" (Sand 1993: 35). Certainly, in ethnographic times there was no sign of the extensive decoration the Santo pots underwent.

In 1895 Glaumont described pottery in the north of New Caledonia as being made from untempered clay by moulding over a coconut or gourd, and drawing up the walls by hand, using a stone as an anvil. He does not mention coiling and the method sounds very similar to Wusi. According to Glaumont, the pots were fired by burning down the shelter they were dried in, and then varnished with gum (Glaumont 1974 [1895]: 41). Although Brou (1980: 11) thinks moulding was just a learner's device and that more experienced potters used coiling, the suggestion from this is that New Caledonia also had both coiling and moulding methods of manufacture.

In his later work, Leenhardt (1930: 33) mentions two other types of pots he had heard of – an elongated one, made only in one area, and a small crude pot that men made when preparing for war, and that Avias (1950: 120) said was used by sorcerers⁴⁷. There are no descriptions of the manufacturing method of either of these pots. However, there seems to have been at least two if not three or more methods of making pots in New Caledonia.

There is no mention of pots being used for anything other than cooking or sorcery. Avias, who specifically said that pots were primarily intended for cooking, also mentioned a double mouthed pot of which he knew two examples (1950: 117), but did

⁴⁶ This is a tree gum from *Agathis corbassonii*, related to the New Zealand *kauri*, *Agathis australis*.

⁴⁷ There is a small Santo pot in the VKS that is said to be a sorcerer's or *posen* pot (Kirk Huffman, pers.comm., 2 July 2012).

not say how it was made nor give it a function. The pot depicted is slightly reminiscent of a Fijian vessel (Avias 1950: 114), and was probably coiled.

Fiji

In Fiji, where again Austronesian languages and women potters are found, bowls, dishes and water bottles as well as cooking pots were made from clay (Roth 1935: 226-27). Both slab-building and coiling techniques were used, according to Schurig quoted by MacLachlan, 1938: 77). Coiling was said to be found only in Na Sava (Rewa), and Schurig probably got her account from Gordon-Cumming (1883: 245-48) who reported Na Sava as the "home" of Fijian pottery. From the brief description, the method is very similar to that described by Leenhardt for New Caledonia, except that Gordon-Cumming described the beating as proceeding while the pot was still being built, and a more elaborate neck was formed.

Six other Fijian places for which I have observer accounts of pottery-working all use similar techniques, but are divided by Rossitto into slab or ring-building traditions:

The women made vessels by slab-building in the lower and upper Sigatoka Valley, Yawe, and Levuka; by ring-building in Ra and Tailevu Provinces; and by slab-and-ring-building in Vanua Levu, Yanuya, and Nasilai. All over the island group, potters used the paddle-and-anvil technique to knock components into shape and fired their products in an open fire, glazing the still-hot water containers with *makadre-dakua* tree (*Agathis vitienisis*) gum—to seal and color the outside, and waterproofing cooking pots with vegetable substances because *makadre* melted on the fire.

(Rossitto 1995: 2)

Slab builders start with a slab worked into a bowl-shaped base which is simply beaten into shape for a smaller vessel, or has other beaten slabs added to make a larger cooking pot. This technique is used in Sigatoka villages (Palmer *et al.* 1968; Rossitto 1995) and Yawe in Kadavu (Le Blanc 2011; Sorovi-Vunidilo & Vusoniwailala 1999). For ring-building, a pot is started on a ring base made of vegetable fibres, the clay is laid in rings until the correct height is reached, and then the pot is beaten with the anvil placed through the hole in the ring. This is the method used in Ra (Roth 1935: 219-20) and Tailevu (Geraghty 1995: 12-15). The slab-and-ring method probably

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means starting with a beaten base and adding rings rather than slabs, as Roth (1935: 231) described for Vanua Levu.

The Fijian style of slab-building with extensive beating can produce very large pots – the pots of Yawe are huge (Le Blanc 2011: 33; Sorovi-Vunidilo & Vusoniwailala 1999: 50). Other techniques are used for making smaller pots, serving dishes and kava bowls. Rossitto describes Nasilai vessels as formed on the knee from a ball of clay, and the sides pulled up in a way reminiscent of the Wusi pot, but this is a secondary technology which only began in the mid 1800s (Rossitto 1995: 36).

Cooking pots in Fiji are generally built upside down, beaten until the hole at the base closed, then righted and a neck added. Sand is used as a temper everywhere. In some Sigatoka villages temper was used only for smaller vessels, not for cooking pots which were made from a finer clay (Palmer *et al.* 1968: 55). There were no slips, but the tree gum varnish was similar to that used in New Caledonia⁴⁸. For firing, pots are usually placed on a dried or preheated area to avoid damp. Sometimes this is just the beach, as in Yawe and parts of Sigatoka, but often ash, firewood or stones are used; Geraghty (1995: 15) mentions a hearth used in Tailevu, on which stones were placed to support the pots.

Similarities between Fijian and Cumberland pots are apparent, especially for the ringbuilding technique where the pot is started on a ring support and built up with rings of clay, although these Fijian rings are much larger than the coils used in Vanuatu and the pots are beaten. In the slab-building area the makers of smaller pots start with a round of clay, shape and paddle-beat it, and sometimes do not add anything further. This is a process that could be related to Wusi pottery. Certainly, the starting methods for these Fijian technologies are very much the same as the two starting methods used in west Santo. However, it is much easier to relate the technologies in Fiji to each other through the methods of Nasilai and Vanua Levu, where a combination of a beaten base and ring-building of the walls is used. It is possible to conclude that all the Fijian pot techniques are related to each other and the variation could, and probably did, arise in the island group after colonisation.

⁴⁸ Agathis vitienisis is another species of kauri.

The inverted manufacture by which Fijian cooking pots other than those of Na Sava are made, is known elsewhere only in the Amphlett Islands and on Goodenough in the Milne Bay province of Papua New Guinea (May & Tuckson 2000: 4, 17, 73-81). In both Fiji and New Caledonia clay was usually tempered by sand, then paddle-beaten to attain the final shape, but while in New Caledonia only two paddles were used to bond and smooth the coils (Leenhardt 1909: 268-69), in Fiji a variety of paddles developed for each technology (Geraghty 1995: 14; Palmer *et al.* 1968: 52). This may be related to the size of the pots: New Caledonia cooking pots seem to have been larger than the Santo pots, and the Fijian pots of Yawe were largest of all (Le Blanc 2011: 33). Fijian and New Caledonian pots were decorated lightly if at all, as is typical of paddle-beaten pots, but all Santo pots are extensively decorated. There may be a trade-off between size and decoration, and the lack of beating in Vanuatu could be a decision in keeping with the cultural complex and the purposes pots were put to.

It seems that some sort of hearth was used for firing throughout Eastern Melanesia, so this feature could have been developed as potters moved to the cooler damper areas south of Near Oceania.

In Yawe, like Santo, there were taboos associated with pot-building. Potters could not be pregnamt, had to abstain from sexual relations and dressed to show respect for the pot (Le Blanc 2011: 47, 100, 110).

Yap and Belau

In Micronesia, as in New Caledonia, traditional pottery is no longer made, but it was still being worked in Yap and Belau in historic times (de Beauclair 1971: 223; Intoh 1992: 69). In both places Austronesian languages are spoken, but Yapese is a member of the Oceanic family to which the languages of Vanuatu, New Caledonia and Fiji belong (Ross *et al.* 1998: 301) while Belauan is believed to be more closely related to the languages of Indonesia and the Philippines.

Micronesia has a long history of contact with outside influences, but the pottery of Yap does not seem to have been described until the early twentieth century after more than two centuries of western trade (Descantes 2002: 233). In contrast, potteryworking was recorded in both Vanuatu and New Caledonia less than 50 years after Europeans started visiting regularly.

De Beauclair commented on differences between the methods of Yap and Belau but her descriptions of the pot-making process do not make these differences clear: in her time both places appeared to build with rolls of clay on a hand-moulded base (de Beauclair 1960: 64, 1971: 226, 231). However, Bellwood said that pots were coilbuilt in Belau from clay tempered mostly with pot sherds, and finished by paddlebeating, a method he saw as influenced by "Melanesian" pottery; while Yapese potters moulded a pot from one lump of clay, without either using temper or beating the pots (Bellwood 1978: 285-86). According to Intoh (1992: 69-71), the methods of Belau and Yap were similar although pots were paddle-beaten in Belau but not in Yap. Neither used slip or any sort of varnishing process, and pots were not decorated in either place. Intoh does not mention temper for Belau where pots were dried for a few days or weeks, before a fire was built around them and lit. The potters of Yap dried pots for several months, and put them into a fire that had already been burning for a while.

De Beauclair thought the laminated Yapese pots were "crude" and ascribes this to the fact that many pots were needed for the year's ceremonial cycle and that they were manufactured by "low-caste" women and used mainly by chiefly families. Pot-making had no prestige and was not seen as an artistic achievement; these were strictly utilitarian wares, made hurriedly and without care (de Beauclair 1971: 228). But Intoh explains the odd features of Yapese pottery as a local development in reaction to environmental circumstances, such as the nature of the clay available (Intoh 1990: 46-49).

At older sites on Yap there was a sand-tempered pottery at the coast and an untempered plainware inland, both of which ceased to occur in the archaeological record at the time that what is called "laminated pottery" came into the record 600 years ago (Intoh 1990: 44; 1992: 75). To explain the lack of temper in this pottery Intoh (1990: 42-49) has two suggestions: that the limited sand available may have been unsuited for the poor-quality clays of Yap, or that the inland potters could not access coastal sand for temper. This may have been political restriction rather than

physical distance. Later Yap pots were built using very fine coils and dried exceedingly slowly over several months to compensate for the shrinkage that untempered clay would suffer (*ibid*.). Intoh does not say so but this could also account for the lack of beating – pots without temper could be so consolidated by beating that they could not fire properly (this argument is further discussed later in this chapter).

Yap pots were continually wetted throughout all the extended drying period, and thoroughly burnished before firing (Intoh & Leach 1985: 133). The wetting would have stopped the outside from drying too much before the inside of the pot and the burnishing would also have acted to increase surface tension and strength (Wallace 1989: 36-38). Here there are parallels with both Ravlepa and Wusi, where local potters say that the red clay slip prevents the surfaces drying and cracking before the inside of the pot is properly dry. Because the ground was damp the fire had to be lit first, to dry the ground, so the pots were wetted again to prevent surface shock and cracking (Intoh 1990: 42-49), and this is believed by Intoh to have caused the laminated effect. All other potters in Oceania are at pains to have their pots as dry as possible before firing so it seems that this is a local invention and not an import from elsewhere.

As in Santo, pots in Yap were made in private, and sexual intercourse and certain foods, such as fish, had to be avoided during the period of firing (Gifford & Gifford 1959: 181). Only adult women could make pots. Because of the seclusion practiced there were special huts for working pottery in Yap (Descantes 2002: 231; Intoh & Leach 1985: 25, 132-33). The above accounts suggest that this may also have been the practice in both Vanuatu and New Caledonia.

Smaller "sacred" pots were also produced in Yap. De Beauclair (1971: 227) said these were the same as cooking pots but only produced by favoured villages. Descantes has not been able to find any differences between the sacred and the ordinary pots in archaeological context and he has no indication that men ever worked pots (Descantes 2002: 232). De Beauclair (1960: 65) was told of a different method practiced in the north of Yap, of working pots by moulding round a coconut or in a hole in the ground, apparently in a similar fashion to Glaumont's (1974 [1895]) descriptions from New Caledonia. De Beauclair (1971: 232n) thought there was a lot of individual variation among potters but in the descriptions of Intoh and Leach (1985: 127-32), who observed pot-making in more than one Yap village, the methods differed very little.

In Yap, as in New Caledonia, information is lacking because of the abandonment of pottery, in both cases attributed to the introduction of European cooking vessels. Descantes has an explanation that accounts for the persistence and demise of pots in Yap: because of the many individual ovens⁴⁹ that were needed in a place where strict caste delineations were observed in cooking, it was simply not practical to build earth ovens. Once European cooking vessels arrived, ceramic pots could merely be replaced with metal, which acquired a prestige pottery did not have and was therefore quickly adopted by high caste households. The decline was accelerated by diverse pressures from various colonisers and acute depopulation during the nineteenth century. Eventually pottery-working was brought to a complete halt after the Second World War by the simple fact that a flat-bottomed metal pot could sit on a little kerosene stove while the round-based Yapese pot could not (Descantes 2002: 233-37).

The potters of New Caledonia and Yap made pottery mainly to have cooking vessels, so once these were supplanted the entire industry was obsolete; while in Fiji there were many other uses for ceramics, and tourism was already encouraging pottery production before other demand declined. This underlines the question of why pottery has survived in Espiritu Santo, where pots were also almost entirely used for cooking, in an area with virtually no tourism.

Pottery in Yap has other parallels with that of Santo. Not least is its use to support eating restrictions for higher status individuals (see Chapters Five and Six). But the potters themselves are low caste⁵⁰. As in Santo, the Yap technology included neither temper nor paddle-beating, despite the fact that their near neighbours, the Belauans, used both. Explanations given involve both different origins (Bellwood 1978: 285) and different clays (Intoh, see above). Even more relevant is the suggestion (above)

⁴⁹ A girl was observed in 1936 tending seven different cooking fires for one meal in one household (Descantes 2002: 236).

⁵⁰ The only other place the status of the potters is mentioned is in Fiji where Gordon-Cumming (1883: 110) described the potters of Rewa as low-caste fishing people (it was emphasised by Leenhardt (1909: 268) that the potters of New Caledonia had no special status

that the same Yapese people the Giffords observed hand-moulding the entire pot from one piece of clay were, a few years later, building the walls of the pot using fine coils (Intoh 1992: 69). If the same potters could move from one of these techniques to the other in a short space of time and without external input, as was also observed in Fiji (Rossitto, see above), it is difficult to retain the belief that coiling and hand-moulding are essentially different heritages.

However there are problems with making comparisons between the pot-making technologies of Yap and those of Vanuatu, New Caledonia and Fiji. The entirely different histories of contact and colonisation mentioned above led into different histories of observation and scholarship, and by the time there was a real interest in Yapese pottery it was no longer being regularly made. While there is increasing linguistic evidence for Oceanic origins for the Yapese (unlike their pottery producing neighbours the Chamorro and the Belauans), there is also evidence, linguistic, ethnographic, and archaeological, for ongoing prehistoric contact with those neighbours (Descantes 2002: 233; de Beauclair 1963: 1; Intoh 1992: 72), so the Yapese pottery practices could have been influenced by their neighbours, or even borrowed from them entirely. Possibly the late Yapese pottery is actually Belauan pottery, adapted for the culture and the clays of Yap.

Near Oceania: Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea

In Near Oceania, pottery working was widespread at contact and, although declining, is still being practiced in several places. May and Tuckson in the 1970s collected all the information they could on as many different traditions as possible, in both Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands (Figure 13). Some of these were almost extinct at the time of their work and more of the potteries have ceased to exist since, as they note in the preface to the 2000 edition (May & Tuckson 2000: x). May and Tuckson classified the pot-making techniques they studied into two main methods, following Schurig's division between coil-working and "paddle-and-anvil" (May & Tuckson 2000: 6) and coordinated these with geographic distribution, language and gender. Their maps and tables suggest a strong correlation between coastal women potters

speaking Austronesian (Aus) languages and the paddle-and-anvil method; and to a lesser extent, male inland potters with non-Austronesian (NAN) languages and coil-worked pots (May & Tuckson 2000: 15-17).



Figure 13: Locations of near Oceanic Potteries (after May & Tuckson 2000: 15)

In the Solomon Islands, pottery was only known from the very north of the group, on the island of Buka and then in the area of South Bougainville, North Choiseul, and the Shortland Islands in the straits between. The potters were all women except the potters of Siwai (in southwest Bougainville) and all Austronesian speakers except the groups of South Bougainville. May and Tuckson (2000: 16, 336) classify all the female potters as paddle-and-anvil and the male potters of Siwai in Bougainville as coil potters but all Solomon potters start with a ball of clay and beat their pots. The non-Austronesian Nasioi of South Bougainville use slab-building (May & Tuckson 2000: 341), as do the Choiseul potters (Ratliff 1979: 7), but other Bougainville groups coil. The main distinction of the Siwai potters appears to be that they do not pre-beat their coils, and they do not use an anvil. The potters of Buka open their pots with a stone, like the people of Wusi, but then go on to add handfuls of clay and paddle-beat their pots. Choiseul and Buka are the only Solomon potteries where temper is used (May & Tuckson 2000: 346) and Buin is one of only two industries described by May and Tuckson (2000: 343) where a slip is applied before firing.

In Papua New Guinea only a few women potters speak Austronesian languages, and according to May and Tuckson, most of these are coastal users of the "paddle-and-

anvil" technique. But Austronesian potters using this technique are more often on islands and most of the coastal mainland potters using paddle-and-anvil are non-Austronesian. To align the paddle-and-anvil with the Austronesian female on one hand and coil-building with male and non-Austronesian on the other, May and Tuckson (2000: 15-19) have come up with a number of intermediary sub-techniques, tabled below (Table 3). I have arranged these categories to emphasise the continuum and to point up an artificiality in the division between spiral coiling and paddle-beating. Only the first two categories are designated paddle-and-anvil by May and Tuckson, but some shaping by paddle-beating goes on in nearly half the groups. As can be seen, there are as many groups where females build pots by coiling as there are where males do.

	Method	Sex	Language ⁵¹	no of groups
Pots beaten				
1	Lump opened, paddle&anvil beating	f	7 Aus 3 NAN	10
2	beaten base, pieces added, p&a beating	f	5 Aus (Sol)	7
3	spiral or slab and p.beating	f	3 Aus 7 NAN	10
4	spiral, ring and p.beating	f	NAN	1
5	spiral and p.beating	m	1 Aus 1 NAN	2
Pots not beaten				
6	spiral and ring	f	Aus	11
7	ring building	f (m decorate)	NAN	1
8	spiral coiling	f	3Aus 4 NAN	7
9	spiral coiling	m and f	NAN	13
10	spiral coiling	m	NAN	6

Table 3: Categories of pot-making in Papua New Guinea (after May & Tuckson 2000:15-19)

One way May and Tuckson achieve their neat separation between their two methods is by distinguishing "coiling", where the pot is built with a continuous strand of clay that spirals from the base to the top, from "ring-building" where a series of rolls of clay are placed on top of each other with their ends joined so that the pot is formed

⁵¹ Aus = Austronesian, NAN = Non-Austronesian languages

from a concentric series of level rings. Coiling can use very long rolls of clay but in ring-building the length of the roll will not exceed the circumference of the pot. However, most of the Papua New Guinea groups start their pot by spiral coiling, whether they coil or ring build after that. Another source of confusion is that the rolls of clay are called "coils" and most descriptions from other places do not distinguish between the two. Cumberland potters I watched used ring-building.

Another distinction made by May and Tuckson (2001: 31) is between paddle-andanvil potters and "hand-paddling", where a hand is used instead of an anvil to support the beating of the pot, usually by people who made pots by coiling). Potters who build pots by pulling up the sides also paddle-beat using an anvil and this is probably the correlation that Schurig's (1930) classification builds on. In Papua New Guinea almost all potters that use an anvil when they paddle-beat have added temper to their clay (May and Tuckson 2001: 34) – this relationship generally holds good in Remote Oceania as well (see above). But as was seen above, most of the North Solomon potters used anvils and did not add temper, and for some of the paddle-and-anvil potters in the New Guinea area of May and Tuckson's survey, the "temper" is provided by natural inclusions. Adding temper gives the potter more control over plasticity of clay and may explain why paddle-and-anvil treatment is usually found in coastal zones where temper is more available, or conversely, available clays are more "sorted", likely to be finer (and therefore "fat", or soft and sticky) so would need temper to make them workable. This is discussed further below.

Elements of both Santo techniques can be seen right through May and Tuckson's survey. Bosman potters on the lower Ramu River (Madang Province) coil their pots on a grass ring, finishing with an everted rim similar to Cumberland. Austronesian women coil potters who do not use temper or beat their pots are found in Milne Bay; pottery industries in such places as Normanby Island display all variations except hearth firing; and some of the pot-shaping and decoration in Milne Bay are very similar to the old Cumberland style. Potters in Kaiep have their own private workshops like the Wusi people (May & Tuckson 2000: 300). Some potters of the Central and Milne Bay provinces use seawater to mix their clay, and many potters start pots by punching into them and make small pots by just pulling up the sides (but all these people also use both temper and paddle-and-anvil). An old Motu bowl with

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applied decoration looks very much like a Wusi pot (May & Tuckson 2000: 55). All Austronesians tend to beat at least some pots, but people who decorate pots as heavily as do the Santo potters, dispense with beating– it is possible that the thicker wall is desirable to carry the decoration.

While May and Tuckson nominally adhered to Schurig's division of Papua New Guinea technologies into paddle-and-anvil and coiling, their work displays more interest in the difference between male and female potters: women are paddle-andanvil, Austronesian potters, making light, thin-walled, "round based and full bellied", "feminine" pots; male non-Austronesian potters make conical thick-walled heavy pots, with more attention to the decoration than to the form of the pot (May & Tuckson 2000: 6-8). However, there are very few industries where all potters are male; most locations of all kinds include female potters, despite the fact that most industries include some kind of coiling. Quite a few of the Austronesian language potteries in the Lae and Milne Bay areas produce coil or ring-built pots (May & Tuckson 2000: 16), and while paddle-and-anvil traditions are declared to be coastal and Austronesian, only nine of the 16 groups of coastal paddle-and-anvil potters speak Austronesian languages. In the Solomon Islands, where the division between male and female has been applied, all the potters open their pots by pounding or beating a lump of clay into a disk base, and then paddle-beat; and Terrell (May & Tuckson 2000: 233) classified the technique of the female potters at Buin, in Bougainville, as coiling.

Revisiting "Treib" and "Wulst"

Schurig's (1930) classification was based on a study of museum pottery and information available at the time from other researchers. She was not a fieldworker herself. Her main conclusion was that the "Treib" technique, where a pot was beaten from a lump of clay, came into Oceania with "Melanesian" peoples from the west, while the "Wulst" technique, where pots were formed by coiling, developed in the New Guinea area and belonged to "Papuan-speaking" people (see also Thompson 1933: 380-81). It is strange that this division has survived for so long when criticisms of it began almost as soon as it was published. The first perceived problem seems to be with attributing any pottery to the "Papua-speaking groups": Thompson (*ibid.*) argued that there were only three Papuan groups making coil-built pottery, and at least two of the three probably acquired the skill from "Melanesian-speaking neighbours". Bellwood (1978: 258-59) also believed both techniques were imported into Oceania and pointed out that coil-building occurs in Indonesia (there seemed to be no thought of two way travel). The "beaten" class has been re-named "slab-built" pottery (ibid), but in the whole study region only the potters of the Amphlett Islands (Milne Bay), two groups in the Solomon Islands and some Fijians can be said to truly use slabs⁵² as opposed to some sort of ring-building.

Christian Kaufmann sees Schurig's division as unable to stand up against field evidence. From his studies in the Sepik region of Papua New Guinea he notes that several elements of the process occur in more than one tradition, but having broken down the process into elements, Kaufmann (1999: 34-39) recombines them into seven "strands" which he affiliates with different linguistic groups, including both Austronesian and non-Austronesian language speakers. He suggests four waves of Austronesian entry into the Sepik area, which he compares to North Vanuatu as a centre of diversity (Kaufmann 1999: 45). While recognising that pottery itself travels, and that languages may change, Kaufmann does not discuss the possibility of potmaking techniques spreading across groups. However, there are examples of borrowing from neighbours in both Papua New Guinea and Fiji (May & Tuckson 2000: 61, 125; Rossitto 1990: 15). Kaufmann also does not consider the effect of raw materials on techniques, seeing "hand-modelling of coiled pot bodies" as "going primitive" compared to paddle-and-anvil shaping, so reasons that it is more easily explained by a migration than by two occurrences of the same regression (Kaufmann 1999: 47).

May and Tuckson's survey is also used to inform another classification of the techniques of Near Oceania (Pétrequin & Pétrequin 1999) to support a theory of three waves of migration of beaten pottery and subsequent local adaptations, so that initially Lapita pottery gave rise to local spread and adaptation resulting in several

⁵² I have never seen the slab-building technique performed; from pictures of Choiseul potters (Ratliff (1979: 6-7) it seems that lumps of clay are added to the rim and beating up continues. The lumps are usually pre-beaten into discs but not always. It would be quicker but demand a better clay.

varieties of coil and beaten pottery and then around 500 years ago, at the same time bronze came into the region, two other waves of beaten pottery arrived. This theory does acknowledge a possible role for diffusion and local adaptation of techniques but the only causes it suggests for this is that coiling is a simpler and easier to learn technique⁵³, and that inland potters learned the techniques imperfectly from coastal potters so omitted beating the pots (Pétrequin & Pétrequin 1999: 97).

These arguments still accord with Schurig's basic idea of different techniques being brought into the region of Oceania by different groups, but another view is put forward by Rye (1976: 109) who points out that like is not being compared with like. Coiling is effectively a starting or building technique, while paddle-beating is a finishing technique. Both can be used on the same pot, and often are, as May and Tuckson's descriptions show (2000: 16-17).

Another Classification and another Argument

Kaufmann breaks the process of pot-making into several phases and here, working from May and Tuckson's chart of technologies, I make some points about the individual phrases recorded in the industries discussed above. The essential potbuilding process can be divided into the stages of preparing the clay; starting, building, decorating and firing the pot.

Clay preparation and tempering

Preparing the clay is mainly limited by the nature of the clay itself, and generally consists of removing impurities, mixing with water and sometimes temper, and pounding the resultant paste until it is consistent and malleable. A potter that does not work to the materials ends up with no pots. Rye (1976: 135) suggests this as a reason first settlement of any place in Oceania could be invisible: experimental pot-making efforts that fail will usually disintegrate. The clay of Wusi with its continental or marine origins would have had a very different mineral composition to any other clays the potters of Santo or their ancestors had encountered in Oceania.

⁵³ It is not, at least as practised on the Cumberland Peninsula

Starting and building the pot

Just as the preparation of the clay both depends on the materials available and affects what can be done with the pot subsequently, the method of starting or opening up of the pot dictates the techniques that can be used in the rest of the shaping. There are two methods of starting a pot: with a lump, or with a coil. A coil start uses a roll of clay wound on itself to form a pointed cone. A lump can be beaten flat or opened with a blow of a fist or stone or by other means. Although there may seem to be several different techniques, these are on a continuum and the same potters may use two or more variants of an opening technique (e.g., Fiji: Palmer *et al.* 1968: 53). Most pots are started at what will be the bottom of the pot, but the pots of Cumberland are unique in the way the double base is formed with both coils and a later-added moulded slab.

Pots are built either by pulling the walls of the clay ball, or by adding pieces, usually coils, rings or slabs⁵⁴. It is quite apparent that if the pot is started with a coil, clay will have to be added, but a pot started with a lump of clay can be built by pulling up or by adding pieces, or by both. In any case beating may or may not be part of the process. Almost all pots started with a lump of clay will eventually be beaten (the pots of Wusi and Yap are unusual). But a quarter of coil-building potters in May and Tuckson's survey also beat their pots. The difference is that coil potters do not use an anvil and their clay is always untempered. May and Tuckson (2000: 170-71) have only one example in Papua New Guinea of a slip being used, in Madang.

Decoration

Pottery decoration has been much studied (see Bedford 2006a, Best 2002; Kirch 1997, among others), but this aspect of pottery construction has not been a focus in this thesis, for reasons that will be discussed later. It has been assumed that it is transmitted with other aspects of learning, and meanings other than the cultural or purely decorative have either not been considered or have been assumed, in archaeological ware, to be unknowable. In one study political affiliation was found to be more relevant than ethnicity (Bowser 2000 quoted by Le Blanc 2011: 24, 113). The nature of decoration can change very quickly depending on the intended function

⁵⁴ Coils are rolled between the hands or more commonly, on a board; rings may be rolled or beaten, and slabs are pre-beaten.

of the pot and the inclination of the potter. However, beaten pots are less decorated than others: usually paddle-and-anvil pots are not decorated at all or lightly marked around the rim; hand-beaten pots are lightly decorated above the shoulder; and unbeaten pots are more heavily decorated, but there are exceptions in each category. The general rule extends into the Pacific – Santo pots are decorated and not beaten, Fiji and New Caledonia pots are beaten and not heavily decorated. Again, Yap is the exception, where the pots are neither beaten nor decorated. Nowhere are heavily decorated pots beaten.

Here there is a correlation between origin and practice: Austronesian potters, no matter what technique they use, are less likely to decorate their pots extensively. The coiling Austronesian potters of Milne Bay hardly decorate at all. May and Tuckson (2000: 11) note that pots are more heavily decorated when men are involved, and the male Austronesian potters of Morobe decorate more heavily than any other Austronesians (although less than most other male potters): their coiled and handbeaten pots are only decorated above the shoulder. Perhaps coiling provides a more solid surface for decoration, so for extensive decoration pots should not be beaten. Alternatively, potters who decorate more heavily could be making the best of an inferior product; instead of the beautiful "feminine" shapes of the coastal paddlebeaten pots they produce an ornately patterned item. In Remote Oceania, the pots of Santo are much more decorated than any others described ethnographically. Yapese pots were not decorated at all and very little decoration was traditionally placed on either Fijian or New Caledonian pottery. Were Santo pots more like New Caledonian pots until beating was sacrificed for decoration? This opposition is also of relevance to the Lapita legacy – a case of apparently paddle-beaten pottery (Green 1979: 40; Spriggs 1997: 144) identified precisely by the ornamentation.

Firing

There may be relevant differences in firing techniques, but this part of the procedure has not been often described, except by a few researchers undertaking intensive studies of temperatures and methods (eg. Irwin 1983; Intoh & Leach 1985). Most potters preheat the pots, put them on some sort of platform, usually wood or ashes, to keep them off the ground, and build the fire around them before lighting. This sort of quick open fire is not hot enough for glazing to occur. However, in Yap the fire was

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pre-lit, and May and Tuckson (2000: 36) give examples in Papua New Guinea where preheating was not used. Firing is surrounded by more *tabu* that any other part of the procedure; probably with good reason, as it is one of the most technically sensitive operations, and in Santo, it seems that only Shutler (1968) in Wusi and Nojima (2010) in Olpoe ever watched the process. This operation will not be included in the rest of the discussion in this chapter.

A re-categorisation

Schurig's original contrast was between moulding and coiling techniques of potbuilding, and this still holds. But these techniques have been combined in various ways and seemingly both have travelled to every region of Oceania where pot-making has been recorded. There is a continuum from the pure coiling potters, who start and end with coils and do not mould the clay in any other way, to pure moulding where a whole pot is formed from the shaping of one lump of clay. Between these two extremes, a large group of potters use a combination of techniques. Thus, the potters of May and Tuckson's survey can be fitted into three categories.

The first category are the paddle-and-anvil potters that temper their clay, open a lump or ball in some fashion to start the pot, raise the sides of their pots before adding extra material, and beat using an anvil. If clay is added it is usually in the form of beaten slabs or hand-rolled coils; few of these potters roll clay on a board in the controlled way of most coil potters. These potters are all women, live on the coast, and more than half speak Austronesian languages. In May and Tuckson's survey this accounts for 17 groups of potters, all female and all but three speakers of Austronesian languages.

The second category use non-tempered clay and, although they start from a lump, the base is hand-moulded and coils are added to raise the sides. The pot is usually finished by beating but the hand is used as an anvil. These are also mostly coastal women potters, but hardly any are Austronesian speakers. About 13 of May and Tuckson's potting groups fit this category.

Finally, there are 38 groups of true coil potters who start and build their pots by coiling. Few of these people beat and even fewer use temper. None do both. These

groups predominantly live inland and are non-Austronesian, but since this group includes nearly all the Austronesian potters of the islands of Milne Bay Province, it paradoxically has a greater number of Austronesian potters than any other. Women are the potters in all the coastal groups, as well as being included in most inland groups.

The division made between Austronesian potters and others is slightly blurred by the presence of both Austronesian and non-Austronesian potters in every category. The male-female contrast is sharper but also relates to environment. Male potters don't beat pots, don't normally use temper, and don't live on the coast (where temper is more available). The most obvious contrast here is between paddle-and-anvil beaten pots made from tempered clay and coiled pots made from untempered clay (Santo potters use untempered clay but only the Cumberland potters coil).

Coiling and temper

The relationship between pot beating and tempering has been previously noted, but May and Tuckson (2000: 34) assert that tempering makes no difference to the techniques required, and therefore suggest cultural traditions are all that influence what they see as "the partial correlation observed between technique and tempering". However, some of the potters designated "paddle-and-anvil" by May and Tuckson do not use an anvil. All potters in May and Tuckson's survey that use an anvil to beat, also use temper, none of them coil. The only potters found to do all three are in New Caledonia (Leenhardt 1909: 268-69), and Na Sava in Fiji (Gordon-Cumming 1883: 245-48). Potters that coil generally do not use temper, even those that beat their pots and have the same starting techniques as the paddle-and-anvil potters (my second group).

Whether or not temper is added depends on the needs of the clay and whether or not temper is available. However, there is a cultural component to temper use - once lost it may not be rediscovered⁵⁵. May and Tuckson (2000: 23) point to the potters of the Amphlett Islands as an example of people who do not use temper because they have not inherited any knowledge of it, even when they are forced to use clay that requires

⁵⁵ This, of course, applies to the whole of the craft: in New Zealand, surrounded by suitable clays and tempers, the Maori were aceramic.

it, but Intoh (1990: 48-9) decides lack of appropriate material is more likely than ignorance as a reason the Yapese do not temper their clay.

In the remote Pacific with small islands, large rivers and sandy beaches to provide tempers are not very frequently found. The potters of Yawe in Kadavu, Fiji, tell their pottery origin story as a tale of sailing from island to island, looking for the correct temper (Vani Korologa and Merelaita Tuivaturogo, Nalotu, pers.comm., 31 January 1993). The question of temper is particularly relevant to west Santo, where the beaches are stony and good temper can be hard to find. Not even Mawson mentions use of a temper at Wusi, and Guiart (1958: 59) comments unfavourably on the lack. But the use of seawater in the Wusi pottery finishing process and the insistence of the potters that it is necessary to stop the pots from breaking (M.E. Shutler 1968: 18) are consistent with the practice of groups who use a calcite temper. According to Rye's experiments, the salt in sea water counteracts the lime spalling effects of heating calcite tempers (Rye 1976: 123). Wusi potters do not use temper but since the whole Wusi platform is of marine origin, the clay would probably contain calcareous materials. Older "Santo" pots I have seen in museums appear to have temper-like shell inclusions, suggesting that previously temper was added, or maybe an older clay source that naturally contained more shell matter was used. Unfortunately, these apparently tempered pieces are usually anomalous pots of uncertain origin (see Figure 11).

May and Tuckson (2000: 34) admit that "...coastal people have easy access to sand and finer clay while those who inhabit alluvial valleys use coarser clay". Most industries that do not use temper are inland where natural inclusions most likely take the place of temper. But coiling can be seen to be practised by coastal potters who do not use temper, so lack of availability is probably not the reason.

According to Rye (1976: 112), beating compacts the clay paste, while tempering keeps it open enough for firing. Too dense a paste is unsuited for cooking pots which must be of a substance that can contract and expand during multiple heatings: the temper, as well as adding strength to the clay would give a coarser structure (Rye 1976: 109). But it seems to me that, in the coil-built pots, the process of forming clay into rolls and binding them could give a consistency of structure that would otherwise

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be difficult to achieve without temper, that there is an inbuilt openness where coils are joined, providing the necessary flexibility for heating, and furthermore, any cracks formed in firing are less likely to travel across coils. An Auckland potter informant thinks it is also possible that the forming of coils acts like the pulling of handles in aligning the colloidal particles in the clay and strengthening the longitudinal bonds within the clay rope (Muriel Francis, Pt England, pers.comm., 2013).

May and Tuckson do not explain their distinction between using an anvil and using the hand to support against the paddle, but using a stone as an anvil compresses the clay and directs the expansion according to the shape of the stone. The clay is not so compressed when the hand is used as an anvil⁵⁶, and May and Tuckson emphasise that hand-beating is only a light, brief, finishing technique.

The above would explain why most of the potters of Papua New Guinea use coiling to build the pot, no matter what sort of starting method they use, since the "classic" paddle-and-anvil method described above is only available to coastal potters who have access to more compatible clays and tempers. Most of these in Papua New Guinea are Austronesian speakers. Coiling is a laborious process; having watched and tried both Vanuatu methods myself, I can testify that opening a lump of clay and raising the sides can be achieved much more quickly, and anyone who resorts to coiling probably has good reason for it –the nature of the clay seems a more likely reason than the inheritance of the potter.

The suggestion that people could give up inherited techniques of tempering and beating pots for reasons other than availability of materials is supported in the category I have postulated between "Treib" and "Wulst". Here there are coastal potters who have resorted to coiling. It could be suggested that the Santo potters belong to this transitional category – both have given up using temper, possibly recently⁵⁷, neither beats, both mould the base of the pot (even if, in the case of Cumberland it could be considered a false base). The Cumberland potters hand-roll their coils in the Austronesian fashion, and the Wusi potters mould the entire pot.

⁵⁶ This information is readily available at pottery sites on the internet, most of which seem to be quoting from the same unidentified source.

⁵⁷ Women in Olpoe tell me they have seen tempered pot-sherds in the hills behind the village. See also the pot in Figure 11.

Only the decoration can be considered exceptional for Austronesian pots of the historical period, and even that has echoes in some of the pots of Motu and Mailu.

Discussion

Santo is not unique in having two techniques – more than one has been described for every area looked at in Oceania. If these techniques come from different traditions of pot-making, why would their heirs invariably travel together? Sometimes these techniques are widely separated as in Fiji and Micronesia, sometimes they are close neighbours, as in Vanuatu, sometimes they are practiced by the same people. Furthermore, the split is often in the nature of small pot/large pot and decorated/beaten smooth.

The explanation, as postulated for Lapita pottery (Spriggs 1997: 144-45) is that there were two sorts of pottery, decorated ware for ritual and plainware for cooking. For various reasons the ritual ware fell out of use in most places, as is actually demonstrated for Lapita. Associated with this is the possibility that the two different potters could have been men and women. This is how two technologies could have travelled together, women making plain, beaten and tempered pots for domestic use, the men making pots decorated with insignia for ritual or magic purposes. Since this division was recorded by May and Tuckson (2000: 211, 216, 243, 290) for several groups in the Sepik, it could, as well as any other features of the Oceanic repertoire, have been handed down from the original potters in Remote Oceania.

Kirch, considering the proposal that Lapita pots were made by Austronesian women (Marshall 1985), theorises along the same lines. His observation at his own excavations (at the Talepakemalai site on the Mussau Islands northwest of the Bismarck Archipelago), is that the Lapita plainware is skilfully made paddle-and-anvil pottery, and the decorated ware is crudely formed coil-worked or slab-built pottery. Drawing from the ethnographic evidence as presented by May and Tuckson (1982), he concludes that the plainware represents domestic pottery made by women

and the decorated pottery was made by men who were more focussed on the surface designs than the underlying pot (Kirch 1997: 150-54).

This raises another question: in coiling, is the decoration added to compensate for the crudity of the pot, or is the coiling a way of making a solid pot for which the main purpose is to be a canvas for design? Is coiling a slower (and no less skilful) method used because this is the style necessary if you want to decorate, as the more fragile and rapidly worked beaten pot will not stand the rigors of heavy decoration? Santo pottery seems to support this second alternative. To keep decoration, the two potting groups of west coast Santo came up with different strategies for building a solid ceramic canvas to work on.

The important thing in Santo seems to have been to have a pot that could be decorated all over its body. But decorated pots are usually not the cooking pots. Yet, in both Wusi and the Cumberland Peninsula, the prime use for pots is cooking. And the one non-cooking pot, the *trova*, which may have a ritual function, is not very decorated. The idea of a ritual pot that is used for cooking blends the two functions in a way that the hierarchical and political institution of pre-European North Vanuatu is shown to facilitate in the next chapter.

Chapter Five: The Supwe and Sandalwood

Why was decoration so important to the potters of Santo that they alone retained highly decorated pots into the immediate prehistoric and historic period, when potters in Micronesia, Fiji and New Caledonia had all abandoned heavy decoration? Elsewhere in Vanuatu, after decorated Lapita was followed by a plainware period lasting up to 1000 years, other potters had taken up decorating pots more or less elaborately, which Galipaud suggests may be connected with population rise and the peopling of the high islands (Galipaud 2011: 475, and see Chapter Two). But there is no evidence for continuation of pot-making past 1000 years ago in any other island except for a brief period where pottery reappeared in Malo and Malekula. Nojima suggests a reason for its continuance in the north:

Persistent production and use of pottery in northern Vanuatu, including Santo, are most likely sustained by the sociopolitical and economic conditions that were typically noted in ethnographies of the area: the competitive system of grade taking and the exchange network that extends over a wide region and connects different groups of people.

(Nojima 2010: 57)

This is a reference to the graded society, a system of leadership that had replaced strictly hereditary chieftainships, as pertained to the south and east, or big man systems as are postulated for most of western Melanesia. The graded society was the means by which chiefs, or "high men"⁵⁸ (Galipaud 2011: 474) were made in the northern islands of Vanuatu. The central ceremony of grade taking hinged round the "sacrifice" of especially raised tusked pigs. There were different levels or grades which men attained by killing pigs, starting with modest numbers for the lower grades but rising to huge quantities for higher grades. This was one of the main drivers of the huge pig exchange networks that existed in the Santo/Malekula/Ambae region. The *Supwe* not only formed wide-ranging political networks in a society which was naturally divided into small groups, but gave its participants enduring sacred status. This chapter tries to reconstruct the chiefly system in the Cumberland area before

 $^{^{58}}$ The term "high men" is probably more accurate, but would only pertain to men who had taken higher grades – I continue to use the term "chief" which, as used by other researchers, does not indicate how high a man has climbed in the graded society.

European contact, relating it to the research done elsewhere on the graded society, before moving on to the effects of European contact on this system. The main argument is that while European contact likely contributed to the demise of pottery elsewhere, the nature of the *Supwe* in Santo and the accidents of history and environment combined to sustain pottery making at least into the twentieth century.

Previous researchers, in the wake of Deacon (1929), whose Santo informants were all described as coming from the south coast, have thought the graded society did not exist at all in Santo except as a recent introduction in the south. Nojima and I see it as the most likely reason that pottery continued in this island, where people were obsessed with pig trading and killing, to the extent that pigs were the main currency for any exchanges (Huffman 1996: 183, 184; Speiser 1990: 246-47) and the only currency Santo chiefs would accept from the first Europeans to trade with them. Huge numbers of pigs were killed in grade taking ceremonies on Santo, especially in the north and west, and during the sandalwood period, it was said that all people thought about was pigs (Shineberg 1967: 133, 155). The role of pottery was important because of the supreme importance of the sacred cooking fires which were exclusive to each grade; signs of the *Rang*⁵⁹ were carved into pots; pots were made for *Rang* ceremonies and chiefs were photographed with their pots (and wives; see Figure 14, below).

The power of Santo chiefs was noted very early:

...we believe them to be the most powerful class of the inhabitants of the New Hebrides, and that the voice of their authority is heard by the natives of the other islands. Each valley of Espiritu Santo has its independent chief who acknowledges no superior; petty warfare consequently exists among the tribes of the island.

(The Nautical Magazine 1839: 606)

In the west of Santo, the population were river people, travelling up and down the valleys of the Cumberland Range as their subsistence needs and political alliances demanded (Guiart 1958: 147; Harrisson 1936a: 251; Speiser 1990 [1923]: 303;

⁵⁹ This name probably comes from the French (=rank, class, station), and although it strictly means a grade or step, it is often used in the Notwes as an alternative to *Supwe*. Where I use *Rang* in the sense of the whole graded society I capitalise it, in its meaning as one step of the Supwe it is *rang*.

Tzerikianz 2000: 194, 198 fn 6). Rivers often had their own dialects (Ross Clark, pers.comm.) and each river would have one or more chiefs (Guiart 1958: *passim*; also see Ludvigson n.d.a: 7). A locally written account describes the people of the Notwes as ruled by chiefs who gained high rank by killing pigs in ceremonial dances that took place on sacred sites. Pottery, used for cooking, was made by following sacred knowledge:

In the Notwes area of Santo, before Christianity everyone lived by their traditional ideology. They only followed the commands of the chief, but many heathen practices ruled their lives. They cooked their food according to custom and since pottery was part of their culture this meant they cooked in pots. The clay pots were made with red clay and everyone knew how to make them according to the correct practices [*tabu*] that had to be followed. When they raised a man to a high rank, there was a place for doing the ceremonies with customary dances and a place for the ritual worship of evil spirits such as *tabu* stones and other images that were carved for the purpose of being honoured and worshipped.

(Philip n.d. *My translation from Bislama*) The contention that Santo chiefs, at least in the Notwes, were powerful and important is supported by a description of a *nakamal*, the club house for men who had status in the Supwe. Missionary John Paton, who was on the ship that delivered Gordon to Nokuku in 1869, described the "chief's house" there as forty feet long by twenty feet wide, with "massive" and "beautifully carved" support pillars and a large number of pottery dishes inside (Miller 1981: 178). A similar house with carved posts was seen in 1914 in Tasmate; said to be previously a temple but since the advent of Christianity, used as a school (Anderson 1915: 57-58). Missionary Alexander Macdonald said that all the land around the mission station belonged to either the family of the chief of Nokuku (shown in Figure 14) or to "two sub-chiefs of the old reigning dynasty" (Macdonald 1891: 19). In the Notwes today, although the village hierarchy appears largely church based, the authority of the chief is almost absolute, not only in his own village but in the whole district. A chief can ban a man from his village and other villages will support his ruling, preventing the man from travelling in the area. Informants often say that only people from chiefly lines can be chiefs, which suggests that the hereditary element noted by Macdonald still pertains.



Figure 14: Chief Wulmedu of Uwuw Lava⁶⁰ (Photo by J.W. Lindt 1890, taken from Tryon 1996b: 116)

The Graded Society

By killing pigs, men attained a place in the afterlife as well as earthly power and prestige, and most men in any village were members. A man advanced through the graded society by steps (or *rang*), for each of which goods such as shell money or mats, and pigs had to be gathered. For early steps, often taken by young boys or even children, the father or the mother's brother would buy⁶¹ a fowl or a pig to be

⁶⁰ Urulava, Notwes Santo (Macdonald 1892: 52)

⁶¹ Codrington does not define currency – in preEuropean times it could have been shell money (in Santo and the Banks islands) mats (from Malo and Ambae), pigs and, in Santo, pots (Speiser 1990: 242-48).

sacrificed. For each step after the first couple, the candidate would have to get his own sponsor and amass his own pigs and other valued goods. Attaining higher ranks usually involved killing many pigs, as well as giving a feast and a dance for the entire district, and could take months or years of work. Exceptional *mana* (spiritual power), expressed by the ability to accumulate pigs and other ceremonial goods, was needed to achieve high grades, and this was out of reach of the majority. This was the way society was ranked and controlled and the older and wealthier men retained power and influence (Codrington 1891: 102-7).

The high man in the *Supwe* was not a lone entrepreneur. He had to be sponsored by other men of rank; anyone who was not wanted could readily be thwarted in his ascent as Allen (1981b: 110, 131-2) points out. The chiefs and powerful men of a district worked together, which is why the idea of peace was strongly associated with the graded society (Lenki Bilat of Wusi also said the chiefs used to be the peace-makers in that area – see Tryon 1996b). This was not an institution of *de facto* leaders of small, temporary bands of followers, rising and falling in isolation; but a district wide political system with far reaching links, in both the material and the spiritual worlds:

Cultural change in the Pacific has long been seen as a recapitulation of the classic pattern of social evolution from tribe to chiefdom to state....Northern Vanuatu presents a very different picture which confounds such universal models of historical process, with a likely development from a simple chiefly structure at initial settlement through to an elaborate system of acquiring rank in the recent past through grade-taking ceremonies involving the sacrifice of specially reared pigs. This was a system that transcended language boundaries and individual islands to create webs of power between different areas, underwritten by elaborate patterns of inter-island exchange.

(Bedford & Spriggs 2008: 102) Cultural geographer Joel Bonnemaison (1996a: 200-16) also seemed to think there was a cline of systems of political power, from the strictly hereditary to the strictly achieved system. He saw the graded society as a more recent development than the established methods of political leadership in other parts of Oceania, but it is not known how old it is in the Vanuatu area. Pig bones are found in association with Lapita plainware in southeast Santo (Galipaud 2011: 472) and the evidence for intensification of taro growing in the Notwes (Galipaud 2011: 473), coinciding with the first findings of circular pig tusks⁶² in the Banks Islands (Bedford 2006a: 227), suggests the society could have been present in the north in some form at least 1000 years ago. These tusks, worn as bracelets, were also noted by the Spanish in Big Bay (*ibid.*), supporting the view that the *Supwe* was present, at least in that area of Santo. Galipaud believes there were two forms of *Supwe* in Santo – a version imported from the Banks Islands in the Notwes, and one from Ambae in the rest of the island (Galipaud 2011: 274). Harrisson (1936a: 250) thought the *Supwe* in west Santo came from Malo. Both could be correct – there were grades that appeared only on the west coast and on Malo (Deacon 1929; Rubinstein 1981; Tryon 1996b; Dorothy Jauncey, pers.comm., 3 April 2019), and the people of the Notwes today claim *kastom* (traditional) connections with both regions. Tasmate people have stories of travelling to the Bank Islands and to Ambae to exchange pigs (Galipaud and Walter 1997: 23).

There were two versions of the graded society in the northern islands: one, called the *Supwe* or variants of that name⁶³, extended from the Torres to North Pentecost, and included all the eastern islands as well as Santo and Malo. The other, the *Mangki*, thought to be a more recent and religiously focussed development of the *Supwe* (Layard 1942: 688), was found in Malekula, Ambrym and Epi (Figure 15). In other islands of North Vanuatu there were also several secret societies to which men could belong⁶⁴, but in Santo there was only the *Supwe*; not a secret society, but a public institution with its clubhouse, the *nakamal*, a central feature in most villages. Chiefs in Santo were all prominent members of the graded society, which probably had a prime role in maintaining pottery production in the northwest.

Speiser (1913: 97, 1990: 402), noting that that the grade system was not practised in some inland areas of Santo, concluded that this was because it had only recently

⁶² These tusks are artefacts produced by human intervention (see below) and associated with the graded society in North Vanuatu.

⁶³ Supwe is the name given to the graded society in the Notwes, other variants were *Hukwa* (Torres), Suqe (Banks), Sumbue (Malo). The Bislama word is Sukwe (Crowley 1995: 237). An ancestral term, *subwe can be reconstructed for Vanuatu languages, meaning "big man or graded society" (Clark 2009: 183) and indicating that the term (so probably the society) came into the area with the people.

⁶⁴ While Codrington and others thought the secret societies were different from the graded society, Rivers (1968:61) and Vienne (1996:234) see them as closely associated to the extent they could all be said to be part of the same system.



Figure 15: Divisions of the graded society according to Layard (1942: 688)

arrived on the coast and had not yet spread. But Layard (1942: 688) postulated an area between the northern *Sukwe* and the southern *Mangki*, with influences from both sides and a collection of different names for the society and the types of ceremony.

What Speiser and Guiart saw as a recent system in the villages of the interior might have been a changing system, as Layard (1942: 712-13) thought South Santo was part of the area where the two systems overlapped (Figure 15). The small islands off the coast of Malekula practised a non-competitive *Mangki* where groups entered grades together and were sponsored by the other "half" of the village (Allen 1981c: 27), in a structure more reminiscent of the rituals of the Baktamin of Highland New Guinea (Barth 1975: 47-49). In Atchin this was also thought to be recently introduced, along with patrilineal descent, by a named ancestor (Layard 1942: 17, 694).

Douceré, head of the Catholic Church in the then New Hebrides in the early twentieth century, postulated that the graded society in Santo was an old system with recent innovations, seeing it as religious rather than political. He thought there was an element of heredity, although chiefs did not control lands for other people (Douceré 1924: 41-42). Elsewhere too, high chieftainship appeared to run in families because men would pass the results of their efforts to their own children (Patterson 1981: 235). A chief's son would sometimes start at the bottom of the division of the *Supwe* his father had attained (e.g. Layard 1942: 52). This may have contributed to increasing the number of grades in some places, as younger participants achieved higher levels earlier in their lives.

To extend the number of *rang*, new grades were most likely purchased from other areas, which was probably the way grades changed order or rose from low to high (see also Bonnemaison 1996a: 203). If none were available elsewhere, grades already in the repertoire were sometimes split or recycled. An area where splitting seems to have been particularly prevalent was Nokuku, where the number of grades was enhanced by dividing some into as many as ten separate steps. According to one of Deacon's informants, there could have been 30 or more steps in the seventeen grades listed for Nokuku (Deacon 1929: 473). This inflation in grades may have been set off early by an increase in availability of pigs due to the intensification of agriculture with irrigated taro; but after European contact was influenced first by the wealth brought in by the sandalwood trade and later by increased demand from men returning from paid labouring in Australia with the means to buy pigs and take grades.

Grades in other places could be subdivided into several levels – systems of three and five grades in East and West Ambae had nine and ten ceremonies involved to get to the top (Blackwood 1981: 45, 55.). However, across the whole of Malekula, there was little variation in grade names (Corlette 1935b: 52-53), in contrast with Santo where the protocol and the titles were different in almost every village (Guiart 1958: 158-67). From the names for the grades and the differences between the names for both the whole institution and the individual grades, it seems most likely that the *Supwe* is old in both the Banks and the large islands of North Vanuatu, and that the *Mangki* of the middle north originated in Malekula and spread from there relatively recently.

Bonnemaison divided the graded society into three levels – most people who had only taken lower grades were the common "men of gardens" (Bonnemaison 1996a: 202); people who had risen to intermediary levels were village and district leaders and elders; and only the few who had attained the highest grades were the really powerful chiefs (*ibid*.). Hans Nevermann (1942: 259) tells the story of meeting an old chief in southeast Malekula who had attained the highest grade and was no longer interested in earthly things – he lived humbly and poorly, waiting for death. There are similar accounts of the withdrawal of high chiefs from Maurice Witts (1905, 7 March) in Sakao and Rubinstein in Malo:

"If a man went far enough through the system, he approached the status of a living ancestor, a man so imbued with power through his connection with the supernatural that he had begun to slough off his earthly nature."

Rubinstein 1981: 139

It is not known if there was ever any variant of the graded society in Efate, and it was not present in the southern islands of the archipelago, where chiefs were hereditary. Unlike the grades of the *Supwe*, the titles of the centre and south of the country were linked to land rights, and connected to each other in a pyramidal hierarchy. Bonnemaison classes this system of ascribed status as intermediary between the big man systems of western Melanesia and the chiefdoms of Polynesia (Bonnemaison 1996a: 212). But he points out that unlike the powerful chiefs of the Polynesian islands, these chiefs did not actually control tenure of the land their titles were linked to, (Bonnemaison 1996a: 213-15). As in the north, there were three classes of high

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chiefs, lesser chiefs and commoner, and pig sacrifices and exchanges were performed in the title-taking ceremonies. Although Bonnemaison thinks the southern system is older than the graded societies north of Epi, following the archaeologist Garanger, he sees it as brought in from the east by the chief Roy Mata only about the time that signs of the *Supwe* began to appear in the northern islands, around 1000 years ago, (Bonnemaison 1996a: 212-14).

The linguistic indications are that the *Supwe* either developed in place on the island of Santo or entered the area with the speakers of the North Vanuatu languages. Despite both Guiart (1958: 166), and Ludvigson (2005 [1981]: 1.9) thinking that the *Supwe* was recent in *Midelbus*, the lists of grade names collected by Guiart suggest time depth, as do the sheer number of grades found in Notwes Santo, more than anywhere other than Malo Island and Seniang in Southwest Malekula (Deacon 1970 [1934]: 472-74; Layard 1928: 151-52). The descriptions in Appendix C show that *Supwe* ceremonies reached an elaborate height in the west and northwest of Santo, especially the area of the Cumberland Peninsula. There were more grades in the area of the Cumberland language group, and missionary Mackenzie observed that eating *tabu* there were more stringent than elsewhere in Santo (Miller 1990: 334).

But because it was believed there was no graded society in Santo, or that if there was, it was introduced late and lost early, there is little or no information on the *Supwe* in Santo itself; recent anthropological studies all come from other islands (see Allen 1981a). But there are older descriptions of ceremonies on Santo (Appendix C), and a modified version of the *Supwe* is practised on the west coast today. With the help of these descriptions and information from chiefs and participants in the villages today, the rest of this section focuses on the practice of grade taking in Santo and its role in sustaining pottery making. The aspects important to this discussion are the role of the sacred fires (*Tabu Faea*); the elaboration of grades and ceremonies in the northwest; and the networks the graded society facilitated, especially in matrilineal areas.

Tabu Faea

After a grade was attained the individual would have a higher place and a new "sacred fire" in the *nakamal* (men's house). He could only eat food cooked at this fire and not at any lower place or with anybody who had not attained his rank. In some places

such as the Banks Islands, the penalty for breaches of the code of the sacred fire could be death (Codrington 1972 [1891]: 105; Speiser 1990 [1923]: 358-59).

Simultaneously, as he climbed through the *rang* on earth, the participant climbed to a higher place in the afterlife – his rise in status and the pigs he sacrificed went with him when he died so the higher the grade, the wealthier he became after death, both in status and in material (pig) riches. Acting both as a mechanism of suppression (Allen 1981b: 113) and a means of elevation, the graded society gave every man a place and a way of improving his lot.; a chief could only eat with other members of his grade, but he would know his place in any *nakamal* he stepped into (Rubinstein 1981: 139-41).

A central feature of the society in most areas is the sacred fire. Members of each rank are only permitted to share food with each other; this requirement is symbolised by the sacred fires on which the food of members is cooked. Men who attain the highest rank achieve considerable power and a certain (circumscribed) authority over their fellows: by long association with sacred things they themselves achieve a degree of sanctity.

(Patterson 1981: 190)

In some islands the Tabu Faea was a feature of the grade taking ceremony or of important occasions only, and at other times, men ate together. In the Banks Islands, the number of days the grade taker had to eat from his own fire increased with the height of the grade (Codrington 1891: 107). In west Santo, the sacred fires of the Rang were most strictly observed (Speiser 1913: 100; 1990: 358). The nakamal was a prominent building in all Santo villages; in fact Speiser thought that if a village did not have a men's house, they did not practise the Supwe. Inside this house all the men lived, slept and cooked. The house was partitioned into sections according to the different grades – with the low grades and their fires at one end, and the high grades progressing up the house. No one could enter the divisions of the house that were higher than his own grade, nor use the fires for cooking or the pots associated with those fires. Harrisson related a story of eating in a very large *nakamal* at Wora on the Big Bay side of the Cumberland Peninsula where only one old high chief remained. He ate in his section at the high end of the *nakamal*, gradeless Harrisson had to eat far away at the other end, and conversation was shouted between the two (Harrisson 1937: 385).

A chief could not eat at a fire that was not his nor could he eat from utensils that were not consecrated to his fire. He had to have his own pots and either cook for himself or have a young male acolyte to cook for him (Speiser 1990: 123). The dishes of the grade were marked with the insignia of that grade and could only be used by men of that grade. In several places, including the Cumberland Peninsula, breaking these laws was punishable by death. Mackenzie, the Nokuku missionary, tells of a chief from a *kastom* village visiting a teacher at a Christian village, and the teacher trying to borrow an appropriate pot to cook his food. When he mistakenly used the wrong one, the people from the *kastom* village came down and killed both the teacher and the neighbour who had lent him the pot (Mackenzie 1995: 66). This is direct evidence that the pots were intrinsically tied in with the graded society in Notwes Santo (see also Nojima 2008: 302).

"Garments and ornaments are not made without designs, nor is pottery" said Harrisson (1937: 353), noting that pottery patterns were said to be "writing belong black man" (*ibid.*). Different motifs on pots were designated for different grades in the *Supwe*. Some of the patterns that appear on high chiefs' pots, and other insignia, are named and widespread. There is a zigzag pattern called *panpan*, found on high chiefs' arm and leg bands in Nokuku, South Santo, and Southwest Bay in Malekula, all under the same name (Deacon 1929: 474, 494). M.E. Shutler (1968: 16) described this pattern on Wusi pots where I saw it still being worked under the same name in 1993 (Figure 26). People in the Notwes today say that, formerly, drums (*tamtam*) and pots were both made every time there was a grade taking ceremony.

Ceremonies

Eye-witness descriptions of grade taking ceremonies in Santo (see Appendix C) were recorded over a period of nearly sixty years. The first was by Gordon near Nokuku in 1869 (Bourge 1906: 183-88; Steel 1880: 335-7), then Speiser (1913: 122-33, 172-78) described ceremonies in Hog Harbour and Big Bay witnessed during his 1910 stay, and Baker (1929a: 24-29) saw a ceremony in Yekul, in the Sakao area, in 1927. While Gordon, as reported by Steel, did not name the event he was at, Speiser and Baker specified that these were grade taking ceremonies they were watching. Only Baker named the grades, but Speiser said that the grade he saw being taken at Hog

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Harbour was very high (confirmed by the sixty pigs he saw killed, compared to only ten for Baker). Drums were mentioned in these descriptions but pots were not.

Speiser's first description is very similar to Baker's, not surprisingly because the two ceremonies took place in the Sakao area around 17 years apart. However, it is noteworthy that Gordon's Nokuku account resembles Speiser's Big Bay description from the other side of the Cumberland Peninsula, 40 years later. And these two last are quite different from any other grade taking ceremony descriptions, mainly in the quantity of pigs killed, including in a preliminary ceremony which seemed to consist of the killing of what was described as hundreds of little pigs (see Appendix C, I, II, III). The other place a similar ceremony was described was in Wusi (Hagen 1893: 364-65)⁶⁵, raising the possibility that the entire west coast area that had both sandalwood and pottery in the nineteenth century also shared the same graded society ceremonies as far south as Wusi⁶⁶.

The centre of a grade taking ceremony was pig-killing. Small numbers of pigs were killed in lower grades, moving up to huge numbers for higher grades. All eye-witness descriptions of ceremonies emphasise the killing of large numbers of pigs. These were usually tusked pigs – either boars or *narave*⁶⁷, and in the ceremonies described for Santo (in Appendix C, III, IV) the pigs were clubbed on the nose by the grade taker. In the Cape Cumberland ceremonies, there was a preliminary event where the main participant danced on a stone table⁶⁸ (mistakenly called an altar by some witnesses and missionaries), and his supporters, other high-caste chiefs, danced in front of him while numerous small female pigs, (said to be two hundred in each case) were thrown to them. They carried them to the grade taker who clubbed them. Gordon said they were all cooked and eaten, but Speiser maintained that in Big Bay the small pigs could not be eaten and were thrown into the sea⁶⁹. In both cases the

⁶⁵ O'Reilly (1958: 36) and Shineberg (1999: 285) both think Hagen's account was cobbled together from several sources.

⁶⁶ Today the names of the chiefly lines in Wusi are words from Cumberland languages, which mean nothing in the present Wusi language.

⁶⁷ So-called intersex pigs – actually boar with inherited malformation of genitals (Baker 1929a: 115-130). – these pigs were infertile but grew exceptionally good tusks (Codrington 1972 ([1891]: 57n)

⁶⁸ This was called an altar by some witnesses and missionaries (Millar 1990: 262) but in the Notwes, at least, it was a low platform for the chief to stand on to kill his pigs and call out his title.

⁶⁹ Supwe members in Santo could not eat female animals (Speiser 1990: 120). Some of these restrictions still pertain in Christian villages today.
large tusked pigs for the actual grade taking were killed in the evening and then there was a dance. In Speiser's ceremony the dance differed from that in Sakao in the use of panpipes, rather than beating bamboos; the Chief's "favourite wife" danced beside his table and the other women were dancing in a line on the side. Gordon, however, described 100 highly decorated women doing their own dance.

The Cumberland Peninsula is the only place in Santo where there appeared to be central female participation in the men's Supwe but Douceré (1924: 41-42) also reported a women's grade taking system that he described as analogous to the men's, but not as important. Deacon (1970 [1934]: 478-97) described women's grade taking ceremonies and separate societies in a couple of places in Malekula, but at the time of Rubinstein (1981: 139) a women's society was unknown in Malo, and Harrisson (1936b: 113) said the women's system was only in the patrilineal islands. However, several observers saw women's status as higher in the matrilineal islands of the north and east than elsewhere (Corlette 1935a: 480-81, Harrisson 1937: 332), and in East Aoba, women could sometimes take grades for themselves in the men's society (M. Rodman 1981: 85). Speiser found women's grade taking in the Banks Islands, Malekula and Ambrym as well as reporting four women's grades in western Santo, and noting a chief's wife killing pigs at Talwuds in Big Bay (Speiser 1990: 357-58, 368). Galipaud noted lower stone tables in the west of Santo, said to be for women's pig killings (Galipaud & Walter 1997: 37). It is probable that, between the time of Speiser and that of Harrisson, the women's ceremony was discontinued, as one of the effects of mission influence and depopulation in that period (between 1910 and 1934). It is not known if dedicated pottery had a place in the women's grade taking.

Pigs and exchange networks

As is indicated above, the importance of pigs is in the tusks, first mentioned by Douceré (1924: 41-42) but not described by anyone other than Baker (1929: 115-30) who had an interest in the *narave* used extensively in the Malo-Santo area. These pigs grow tusks like males, and in both, if the upper incisors are knocked out, the lower tusks will be unimpeded, and in about eight years will circle round and either grow back into the jawbone (Baker 1929a: 129) or continue circling up to three times; these animals were supremely valuable but could not forage and had to be hand reared (Speiser 1990: 247). Gordon did not mention these "tuskers", but the pigs Speiser

saw killed in the main part of the grade taking, 26 in Big Bay and 60 at Hog Harbour, were all tuskers (the lower grade Baker saw being taken only required ten pigs). Deacon was told that in Nokuku 1000 small pigs and 100 large pigs were required for the high grade called *Tor Boi*⁷⁰ (Deacon 1970 [1934]: 472).

Raising and feeding huge numbers of pigs was feasible in the Cumberland Peninsula, where a lot of taro was grown in the large irrigated gardens, and this may be the way inflation of grades in this area started (Galipaud 2011: 473). But the true art in accumulating pigs was the elaborate exchange system this involved (Speiser 1990: 143-45, 250). Most pigs were apparently raised by someone other than the grade taker and a prime activity was dealing in pigs – exchanging materials for them, lending them out and dealing in different values. Pigs were lent to pay bride-price, fines for infringements, or for ceremonies – the expert pig dealer could call numerous debtors to pay up for a ceremony and there was skill in calculating how to accumulate enough pigs, sometimes thousands, to take a high grade. Malo and the Sakao area were both centres of *narave* pigs which were often worth several ordinary pigs.

Another way of guaranteeing enough pigs for a *Rang* ceremony in the Notwes was to pray to a specific stone, which would yield up a piece of pottery for the grade candidate to take home and keep. The right number of pigs would miraculously be available on the day of the ceremony (Macdonald 1892: 52).

Pottery was important in the exchange context too. The value of a pot, I was often told, was one pig or one mat. On Santo, mats were not traditionally made for clothing (Speiser 1990: 236), but pots were traded out to places like Malo and Ambae in exchange for mats (see Nokuku chief, Figure 14) as well as pigs.

The trading activity between these grade chiefs formed networks that were sometimes very extensive: the highest "castes" of each district worked together to form wide alliances, in some cases covering a whole island (Speiser 1990: 102). These cross-kin networks of exchange and obligation acted as a force for peace (Blackwood 1981: 37, 41), symbolised by the cycas palm, or *mele*, which gave its name to the whole society

⁷⁰ "Many pigs"

in some areas of southwest Santo and Malo. Where men were competing for grades and exchanging pigs, they were not fighting each other. In matrilineal areas, the bonds between men of the same grade substituted for the lineage bonds between men in patrilineal areas, and thus the graded society took politics away from kinship, forming alliances between non-related males (Allen 1981c: 24). The matrilineal societies of the islands of Vanuatu were linked in far reaching networks that did not appear in patrilineal areas where authority and kinship went hand in hand (*ibid*).

Individual grades were also bought or traded. There are indications, through the names, that grades on the west coast had come from or been sold to such places as Sakao, the south coast and Malo⁷¹, and this theory is supported by evidence from research elsewhere – after contact Ambrym was still buying grades in the *Mangki* from Malekula (Bolton 1998:187; Patterson 1981: 192). Grades were often equivalent in different places (Rubinstein 1981: 139), and at least on Santo a man could expect to go to another place, be provided with the right fire, and buy or use the appropriately marked pots (Mackenzie 1995: 66)

The accounts of hundreds of pigs being killed in grade ceremonies in Santo are matched by reports of large numbers in other places (Blackwood 1981: 57; Patterson 1981: 234 n.19). But the extent and grandeur of these ceremonies might have had recent origins in western Santo. In the middle of the nineteenth century when sandalwood exploitation began on the west coast of Santo, the chiefs of the river valleys undoubtedly came down to the coast to protect their property and trade with the foreigners. The usual initial period of overvaluation of European goods seems to have been absent from Santo: despite the trouble and expense the sandalwood traders had, to supply enough pigs, right from the beginning of the trade these pigs were the main, and often the only, exchange items people would take for sandalwood (Shineberg 1967: 133). This testifies to the fact that the chiefs of the Cumberland Peninsula, already powerful, were enhancing their power and intensifying their grade taking system. The number of pigs involved in ceremonies, and the secularisation and individualisation thought to be characteristic of the *Supwe* (Layard 1942: 13.14, 743), may be an effect of early European contact.

⁷¹ At least in pre-European times, pots were probably traded to Malo for grades as well as pigs.

European Contact and the Supwe

The Vanuatu archipelago was seen by early European travellers as a malarial place with few easily exploitable assets and numerous hostile natives (Harrisson 1937: 133). In the northern islands, there were many small independent polities, and no apparent rulers that could be negotiated with to keep whole islands or even large areas under control (MacClancy 2002: 45). So, while more strategically located Pacific islands and those with smaller populations, healthier climates and suggestions of available mineral wealth were subject to European attention from the late 1800s, the islands of Vanuatu were only briefly and occasionally contacted until nearly the middle of the nineteenth century. But even in that context, having been the first island "discovered" by Europeans, Santo was surprisingly late in being taken into the European circuit of exploitation. This section briefly summarises known early contacts with Santo before discussing the first large scale episodes of exploitation that affected both the graded society and the production of pottery.

Early contact

De Queiros described Big Bay as a fertile place with a mild climate, numerous villages and clean, healthy people who made black "well-worked" clay pots⁷² (Markham 1904: 269). There were many pigs, and full-circle tusk bracelets were seen (Kelly 1966: I: 299), suggesting the possibility of the presence of the graded society. It has already been noted that the Spanish attempt at settlement quickly failed, but while de Queiros' ship returned to Europe (MacClancy 2002: 38), navigator Luis Vaz de Torres rounded Cape Cumberland and took a bearing to the southwest. Although Torres reported seeing high mountains and went as far south as the latitude of New Caledonia, he was not close enough to shore to distinguish the island nature of the Vanuatu chain (Dickie 1981: 111). French explorer Bougainville took his ship between Malekula and Malo in 1768, and sighted the mountains of the west coast of Santo (Jolly 2009: 78). Captain James Cook, who tacked right down the west coast in the *Resolution*, did not land but saw, on August 31st 1774, "...a low sandy flatt where several of the Natives made their appearance" (Beaglehole 1988: 518). Cook added "We observed on the sides of the hills several plantations that were laid out by line and fenced round" (Beaglehole 1988: 519). The latitude was between 15° 20' and

⁷² Though this apparently was a second-hand report – the pottery was sighted during a raid by Queiros' sailors (Mondragón 2007: 164-65).

"Cape Lisburne", where Wusi is the only place to answer that description. Cook does not report seeing any fires or other signs of villages south of the Cumberland Peninsula. Neither Bougainville nor Cook had any direct contact with Santo people (Shineberg 1967: 130).

Explorers were followed by whalers before the end of the eighteenth century, but the islands of Vanuatu were not an important hunting ground (Lever 1964: 35). There are few known contacts with Santo before the middle of the nineteenth century: Shineberg mentions three whalers that visited between 1800 and 1835 and a merchant vessel trading in Big Bay in 1834-5 (Shineberg 1967: 130), all before Lewis's unsuccessful sandalwood exploration in 1845. Langdon (1984) lists five American whalers in the Espiritu Santo area between 1828 and 1851, only one of which is known to have made contact with the shore. There is no further information about which part of Santo anyone saw. In 1845, Turner, a London Missionary Society (LMS) missionary travelling around the southern islands of the group came into contact with both a sandalwooder and a Samoan Christian who had been to Santo, and in 1859 with some Lifu men who had worked on Santo for nearly a year (Turner 1861: 386, 387, 395, 509).

Before the middle of the nineteenth century, the west coast of Santo had been reported as uninhabited (e.g. Jacobs 1844: 233). The first reference to a village near the shore is from Patteson, the Anglican bishop, who visited Tasmate in 1856 and reported pottery there (Yonge 1894: 161-2), as well as labour recruiters. What had happened in between was the discovery of sandalwood on the west coast.

Sandalwood

Sandalwood exploitation, unlike whaling, necessitated dealing with local people (Abong 2008: 27). Sandalwood, important in the China tea trade, had been discovered in the southern islands of the Vanuatu archipelago in 1825, but the trade was precarious, and after a brief boom in the 1840s, it declined rapidly until a new supply was discovered on Santo in 1853 (MacClancy 2002: 44). Sandalwood only grew well in the drier western areas and, other than a small area in western Malekula, the west coast from around Wusi to Wora Point in Big Bay was the only place it was found north of Efate (Gillieson *et al.* 2008). The only place the Oxford team found it was in "secluded parts of the northwest" (Marshall 1937: 204).

After the southern islands had been exhausted, the sandalwooders concentrated their efforts on Santo and by this time the extraction pattern was more stabilised (Shineberg 1967:130). The business was in the hands of a few large entrepreneurs who kept it profitable by putting crews of indigenous labour from other islands on shore to cut and prepare the timber before it was collected by ship (Shineberg 1967: 190-91). By 1856, Santo had around 16 stations (Beasant 1984: 5), although Wusi is the only one named (Scarr 1968: 84 n24). One trader was reputed to have 150 islanders from elsewhere in the archipelago working on Santo (Shineberg 1967: 191). Other traders (Shineberg names Burns, Towns and Henry) also had stations on Santo from 1861, all almost certainly on the west coast, as this was the only place the wood was found. But by 1868 there was one sandalwooder left, and the trade ended around that time (Shineberg 1967: 135).

Despite this being Santo's first extended dealings with white traders, the Santo owners of the sandalwood reportedly had the edge. There was no hope of coercion (Shineberg 1967: 157), and the "Santoese" would only accept pigs for their wood, so sandalwood ships had to collect pigs from other islands to meet this demand. Shineberg quotes all three of the operators above as complaining about this, and she does not record ships to Santo as bringing in any other trade goods except tobacco, soon giving up offering other items such as they had exchanged elsewhere (Shineberg 1967: 155). There had been complaints for a while of the difficulty of interesting New Hebrideans in any goods that did not contribute to the traditional economy and this is evidenced by the records of what the ships carried in to trade. Even so, the high numbers of pigs required eventually drove the market to a halt (Shineberg 1967: 145-62). The profits were too uncertain for anything other than small ships at the end of their lives to be used (with islander logging crews), and eventually the costs of this exchange exceeded the price that could be got from sandalwood and the entire trade declined (Beasant 1984: 6; MacClancy 2002: 45-46).

The main function of pigs in the society of the Santo west coast was to contribute to the *Supwe*, and the high prices asked for sandalwood resulted in an inpouring of pigs,

which contributed to the inflated number of grades noted by Deacon in the northwest area and to the elaborated ceremonies noted by Gordon, Hagen and Speiser on the west coast and Cumberland Peninsula. The number of pigs needed for each grade increased, the grades were subdivided, subsidiary ceremonies were inserted, requiring more pigs, and in the late nineteenth century more grades could be taken in the Notwes than anywhere except in Malo (with whom grades as well as pigs were probably being traded⁷³) or Seniang in South Malekula (see Deacon 1929). Already large quantities of taro were being grown in irrigated beds, and with an increase in the number of pigs to be fed, the demand on taro must also have increased, and concurrently, the demand on the labour of the women, who grew and cooked the taro and looked after the pigs.

The effects on pottery would have been two-fold. While the demand for new pots for every *Supwe* ceremony increased, the use of pottery as a trade item declined – while pigs could be bought with sandalwood, pottery production was no longer essential for the pig trade. This may be the period when the potters of the Cumberland Peninsula stopped supplying an export market to other parts of Santo and to other islands, since local demand for female labour, to produce food for the pigs and pots used in the ceremonies, increased at the same time as the supply of pigs was being satisfied by the sandalwooders, so pots were not necessary for exchange.

There is some information from the Tasmate area about the effects of sandalwooding, but local legends mainly talk about increased hostilities between bush people and coastal people as an effect of competition for access to European goods, and the resultant sorcery and deaths (Tzerikiantz 2006: 50-58). The increase in pigs and grade taking, leading to an increased use of magic, is seen as contributing to bad feeling, murder, illness and depopulation. Tzerikiantz (*ibid.*) indicates that people blamed sorcery for epidemics and did not necessarily associate them with Europeans at this stage.

Other effects of the sandalwood trade on local life can be postulated, especially for the northwest in the years from 1853 to 1865. It is highly likely that the sandalwood

⁷³ There are individual grades in both Tasmate and Nokuku found nowhere else except Malo (see Deacon 1929; Tryon 1996b; Dorothy Jauncey pers.comm., 2019).

trade drew people down to the best anchoring places of the west coast; the oldest coastal villages of Valpei, Nokuku and Tasmate are all at places where there is either a cove or some other means of shelter. It is also likely that when the trade declined people withdrew back up their sheltered and defensible river valleys. Despite theorising by Speiser (1913: 161-69) and Nojima (2008: 40, 51) there is no evidence that the west coast had a different coastal population that were all wiped out and replaced by hill people during the days of the mission: the ruins sighted by Speiser at river mouths on the coast could be the remains of sandalwood camps (villages are not normally situated in those locations because of the dangers of flash flooding). Gordon found people at Nokuku in 1869 (Steel 1880: 339), and Macdonald (1892) reported 15 villages on the coast, most in what he called the Pelia district (the broader Nokuku area).

Labour trade

The labour trade developed slowly, islanders first joined ships' crews and were then employed in the sandalwood trade. In 1863 sandalwooder Robert Towns took labourers, most likely from the southern islands (Beasant 1984: 6-7), to work on his plantation in Queensland (Shineberg 1967: 118, 193). As sandalwood became unprofitable, many sandalwooders joined the labour recruiters and found Santo a productive area to recruit, from the 1860s onwards (Scarr *ibid*.; Wawn 1973 [1893]:164,172, 273, 404; Shineberg 1999 quoted by Lightner & Naupa 2005: 58). Young men wanted to go overseas to work, particularly to Australia. The difficulty was to get them home again to their villages, sometimes because of the unpredictable west coast weather and sometimes because they did not want to return (see Wawn (1973 [1893]: 114, 116-8). By 1868 the Queensland trade was regulated, and the worst of the atrocities of forced recruitment and labour were over (Scarr 1968: 6-7).

Labour recruitment occurred first on the west coast, but in Santo the east side with its sheltering islands and rocky harbours was often more accessible than the bleak and exposed west coast (Speiser 1990: 47; Wawn 1973 [1893]: 25, 114, 191). The 1870s, when both Wawn and Giles were on recruiting ships, was a period of particularly bad weather in the region and the west coast was often inaccessible (Wawn 1973: 113, 114). There are few reports of recruiting in Big Bay, although Giles, who reported large populations around the River Jordan in 1877, thought they had previous

experience of kidnappers (Scarr 1968: 82-83). The worst effects of black-birding were felt in the southeast corner on the island where most of the adult populations were apparently removed, especially from the vulnerable villages on the small islands ringing the southeast coast (Speiser 1990: 47; Wawn 1973: 84-87, 172). The remaining villagers, particularly on the islands and the adjacent mainland, were virtually wiped out by imported diseases (Miller 1990: 40; Speiser 1990: 34). But the reduction in local island to island trade, which apparently virtually ceased when canoes became vulnerable to kidnapping by unscrupulous black-birders (MacClancy 2002: 61-63; Miller 1990: 10), would have also affected the west coast: goods moved long distances between the islands of what has been called an "Oceanic Mediterranean" (the North-Central islands from Santo and Maewo down to Ambrym – see Bonnemaison 1996a: 208, 1996b: 174; Hoffman 1996: 184) until blackbirders started kidnapping canoe-loads of travelling people. From a trade boom in the sandalwooding period, the coast would soon experience a slump in both local and European trade, as well as population reduction.

Recruiting to work for planters, both in the Vanuatu archipelago and overseas, gave men who had not previously any way of advancing in the hierarchy of the Supwe the chance to earn the money and prestige to take part when they returned. This would have further contributed to the elaboration and intensification of the Rang. Elaborate ceremonies with the killing of hundreds of pigs may not have been seen before this sudden increase in wealth, confirmed by the observation that the huge number of grades listed in that area by Deacon really represents a few grades split into several ceremonies, as can be seen by the names for the individual grades (Deacon 1970 [1934]: 473). This is a probable post-contact device to prevent new rich young men from rising too far and too fast in the Supwe and upsetting the established social gerontocratic order (it is also a possibility that new grades could no longer be purchased from elsewhere as interisland trade declined, an early factor in a declining need for pottery, despite the increase in grade-taking). After the sandalwood trade finished, young men could still recruit as labour in Australia, Fiji or New Caledonia, and return with foreign currency and position to buy their way up the grade system as Speiser surmises, paying money for tusked boar (Speiser 1990: 49):

The absolute value of the tusked pigs has been steadily increasing since the advent of the white man. Through the money earned from the whites, young natives could buy tusked pigs and thus acquire a higher rank in the *sucque* [sic] while still young in years.

(Speiser 1990 [1923]: 248)

West coast Santo was not the only place in the islands of Vanuatu where European contact and trade had the initial effect of bolstering or even enhancing traditional systems. Other places valued mainly items of trade that could be fitted into the indigenous economy: Bedford and Spriggs give the examples of bottle glass substituting for volcanic glass for cutting tools, and iron saucepans were accepted in many places, even those that had access to pottery (Bedford & Spriggs 2008: 111). On west coast Ambae, access to tusked pigs also accelerated through European trade with a consequent increase in the extravagance of the grade taking ceremonies (*ibid.*).

Sahlins (1992: 13-21) states that people when initially contacted by European society, only want trade goods that can be fitted into their own mode of living. He sees, however, a fast-reached limit to the amount of such practical items that can be absorbed to replace tools of subsistence production. After that need for practical goods is satisfied, people may only accept "commodities of social and ritual value" (*ibid.*).

The people's efforts to obtain certain so-called prestige goods may have no apparent limits. Nor do increasing supplies of these things bring about a corresponding decline in value. The effect rather is to increase society as such: the scale, density, and pageantry of its relations. Foreign commodities are thus harnessed to the evolution of traditional culture.

(Sahlins 1992: 17)

It seems, however, that in the case of Santo, the demand was immediately for the pigs as the prestige goods, and the resulting acceleration was only limited when the trade collapsed.

Western Santo was the only place where pottery, sandalwood and the graded society all coincided in the nineteenth century. Oddly, it seems that the soils that were good for sandalwood were also good for pottery, and consequently a previously sparselyinhabited area of Santo attracted people with pot-making ability down from the Cumberland range, and gave them, through the *Supwe*, a reason to continue and even increase their pottery making, at the same time as other outlets for pottery, such as inter-island trade, were becoming impractical or even dangerous. The people of the Cumberland Peninsula may or may not have had one of the most complex graded societies in the northern island of Vanuatu before the advent of the sandalwood traders, but the consequent pig trade made it so, and while any pot-makers elsewhere in Vanuatu lost their trade and their product became obsolete, the pots of the *Supwe* on the west coast were enhanced in value.

However, as hinted above, this inflation could not last and after the collapse of the sandalwood trade, western Santo was left vulnerable to other external factors which soon affected both the *Supwe* and the pottery. The next chapter follows this deterioration through the events of the colonisation of the New Hebrides.

Chapter Six: Decline of the Supwe and Pottery

The peak the *Supwe* attained in the Notwes was not sustainable and the vectors of its decline were set in motion almost as soon as those of its inflation. As well as increasing the ability of men to take part in attempting its higher ranks, the labour trade removed young men from the work force, which not only had a direct effect on the number of supporters that were available to work for the ceremonies but also meant the best part of the economic work force and the potential parents for the next generation were reduced. With young men away, fewer wives came in so there were fewer workers for raising taro and pigs, and fewer children:

The consumption of tusked pigs therefore increased and their number inevitably diminished. Another reason for the decrease is the present shortage of women, which means fewer personnel for looking after the pigs [....] breeding has also tended to lapse as part of the general demoralisation.

(Speiser 1990 [1923]: 248)

Speiser seems to prefer to think that a decrease of pigs was due to their all being eaten, and a decrease in people was because they were too "demoralised" to have children, rather than attribute these to the disruption of traditional networks and import of disease under European influence. As well as being devalued by the ability of returned plantation workers to bypass the traditional networks by buying their own pigs and thus achieve high grades, the indigenous system of authority was undermined by other causes. The first of these was the political activity of the missionaries, who reportedly ignored the traditional chiefs and appointed their own (Miller 1990: 55; Speiser 1990: 49), although Rubinstein (1981: 144) suggests that at least in some places the structure of the graded society was recast inside the new order of the mission. But over and above all this was the catastrophic effect of depopulation on traditional life.

This chapter will look at the factors that contributed to the decline of the *Supwe* and pottery, from the last decade of the nineteenth century until Independence in 1980. The first part discusses the early era of the missions and the return of the indentured labourers before the First World War, when depopulation started in earnest. From this time, events in other parts of the island and the archipelago as a whole also

influenced the *Supwe* in pottery-working areas. The New Hebrides became a protectorate and then a Condominium in this period, for which most information comes from the writings of the missionaries and visiting observers such as Speiser.

Between the wars, when there were no resident observers writing about the west coast, it is necessary to rely on mission and other literature, such as the descriptions of the Oxford Zoological Expedition and information recorded by other occasional visitors who were passing through. Finally, from about the time of the Second World War, there are the accounts of local people and the informants of other historical and anthropological writers, starting with those of Jean Guiart, the French anthropologist who surveyed the Santo highlands in the 1950s. The focus of this chapter therefore moves out, from a concentration on the west coast in the early days of the missions,to Santo-wide and even nationwide influences, with finally a discussion of what these events meant for the people of the Cumberland Peninsula and the west coast, and the effects on their traditional practices of grade taking and pot-making.

Early Influences

The missions seem to have followed the sandalwooders around, probably taking advantage of their initiating contact and trade:

The natives of Espiritu Santo are cannibals and many are exceedingly fierce. Those on the west coast have frequently been visited, and are more pacific and disposed to trade; but on the east and inland where they have seldom met strangers, they are not so friendly.

(Steel 1880: 337)

This may explain why most early mission attempts were made on the unpredictable west coast, and it was only later that stations were established in the south and east, where ship access was more reliable, after the labour recruiters had established contact. The mission settlements opened the gates for other settlers (Harrisson 1937: 382) and missionaries were followed by traders and planters which necessitated some form of land registration and eventually, the Condominium.

Missionaries

Mission ships were in the waters of the archipelago from 1839 (Miller 2001: 127), but early missionary attempts were focussed, like those of the sandalwooders and labour recruiters, on the southern islands. The first attempts to esstablish missions in Santo did not seem to have much effect. Patteson, the Anglican bishop of Melanesia, took two "boys" from around Tasmate on the west coast in 1856-57 for his mission school in Auckland (Miller 2001: 176; Steel 1880: 337). Miller does not report what happened to them. Three missionary couples from Rarotonga and Erakor were dropped off near Cape Lisburn in the southwest in 1861 by the LMS ship John Williams. Apparently, most of them died of malaria within a year (Miller *ibid.*). In 1869 James Gordon of the Presbyterian Mission at Erromango, who had met two West Santo men and learned some of the Nokuku language from them, spent five months camping at Nokuku, where he bought some land and built a church. He planned to return, but was killed in Erromango in 1872. Another Presbyterian missionary, John Goodwill, again attempted a settlement at Cape Lisburn but, after four years of illness and attacks by local people, he left in 1874 (Miller 2001: 176-81).

The sandalwood boom on the west coast of Santo was over by the time Gordon appeared in 1869 (Steel 1880: 339). Labour recruiting was easier in Big Bay and on the sheltered east side, where access was less weather dependent, and chiefs had neither the experience in driving hard bargains nor such iron controls over their followers. Furthermore, because of the influx of pigs from the sandalwooders, and the hazards of interisland voyaging in the time of the black-birders, traditional networks between islands had been disrupted. The warm welcome Gordon received at Nokuku was from people who already knew Europeans and hoped for further benefits from associating with them. Gordon only stayed five months and all that is recorded from his stay was that he bought land, learned the language and taught the chief to read and write (*ibid*.). It was another 20 years before the next missionary was sent, but the influence of the missions from that time on was huge.

In 1881 the Anglican and Presbyterian missions partitioned their interests in the western Pacific islands, and most of the New Hebrides, including Santo, fell to the Presbyterian missionaries who settled on the islands of Malo and Tangoa, off the south coast of Santo in 1887 (Miller 1990: 2). The first successful mission settlement

on the mainland was on the land purchased by James Gordon at Nokuku in 1869. Missionary Macdonald arrived in 1890, built a house and two schools, and bought tracts of land for the Church as a precaution against the French Catholics acquiring a foothold (Jacomb 1914: 137). Macdonald left in 1893, but had travelled the length of the west coast and published his impressions of the area (Macdonald: 1891, 1892). Further Presbyterian missions were established at Big Bay in 1896 and Hog Harbour in 1897, the latter becoming a small European community with the missionary, a lay worker and eventually the first official British Agent for Santo (Miller 1990: 418, 426, 495, 523).

There were two more Presbyterian missionaries at Nokuku, J.N. Mackenzie, from 1895 to 1909, and Dr William Taylor from 1910 to 1912, but both left when their wives died. After that Nokuku was mostly either administered from one of the other stations on Santo or Malo, or served by NiVanuatu teachers and pastors. The Jureviu mission in Big Bay ran into disputes with local chiefs and European traders and lost its resident missionary in 1915 (Miller 1990: 20). Wusi, although the only mission station with inland Christian villages attached, never had a foreign missionary resident and after the second Nokuku missionary wife died, the climate of the west coast was thought to be too harsh for Europeans to live there.

Most of the west coast became Christian during the tenure of J.N. Mackenzie and remained so throughout all subsequent religious movements and political events, although there was support for the later Nagriamel movement in the Wusi area. Inland Presbyterian villages were established near Mt Tabwemasana above the southwest coast of Santo in the 1890s (Miller 1990: 143). The Presbyterians in Santo limited the effects of the French, particularly on the west coast where they managed to block them out entirely, and supported the introduction of the Australian planters and settlers who came, eventually, to dominate Luganville. After the First World War depleted its already dwindling workforce, the Presbyterian Mission did not get back to its former strength and its work was carried on in such places as the Christian west coast by local teachers, overseen by the expatriate missionaries, now mainly Australian, from Tangoa or Malo. Hog Harbour and Tangoa still had resident expatriate Presbyterian missionaries.

French Catholic priests from the Marist Mission arrived on Santo in 1887 but left in 1895 because of disturbances and the killing of a settler there (Monnier 1988: 104). They returned in 1902. There were several attempts to start a mission at Tolomako in Big Bay from 1901, but the place was "unhealthy" (Monnier 1988: 107) and the people as resistant to Catholic conversion as they had been to the Presbyterians. In 1921, the whole Tolomako parish population moved to Port Olry (Nevermann 1942: 244-47). In both places the Catholics were in close proximity to the Presbyterians but they also spread their domain over the whole southeastern corner of the island, which the Presbyterians had not touched. In 1907 the Catholic mission bought land at St Michel near Luganville on the south coast, and mission stations were established there, and then inland at Beleru⁷⁴ in southeast Santo (Monnier 1988: 115). Seventh Day Adventists arrived in the archipelago in 1912 (Jacomb 1914: 181), and started working in Big Bay about the time the Catholics and Presbyterians left.

Effects of the Presbyterian mission on the *Supwe* of the west coast were immediate. The pig slaughtering of the *Supwe* was identified as "heathen sacrifice" and converts had to give up every facet of the grade taking system. "Breaking caste" by eating "from the common fire" was the essential sign of accepting Christianity (Miller 1990: 259, *passim*). Missionaries disrupted ceremonies in unconverted villages (eg. Miller 1990: 263) and focussed on converting the chiefs, knowing the entire population would follow them into the church (Mackenzie 1995: 67; Miller 1990: 285, 292; Tzerikiantz 2006: 83):

In heathen times everyone lived under their Chiefs and it was the Chiefs that invited the Gospel onto the Nasara ["dancing ground"]. The Chiefs did this for the benefit of their people⁷⁵.

(Philip n.d. My translation from Bislama)

This is in direct contradiction of other missionary statements, that the chiefs of the *Supwe* had few or no followers and only ruled from fear (Miller 1990: 292, *passim*). The rapid conversion of the entire west coast reported by Nokuku missionaries may owe something to the conversion of the chiefs, and the fact that so many west coast chiefs were ready to convert may easily be due to the collapse of the previous system,

⁷⁴ Spelt "Belaru" on map, Figure 2.

⁷⁵ The meaning of the last sentence in the original is a bit obscure. An alternative translation could be: "The Chiefs remained to look after all their people."

after the withdrawal of the sandalwood trade and the loss of previous trade networks. The mission facilitated the accumulation of wealth, both by encouraging market crops and acting as a channel for entering the wider economy, as was seen later in Malo (Rubinstein 1981: 144). It is quite possible that other elements of the *Supwe* persisted, but the *Tabu Faea* and therefore pottery, was not part of the new system.

As well as the obvious effects of undermining the *Supwe*, the traditional focus of religious and political life, there were many other social and material effects of missionisation. Christians were encouraged to live in villages on or near the coast, to grow coconuts for copra and arrowroot⁷⁶ to support the mission, and to attend school. Houses in Christian villages were different, with raised beds, walls and sometimes floors of woven bamboo, and separate kitchens. People were busy with horticulture and mission activity and both adults and children attended classes in literacy and bible study. Child marriages⁷⁷ and polygamy were forbidden to Christians. This meant that girls were brought up in their own villages and went to school instead of learning the customs of the household of their future husband, and there were no spare wives to help grow taro and look after pigs. Mothers, with fewer children and no potential daughters-in-law to teach, started teaching their pottery craft to their sons, in the hope that they would teach their future wives. In place of the old trade networks, the Christians of the coast had new networks of links with other mission villages and church institutions.

By 1904, Mackenzie reported approximately 50 km. of the west coast as converted (Miller 1990: 274), and by 1927 it was claimed the entire population were Christian. However, after the last of the resident expatriate missionaries, Taylor, left the coast in 1912, dancing and grade taking either continued or was revived – Harrisson in 1934 attended a dance at Vasalea (see map Figure 19) and reported large numbers of pigs and grade taking in the whole west coast-Cumberland Peninsula area (Harrisson 1936a: 250). Despite Guiart's (1958: 147) claim that there was only one non-

⁷⁶ Macdonald had reported few coconut trees on the west coast; manioc was probably not introduced to Santo until later and is still not popular there (Weightman 1989: 105-7, 126)

⁷⁷ European observers said child marriage was more common in patrilineal areas (Corlette 1935a: 477) and local people are inclined to deny it ever took place in their own village; however, they point to other villages as practising this and there are witnesses to its occurrence in west Santo (Miller 1990: 54, 178, 182, 296). Chief Willy Mackenzie (among others) told me small girls in the north were exchanged as brides (sister exchange) and brought up in their future husband's home.

Christian village left in the Notwes by the 1950s, the local Church records from the west coast describe and name several hill villages that did not follow Christianity but continued to practise the *Supwe*.

There is no suggestion in the Notwes that pottery was discouraged by the mission, in fact expatriate missionaries seemed to be interested in, and proud of, the pottery of the west coast (Mackenzie 1995: 66; Macdonald 1892: 48; Miller 1990: 105, 229). But as well as getting rid of the *Supwe* in the coastal villages on the west side of the Peninsula, thus taking out a central reason for pot-making, the missions opened the gates for other colonists to establish themselves on the island of Santo.

Condominium

The first European settlers in Santo were probably traders who came in with the sandalwood ships but later traders, such as Stephens⁷⁸ at Valpei (*QJNH* 18, 1897: 29) and Cordin at Nokuku (J.N. Mckenzie 1906: 22), settled near mission stations. Most other plantations were in the depopulated southeast corner, where early English planters left or were bought out in the early 1880s by the French Compagnie Calédonienne des Nouvelles-Hébrides (CCNH), which also purchased uninhabited indigenously owned land in that area (MacClancy 2002: 70; Belshaw 1950: 17; Jacomb 1914: 21), and established the settlement of Luganville.

In 1902 Australian planters under the auspices of the Presbyterian mission took up land near the Tangoa mission on the south coast, but like the French before them, most of their efforts failed from inexperience, poor soil, and a shortage of labour (Bourge 1906: 158-9); Santo people preferred to grow their own cash crops rather than work for a planter. The French solved this by bringing in "Tonkinese" (Vietnamese) from 1913 (MacClancy 2002: 96) and the British Administration eventually relaxed the restrictions on employing local labour⁷⁹. Today large coconut plantations under foreign management are found along both main roads out of

⁷⁸ Before 1900 this trader went to Malo where he ran a store; his son was Fred, the South Santo planter who complained to the mission about the activities of the Naked Cult, and his grandson was Jimmy Stevens of *Nagriamel* fame (Miller 1990: 256, Guiart 1958)

⁷⁹ Australia's only colonial source of workers was the New Hebrides, so their planters were in competition with their mother country for labour.

Luganville, all the way to the south corner and inland at least as far north as Shark Bay.

In 1886 France proposed taking over the New Hebrides and putting an end to the labour trade. Britain would have agreed but Australia, which depended on the trade and feared being surrounded by the French, objected, as did the Presbyterian Mission (MacClancy 2002: 69). Britain's refusal precipitated the sending of troops from New Caledonia (Beasant 1984: 12), which had similar fears of being surrounded (by the English), as Australia. The arrival of the French troops and consequent protests of the Presbyterian missionaries led to the 1888 Anglo-French Convention which established a Joint Naval Commission to protect the British and French residents of the island group. It had no other responsibilities or powers (Jacomb 1914: 11) and the solution was seen as unsatisfactory by all parties. Eventually the Condominium was formed, and the British and French administered the country jointly from 1907.

In 1912 a British District Agent was appointed to Santo, settling in Hog Harbour, which was possibly the largest British settlement on the island at the time. Two years later the French District Agent was appointed and based in the small French settlement of Luganville on the west side of the Sarakata River, where eventually the French school and hospital were also established. Later the British representative moved to Venue Island near Tangoa and eventually joined the French Agent at the Segond Canal (Field 2002: 233, 240; Woodward 2002: 27, 36).

The English and French could each appeal to their own court system but the New Hebrideans were left without legal recourse (Jacomb 1914: 55-73). However, a Joint Court was established to handle matters dealing with labour and land claims, with "custom" as the basis for regulation:

... ni-Vanuatu were 'governed by native customs and tribal rules,' not English or French law, even though the capricious effects of British and French colonialism allowed the two regimes and their joint condominium to define exactly what 'custom' was, and subordinate the customary code to secondary levels of law and the diminished status of the 'stateless native'...

(Rawlings 2015: 162)

Although not a very effective protection, "Custom" was the only basis the people of Vanuatu could use to lay claim to their land. Rawlings sees this as the inception of the term and the original enshrinement of its importance (*ibid.*). Indigenous New Hebrideans were, in essence, stateless, being subjects of neither Britain nor France (Miles 1998: 36; Rawlings 2015: 162; Woodward 2002: 13.). They only came to the attention of the Administration as labour on plantations and farms, as "native police" for the Condominium, or when they broke the law (Jacomb 1914: 30). In Santo, this was generally to do with bush uprisings and political movements, usually described as "cargo cults". The indigenous people had no way to get legal title to land – claiming it under what became "*kastom*" was the only official way they could assert rights to their ground, and this became an important claim at the time of Nagriamel, and was used by both political sides in the battle for control at the time of Independence.

The condominium system of government, where nothing could be done without formal consultation between the two partners, and with little will on the part of either to spend any money on the country, meant that there was little interest in providing services to the indigenous people. The British left education and health services to the Presbyterian and Anglican missions, and took no interest in either until the Presbyterians forced some nationalisation of the education system by withdrawing from their schools before Independence (Woodward 2002: 51). The French Administration did build hospitals and schools, but mainly after 1960 when the French started a drive to recruit more indigenous people to their cause of retaining colonial control in the islands (MacClancy 2002: 124-26). There was also little interest in other forms of infrastructure: few roads were built until the Second World War, and the roads and bridges put in then by the Americans were not added to (except in the urban area of Vila), and barely maintained (see next section below). Today, that is still reflected in the inadequacy of infrastructure, health and education, and the poor access to these services for anyone living outside the main towns. On Santo, this is especially so for the villagers on the west side of Big Bay and the whole west coast down nearly to Tasiriki.

For the whole Condominium period the west coast of Santo seems to have been largely left alone. It is almost never mentioned in official records – any references seemed to concern only individual workers at the southern end of the coast.

Missionary records decline – the Presbyterian mission station at Nokuku was selfsufficient and self-supporting from about 1902 and had no resident foreign missionaries after 1925 (Miller 1990: 288-89, 324). Government agents do not seem to have toured the coast in any capacity before the Second World War. Local people's stories do not reach back further than the Second World War.

Epidemics and Depopulation

From the end of the sandalwood trade in 1865, the *Supwe* was affected by the loss of income and decline in population, even before the arrival of the missionaries. At the same time, the demand for pots for the ceremonies would have also declined. The "shortage of women" and "general demoralisation" observed by Speiser (above) were caused by the depopulation that was such a feature of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Women were needed to hand-rear and grow and cook taro for the tusked pigs that could not look after themselves. Without enough people the exchange networks were collapsing; furthermore, said Corlette (1935b: 63), speaking about Malekula, the first to die were the old men who knew the secrets and rituals. "A large number of important ceremonies are now imperfectly known by the young natives", observed Speiser in 1923 (1990: 307). With the decline of the *Supwe* the west coast of Santo went from being a place where there was a great demand for pigs to being a place where pigs were readily available (Harrisson 1936a: 250).

The two lists of grades collected from Nokuku are interesting as Deacon's informants were recollecting the *Rang* at periods nearly 30 years apart - Aleck Mapure left in 1897 to be trained as a teacher and then went to Big Bay (Miller 1990: 254, 384) and the other informant was very young when he was interviewed in 1925. In the interim some of the worst of the epidemics had occurred. Some low grades were no longer taken, the inflated grades declined in number but, most notably, the high grade of *Liwusi*, recorded in most of the Santo graded societies, was lost (today there appear to be only two named grades in Olpoe). The graded society apparently collapsed completely on the south coast of Santo because of depopulation after 1890 (Bonnemaison 1996a: 202).

Previously unknown diseases had begun to appear when European ships started visiting the Vanuatu archipelago from around the 1830s (Harrisson 1937: 261; Shineberg 1967: 130). The first wave of infection introduced cholera, dysentery, smallpox, measles, diphtheria and whooping cough (Miller 1986: 29), but was unrecorded in Santo. The only early estimate of population of Santo seems to be that of Douglas Rannie, an Australian government recruiting agent in the 1880s, who calculated the population of Santo in 1874 as 30,000 (Speiser 1990: 34-35). It should be said that Speiser, reporting such early estimates, thought they were undercalculations, as most were from coastal populations only, and Speiser (1990:41) thought he himself was the first person to realise the size of the inland populations. Harrisson (1937: 268)) also thought pre-European populations were higher than estimated. The coast and offshore islands of the southeast, first reported as "thickly inhabited" (Sandwich Island Gazette 1839), were depopulated between the Segond Canal and Port Olry by 1879 (Roberjot 1883: 186). When the Presbyterian missionaries first arrived, the whole of this corner of Santo was considered to be uninhabited, although the offshore islands had been repopulated, most probably by people from the mainland (Miller 1990: 11, 16, 39, 40, 486). Even in 1910, plantation workers were the only indigenous people left in the whole southeast corner of Santo (Speiser 1913: 37). Baker charted the sites of former villages in the Sakao area and was informed by a settler who had been there for 25 years that approximately nine tenths of the population had died in his time (Baker 1929a: 46, 50-51).

On the west coast there may not have been many coastal villages before the lure of European contact and trade. Cook had not reported seeing people before he got to the latitude of Wusi (Beaglehole 1988: 518), and Jacobs (1844: 233) thought the whole west coast was uninhabited. Speiser reported quite large hill populations during his visit, especially in southwest Santo, but only mission villages on the west coast itself, with the ruins of previous villages to be found at river mouths. These may have been the remains of sandalwood stations, however, or of temporary villages of hill peoples who came down to stay on the coast during the sandalwooding period.

In 1860-62 at the height of sandalwooding in Santo, a measles epidemic broke out in the southern islands of Vanuatu. The mission ship John Williams visited those islands as well as Efate before dropping mission teachers off at Cape Lisburn in southwest Santo in 1861 (Miller 2001: 176). With this evidence of direct contact between the infected islands of the south and the west coast of Santo it seems reasonable to postulate that measles did travel to the west coast. When Gordon visited in 1869, there would still have been some immunity to this and other diseases brought by the sandalwooding ships, and possibly even at the time of Macdonald and Mackenzie 30 years later. There is a marked contrast between the missionary letters from Nokuku and those from the Jureviu mission, occupied at the same time – illness of local people was hardly mentioned by Macdonald or J.N. Mackenzie, while reports from Big Bay (e.g. E. Mackenzie 1910, 1915) were full of epidemics, illness and death for the whole period of the mission (Miller 1990: 334-413).

Big Bay had been reported as having large populations from de Queiros in 1606 (Markham 1904: 264-65) and Cook in 1774 (Beaglehole 1988: 516) to Neilson in the 1870s (Steel 1880: 347). In 1877 the recruiter Giles estimated 500 men came down to the mouth of the Jordan to meet the labour recruiters, despite three other recruiting ships having called in the previous year (Scarr 1968: 82). But after the Presbyterian mission opened in 1896 and the Catholic one in 1901, populations declined. In 1908 Yates gave the population of the Bay as 810. Harrisson counted 647 in 1935 (Monnier 1988: 105), and the depopulation continued. It is possible that, despite the blackbirding activity in the area (Scarr 1967: 142), the people of Big Bay got their main exposure to foreign diseases from the missionaries.

When the indentured workers were returned from Queensland, from the 1890s, there was another wave of epidemics from newly introduced influenza, tuberculosis and mumps, while several of the previous diseases such as dysentery and whooping cough reappeared (Miller 1986: 29-33). Influenza, whooping cough and dysentery continued to recur, tuberculosis was chronic and in 1913 measles returned and cerebrospinal meningitis was introduced (Bowie 1916: 9; McKenzie 1910: 11, 1915: 14; Miller 1986: 31-2; Paton 1938: 6; *QJNH*: 127, 1925). Speiser calculated that by 1912 there were only about 12,000 people on the whole island (Speiser 1990: 34-35),

in contrast to the 1874 estimate of 30,000 inhabitants, credited by Speiser to Rannie (above) and by McArthur to Geddies (McArthur 1981: 17)⁸⁰.

Death from disease on the west coast does not seem to be epidemic until nearly the First World War when populations there also began to drop steeply (Miller 1990.: 87-88, 295). In 1916, there was a dysentery epidemic which killed 13 people near Peak Santo, somewhat south of the Wusi area, (Miller 1990: 315). By the early 1920s the Christian population had fallen by nearly half (Miller 1990: 276). Initially it was the coastal population that declined but by the 1920s the inland also started losing people (Harrisson 1937: 379, 386; Miller 1990: 494): in the 1930s Harrisson (1937: 261) calculated that about 17% *per annum* were dying in South Santo. The Ronovuro cult movement was probably at least partly a response to the increasing mortality, but the resultant movements of followers were seen to spread influenza among the bush people (Bowie 1924). There was a severe influenza epidemic on the west coast in 1927 (Miller 1990: 325). Harrisson's estimate of only 1000 people remaining in the 1930s in west Santo was about half the last number that was recorded by J.N. Mackenzie at the beginning of the century and confirmed by later missionary censuses.

A Rockefeller Foundation doctor who toured the Vanuatu islands in 1925 blamed the Condominium: according to his observations, population elsewhere in the Pacific was recovering but "...I must exclude the natives of the New Hebrides, whose situation under the condominium offers little hope for their racial regeneration" (Lambert 1929: 11). The Presbyterians and other missionaries treated disease in the villages (Miller 1990: 497; *QJNH* 127, 1925), and set up training schemes for Native Assistant Medical Practitioners (*QJNH* 201, 1943: 5), but epidemics and depopulation continued past the middle of the twentieth century (Belshaw 1953: 81, 91; Guiart 1958: 20-24; Ludvigson 2005 [1981]: 1.7). The Condominium administration did not initiate treatment for local people until 1954. The first general census was in 1967.

⁸⁰ These are among the lower estimates: Harrisson (1937: 268) suggests the pre-European population of Santo was around five times that number. Galipaud (2007: 28) estimates there were around 12,000 in the Santo population at the time of Queiros.

One of the demographers in charge of this census believed the extent of depopulation was inflated, both by over-generous estimates of pre-European populations and by exaggerated reports of deaths from missionaries and other early European contacts (McArthur 1981). But from Santo there are calculations from trained researchers: 12,000 for the whole of Santo in 1910 (Speiser 1990: 35); 4,090 in 1927 (Baker 1929a: 49); and approximately 3000 in 1954 (Guiart 1956b: 61-63). In the 80 years between the population estimates of Rannie (or Geddies) and Guiart, there could have been a loss of 90% of the population. Galipaud has the evidence of ruined and abandoned villages and believes this loss took place early on the west coast as well as in the attested period (Galipaud 1997: 21).

While depopulation can be minimised or discounted by demographers and statisticians it looms large in the stories of the Cumberland Peninsula and Wusi. There are people who were "born in the bush" in every village; most of them are survivors of epidemics that devastated their home villages and left them orphaned, to be taken down by priests, pastors or older siblings who had already moved to the mission. A lot of these were already Christian – Guiart says that by the time of his treks there was only one non-Christian village left on the Cumberland Peninsula, inland from Nokuku (Guiart 1958: 147). The chiefly family that owned the Pespia River near Olpoe moved to the shore more than once, but returned to avoid sickness on the coast. Their final move was after World War II⁸¹ (but before M.E. Shutler would have visited in 1967). Everywhere, NiVanuatu people tell, with horror, stories of their relations and forebears dying in such numbers "there was no one left to bury them³². The bush villages of the northwest are all empty now, with only the occasional self-isolating or diseased person still living antap. But health is still a preoccupation, unsurprising given the lack of government services available in this, as in every other department, with supernatural causes and remedies of disease both very much believed in.

⁸¹ Exact dates are difficult because birth dates were not recorded in the bush – people know how big they were when they came down but not how old they were nor how old they are now. Chief Tavue's older sister was named after the American planes flying over but later siblings including Tavue were born in bush villages.

⁸² This statement was constantly being made by people recounting the past in almost every village we visited, on both sides of the Peninsula. Like the rest of the (unreferenced) information in this paragraph it is part of local lore and cannot be attributed to any one informant.

The effect of this long period of population decline must have taken a toll on both the *Supwe* and the manufacture of pottery, and between the mid thirties and the early fifties of the twentieth century, there are no reports of either. Between the time Baker and Harrisson were attending ceremonies and describing pot-making, and the visit of Guiart, there was a withdrawal of the bush people from traditional practices – Guiart (1958) reports the Bayalo valley as the only place the graded society was still being practiced in the inland villages. He only saw pottery being made in Wusi and reported there were no learners.

Cargo cults

A series of twentieth century movements centred in southwest Santo have been seen as being equivalent to the cargo cults of Tanna (Tabani 2001) – however most of these movements were rather small and transitory and few of them were about ancestors returning with $kago^{83}$. At the most there were four or five of these, although Miller links them back to killings of planters in South Santo around the turn of the century (Miller 1990: 165) and sees Nagriamel in the 1970s as part of the same movement, called *Tamana*.

The early killings, that of Sawers in 1891, and that of Grieg in 1908, were by bushmen who had disputes with the victims. Only for Grieg was there a material motive, and it seemed to involve robbery rather than *kago* (Miller, *ibid*.). Another planter, Clapcott, was murdered in South Santo in 1923 by followers of an ex-mission pupil, Ronovuro, who inherited the ability to raise the dead from his maternal uncle. Around 1919, during an epidemic (Miles 1998: 65), Ronovuro began having visions and prophesied the return of dead ancestors. He thought pigs were dirty and caused disease, possibly an idea that originally came from the missionaries (Guiart 1958: 202), and that white settlers were standing in the way of the return of the dead. Clapcott was believed to have slept with and subsequently "poisoned" Ronovuro's wife, and his presence at Tasmalum was preventing the dead ancestors from coming back in a ship laden with *kago* (Miller 1990: 186-87). The information came from local indigenous Christians who disliked Clapcott and may even have framed Ronovuro for his murder (Guiart 1958: 198-202). The Ronovuro movement may be

⁸³ "Goods, stock" (Crowley 1995: 106), in this case, supernaturally acquired and therefore millenarian.

the only one that could be called millenarian, and it died after Ronovuro was executed for murder (Miller 1990: 212), but the idea that pigs caused trouble persisted.

The Midelbus leaders of two more cults, Avuavu who saw pigs as a cause of disease and disputes in the 1930s, and Atori who was supposed to be advocating preparation for the return of Americans with *kago* after the Second World War, were also arrested because of accusations against them. Avuavu died before he could be tried but most of the accusations against Atori were found false. Neither Guiart nor Ludvigson found any millenarian elements in either of these movements (Guiart 1958: 202-3; Ludvigson 2005 [1981]: 1.9).

Avuavu's teaching may have led to the decline of pig-keeping and the *Supwe* before the post-war Naked Cult, when the followers of Tsek in Midelbus were persuaded to give up all domestic animals, grade taking and other traditional practices as well as anything to do with Europeans, including working on their plantations. Despite rumours, and allegations against the bush people by the Tangoa missionaries, there seems to have been no millenarian element and no threat to the planters or the Christians and the movement was largely ignored by the Administration. After only about six years the founder died and the movement started to decline. People had not been happy breaking the marriage *tabu* or going completely naked, and very soon wanted their domestic dogs and chickens back, so had to go back to work in the plantations to get the money to buy them (Guiart 1958: 210; Miller 1948: 341). In the 1950s Mol Valiv again banned plantation labour and contact with Europeans, as well as pig-raising and grade taking. Guiart (1958: 213-17) also saw depopulation as a cause of this movement.

In these later movements, there is no component of supernaturalism or prophecy – Ronovuro was apparently the only leader recognised as a prophet. It appears that most of the millenarian or anti-colonial movements occurred in South Santo, in the area of the Tangoa mission station and the resultant cluster of expatriate plantations and indigenous Christian villages on the adjacent mainland. This could have been because people in close proximity to the "heathens" could report what was going on. However, Guiart saw the missionaries, planters and indigenous Christian villagers of South Santo as the causes of the phenomenon, and not just because of their presence

and the mixing of Christian ideas with tradition. Guiart thought the indigenous Christians who suffered from the land grabs of the colonists, and resented the bush people's failure to convert, were playing these two groups off against each other for their own gain. Guiart, viewing the Christians as millenialists, reasoned the coastal Christians were the source of all the stories of the ancestors returning in ships with *kago*, since the bush people believed their dead travelled to mountains or caves across land, not to other islands across water. He also pointed to troubles between indigenous Christians and expatriate planters on other islands such as Malekula, where the Christians connived in or incited the killing of Europeans by bush people. He thought the Presbyterian missionaries of Tangoa Island were unwitting tools of the indigenous Christians, uncritically voicing their complaints and passing on rumours started by them (Guiart 1958: 204-207, 216).

Guiart's central argument in 1958 was that the various bush movements described as Tamana were not a coordinated cult movement but a series of loosely related local attempts by the bushmen to improve their conditions by turning their backs on the colonial-influenced culture of the coast and the waetman economy (Guiart 1958: 204-7; Tabani 2008: 332), separatist rather than proto-nationalist. Guiart did not lay much emphasis on the continual epidemics that kept on depopulating the villages of the interior, but these strongly influenced the behaviours of the bush people, with a common focus of attempting to ward off disease and death by any means possible (Ludvigson 2005 [1981]: 1.7). It was only the earlier movements that seemed to display any hope of returning the dead – later the concern was to avoid any more death. The missionary idea that dirt caused disease was transmitted to the bush people, but secular observers suggested that the missionaries themselves contributed to dirt and disease by clothing the people (Speiser 1990: 43). The indigenous New Hebrideans realised from an early period, while the missionaries themselves were still looking for other causes, that the Europeans brought the diseases with them. Recognising that they could not rid their country of waetman, having as little to do with them as possible was entirely logical. The depleted populations and the lack of suitable marriage partners in the declining hill villages may have encouraged a relaxation of the tabu against marrying in ones own descent line (Guiart 1956b: 64; Ludvigson 2005 [1981]: 6.22; Miller 1948: 336). And it also could have been a relief to abandon the multi-pig killings required by grade taking, when there were not

enough people to support the cooperative effort required (Ludvigson 2005 [1981]: 1.9). Grade taking was probably the last abandoned practice to be resumed, and the *tabu* fires and multiple pig-killings had not returned to the bush by the time of Ludvigson (1974-6). There have however been pig-killings on the coast since the eve of Independence (See Figure 16 below), and I attended a multiple pig-killing (seven or eight, including at least some tuskers) at Linturi in 2009 (see Figure 17 below).



Figure 16: "A *Kastom Jif* killing a pig for Independence, 1979" (Photo property of Ben Frank, Nokuku)

The last movement associated with the Ronovuro cult (Miller 1990: 188, 218) was the post-World War II Nagriamel movement, discussed below, but it is difficult to see much connection, apart from the common annoyance (from the colonial viewpoint) of refusal to become Christian or work for the planters. Nagriamel was a response to

threats to land ownership and did not have the abandonment of the *Supwe* as a theme. Jimmy Stevens (Mol Patundun) killed pigs and took grades. However Ludvigson confirms Miller's claim of a *kago* element here. Money was collected and badges given out with a story that when there was enough money, "Merika" (the Americans) would return, kill everyone without a badge and the Nagriamel members would have stores full of goods and themselves would be "*Masta*"⁸⁴ (Ludvigson 2005 [1981]: 1.6).



Figure 17: Pig-killing at Linturi

In southwest Santo, many *kastom* practices, including pig keeping, were said to be abandoned by almost all the inland villages before 1930^{85} (Guiart 1958: 198). This would have completely precluded grade taking, to which pig killing is so central that when people talk about someone having killed a pig, they mean he took a grade ("*Mi kilem pig finis*" means "I am a Chief"). Taking higher grades in central Santo involved killing up to 300 pigs at one time (Ludvigson (2005[1981] 1.9), and few men would ever have been able to get these resources with the small populations in the mountains (Guiart 1958: 166). The network of pig exchanges, loans and debts had

⁸⁴ "Boss" (Bislama). A term generally applied to colonists only.

⁸⁵ However, Harrisson (1937: 383-84) and Miller (1990: 104) noted pig keeping and grade taking in inland south-west Santo in the 1930s.

enabled the chiefs of the graded society to help their followers with bride price and other assistance, and when the system was abandoned in the inland this lack enhanced population decline – Christians would not give wives to the inland people and they could not afford wives from people who still practised grade taking, as they had no pigs (Guiart 1956b). Guiart (1958: 158-66) recorded lists of grade names from many inland villages in the western mountains in 1954 but, in most of these, the institution was moribund. He found eight small villages on the Bayalo River practicing what he considered a dying and degenerate version of the grade system and shunned by other inland dwellers (1958: 127). In the 1970s the inland people told Ludvigson (2005 [1981]: 1.9) that the grade system was a recent import and not really their custom. However, the inland villages were buying "chiefs' pots" from Wusi in 1993, as they had been doing for at least the previous hundred years.

Second World War and Aftermath

The impact of the Second World War on the islands of Vanuatu was huge. In 1942 the Americans needed the country to use as a base to launch their Pacific campaign to retake the Solomon Islands and work their way up into Southeast Asia. They took little notice of the officials of the Condominium, and effectively behaved as an invading force (MacClancy 2002: 116), commandeering land, bulldozing plantations, and employing large numbers of local men as service workers for the troops. Their largest base was in Santo, through which over 500,000 troops passed (MacClancy 2002: 116), more than ten times the entire population of the archipelago at the time (McArthur 1981: 27). The Americans set up a camp the size of a town on the east side of the Sarakata River, appropriated land from both Europeans and indigenous New Hebrideans, and built a dockyard, airstrips and roads to the northeast and southwest. The people of Mafea were moved to the neighbouring island of Tutuba so that Mafea could be used for bombing practice (British District Agent, Northern District, ms.a. 1947). Men from all over Santo, as well as other islands, came to work for the American troops (Lindstrom & Gwero 1998: 4).

When the war front moved on, the Americans left Santo, destroying their equipment and leaving structures to decay (Beasant 1984: 29). The plantations were in disarray, planters had not recovered from depression debts and labour wages had been driven very much higher by the Americans (Belshaw 1950: 69-71). After an initial post-war boom, copra prices collapsed and the French planters lost their Vietnamese workers⁸⁶. It was around this time that the last of the Midelbus "cults" (Mol Valiv) arose, the people of the interior withdrew their labour and Guiart (1958: 1) was sent into inland Santo in 1954 to try and negotiate a return to work on plantations. In the late 1950s meat prices started to rise; and the plantation owners moved into cattle farming and started clearing more of their unused land. This began on ground in Santo originally "purchased" by the CCNH nearly sixty years previously, but since used almost uninterruptedly, if not by the previous owners, then by other indigenous New Hebrideans (MacClancy 2002: 133). This perceived land grab was one of the factors involved in the Nagriamel movement. Beasant (1984: 10-12) suggests all the French purchases were dubious and indigenous owners had no understanding of the nature of the alienation proposed.

There are no written accounts of the effects of the Second World War on the Cumberland Peninsula. It is not mentioned in any of the church accounts. There were few European visitors and none have left accounts of the war, although there was an American Army radio unit stationed at Cape Cumberland to give first warning to Luganville bases of planes flying in from the north (Littleton 1944a). There is no mention of local behaviour or practises in military reports (Littleton 1944b, 1944c) but this is within the period of local oral history and several stories, none very complimentary, are told of the Army landing, their goods and their behaviour. Some local people did trade and work with the squadrons but others, including the people of Olpoe (Nojima 2011: 16), went back up to the hill villages to avoid them. Here pottery making was continuing.

Coming down to the coast

In local people's accounts of the Cumberland Peninsula, when the people from the hill villages overlooking the rivers came down to live on the coast, they descended to both

⁸⁶ Most returned to Vietnam to support Ho Chi Minh, according to the descendents of those that remained.

sides of the mountain range. This is supported by present-day connections between the village of Olpoe and the village of Pesena. The maternal lines have the same names and people know their family relationships with each other. The languages are mutually comprehensible and some of the pottery legends of the two areas are identical. Most river valleys on both sides of the Peninsula run on the angle southwest to northeast, and a connection between Olpoe and Pesena, similar to that between Petawata and Peamatsina, looks completely feasible, even though there is no overland track today⁸⁷. There is an example quoted in the Church History of Petawata⁸⁸ (Erick nd: 1) where the newly converted chief of a village which had just moved to the coast tells the chief of Petawata that he now ate *olbaot*, that is, not at his own fire and not from his own tabu dishes. Bolton (1998: 184) pointed out that when this happened in Ambrym, it was "the most unimaginable sacrilege". Leaving the hill villages would mean joining the Christians of the coast, adopting monogamy and taking part in the cash economy. This would add to the workload of women in particular, and it is to be noted that while the remembered potters of the hills were female relatives of informants, the named potters of the coast were males.

Nagriamel and Independence

The Nagriamel movement began when Jimmy Stevens, grandchild of the British trader in Valpei (whose children married local people), became involved with the land claims of people whose land had been purchased earlier by the Societé Francais des Nouvelles Hébrides (Tabani 2001: 155). With Chief Buluk, he started the movement called *NaGriaMel* ("land and peace"), using the claim of customary use rights to the land (Beasant 1984: 17). This was the only claim open to indigenous people, who could not register ownership of land under the Condominium. Originally the movement started with local groups and a settlement established at Tanafo (see Figure 18), but needing money to support his activity, Stevens brought in other groups and backers and lost support from his original base. Eventually his support was from

⁸⁷ A saddle at 1000m separates a tributary of the Pespia from the Petasalili River that comes out just above Vunap.

⁸⁸ Petawata is a coastal village south of Penaoru, on the west side of the Cumberland Peninsula. It has connections with Piamatsina in Big Bay and a colonial history of withdrawal from the coast to the hills and subsequent repopulation. Today there are three *stesen* corresponding to the three religions practised there: the coastal Presbyterians who speak a variant of the Penaoru language, the Catholics further up the river who speak Piamatsina language, and the Neil Thompson ministry settlement, probably a breakaway from the Presbyterians, on the other side of the river.

Catholics and the French, and overseas backers, including the American libertarian Phoenix Foundation, who facilitated a petition to the UN for independence for the New Hebrides (Beasant 1984: 54-71). At this stage the French began returning the land that had been the original cause for the movement.

Other political parties started and the country became divided between the New Hebrides National Party (NHNP) led by Anglican clerics (the most educated of the New Hebrideans) and parties aligned with the French and Nagriamel (Miles 1984: 40). The English supported independence, the French did not, and poured support into particularly Santo and the Nagriamel movement. Elections were called in 1975 and although Stevens got a seat in the representative assembly, he boycotted it, and Nagriamel became a separatist movement. In the 1979 election, the majority went again to the NHNP, now renamed Vanua'aku (Beasant 1984: 39), there was civil unrest in Santo, and the Vemarama Movement, led by Stevens and Nagriamel, proclaimed the secession of Santo. The leader of the NHNP, Father Walter Lini went ahead with plans for independence in 1980 and once he achieved that, called in Papua New Guinea troops to replace the ineffective forces of the Condominium powers in Santo. Vemarama was very quickly crushed and Stevens was gaoled (Beasant 1984: 31-38; MacClancy 2002: 138). But there were repercussions for Santo, in the form of police and government retaliation (Kolig 1987: 184), some of which were still being felt when I visited in 1993 (Mrs Sue Kamden, Luganville, pers.comm.).

Stevens was condemned as a self-interested charlatan, using a trumped-up and inauthentic version of *kastom* to link his millennial movement to previous anti-European *Tamana* or traditional cargo cults and attracting a naive following with the promise of earthly riches (Beasant 1984: 19-21; also discussed in Kolig 1987; Tabani 2008). Kolig (1987: 191) perceives *kastom* as integrally linked to *kago*. But Tabani's (2008: 8) view is that "...Nagriamel was neither clearly cargoist nor really nationalist". Attribution of motives of short-term materialism for Nagriamel membership suggests a lack of awareness of the spiritual and intellectual concerns of the bush people (best explained in Ludvigson 1981). The one thing in common among the Santo bush cults was a desire to get away from any dependence on Europeans and return to a simpler, more traditional life style. This is the idea of *kastom*. Nagriamel was not hostile to the *Supwe*, Jimmy Stevens authenticated himself in the traditional political structure, by being sponsored by traditional chiefs of the land to kill pigs and assume leadership. This gave him both status and place. He behaved as



Figure 18: Jimmy Stevens' map of Nagriamel support in Santo (Stevens n.d.).

much like a chief as like a cult leader, feeding people and making laws for their mode of life, and he welcomed roads, pharmacies and schools, unlike the other villages of Midelbus. He established his own Christian church, another common leadership practice, at least in Santo. His movement not only stretched beyond Santo to other islands of the archipelago, but also made connections with other countries and, ultimately the UN (Beasant 1987: 19-21). He thus circumvented the colonists and the Condominium and helped precipitate independence. From the viewpoint of this thesis, he may have also made the road for today's updated version of grade taking, where single pigs are killed to symbolise rather than confer leadership.

Today Tanafo is thriving and widely supported, at least in Santo, and Nagriamel is still a political party with representation in parliament – Franky Stevens was the MP when I visited in 2009, as well as the head of Tanafo and Nagriamel, positions he inherited on his father's death in 1995 (Tabani 2008: 7). This is exactly how succession should play out in the case of a *Kastom Jif* in Santo.

Effects of Independence on Santo

The legacy of the Condominium was a cumbersome and top-heavy administration, a duplication of ill-maintained buildings and offices, and almost no infrastructure outside the main centres (Miles1998: 24, 36, 46). Luganville had got a deepwater wharf in 1957 and the American airstrip at Pekoa was developed as a civilian airport in the 1970s (Woodward 2002: 45). But it was probably only the efforts of the French to win support in the north that had gained the rest of Santo such public works as the roads to Tanafo and Big Bay, and new French schools, clinics and churches (Beasant 1984: 27, 36).

After Independence, with an anglophone government and the resentment that the events leading up to Independence had generated, Santo was not a prime candidate for expenditure in the cash-strapped new state (Miles 1998: 160). The French had already started ceding purchased land such as the Luganville Estate to Nagriamel as the representative of the indigenous former owners (Beasant 1984: 27; Van Trease 1987: 217). The French planters and businesspeople who were the majority of the European residents on the island, had by now fled or been expelled from Vanuatu (MacClancy 2002: 158). Residents from other islands had been returned to their
homes (Beasant 1984: 146-8), and only a few Australian businessmen and planters, and Asian traders, remained. Any tourism had ceased. When I visited in 1993, Luganville was still a semi-deserted town of wide streets and empty sections, small Chinese and Vietnamese stores and one cafe. Recommended tourist entertainment was looking at the Quonset huts and other American war leavings (Harcombe 1991: 171). Administration was still centralised and Santo's relations with the government were still wary.

For the villages, there were problems with the loss of the District Agents. The Condominium administration had instituted a system of village chiefs who could deal with petty issues of conflict and crime, and refer anything more serious, such as assault, murder or adultery, to the District Agent. In practice this had given the village chiefs a lot of power. Most cases that went to the Condominium authorities were troublemakers that the chiefs wanted removed from the villages. When the District Agents of the Condominium left at Independence, the chiefs had no effective back-up. There were Regional Councils but because of the Santo (and Tanna) rebellions, power was first centralised in Port Vila and then handed to "Custom Courts" by the Island Courts Act 1983 (Larcom 1990: 178-86).

Because of their remoteness, early cooperation and missionisation, the villages of the west coast and Cumberland Peninsula seem to have been largely left alone for most of the twentieth century. After the west coast was the focus of sandalwood exploitation, the east side was more easily accessed for labour-recruiting and European plantations. The early missionisation of the coastal west side meant that this was not an interesting area for anthropologists interested in "traditional society". Furthermore, Santo was thought to lack the *Supwe*, the graded society (neither Allen (1981a) nor Bonnemaison (1996a), in their overviews of the graded society in the northern islands, mention its position in Santo). From almost the beginning of the twentieth century the indigenous church had effectively run itself, for as well as being remote the coast was said to be dangerously disease prone and almost impossible for Europeans to survive on. The last resident foreign missionary left in 1924, medical officers seldom visited and the District Agents hardly ever. Other than the Second World War invasion by American troops the people of the Notwes seem to have been effectively ignored by the rest of the world; in fact pottery may have been one of the few things

that brought enquirers into the area, and its manufacture was being reported as declining in the 1950s and 60s. In 1996, Galipaud reported that pottery was no longer made on the Cumberland Peninsula.

The graded society died out completely on some other islands: it is not known if it was ever practiced in Efate, and it quickly disappeared in the other south-central islands. Tonkinson (1981: 13-14) reported that it vanished when Christianity arrived in southeast Ambrym in the early 1920s. Under the more tolerant attitudes of the Anglican missions the graded society survived longer in the eastern islands: Jolly (1981: 284) found grade taking still being practiced in South Pentecost in the early 1970s. However, the Anglicans were ambivalent in the Banks and finally banned the Suge in the 1920s (Durand 2013: 145). It also seemed to researchers that if the graded society had ever been established in Santo, it must be defunct: coastal Santo had been missionised in the nineteenth century, and in the Notwes, people were believed to have all been converted prior to the Second World War. The earliest investigators of political institutions (Deacon 1929, Layard 1942, Speiser 1923, 1990), had all thought that the Supwe was a late arrival in Santo and had only really touched the south coast - Speiser said it had not arrived at the inland "pigmy" areas, and this was interpreted as meaning the whole of the inland; all Deacon's informants were assigned to the south Santo coast by his editor (Wedgwood 1929); and Layard, following Deacon, grouped the south coast of Santo into an area intermediary between the northern and southern systems (see map, Figure 15) and did not say anything about the west. Guiart (1958: 162-63) reported only a few isolated practitioners of a degraded version of the Supwe in the inland villages of the southwest of Santo and by that time all coastal communities were Christian.

But in places like Piamatsina, Pesena, Pespia and Penaoru, all on the Cumberland Peninsula, according to local accounts, there were still people who were not converted to Christianity living in the hills until after the Second World War, as there were also between Elia and Big Bay (See Map, Figure 24, also Tzerikiantz 2006). Furthermore, they were not in contact with the villages of Midelbus to the extent that they were affected by the mid-century cults that prohibited the keeping of domestic animals (Guiart 1958: 136-37). Certainly grade taking was still going on in this northerly region of Santo, which was always rich in pigs (Harrisson 1936a: 250) and had not

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had a resident missionary since the 1920s. Even the Christians of inland villages took grades and had *Kastom Jif*, and for some of the later villages coming down, the chiefly succession was continuous (Tzerikiantz 2006:133); the chiefs of the hills became the chiefs of the coast villages. According to local reports, a number of the coastal villages today on both sides of the Cumberland Peninsula were established after the last of the bush people were brought down from the interior by the missions, the Catholics in Pesena and Petawata, the Presbyterians in the Notwes.

When Vanuatu became independent and the Vanua'aku party was elected to govern on a platform of reviving *kastom*, in the Notwes at least, ceremonial pig-killing and grade taking promptly resumed. Old men, who qualified as *Kastom Jif* and could confer the grade on others, were still around (Figure 16). If the *Supwe* was abandoned at first missionisation (i.e. in the last decade of the nineteenth century and first two decades of the twentieth), this seems impossible, but considering that the aforementioned conversation between the two chiefs at Petawata about leaving the *Tabu Faea* is reported as having taken place in 1959, it is completely feasible that there would still be people alive in 1980 who had taken grades in the hill villages. Both the father and the grandfather of Chief Tavue Malmal of Olpoe were high chiefs who kept the *Tabu Faea* in their hill villages, and Tavue himself has killed four pigs⁸⁹.

Chiefs and the Supwe in the Notwes Today

Today in the Notwes, people live in stable villages of usually under 200 people, mostly related to each other and to people in other villages of the Peninsula. Like most of rural Santo, the population of Cape Cumberland is almost entirely indigenous. The last resident expatriate Presbyterian missionary left Nokuku in 1926 (Miller 1990: 20), and otherwise occasional traders, foresters, and staff of the Wunpuko sawmill have been the only non-indigenous residents. All villages north of Elia on the Peninsula are coastal (see Tzerikiantz 2006: 128, 267, 276).

⁸⁹ However, by 2012 Chief Tavue could only remember the names of two grades.

There have obviously been many changes in the Notwes area since the pig-killing ceremony described by Gordon. The fluidity of today's situation may bear little resemblance to the traditional transmission of chiefly rights, but the ideology has probably been consistent for most of the last hundred years. Certainly there are elements of matriliny involved, as well as land ownership (see section on land ownership in Chapter One). In any case where I have enough information, the man who has the right to be the *Kastom Jif* comes from the land-owning *laen* of the area, and land is usually handed down father to son, even in matrilineal areas. This was observed by Codrington (1972 [1891]: 61, 67-68), so could be pre-European or at least peri-contact, although Speiser thought any patrilineality was of recent origin (Speiser 1990: 298-99).

A Vanuatu village today appears egalitarian in comparison with a Polynesian or Fijian village. It is usually difficult to tell the chief's house or even distinguish the chief from any other member of the community: he does not appear to have followers or attendants, he works in his own gardens and he seems to have more administrative responsibility than privilege. It is very easy, therefore, just to see the chief as an administrative appointment, and some are. At the end of the nineteenth century, the Presbyterian missionaries had Christian "chiefs" appointed to take charge in mission villages in this area. Only some of these had been traditional chiefs (high men in the *Supwe*), others were Christians elected by the villagers (Miller 1990: 55, 129, 285). The Condominium administration adopted this practice (Bolton 1998: 183) and today every village has a village chief, the village administrative officer who liaises with the Administration. In Condominium times, this person was regularly appointed by the District Agent (though possibly not often on the west coast), more likely on the advice of a missionary or planter than because he had any traditional status.

However, there is more than one type of chief, and often more than one chief in a village. A hereditary chief comes from a chiefly line, and ideally the official village chief will be one of these. He will have attained some *rang* of the traditional *Supwe* and have an official name, or at least he will be the child of chiefs. When a very young man became the chief of Nokuku, a retired chief explained to me how satisfactory this was: he himself had had no real right to be a chief because he was a commoner, the next chief had some right on one side of his family, but the new chief

came from chiefly lines on both sides of his family and therefore was more appropriate to be chief than either of the two that had gone before. If he had not already attained a grade in the *Supwe* he would be assisted by other chiefs in the district to take *rang* and have traditional status as well as the administrative role.

On the northwest coast of Cape Cumberland today, there are several *Kastom Jif* and the roles of *Kastom Jif* and village chief are so combined that I am unclear as to which parts of the duties of a chief are as a government administrator and which parts are as chief landholder or *Kastom Jif*. The chief has the power to put *tabu* on communal resources, such as the eels in the river. He can preside at local court sessions and he attends the meetings of chiefs of the district. He is also responsible for greeting visitors to the village and arranging accommodation and hospitality for them. Each chief has a number of spells and cures, but I do not know how any of them acquired their own particular collection or whether there is any increased efficacy because the practitioner is a *Kastom Jif*.

The important unit of kinship is the clan (*laen* in Bislama), membership of which is inherited through the mother. Marriage is exogamous (Nojima 2008: 47). There are many named *laen* and initially the rules about who can marry whom seem complicated, but it seems all *laen* are branches of two fundamental moeties (*saed*) and marriage must be with a member of the opposite moiety. This is a basic tenet of kinship – children, who are often given lineage names, are brought up to know who they may or may not marry. Different behaviours are required towards classificatory siblings than towards classificatory in-laws. As well as for marriage partner restrictions, lineage is important in traditional rights to land and resources. Only men of the correct line can collect clay for making pottery in the Cumberland tradition, and the potters must wait for this person to collect it. Even more important is the lineage of the man collecting the red clay used for slip, as he must call on his ancestors to infuse the clay with blood.

All the recent chiefs of Olpoe have been from land-owning lines, most have descended from Tavue's father, a high *Kastom Jif* and the previous owner of the river Pespia, but sometimes through daughters rather than sons. Chief Tavue owns no land

in the village, his family lives on *graon* given by his paternal uncle and all his own land is up in the hills. But Tavue is the *Kastom Jif* and he owns the river.

In part of the Notwes at least, the chief's sister's son or the chief's grandson is the most appropriate successor to the chief (A.E., pers.comm., 2007). For an appropriate chief today, the combination of hereditary right through *laen* (preferably on both sides) and achievement of one or more rang seems to be the ideal the length of the coast. There does not seem to be any emphasis on seniority as, where I know the family tree of a chief, he is quite often a younger son. Hakua has a young chief who had not yet killed a pig when I was there, but other chiefs were planning to sponsor him to do this. The village chiefs of Wunpuko, Valpei, Wunon, and Petawata are Kastom Jif who have killed pigs, and Olpoe and Penaoru have elderly Kastom Jif whose administrative duties have been taken over by younger relatives⁹⁰. In several cases there are mutterings about the grades being taken in the wrong order, or other parts of the protocol being improperly followed (see Allen 1981b: 108), but there seems to be no doubts about the right of these particular men to be the chiefs. One chief in an SDA village in the area had, of course, no pigs, so killed chickens instead. People in other villages laughed at this but did not seem to think he was any less a chief because of it. On the other hand, another chief was severely criticised for killing his pig wearing European clothing rather than a *nambas*⁹¹ ("traditional" dress).

Unlike previous times, for each *rang* there seems to be only one pig killed. This is a tusked boar. The pig jaws I have seen have only completed one revolution of the tusks. The stone table is erected, everyone is dressed in the Christian version of *kastom* dress and there are dances, but the crucial part of the ceremony is where the grade taker stands on the table, clubs his pig and calls out his new name. This is a personal name given to the candidate by the other chiefs of the district, which usually seems to have some element of "protector of the people" or "peacekeeper" about it.

Traditionally, there were several types of regalia associated with grade taking. People today wear their version of traditional dress, complete with paint, at the ceremony,

⁹⁰ In 2007 the village chief in Olpoe, who was a sister's son of the *Kastom Jif*, would become *Kastom Jif* himself one day, when the elders and *kastom* advisors of the village felt the time was right.

⁹¹ This is not a *nambas* in the Bislama sense of a "penis sheath" but rather a loin cloth, neo-traditional dress in Santo, used as a badge of "paganism" in other contexts.

traditional plants are planted and used, and a stone table is erected for each ceremony. There are no food *tabu* attached to the status; since *Kastom Jif* eat with everyone else, pots are not made and the sacred fires are no longer lit. The sacred drums or *tamtam* are not made either.

The reason I have mentioned the *tamtam* so often, is that I have been told that these were the male equivalent to the pots. Whenever there was a grade ceremony the women made *graonpot* and the men made *tamtam*. The *tabu* to be observed during manufacture were the same for each, and they were both to be used during the *Supwe* ceremony. The *tamtam* had their own names and at least two different tones each, and they were also used to send messages – their notes could be heard miles away. Today, even more than the pottery, the *tamtam* have fallen into disuse – there was still one in Peanaoru in 2009 but it had gone in 2010. People say they can still make them but it seems none have been made recently. People in Wusi say they did not have drums.

There is an element of community involvement in the taking of titles by a *Kastom Jif*. Chief Tavue, from whom I have the most information, told me on two occasions that he took his first two grades on his own account, but the next two were because he was asked to by the people of the village, and they provided the pig for him to kill. There also must be approval from the other chiefs of the district, both for the grade to be taken and for the name the new chief will be called by. Thus, at least in the Cumberland area, the networking functions of the old graded society are continued, enhanced by district and regional councils that contribute to the National Council of Chiefs.

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Discussion

Like the kinship system and marriage rules in the northern islands of Vanuatu, the graded society may have become standardised, possibly on a Malekulan model, since killing a single pig for each grade was a Seniang practice (Blackwood 1981: 70). In the Christian villages of the west coast, all the *Kastom Jif* of a district must approve the candidate and his title, and probably attend the ceremony; the people of the village support their chief and supply him a pig. In any village today, *Kastom Jif* are only those who have the right through their line, and have been approved by the chiefs and other senior members of the community who hold traditional knowledge (and are sometimes also Presbyterian Elders).

In a contrast to reported practice for Cape Cumberland today, many pigs were killed in the Linturi ceremony I attended. Some of the pigs from elsewhere came in boats, so there is still clearly some sort of exchange network involving them (the young chief-designate told me that he would have clubbed the pigs if he was taking the grade⁹²; since he was not, I have not witnessed the climactic moment when the chief calls out his new name), and the ceremony seemed to have more elements of tradition than there are remaining in the Northwest. This is despite Guiart's (1958: 198) belief that the entire system had been completely abandoned in the southwest area at least 20 years before his visit in the early 1950s. But the Linturi people have only recently come down to the coast.

Despite previous reports (Tzerikiantz 2006: v), it seems that the graded society in Santo has persisted to the extent that in today's revival of the *Rang* there are still traditional elements. However, in 1996, when the VKS held a workshop on the subject of "Nimangki" (Tryon (Ed) 1996b), and the North Malo fieldworker could recite an impressive list of grades and ceremonies, coastal Santo informants said they knew little about it as it had been abandoned from the time of the mission. Ten or fifteen years later those same Santo informants were taking grades and assisting at ceremonies. The most interesting report came from Inland Santo, where the fieldworker said they had ten steps but they could all be taken at once these days by killing one pig with tusks that had completed a revolution, so the candidate leapt

⁹² The ceremony had originally been planned for him to take the grade, but at the last minute the kastom advisors of the area had decided it was not yet the right time. See Olpoe above.

straight to the top grade. It was also said that pig-killing was an annual event in west Santo (*ibid*.). Here there seem to be the elements of the pig-killing of Jimmy Stevens, and the institution as it is practised on the coast today.

Rio sees the change in the graded society as being from an interaction with spiritual forces to establish hierarchy to a distribution of wealth to create equality (Rio 2019: 320-30). But Rio is comparing the *Mangki* in today's Christian Ambrym to Atchin at the time of Layard, where newly imported rites emphasised kinship and status in the afterlife (Patterson 1981: 196), and individual status was actually less emphasised (Allen 1981c: 27).. It is likely that the religious element was not as prominent in the *Supwe* as it was in the *Mangki* while the elements of of networking and trade were more important (cf. Layard 1942: 743). In the Notwes some of the spiritual connotations and justification of hierarchy still pertain, the function is to confirm a chief already established by inheritance. Pig exchanges, at least in Linturi, seemed to follow pre-Christian traditions.

But the pottery that spurred my initial interest in the *Supwe* does not appear to have any present-day role to play. Pottery certainly had an important role in the Supwe of the past. The Tabu Faea was a vital part of the grade taking society, and most strictly adhered to in Santo (Speiser 1913: 100. A chief could not eat at a fire that was not his nor could he eat from dishes that were not consecrated to his fire. Nojima saw pots as facilitating the ability to cook small quantities of food for those who were too sacred to eat with other people (Codrington 1891: 299). A pot was a prestigious object that was part of the regalia of the *Kastom Jif*. The two places where pottery survived the longest in the Notwes, Olpoe and Penaoru, are places where named traditional chiefs were still taking grades and eating at their Tabu Faea after the Second World War. The father of Chief Tavue Malmal was a traditional chief who ate at his own fire and had to have his own dishes; Chief Lepiko Boe was the chief that renounced his Tabu Faea in 1959 (Erick n.d: 1). This not only confirms the association that Nojima and I both postulated between the survival of the pottery and the graded society, it also supports the idea that the Supwe in the Notwes was more important than it was anywhere else. Through nearly a century of depopulation and missionisation, the Supwe survived, as did the pots necessary to the Tabu Faea. But with the reduction of population, the pottery community also declined, and there were only two named

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women potters in the hill villages of the Cumberland Peninsula by the time the people of Olpoe came down to the coast, after the war. However, today people say there has never been a break in either pot-making or grade taking.

Since the abandonment of the *Tabu faea*, pottery decoration has suffered. In the Notwes, older pots I saw were larger and more finely decorated than recently made pots. But even the most recent of the pots made inland (by mothers and grandmothers of today's coastal residents) were decorated with a combination of incising and appliqué, while most coastally made pots just had horizontal bands applied. This could be because of the takeover by men – several people said that they were less patient (or capable) than women and not as careful with fine detail, but also could be because the patterns of the *Supwe* are no longer relevant. Likewise, the Wusi pots, which lost many traditional patterns between my first visit in 1993 and my second in 2009, may be displaying their reorientation to a tourist rather than a traditional market, but may also have abandoned the patterns of the *Supwe* because of a reduction in demand from the inland villages (See also Appendices A & B).

One might expect that the *Supwe* would suffer even more than pottery in the historical situation of Christianisation and depopulation. Grade taking must depend on knowledgeable members of society (as well as the ability to accumulate resources and organise events) for its continuation, and there is already a hint of a decline in the difference between the two lists of grade names collected by Deacon (see above). With no information on any part of the *Supwe* other than what has already been discussed above, it is difficult to know how it was taught or perpetuated. Something so central must have had associated legends and *tabu*, like the pottery. But a ritual that may never have been too often performed could depend on quite different mechanisms of transmission. While building pottery depends on precision in both knowledge and skill, the ceremony which is the essential sign of a grade taking depends on public spectacle, so probably meets the conditions of an extreme tradition (Morin 2016: 217ff.). This means it would be able to be reproduced in a way satisfactory to its audience even after a period of many years and the loss of quite a lot of associated knowledge.

The story of the graded society, the survival of the chieftainship, and the apparent abandonment of pottery in today's institution, is also an example of the adaptation of *kastom* and the agency of NiVanuatu in their dealings with contact, as postulated for colonised peoples by Sahlins (1992). In the first instance, the advent of traders, sandalwooders and labour recruiters provided Santo people with the means to support and enhance their own social and political institutions. At least on the west coast, the graded society seems to have been able to flex and accommodate the changes of exploitation, Christianity, colonisation and Independence. But pottery, once an essential part of the *Supwe* on the Cumberland Peninsula, may have become irrelevant, as have the *tamtam*, the drums, which once had a central role in the ceremonies. The next two chapters investigate the situation of pottery today by looking at the history and practice of making pottery in the remaining pottery villages of the west coast.

Chapter Seven: Pottery and People on the Cumberland Peninsula

In previous chapters it was found that the pottery of the Cumberland Peninsula is a traditional Oceanic pottery that can trace its descent as well as any in Vanuatu from the earliest arrivals in the country, the Lapita people. Santo was the only place potters were seen by early European observers and the craft may have been preserved because of its association with the *Supwe*, first enhanced by favourable trade with early European contacts, and then threatened by Christianisation, depopulation and other influences of colonisation. The further question is what has happened to it today? Do people still make traditional pots in the Cumberland area, or has an area that alone retained a skill that was lost everywhere else in the archipelago finally also succumbed?

Most eye witnesses of the early period only visited briefly or did not write about indigenous life on the Cumberland Peninsula, so the first part of this account relies on fleeting observations, later reconstructions and the reports of two Presbyterian missionaries in Nokuku, Macdonald from 1890 to 1893, and J.N. Mackenzie from 1895 to 1909 (Miller 1990: 525). Historical information is supplemented by my fieldwork observations and information from the people mostly of Olpoe and its neighbouring villages of Valpei and Nokuku on the west coast of the Cumberland Peninsula, to establish the place of pottery in the Notwes.

Pot-making Traditions on the Peninsula

This section details the eyewitness accounts of pottery in Santo, goes on to discuss some ideas on the origins of the Cumberland people and their settlement pattern, and finally gives the views of the Cumberland people themselves about making pottery.

Reports of pottery on the Peninsula

An early mention of pottery on Santo comes from one of the few records of whaling contact with Santo, the 1829-32 journal of an English seaman, James Haberley, serving on a Sydney whaler:



Figure 19: Map of the Cumberland Peninsula, showing places named in the chapter

"...[We] made our way for the Island called Esterito de Santo we went on Shore there was a heavy Sea, and the Boat capsized, the Natives got hold of the Boat, and hauled her ashore, there was some Bread in the Boat the Cptn gave to the Natives, they were proud, they returned the compliment they gave us baked Pigs Heads, they were in earthenware Pots, the Pots were like those of ours made with three legs, they were very friendly they came on board and the Cptn gave them some Tomahawks..."

(Forster 1975: 99)

The mention of a place where the sea was heavy enough to capsize a whaling boat and pottery was associated with pigs' heads, could be an exceptionally early reference to west coast pottery but it could be anywhere on Santo. It is probably the first time pottery was noted by visitors to Santo since the visit of de Queiros' expedition, over 200 years previously.

Pottery in Santo began to be regularly reported by travellers from the 1850s on. In 1856, Rev. J.C. Patteson, later Bishop of Melanesia, sailed up the west coast and visited a sheltered landing place "about half way along the coast" where the village had "plenty of earthenware pots and basins" (Yonge 1894: 161-2). This was Tasmate, where pots were also seen by a later traveller on a boat tour who thought they came from further up the coast (Anderson 1915: 57). Another churchman who travelled along the west coast on the Presbyterian Mission boat in 1878, Thomas Neilson, noted "a kind of rude pottery" being made at "Taslemon" (Steel 1880: 345), which later writers (e.g. Miller 1990: 141) have taken to be Wusi. But Tasleman is the beach at Ravlepa and this is the only reference before Galipaud (1996b: 130) to pottery in that location where it is being attempted again today (see below).

Rannie, the recruiting inspector, visited Santo in 1886 and 1888 (O'Reilly 1958: 33-34), and described Valpei as having many pottery items made locally by male potters following a tradition of their forefathers. He itemised cups, vases and models of clay pigs, as well as plates and bowls (Rannie 1912: 166-67). However, local people told me pottery was never made there.

In Big Bay in 1890, Glaumont found evidence for pot-making at both ends of the Cumberland Peninsula and thought potters still lived in the hills above Tolomako (Glaumont 1899: 36). The last European to record pot-making on the Big Bay side of the Peninsula was the planter Maurice Witts:

The natives of that vicinity [near the Jordan River] make a rude kind of pottery somewhat after the style, it is said, of the Spaniards of the 17th Century. These are the only natives in the New Hebrides to attempt pottery which would seem to suggest that they must have learned the art from strangers, these strangers presumably de Queiros' Spaniards.

(Witts, 1905, 4 July,)

This belief was previously refuted by Codrington (1876: 21) who recognised the pottery was pre-European, since it had already been described by de Queiros⁹³. Witts later suggested "bush tribes" were the pottery makers when he made a trip to Nokuku and witnessed a pottery trade in this part of the district:

From thence we journeyed to the local "Paddy's Market"; a strip of neutral territory at the foot of the mountain where the bush tribes meet the "school" [church] people for the purpose of exchanging their wares (chiefly those earthenware pots for which they are famous) for tobacco, pipes and other luxuries.

(Witts 1905, 25 Sept)

It is possible that this market was being held at Olpoe, apparently a market area before the village was established. In this case the potters were the bush people, probably from either the Pespia or the Pelia River (another pot-making area). The Nokuku people were buying pots, not making them themselves, although an Australian traveller who visited several places in Santo in 1914 said that Nokuku was the only place pottery was still being made (Anderson 1915: 59-60). Pespia was designated the pottery village of the northwest by Speiser (1913: 182), but Harrisson (1936a: 249) saw what he thought was the last Pespia potter in 1934.

By the time of Speiser (1990: 34), the Big Bay population was severely reduced. Later people who moved into the Tolomako area did not speak languages of the Cumberland group and did not make pottery. It is likely, as Witts indicated and Speiser surmised, that the pottery-working peoples moved up into the hills. But

⁹³ Mondragón (2007: 167) suggests this information from de Queiros can be relied on as it appeared in his travelogue, not in his later memorials which tended towards hyperbole.

neither they, nor anyone else since Glaumont, seem to have visited the area of the Peninsula north of Wora Point on the Big Bay side. Here the Cumberland people with their pottery remained in the hills and did not come down to the coast until after the Second World War, the same time as the people came down on the west side.

The Nokuku missionaries described pot-making on the west coast and Speiser in 1910 named two specific places, Pespia and Wusi (confirmed by Harrisson 1937: 353). This was the first mention of Pespia. Guiart (1958: 54), who only went to Wusi on the west coast, said pots were made in Nokuku. M.E. Shutler (1971: 81), speaking of the Notwes in 1967, about 13 years after Guiart's time, said that several villages made pottery, but Olpoe was the closest in style to Wusi. Galipaud originally identified Wusi as the only place people were still making pottery (Galipaud 1996a: 97), but later found the old potter Lepiko Boe at Ravlepa (Galipaud 1996b). People in Olpoe apparently made pots in 2000, just before Nojima went to do her fieldwork there, and they demonstrated pot-making to her in 2001 and to me in 2007 (Nojima 2011: 159, 172).

Origins

The people of the Cumberland Peninsula were singled out by Baker, Deacon and others as different from the other peoples of Santo. Their lighter skins were thought to mean they were Polynesian, or came from the Banks Islands or Ambae (eg. Speiser 1990: 54). They were praised as being more civilised, gentler, kinder to their women and of a "higher culture" than the rest of the island. Linguistic evidence also indicates that they were a separate group from early in the island's prehistory (see Chapter One). The archaeology is more ambivalent: Galipaud suggests the present people, along with chiefs, taro, irrigation and pig killing, arrived only about one thousand years ago (Galipaud & Walter 1997: 35, 37).

Speiser first thought that Santo pottery originated from "the pygmies", said by him to reside in the Tolomako and southern region of western Big Bay (Speiser 1990: 231). Like others he also thought, from the appearance of the people, that there were connections to the Banks Islands, and these links are attested. Venua Lava, an old village near Hakua, has essentially the same as the name of one of the Banks Islands, Vanua Lava (Nojima 2008: 144). But since most if not all Banks pottery is imported

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(Spriggs 1997: 139, 175), it is more likely pottery was exported to the Banks Islands from the Cumberland area than *vice versa*, and in recent times Banks people, among others, came to purchase Cumberland pottery (C.T.M., Olpoe, pers.comm.).

Galipaud (2011) also hypothesised that the Cumberland Peninsula was originally settled by people from the Banks Islands, and the present inhabitants arrived later. He discovered numerous pottery sherds on both sides of the Peninsula, in particular a concentration near Cape Cumberland, at Pelol, where Glaumont had previously excavated (Glaumont 1890: 36, and see Chapter Two), supporting the local tradition that a centre of pottery manufacture was formerly located there (Galipaud 1997: 13).

Pelol is quite a distance from Tolomako, where Glaumont purchased pottery and saw the source of the clay, and which was a likely location for the pottery reported by the de Queiros expedition (since that is the area of Big Bay where they were moored), and it is likely that at one time pottery was made in villages the length of the east side of the Peninsula, as is claimed by people in Pesena and Petawata. Pottery is still found in the hills above Tuturu and Jureviu but the people living there now are Big Bay people from a different language group, who say their ancestors never made pottery, but admit to being recent arrivals on the Peninsula.

Former settlements

Unlike the coastal pottery of Wusi, identified with later migrants and the Oceanic/Lapita tradition (Galipaud 1996b: 116-17), the pottery of the Cumberland Peninsula was a pottery of the inland villages. From missionary writings, as well as the reports of Speiser and Harrisson, who were the only anthropological researchers to travel inland on the peninsula itself, it seems most settlements were small and situated in the hills (where there was no malaria). The settlement pattern on the Cumberland Peninsula may have been similar to what Guiart found in the southwest, where inland people lived in very small hamlets and moved frequently, a lifestyle dictated both by swidden agriculture and by the politics of the region (Guiart 1958: 158). However, most reports on the inland post-date the epidemics of the early twentieth century and local people say there used to be hundreds of people living in the hills. While there are witnesses to large populations in Big Bay, from the time of de Queiros right up to the arrival of the first missionaries (Miller 1990: 5, 14), it was not the same on the west coast of the Peninsula. There is no recorded evidence of coast dwellers; in fact there is more support for the idea of an uninhabited coast before the advent of sandalwooders and European traders. Galipaud and Nojima postulate that the coastal people died out through epidemics and have been replaced by the bush people (Galipaud 1996b: 116-18; Nojima 2008: 40). But earlier Glaumont (1890: 71-72), had identified all the peoples of the west coast as bush people.

Later observers described the people of the west as river people (see Chapter Five), using the resources of the coast but not living on it. The coast was often described as dry, infertile or disease ridden. According to Witts (1905: 25 Sept.), it was impossible to live anywhere except in the river valleys, as the coast itself was "ovenlike" and treeless. In the Notwes, only Valpei (which has moved from its original position), possibly Nokuku⁹⁴, and Tasmate can claim to be traditionally coastal villages; all others were formed during the late nineteenth or the twentieth centuries. People tended to live in the hills in cooler and more easily protected locations, and to come down to the coast to use marine resources.

Local accounts of pot-making

Several of the villages on the Cumberland Peninsula claim today to have made pottery in the past. The people now living in the Tolomako area of Big Bay say that their ancestors did not make pottery, though they find sherds in the bush. Further north, people in Vunap and Pesena have old pots (see Figures 20.and 21) but while the owner of the Pesena pot (Reremwalisa, Pesena, 9 July 2008) could relate stories of the pot-making process, in Vunap the magnificent old pot, *Tarpoililvanua* (see Figure 20), is said to have been made by a devil⁹⁵. Reremwalisa, a *bubu* from the former bush village, Tapuna, had gone to Pesena on the coast after her last child was born,

⁹⁴ A lot of the Nokuku people came down to the coast when Gordon arrived (Miller 1990: 244). According to Chief Willy Mackenzie, there were only two families in Nokuku before the coming of the mission.

 $^{^{95}}$ This just means "of supernatural origin", and reflects the age of the pot. It could be related to the Wusi myth that pots were given to people by supernatural beings. The people of Vunap knew all the Olpoe pottery *tabu*.



Figure 20: Chief William and Brightly hold Tarpolilvanua at Vunap



Figure 21: Reremwalisa of Pesena with her old Welep

some time in the 1950s. She could tell the stories of pot-making and she still owned two pots that could be seen to have been used for cooking. One was made by a potter on the west coast, Opala Komasleo, who may be the Olpoe potter named in several accounts there. Reremwalisa did not know the name of the maker of the older pot (see Figure 21).

On the west side, it is said pottery was never made in the Valpei-Hakua area, because of a lack of suitable clay. In Tasmate, where pottery had been seen by Patteson in 1856 and Anderson in 1913, Tzerikiantz (2006: 55) was told they used to have pots that were big, not small like those of Wusi, so clearly belonged to the Cumberland tradition, as one would expect from the present-day language⁹⁶. Pesena, Nokuku and Penaoru people say they used to be able to make pottery but now cannot, either because their clay source was "spoiled" or because they have forgotten the skill. The people of the Ravlepa *stesen* of Penaoru are all descended from one of the last two of the named potters of the Notwes area and have recently attempted to revive the craft. Olpoe, however, is the only place in the Notwes that other villages recognise as still having the ability to make pottery.

Although Santo west coast pottery was referred to by several of the travellers and early missionaries who lived in or visited the area, neither Olpoe nor even Pespia were identified early. Gordon in 1869 simply alluded to the pottery as made by "the natives of this island", describing it as unglazed (Steel 1880: 332). Macdonald (1892: 48) indicated pottery was made in several local villages, each with their own style and decoration. J.N. Mackenzie, the longest serving foreign missionary at Nokuku, named Pespia as a "heathen" village that was converted around 1903 (Mackenzie 1995: 70-73). But although he gave the first detailed account of the Cumberland pot-making method (see Chapter Three), he did not specify which villages made pottery.

In summary, there were foreign witnesses for pot-making on the west coast in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries at the following locations: Pespia, Nokuku,

⁹⁶ Tzerikiantz (2006: 231) was told Tasmate language was a mixture of northwest and bush languages; but in fact its closest relations are the languages of Vunap and Piamatsina on the east coast of the Peninsula (Ross Clark, pers.comm.).

Tasleman (now Ravlepa), Tasmate and Wusi. Except Pespia, now uninhabited, all these places still claim to be traditional pottery villages, and only the people of Nokuku admit to having completely lost the skill. There is also a suggestion that in the early period the Wusi and Notwes styles may have been on a continuum that stretched the whole length of the coast.

Today, however, although Olpoe is thought of as the true pottery village by the people of the west coast and the Cumberland Peninsula, Nojima and I came to the same reluctant conclusion, that pot-making is no longer part of the practised culture of the Notwes.

Pottery Villages today

Olpoe

Olpoe is a relatively new village, absent from most maps of the area before the Lands and Survey 2003 map (and still not to be found on the Google map, which has in its place "Nokuku"). It is said to have been a place where inland and coastal people met for exchanges, and the name means "place of the pigs" (C.T.M., pers.comm., 2006). Macdonald and Mackenzie mainly refer to the area as a place where they had trouble with "heathens" (Miller 1990: 247). At that time the villages of the Pespia River were inland. Nojima (2011: 161) dates Olpoe from the 1920s, when the Presbyterian mission reported the conversion of "a village of 40" (Miller 1990: 324). But according to local accounts, people were previously driven away from the area because they were denied rights to use water by the chiefs of the inland villages, who owned the sources⁹⁷. When the people of the Pespia hills moved to Olpoe after the Second World War, there were three *stesen* (family settlements), but only one family is now pointed to as being already in the area before the Pespia people arrived.

The present *Kastom Jif*, Tavue Malmal, was the youngest son of the old Chief of the Pespia River. His father, although said to be a Christian, was a *Kastom Jif* and had his own cooking fire and pots and dishes no one else could use. Tavue's family lived in

⁹⁷ This may have been a common deterrent for coastal populations; the chiefs in the river valleys had control of the water of the rivers (see also section on Land Ownership in Chapter One).

several different hill villages⁹⁸ on the Pespia River, around the time of the Second World War - his older sister was named Ilamerik after the American planes flying overhead, most likely for the invasion of Guadalcanal in 1943. At this period most people in the Notwes were "school people" or Christians, and Chief Tavue's father brought his family down for "school" when Tavue was a small boy. They settled in the area of the present village, but when one of Tavue's brothers died the family went back to their previous inland village, situated on a promontory overlooking the river. When Tavue was about eleven they came down again, probably in part because the epidemics were moving from the coast into the interior and at least on the coast there was a possibility of getting western medicine. The church records (Philip n.d.) date the coming down from the village of Unlolo, "behain long bigfala fork mountain" and beside a "bigfala river" (surely the Pespia), to 1953, but that could be either of the two moves Tavue remembers. The owners of Olpoe village land are the descendents of Chief Tavue's two older brothers, and two men from elsewhere, one married to a village woman. In the area of the village I stayed, most people lived on land given for the village by one of these brothers; Chief Tavue's own land is all up on the hills.

The village is sited on the first two terraces up from the beach, on sandy soil on the north side of the Pespia River (the village stream is actually the Pevil but this small stream often fails to run during the dry season). Nojima counted 48 households and estimated the population at around 250 in 2000, when the village was just beginning to spread into the plantations on the other side of the former logging road (Nojima 2008: 45). Twelve years later, the village had spread along the old road at the back of the football field in the north, eastwards into the plantations and southwest across the river, meeting the settlement at the Dayspring School, between Olpoe village and the airport. I estimated the population was over 300 in the years I was there, although people themselves were still using Nojima's count of 48 households.

Olpoe has a central location in what used to be the Nokuku mission area, stretching from Pesena in the northeast to Tasmate in the southwest. Although nearby Nokuku is the first missionary village and an older coastal village, Olpoe is arguably more important. It is larger and has a self-sufficiency that other villages don't display.

⁹⁸ These villages were named, but none were called Pespia – that was the name of the river

Because it is so big it can be mostly endogamous; in 2009, there were only three wives who came from outside the district. Possibly because Olpoe has such recent links to the inland past, a lot of tradition is still alive and appreciated. Cross-cousin marriages at the first cousin level are more tolerated than they are in the older established Christian villages such as Nokuku. More of the traditional *tabu* around childbirth are observed at Olpoe than at other places (according to one of the few wives from another island), and a lot of traditional cures are still known.

Olpoe was not known as a pottery village prior to the 1960s. Speiser and Harrisson, the two earlier witnesses for making pottery, went to inland villages on the Pespia River, and Olpoe is not mentioned as a pottery village by Miller (1990) at all. By the time of Shutler's visit to Olpoe in 1967 (Nojima 2011: 171; M.E. Shutler 1971), the Pespia River villages would no longer have been occupied. M.E. Shutler's account of Olpoe pottery is much less detailed than her careful description of Wusi pot-making (M.E. Shutler 1968), and Nojima notes that Shutler said the potter was surrounded by an admiring audience, which Nojima interpreted as meaning that this was an unusual event (Nojima 2011: 16). In the 1990s Galipaud thought pottery was no longer made at Olpoe; he used Speiser's description in conjunction with an interview with Lepiko Boe, the old potter living at Ravlepa (Galipaud 1996b: 130). But Nojima in 2000 found pottery had recently been made at Olpoe, and in 2001 she recorded the process (Nojima 2011: 159 and video deposited in VKS).

Making pottery at Olpoe

Like Nojima I found the Olpoe potters reluctant to actually demonstrate pot-making. In 2004 I was introduced to the old potter, Pala, who described the process and answered my questions about it. He himself no longer made pottery but said there were still people in the village that could, including his son. The Chief, who could also make pottery, had offered to arrange a demonstration for me as he had for Nojima, but this seemed difficult to organise, despite my returning to the village at the appointed time for the next two years. A pot-making demonstration was arranged for us at Olpoe in 2007 but when we⁹⁹ arrived on June 6th for a three-week visit, the village was hosting travellers returning from the annual PWMU conference in

⁹⁹ I was accompanied by my husband, linguist Ross Clark

Jureviu, there was a generator and all night videos running in our house and nobody was ready to make pottery. We were sent to Valpei and it was not until the following Friday, eight days later, that we could return to Olpoe. Although the black clay had been collected while we were away, Sabbath preparations meant that nothing could be done until the Monday. By then, there was not going to be enough time to complete the whole process before we had to leave, so it was decided that the red clay would not be necessary yet, as they could just demonstrate the making of the pots now, and they could do the decoration and slip when I returned, a week later. Chief Tavue no longer made pots but he would supervise. The old potter, Pala, gave the go-ahead on the Sunday. But the Chief's son-in-law, who was the appropriate person to go and get the red clay for the slip, set out on the Monday, taking his own young son.

That evening we were eating dinner at the house of the airport agent and his family at their compound at the back of the village when his brother Pita, the son-in-law who went to get the red clay, returned and described his experience. There are several interesting aspects to this incident. Firstly, although Pita was not addressing his account to us, he was speaking in Bislama to an audience of Nokuku language speakers, the people we were eating with, in our presence. Secondly he emphasised how frightened his son had been by the protocol of calling to the spirits of the slain ancestors, to ensure that the clay would turn the pots red. It was not until later, in another village, that I learned that you cannot show fear when calling to the spirits of the dead for the red clay. I later learned that the clay comes from Tsar-kin-vegel (a battleground) and traditional dress, or nothing at all, must be worn when digging it out.

By Tuesday, the village was getting ready for a large meeting next day at the Olpoe church, with people coming from as far away as Petawata. The visitors did not leave for two days so the only further thing that was done that week was the cutting of the *nakatambol* root to make a platform to pound the clay on. After the clay was pounded, it would have to be covered and left for a couple of days. But the root was found to be rotten the next Monday, so a new one had to be cut and there was an emergency meeting of the village that day because the *Model Kindy* teacher had resigned. However, the new root was cut and prepared and although the Chief's wife was ill and he could no longer supervise, other people rallied around and on Tuesday

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morning the clay was worked and the potters assembled, under the guidance of Pala, and we watched the pottery being made. By the end of the day there was not one completed pot – all had collapsed or been abandoned as *nogud*. But the Chief said that they would make more pots while I was away, and that they would be ready to be painted and fired when I got back. The following day we flew out.

Below is my description of the process I watched in 2007 (Figure 22):

Black clay was mixed with water by hand on a previously prepared *nakatambol* buttress root slab. Then the paste was pounded vigorously for about an hour by four men taking turns with a large hardwood club. While this was going on other men cut and trimmed short thick bamboo lengths to make the pedestals on which the pots would be worked. When the clay was ready it was divided into three large pieces each of which was wrapped in *burao*¹⁰⁰ leaves and taken to a cool place in the kitchen where the pot-making would be done.

In the kitchen the three potters set up their own work stations by digging holes in the dirt floor to support their bamboo pedestals, and hollows in which to put coconut shell halves that would hold the water used in the process. Each man got himself a low seat, a lump of clay paste wrapped in leaves was put beside each man and work began.

The head of the bamboo pedestal, of which the edge had been previously trimmed to a rounded shape, was wetted, then a piece of clay was rolled between the hands [see Figure 22, below], and the resultant long sausage was coiled around the end of the bamboo pedestal. More clay coils were added on top, each slightly longer than the previous, so a flaring shape rose from the pedestal. The sides were smoothed with water so that the coils merged together. When sufficient width had been achieved for the planned pot, a base was formed from a small flat piece of clay and fitted into the pot. Coils continued to be shaped by rolling between the fingers and adding to the working edge.

The pot is thus built up from the bottom to the height and diameter required, and the pedestal base can be turned as the pot gets larger and different parts of the

¹⁰⁰ The coastal hibiscus *Hibiscus tiliaceous* has large plentiful leaves often used as a convenient cover or wrap.

sides require attention. After every few coils are added, the sides are smoothed with water to blend them in. At this stage hands and fingers only are used to form the pot – no tools are involved. Handles for the pot are made by forming short coils and attaching them to the outside near the rim. Where handles are used, a large pot traditionally has four, a small one, two. When finished the pot is removed from the pedestal by cutting through the coils below the inserted base. The clay from the lower coils is then wrapped around the base, and smoothed to form a pointed base of double thickness. The finished pot will be put on a shelf in the kitchen to dry prior to decoration, painting with slip and firing.



Figure 22: Ben rolling a coil for his pot

This was an unsuccessful demonstration in that no pots were completed; all either collapsed or were destroyed. Rereading my notes, I attribute this partly to the hasty nature of the preparation: normally the clay is rested for two days and not having time to do this was one of the reasons given for not making pots. In the event, the clay was pounded immediately before the pot-making started.

When I returned to Olpoe, there were still no completed pots. When I mentioned them to anyone, they just laughed. However, as the week went by, and on subsequent visits, several people were at pains to give me reasons as to why the pots had failed. Most were on the theme that people had not obeyed the *tabu*. Neither the hasty mixing of the clay nor our presence or behaviour seemed to be blamed for the failure. A couple of years later the explanation settled on seemed to be that the stick¹⁰¹ for mixing the clay had been contaminated with seawater. My own impression, from Nojima's video, which I later watched at the Kaljoral Senta in Port Vila, was that there was a problem with the clay – it did not have the plasticity or tensile strength of the clay they were working in 2001. I never asked the people of Olpoe to demonstrate pot-making again, and they never offered. It was only later I read that there had been similar reluctance to make pottery for Nojima, despite hers also being a pre-arranged demonstration (Nojima 2011: 164).

The people of Olpoe appear to feel no need to demonstrate their traditional skills and knowledge to others. Both researchers and people from other villages have been surprised by the high rates the Olpoe people charge for any sharing of their traditions, and when there was a possibility of Notwes peoples being represented at the Cultural Festival of 2009, Olpoe was the only village who simply were not interested.

Penaoru pottery

In 1878, the missionary Thomas Neilson, travelling on the mission ship Dayspring, described calling at a place named Tasleman where pottery was being made (in Steel 1880: 345). Probably because of the pottery, this place is identified as Wusi by Miller (1990: 141), but in fact it was most likely to be Taslaman just south of Penaoru, close to the present day settlement of Ravlepa. A second centre of Cumberland pottery, Ravlepa is a recent *stesen* of Penaoru village and was not mentioned in the literature before Galipaud (1996b: 117). Both he and Nojima (2011: 164, 171) met the old potter, Biko (Lepiko) Boe, but neither have published any description of his techniques. I first heard of pot-making activities in Ravlepa when I met Chief Josef Boe at Nokuku in 2006, but because of the difficulty in getting there, did not record pot-making until 2009.

Penaoru is about 13 km south of Olpoe but hard to reach because a large bluff just past Nokuku precludes walking along the coast, except at very low tide. The present

¹⁰¹ Later, at Ravlepa, I was told that a *burao* stick will pull out impurities in the clay while a stronger *palako* wood one will not. I do not know what wood was being used at Olpoe.

village was established fairly recently by landowners who, as orphaned children in the 1950s, were taken down to the mission school at Nokuku. Most people in their bush villages on the Penaoru River had been killed by a sickness which is blamed by local informants on either witchcraft or on "the prayers of the Missionary"¹⁰². As adults, the Penaoru River people moved back around 1958, to Worsasul just south of the river. At first, they lived inland when it was hot and only occupied the coastal villages during the cooler weather when it would have been drier and there would have been less disease around. After the river flooded, the main settlement was moved to Wuniap, the main settlement of Penaoru (now usually called Malapoa), and finally Chief Lepiko Boe moved his family back to their land at Ravlepa. Galipaud interviewed Chief Lepiko about the pottery techniques and reported them as being the same as those used in Olpoe (Galipaud 1996b: 117).

Lepiko Boe was not one of the Notwes potters named by my 1993 informants, and does not seem to be known as a practising potter by any researcher prior to Galipaud's visit in 1996. Nojima recounts that Lepiko's mother came from Olpoe where she learned pottery-working, and Lepiko learned from watching his mother at work (Nojima 2011: 171), which may mean he was not formally taught. Lepiko himself told Galipaud that he learned by spying on his aunt (Galipaud, pers.comm., 8 April 2014). But I was told by members of his family that Lepiko, his wife and another elder who still lives in Penaoru were all taught by their mothers in the bush villages. Similarly, his sons Josef and James are variously said to have learned from their father, their grandmother, or merely by reconstructing what they remembered.

James Boe, who recalls the visits of Galipaud and Nojima, believes they both took pots made by his father to the Vanuatu Kaljoral Senta in Port Vila. But Galipaud, Nojima, and the field workers who accompanied each of them to Ravlepa, all say that there were no pots available to be taken away (Yoko Nojima, pers.comm., 6 Nov 2009), and only Galipaud had aspects of the pot-making process demonstrated to him (Nojima 2011: 171).

¹⁰² These are probably different sides of the same coin. The chief of Nokuku, Willy Mackenzie (himself one of the orphans brought down from the bush), told me that people had first perceived the sickness in the coastal Christian villages as inflicted by the pagan ancestral gods. When the sickness moved to the bush villages the perception was that the Christian God had won, so people converted and moved to the coast. This was all surprisingly recent: bush villages were healthier than the coastal villages at the time of Guiart.

In recent years, there have been further attempts to revive the pottery traditions both in Ravlepa and in Penaoru. Chief Lepiko Boe died in 2003 but his son, Chief Josef Boe told me in 2006 that he and his brother were trying to make pots. Pottery was attempted in Ravlepa in 2007, possibly after a hiatus of around ten years. Independently, people at the Malapoa *stesen* tried to make pottery in 2008 for Chiefs' Day, and planned to do it as an annual event. There is apparently still a good clay source near Wuniap, which is where the Ravlepa people were getting their clay in 2009.

Making pottery at Ravlepa

In 2009, when I was staying at Malapoa, James Boe, the brother of the Ravlepa chief, came to carry away the clay stored there and invited me and my hostess, Viran Pwet, to watch a demonstration the next day. However, we were told we had to obey the *tabu* and must not eat salt¹⁰³, drink any cold drinks or go near or even look at or talk about the sea, before we came down to Ravlepa.

When we arrived, before sunrise, James was already working and appeared to be halfway through a large pot. Although the basic technique was clearly the same as that practised at Olpoe, there were some essential differences. The pot-making was being done outside, under a tree in the middle of the village, with people walking by or watching, and kids playing with the clay and imitating the process. The atmosphere was happy and casual. James worked very speedily and with an easy confidence, although using a lot of water. His coils were very thick but appeared strong and with good elasticity. The first pot we watched being made soon needed repair; James persisted with it until I could photograph it in a near complete state, then it was collapsed. After that James' nephew also started working a pot and James made a smaller pot. Both men worked quickly and confidently, and when they completed their pots, other people including some young boys, moved in to use the bamboo supports to build their own pots (Figure 23). During the course of the day, about seven or eight people made serious efforts at working pottery, all males, all brothers or nephews of James who, after his second successful pot, took the role of

¹⁰³ According to Nojima (2011: 169), to eat salt is a euphemism for sexual intercourse. I did not know this and Viran Pwet may not have known either; the salt prohibition is also taken literally in Olpoe now.

instructor to the less competent family potters. By the afternoon an impressive number of pots were completed and put in the kitchen to dry. We were told they would rest for five days and then be painted with the red clay slip. We could come back to watch but could not eat any hot food before we came.



Figure 23: Making pottery at Ravlepa

The day before we were due to return to Ravlepa, James came to see us. The pots had dried quicker than expected and had already been painted. However, they would demonstrate painting and firing the pots. But some of the pots were spoiled, said James, and that was our fault because we ate and drank before we arrived. He pointed out that his large pot had begun to sag the minute we appeared on the scene. This time we were to eat nothing at all before we went down.

So, we went down even earlier. The painted pots were brought out of the kitchen for me to photograph. They looked very red. Two pots had been left so we could see the technique of applying the slip. The red clay was mixed with water in a coconut shell and dabbed on with coconut fibre. Then a fire that looked like a perfectly ordinary cooking fire was made and an old pot cleaned out, water poured into it and it was placed on the flames. Although both I and Viran Pwet had thought we were going to see pots fired, what we got was a demonstration of "cooking" in a traditional old pot (although the term used was *bonem* (burn) and no food was involved)¹⁰⁴. The water heated to a simmering temperature and eventually boiled away, after which the pot was taken out and left to cool. During this demonstration villagers wandered by and remarked how long it takes to cook anything in an old pot. Jocelyn, one of the wives, observed: "If you want to eat in the evening you put your food on to cook in the morning".

After this the different designs and patterns of pot were demonstrated (see Appendix B. Part II), and then pot-making started again. This time we were invited to participate and Viran Pwet, after one false start, made a nice little *wetaprami* (an open-mouthed pot for cooking taro or yam). As on the previous day, the other potters were mainly boys and men of the family, although another woman and a girl did try. Five pots were completed to add to the eleven from the previous week.

One oddity is that, although there has clearly been some pot-making activity in the Penaoru area over the last few years, like Nojima and Galipaud I did not see any fired pots that had recently been made. It is possible that firing has not yet been successful.

Comparison and Tabu

Although the method of pot-making was basically the same as that at Olpoe, there were some differences. The prepared clay at Ravlepa demonstrated better tensile strength and elasticity than that I saw being worked at Olpoe, but this may have appeared so because most of the potters at Ravlepa used notably thicker coils than those at Olpoe. The technique at Ravlepa was more relaxed – coils breaking did not appear to worry the potters, they merely rolled a shorter piece to fill the gap. Crooked pots were continued with and a lot of water was used. Potters spent more of their time smoothing and filling in proportion to the amount of time spent adding coils. As well as attempts to emulate old forms there was also more creative pot-making, especially from the young boys, one of whom made himself a cup and decorated it with his own name. Pot-making proceeded more rapidly than at Olpoe, and an impressive number of pots were finished. This was probably partly because of the thicker coils, but

¹⁰⁴ I am still unclear exactly what they were trying to show us –possibly because none of their recently made pots were ready to fire they were just demonstrating the ability of the pot to withstand fire.

successful pots were smaller than those being worked at Olpoe. The Ravlepa people themselves say that Olpoe makes larger pots that can be used for cooking taro.

The craft appears to have been taken over by the men to an even greater extent at Ravlepa than at Olpoe. There do not seem to be any women potters but two women tried during the two days of pot working. One did not persist but the other completed a pot.

The demonstrations Nojima and I saw at Olpoe were displays of pot-making held mainly, if not entirely, to demonstrate the techniques for our benefit. At Olpoe I paid towards the pottery demonstration and I was told Nojima had too (I was not asked for any fees or expenses at either Ravlepa or Wusi). The Ravlepa pot-making session was a primarily a family teaching exercise, but they were enthusiastic about having observers, demonstrating aspects for our benefit and invited us to participate. I was probably the first researcher to see pot-making by the present group of potters in Ravlepa, and some of the differences from Olpoe could be put down to the circumstances of each demonstration. At Olpoe the demonstration was long promised and the knowledge was paid for. This was at a very busy time when there were other tensions in the village and the potters may have felt some pressure to deliver. At Ravlepa the demonstration was entirely voluntary at a time of the potters' own choosing. Furthermore, Olpoe would have had more knowledge of the nature of researchers, their standards and demands, while James met me for the first time when he came to Penaoru to collect his clay. If they had demonstrated to outsiders before, it would have been to casual travellers passing through. However, these circumstances do not account for all the differences between the two styles, which although very similar, were not the same¹⁰⁵. When making pots, the Ravlepa potters seemed quite casual: they worked outside, they allowed children and outsiders to participate, but their grasp of tabu seemed incomplete and changeable. Despite the emphasis on our keeping *tabu*, the entire proceeding appeared more informal than that at Olpoe. There was no attempt at creating a quiet and secluded atmosphere as the work was done outside, under a tree in front of the village, whereas in Olpoe it took place in the kitchen of a secluded homestead.

¹⁰⁵ As noted in Chapter Three, both the formation of coils and their application were slightly different, as well as, most importantly, some of the *tabu* that were observed.

But despite as few as two generations separating them from Olpoe (or Pespia) pottery, it appears that Ravlepa is evolving a different tradition. Bamboo stands seemed wider, clay coils were much fatter, rings rather than coils were used, joins were more tolerated, more water was used, and the *tabu*, which seemed imperfectly known, were definitely different. This will be further discussed below.

Discussion: Situation of Cumberland Pottery today

The previous chapters have first put forward a set of propositions to explain the survival of traditional pottery in the Notwes, through the disruptive events of early contact until at least the middle of the twentieth century, and then described some of the adverse factors that led to the decline of the *Supwe*, depriving pottery of a lot of its traditional role. This chapter has described the status of pottery on the Cumberland Peninsula today. The first question is how pottery survived through the early contact years when it seems that the events of the nineteenth century rang the death-knell for pottery anywhere else it was still being practised (this is argued for in various islands of the Vanuatu archipelago, by researchers such as M.E. Shutler (1971) and Bedford (2006a) but the west coast of Santo was the only place there are any eye-witness accounts of pottery being made). A case can be made that the combined effects of the *Supwe* and the sandalwood trade preserved the pottery of the west coast into historic times.

The west coast of Santo is the only place in Vanuatu that had both the *Supwe* and extractable quantities of sandalwood – Efate and the southern islands did not have the graded society, at least by the time Europeans were in the area, and while there apparently was a little sandalwood on the west coast of Malekula, there is no record of any nineteenth century attempt to extract it. I argue that at exactly the time that labour recruiting was beginning to have a detrimental effect on the trading networks of the northern islands on which the graded society depended, the sandalwooders arrived on the west coast of Santo and replaced the traditional networks with a ready supply of pigs. This had the dual effects of enhancing the *Supwe* and accelerating the loss of the traditional inter-island trade. While other areas were losing supplies of

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items essential to their grade taking, the west coast and Cumberland Peninsula had an abundance, grades multiplied and, despite the loss of the networks, the demand for pottery increased. The area where sandalwood naturally occurred, from Wusi around to Wora Point, was exactly the area from which the enhanced grade ceremonies, involving hundreds of pigs, were reported.

The *Supwe* in the northwest of Santo did not receive its first set-backs until the sandalwood extraction and labour recruitment decreased. Arriving almost immediately after, the missionaries seem to have been welcomed with open arms, at least in the Nokuku area. This, I argue, is because the Europeans and their ships were seen as opportunities for trade and commerce, and were not associated with the outbreaks of disease that had ravaged islands further south and were beginning to devastate Santo in its turn. And, as I described in Chapter Six, there are few reports of illness from the west coast missionaries except among themselves and their teachers – four of the six mission deaths on Santo are attributed to infection with a deadly form of malaria at Nokuku (Miller 1990: 300, 325, 328). It is possible that the reputation of the west coast of Santo, as a place no European could survive, protected the indigenous population from too much contact until the early twentieth century when the large numbers of Queensland recruits began to return.

At the time when a loss of trading partners and an insufficient work force to meet the demands of the pig trade threatened the *Rang*, the missions offered both an alternative economy and a new road to immortality, available to all, not just the high chiefs of the *Supwe*. The people of the northwest were very willing to adopt the trading practices of the Europeans, and the Nokuku mission became the first self supporting mission station in Santo. The coast was then left to itself for many years and despite the early mission opposition the *Supwe* survived in the hill villages until after the Second World War –the last two named female potters of the Notwes hill villages were the wives of traditional chiefs who observed the *Tabu Faea*.

It seems the strictness of the *Supwe* in the Cumberland area; the boost it received from sandalwood early in the contact period, and then from returning labour recruits; and lastly the very remoteness of the west coast, an effect of bad seas and a bad reputation for disease, were all vital factors in protecting the pottery through to the middle of the

twentieth century. Depopulation effected an early separation of the hill villages of the Peninsula from the *Midelbus* area where disease and hostility to Europeans led to the cults that tried to get rid of the *Supwe*. It was not until the 1950s that the majority of the hill villages of the Notwes area were abandoned and it was even later on the Big Bay side. Today there are still a few small settlements in the hills – people who for one or another reason do not want (or are not accepted)¹⁰⁶ to live in the Christian villages on the coast.

The second question is what has happened to the pottery of the Notwes since the hill villages were deserted and the *kastom* people joined the coastal Christians? Nojima thought the combined effects of western cookware replacing pottery, and epidemic deaths reducing knowledge transmission, had a detrimental effect on pot manufacture (Nojima 2010: 63). But I was told by two older men that when they came down to the coast their sisters did not want to make pottery, so they learned instead.

From the early years of the twentieth century, Notwes pottery started to decline in almost every way – the few older pots that are still kept are larger, more finely decorated and better made. Newer pots I have seen are in the same size range of those of Wusi. However, the pottery reputation of Olpoe persists. Pottery was made and used at Olpoe until relatively recently (Nojima 2011: 162), although even by the time of Shutler's visit in 1967, it may not have been made regularly. Nojima (*ibid.*) was told of pottery making around the time of a remembered cyclone in the early 80s; in 1993 I was told there were several men making pots in the Notwes; but by 1996 Galipaud only found one potter, the now-deceased Lepiko Boe at Ravlepa. By 2000, pot-making was only a commemorative gesture, without practical purpose (Nojima 2011: 161), and this seemed to be the reason for making pottery in both Ravlepa and Malapoa when I visited the Penaoru area: not even the correct time of the year was observed in Malapoa. Even though people told Nojima (ibid.) they were nostalgic for the taste of food cooked in clay pots, they used metal pots for daily cooking. The markings of the Supwe are no longer relevant, and without regular practice, skills decrease and larger pots may be impossible to produce. Any pots I have seen made in

¹⁰⁶ Of the three lone homesteads I knew of in the Notwes, one belonged to a deaf man, one to a person with leprosy who subsequently died, and the third was a man who preferred to live on his land (possibly because of a dispute with his previous village).

the Notwes since 2007 are small, clumsy and crude, but were made by individuals working alone¹⁰⁷, rather than in the workshop setting of the demonstrations for Nojima and myself. However, the information that today there are also women¹⁰⁸ in the village that can make pots (S.F., Olpoe, pers.comm, September 2012) is encouraging, as men's and women's work patterns differ and it seems that those of women are more conducive to making pottery in the part-time situation of a subsistence economy (see Chapter Nine). It is recognised, at least in regard to the Ravlepa pot-making attempts, that women would be better and more patient at the fine detail of pot-making; they are said to be waiting until the men have learned to make them properly.

But still, can it be said that the pottery of the Cumberland Peninsula survives today? This is a surprisingly difficult question to answer and depends on what is meant by survival. There are no villages on the Peninsula today that regularly make viable pottery, i.e. pottery that survives firing and can subsequently be used for cooking. The one village that is recognised as being a pottery village is Olpoe, and it is a moot point whether pots made today could have any practical function. But, why then do the local people of the Cumberland Peninsula and beyond still point to Olpoe as the village of potters? In 1993, as today, all the potters named to me by the Christians of the southwest of Santo, were male residents at Olpoe.

One can only surmise that what is held at Olpoe, alone, is the traditional knowledge of Cumberland pottery. Tzerikianz emphasises the importance of this, in the context of Elia. For the manufacture of such traditional crafts as *nalot* (a ceremonial pudding) dishes, the knowledge is held by the traditional expert and passed on, if at all, only to one of his sons, not necessarily the eldest. This knowledge is not handed on as a matter of right; the recipient has to be chosen and may even have to pay for it (Tzerikiantz 2006: 249-50). And it is not merely the techniques of carving (or clay working) that have to be acquired.

¹⁰⁷ In 2012 the widow of Chief Tavue's older brother (the former chief of Olpoe), showed me some pots her son had made recently – they were thick-walled, small and simple but they had survived firing. ¹⁰⁸ Early on I was told that men and women work and fire pottery separately in the Notwes, probably

¹⁰⁰ Early on I was told that men and women work and fire pottery separately in the Notwes, probably the reason women have not been seen in any of the formal demonstrations. In 2004 there were ten men and two women who could make pots in Olpoe (O.P. Olpoe, pers.comm.).
The emphasis in both Olpoe and Ravlepa on consulting with elders was puzzling, especially in the case of James Boe who had a workbook with all the pot types and decorations recorded (see Appendix B). It is only after reading both Tzerikiantz (*ibid.*) and Lindstrom (1990) that I realise that the knowledge the pot-makers were trying to reconstruct was not the technical knowhow, which appeared from the outside to be what was lacking, especially in Ravlepa, but the esoteric knowledge that their ancestors had failed to pass on before they died. This would include the *tabu* to be observed and possibly spells and chants (that I was never going to hear of, as an outsider to these Christian villages). And the elders would access this knowledge not only through memory, but also through what Lindstrom (1990: 19, 44-45) calls "inspiration", as in a dream or other communication from the spirit world. This interpretation fits the behaviours better than the idea that this was a sophisticated deception, or that the elders were withholding information.

The loss of traditional knowledge is a recurring theme also in the Wusi story, but information on the Wusi pottery comes from a number of different sources, and despite the uncertainty of its origins, throws more light on the mechanisms of transmission that affect the viability of pottery.

Chapter Eight: Wusi and its Pottery Tradition

The survival of pottery in Wusi does not appear to be in question. Despite the local industry apparently starting life as either a tail-end chopped off from the pottery of the Notwes, with inferior clays and a lack of knowledge; or as a survival from some immigrant culture, either of refugees from Big Bay via the mountains, castaways from some other island of Vanuatu or, less likely, potters from further afield; potmaking has taken place in Wusi for at least 160 years and possibly longer than that. At the time of my 1993 visit, it looked as though the ability to make any sort of pottery was fading, and the only support was a few bush villages still buying the pots. It seemed that pottery making would cease completely within the next decade, but during that time foreign aid funded a revival project. Reports I then received from other researchers suggested the pottery was being irrevocably spoiled by being changed away from its traditions in ways to suit a tourist market. But when I returned in 2009, having read enough in the meantime to make me think this industry had always been threatened, I found the pots improved, the potters more enthusiastic and no sign of imminent demise. In the course of this chapter I look at Wusi and its pottery in the context of some of the ideas of other researchers on its continuity and decline, and the identity of the makers of the Wusi pots.

Reports of the Village

Wusi, also on the west coast, is at the southern end of the coastal strip, on a small platform of land between the highest mountains of the Cumberland Range and the sea. South of Wusi the path leads by the village of Linturi and up the Saoriki Valley into the hills which plunge straight into the sea until Tasiriki, where there is a little sheltered bay, the landing for the truck road. Any villages are high in the hills and invisible from the sea, and it is necessary to either climb steeply or take a boat to travel to Tasiriki and the south road head, a distance of nearly 30 km or at least four hours by boat from Wusi (see Figure 24).



Figure 24: Wusi, showing steepness of the terrain

Prior to the introduction of Christianity there were few villages on the west coast, especially in the Wusi area (Macdonald 1992: 44). It is possible that Wusi village itself does not predate European contact. After Cook reported seeing only gardens and people in the Wusi area, not dwellings or smoke from fires (Beaglehole 1988: 518-19), the area was described as apparently uninhabited (Jacobs 1844: 233), and then as the site of an early sandalwood station (Scarr 1968: 84), which would have been after 1853 (Shineberg 1967: 133, 191). This station may have attracted people to live down on the coast which they had previously used only as a resource. The first report of either a village or pottery at Wusi comes from a naturalist who visited "Poussey¹⁰⁹ Bay" some time during the sandalwooding period in the early 1860s (Rietmann 1868: 125, 177).

By 1876, Wusi was known as a place with a chief, from which labour recruits had been taken (Wawn 1973 [1893]: 114), although sources were still sometimes vague about location (e.g. Goodenough: 1876: 336; Steel: 1880: 344-45). By the 1890s Wusi was regularly being reported as a pottery village (see Table 4).

The Australian geologist Douglas Mawson visited Wusi and watched pots being made in 1903, and Speiser had a pot made for him in November 1910. The early missionaries, Macdonald and J.N. Mackenzie, had accepted Wusi as the southern end of a continuum of pottery villages, but Speiser pointed out differences between the pottery manufacturing methods of Wusi and those of the villages of the Cumberland Peninsula, and after that anyone who saw both commented on these differences between them (Harrisson 1937; M.E. Shutler 1968). After the Second World War, detailed descriptions of the pot-making process of Wusi were given by Guiart in 1954 and M.E. Shutler in 1967. A moratorium on research was placed after Independence in 1980, and the next recorded visit was mine in 1993.

¹⁰⁹ Wusi was variously called *Poussy, Pussé, Pussey, Pusei* or *Warsei* during the nineteenth century (eg. Chief of Engineers, US Army, 1943; Goodenough 1876: 336; Hagen 1893: 364; Scarr 1968: 84; Wawn 1973 [1893]: 114). It was also commonly called *Wus* (e.g. Speiser 2013: 181) and today its inhabitants call it *Wuhi*. I have stuck to calling it by the name it is commonly referred to in the literature today.

Date	Witness	Place described	Pottery	Reference
			mentioned	
1774	Cook	gardens	no	Beaglehole 1988: 518- 519
~1844	Jacobs	uninhabited	no	Jacobs 1844:233
~1860	Rietmann	Wusi village	yes	Rietmann 1868: 177
1875	Goodenough	could not find village	no	Goodenough 1876: 336
1876	Wawn	place with chief but could not find	no	Wawn 1973 [1893]: 114
1877	Giles	sandalwood station	no	Scarr 1968: 84
1878	Neilson	Punapioni	yes	Steel 1880: 345
~1892	Macdonald	Wusi village	yes	Macdonald 1892: 44, 48.
~1890s	Hagen	Wusi village	yes	Hagen 1893: 364
~1901	Cheeseman	no	yes	Cheeseman 1901
~1901	Mackenzie	no	outlined process	H.Mackenzie 1995: 69
1903	Mawson	Wusi, large village	described pot- making	Mawson 1957: 83
1909	Bowie	inland villages	no	Miller 1990: 174
1910	Speiser	houses at Wusi	described pot- making	Speiser 1913: 181
1910- 12	Lewis	no	yes	Welsch 1998: 397
1914	Anderson	no	only in Nokuku	Anderson 1915: 59-60
1924	Stewart	visited place	no	Miller 1990: 324
1927	Baker	inhabited place	only "West coast"	Baker 1929a: 37, 178
1928	Salisbury	Wusi village	no	Records of the District Agent Santo 1926-30.
1933	Harrisson	Mission village	yes, some details	Harrisson 1936a: 250
1934-6	Aubert de la Rue	Wusi place	yes, some description	Aubert de la Rue 1945: 173-74
1941	Frater	large village	no	Frater 1941.
1949	Pastor lan	reported to mission	Only Wusi and Wunapi'on	Miller 1990: 105
1952	Anthonioz	village	yes, some detail	Anthonioz 1954: 102
1954	Guiart	small village	yes, process described	Guiart 1958:58
1958	llo	village with sickness	no	llo 1958
1965	(medical tour)	healthy village	no	Report 1965
1966	Camden	village	yes	(nothing published)
1968	Shutler	village	described pot- making	Shutler 1968
1993	Pascal	village	pots displayed	Pascal 2000

Table 4: Published references to Wusi Village

Continuity of Wusi and the Pottery Tradition

Although Speiser was the first to comment on deteriorating quality in Wusi pottery, Guiart suggested a reason for this was a break in the tradition since the time of Speiser:

There are no longer any descendents of the original landowning lines of Wusi. Today there is a group of immigrants who have taken up a traditional technique of the place where they live. According to the statements of the informants¹¹⁰ there was even quite a long period without pottery, this craft being for a time the object of disapproval by the Presbyterian mission, as a survival of paganism. This break in the temporal continuity of the tradition would explain the absence of temper and the differences from the technique described by Speiser 30 years ago.

Here there seem to be two things happening: new people came in and learned the pottery making techniques but, between Speiser's visit and Guiart's own, people did not make pottery at all for a while, so the techniques changed. Although neither Speiser nor Mawson mention the addition of temper¹¹¹ in preparation of the clay (see Chapter Three), the pots themselves have changed in appearance since the time of Speiser. Can this be traced to either a replacement population or to a period of no pottery being made?

A break in the pottery tradition was also suggested by Galipaud, who introduced the idea that Wusi was depopulated for a while, again after Speiser:

...[Wusi] appears to have been abandoned shortly after Speiser's visit, and later re-settled by west coast clans who revived the tradition.

(Galipaud 1996a: 97)

(Guiart 1956a: 58-59)

It is hard to see how pottery making techniques could have been transmitted to unrelated peoples without contact, and Galipaud elsewhere corrects this by suggesting

¹¹⁰ Here Guiart has a footnote as follows: "Principally Lulu, originally from Valay, between Punampioni and Nokovula, married to a young woman from Punampioni to whom he was teaching the technique of pot-making." Lulu is mentioned several times in the local Church Accounts and by Miller, and turns up in the genealogies taken by the officials of the RSTP project (See below)

¹¹¹ I have not been able to find any description of the use of temper in association with Wusi pots, and the only two Santo pots I have seen in museum collections that look to have added temper have poor provenencing but appear more like Cumberland than Wusi pots.

that the last potters survived to reconstruct the pottery technology at the time new people came down from the mountain villages to Wusi and Kerepua (Galipaud 1996b: 117). But that happened after 1960, and Speiser had visited over 50 years previously (Speiser 1913: 19): if the village was abandoned for so long, some sort of transmission must have been taking place elsewhere. In fact other witnesses (listed in Table 3) indicate that pottery making was taking place in Wusi itself for most of the twentieth century.

A time, as well as a cause, for depopulation is given by Tzerikiantz:

In 1903 the mission of Wusi incurred the anger of the remaining inland pagans who ended up by "poisoning" them (an epidemic of whooping cough decimated the coastal population in 1908). Certain escapees regained the mountains (near Mt Tabwemasana) while others departed towards the banks of the Saoriki River In 1938 the population of Wusi, estimated at around 30 people, was well established and remains until today.

(Tzerikiantz 1999: 212)

Galipaud and Tzerikiantz do not name their sources but the theme of illness causing Wusi to be deserted is found in two local stories. Lenki Bilat, the former west coast VKS Fieldworker, showed me the old village of Wusimwele and told me it had been abandoned by the surviving early Christians after "pagans" had come down from the Saoriki River and "made trouble" from which a number of people died. This is probably also where Tzerikiantz's version comes from. The other is slightly different: Elder Dampeper (who would have been one of the children in the village when Guiart visited), said that "the missionary"¹¹² cursed the village and there was subsequently an illness which killed 400 people. Others ran away back up into the bush.

Tzerikiantz, like the local informants, is interested in sickness as a cause of depopulation. Her use of quote marks with the term "poisoning" signifies witchcraft¹¹³ – on the west coast and the Cumberland Peninsula any disease is usually attributed to malevolence by some other human who will have cast a spell to cause

¹¹² In fact there was never a foreign missionary stationed at Wusi (Miller 1990: 140-43). This could probably be taken as a personification of Christianity, which was seen to be fighting the old beliefs and forces. Eventually, Christianity won (See Chapter Seven, Fn 81).

¹¹³ Bislama posen: sorcery, witchcraft (Crowley 1995: 190, meaning 2)

illness and death. This is implied both in Dampeper's "curse' and Lenki's story of "trouble" – abandoning the village could have been because of physical aggression but death would be attributed to magical causes, ill-wishing by either "the missionary" or the "pagans".

The earliest reports of epidemics and population figures in Santo (see Chapter Six) come from the Presbyterian Mission histories but there was never an overseas missionary at Wusi. According to the wife of the missionary stationed at Tangoa, several different diseases hit the area in 1900 and 1902, reducing the population from 278 to 32 (Baker 1929a: 58) in a few years. But Mawson described Wusi as "a large village", and pottery was still being worked when he visited in 1903, just after the epidemics recorded by Baker. In 1908 the first Presbyterian Mission teacher, Nalin from Erromango, who arrived in Wusi three years previously, died in another wave of epidemics (Miller 1990: 145). This all occurred before the visit of Speiser.

The west coast of Santo was regarded as disease-prone in the early years of the twentieth century (Harrisson 1937: 373; Miller 1990: 103), and Wusi, being very hot and dry, was seen as particularly unhealthy even for that area. Although the missionaries usually encouraged people down to the coastline it seems that after Nalin's death the Wusi mission may have gone inland, as the next named mission teachers were associated with inland villages, and any missionaries that visited Wusi were going to these villages (Miller 1990: 174). Still, Speiser, in November, 1910, found someone at Wusi to demonstrate pot-making.

There is a report of deaths from dysentery at an inland Christian village (named in the local Church History as Velei) in 1916 (Miller 1990: 315). In the same year the mission village of Kerewai was established as a healthier coastal location¹¹⁴ between Wusi and Tasiriki (Miller 1990: 149). The only mission teachers named for Wusi after Nalin were Maile, and then Mwaijone who was actually in the village of Wunawuwudi on Mt Tabwemasana around 1929 (these two were probably local men since Miller (1990) does not mention them). Local church records (Anon, n.d.) follow

¹¹⁴ It was a sad irony that, when Guiart passed down the Kerewai River in 1953, all the Christians who had moved to the new coastal village had died in epidemics and the village was defunct (Guiart 1958: 110).

"the Mission" (the Christian population and their teachers) through a series of villages in the mountains¹¹⁵ until in the 1930s they come down to Petap and finally Wunapi'on, both at lower altitudes and described as pottery villages.

In 1938 the Malo mission sent another trained teacher, Jino, to Wusi, which was then described as a village of 30 people being taught by a local man, Laban (Miller 1990: 192). But three years later, the first official medical officer to tour the west coast reported only twelve people at Wusi "...The village is really quite a large one but most of the houses are apparently used by the two inland villages when they come down to the sea." (Frater 1941). These were the Christian villages of Nokovula and Wunapi'on whose populations at that time were 20 and 50 people respectively. Frater was writing during the Second World War when, from fear of both the Americans and the Japanese, everyone who could was likely to have gone inland. Laban, the local mission teacher, may have taken part of the congregation to Nokovula.

The next medical tour of Wusi (Report of a Tour of the West Coast, 1st November 1947) was during the period of the Naked Cult which was the only direct pagan threat to the village recorded by the Presbyterian Mission¹¹⁶. The Malo missionary, Rev R.L. Sykes, reported a group of about 30 bushmen threatening both Wusi and the inland Mission villages (Sykes 1947: 8), which could be the occasion of the problems talked about by Lenki.

In 1954, Guiart (1958: 58) recorded only ten adults left in Wusi village after an illness had swept through. This was also noted by a Native Medical Practitioner's report (Ilo 1958). At this time, as on the Cumberland Peninsula, people who came down to live on the coast for trade and "school" were still retreating to the bush when disease struck. Later, the epidemics hit the bush villages, and the coast where medication was available was the place with the better chance of survival. Like the people of the Cumberland Peninsula, the present-day residents of Wusi and Linturi tell tales of coming down to the coast in the 1960s and 1970s because of disease in the bush

¹¹⁵ The people of Tasmate tell a slightly different version of these events (Galipaud and Walter 1997: 23-27).

¹¹⁶ This source is a collection of unpublished papers held in the library of Talua college, South Santo. There seem to be several authors, none named, and dates range around 2006. There is no definitive title for the whole or for any parts. I have listed this material under "Anon" as "Local Accounts of Church Planting, West Coast Santo".

villages. Around 1964 Pastor Ian, Guiart's informant in the pot-making village of Wunapi'on, brought half of his congregation down to live in Wusi. The rest of the Wunapi'on people moved to Kerepua, further up the coast. The families of those people who came down from Wunapi'on to Wusi are still in the village today.

When the Wunapi'on people arrived, there were four families at Wusi, just as was reported by Guiart, ten years previously, when he counted a population of 20 (Guiart 1958: 23n). Laban, the mission teacher mentioned above (who was Dampeper's father), was the only one of the men who was not a potter. The other three, who had all learned to make pots from their mothers, were two brothers who owned land locally, and Guiart's Wusi informant, Lulu, who was born in Nu'nu' (probably Tabunaudu, the inland mission village occupied before Velei). His mother originally just came down to the coast to work the clay but while Lulu was still a child they moved to Wusi village (Lenki Bilat, pers.comm., October 2009).

It is almost impossible to guess which missionary would have suppressed the making of pottery (Guiart), or "cursed" the village (Dampeper). There were seldom expatriate missionaries on the west coast and neither Macdonald nor J.N. Mackenzie expressed any desire to restrict pottery making. After Macdonald, only Taylor in 1910 and Stewart in 1922 were briefly responsible for Wusi. Taylor probably did not even visit Wusi, and Stewart may have passed through once on his way to the inland village of Nokovula (Miller 1990: 324). Neither Stewart nor Taylor recorded much about their experiences on the west coast, according to Miller (1990: 309, 328). Most of the mission teachers were local men and it can be assumed, since they were often married to potters or made pots themselves, that they were not interfering with the pottery making. Of the three teachers from other islands, Nalin was resident during Mawson's visit and died before the visit of Speiser, Jino was there at the time of the grandparents of today's potters; and Ian was an informant on pot-making for Miller (1990: 105) and although a pastor, was described as a *Tarpolpun* (name for a traditional rang) in the local church history (Anon n.d.) However, if Jino was the teacher who disapproved of making pottery, this may also have been a reason for the emptying out of Wusi village – Lulu, the potter who had been living in Wusi since he was a child, was in Wunapi'on in the 1940s and Laban, the mission teacher when Jino arrived at Wusi, did not make pottery, although born in Wusi.

Tzerikiantz's indication that the population of present-day Wusi was established in 1938 is well supported by local and Presbyterian Church records as well as other observers. It seems the most likely time for the complete abandonment of Wusi village was during the First World War, when missionary oversight was sporadic and there are no records of the Presbyterian congregations on the coast. There are complaints about the lack of missionary attention to the west coast at that time (Harrisson 1936a: 250; Miller 1990: 12), and local records, while following Mwaijone and his successors in the Christian mountain villages, do not record any contemporary church doings in Wusi (Anon, n.d.). Also, the establishment of the mission village, Kerewai, between Wusi and Tasiriki in 1916 may suggest that Wusi was not able to be occupied.

The most likely gap in pot-making is also the period immediately after Speiser's visit, when one traveller says the only place pottery was being made on the west coast of Santo was in the Nokuku area (Anderson 1915: 59-60), and there are no further reports of pottery at Wusi until Harrisson, over 20 years later. But all indications are that the people from Wusi went to inland Christian villages, and continued working pottery, coming down to the coast to get clay, as indeed they may have been doing before sandalwooding, labour recruiting, Christianity and medical services all attracted people to live on the coast. Tzerikiantz's (2000: 194) designation of the west coast people as river dwellers makes more sense than a coastal/inland divide. The people of Wusi always had closer connections to the people up the nearby river valleys and ridges than to anyone else – they exchanged wives with them and in the event of a coastal depopulation, relatives of the landowners would take their place. A girl brought up in Wunapi'on or Nokovula would very likely have a mother who had been raised in Wusi and could *wok graonpot* – as is evident in some of the modern genealogies.

Finally, the effects of epidemic disease on the population of the whole area would be a strong factor in declining ability and confidence in making pots. When the potters in 1993 told me they could not make good pottery because all their old people had died, I thought they meant a recent occurrence – the population of the village at the time seemed very young to me. But they could have meant 40, 50, or even 80 or 90 years previously.

Changes in Pot-making over a Century

The Santo natives make a rude kind of pottery ware, such as bowls, basins and non-descript articles holding liquids and as cooking utensils. They are not acquainted with the potter's wheel, but build their wares on a shape, mostly their knee when the leg is doubled back. The ware is thin and brittle, but well burned. It is made from a black kind of clay, washed over with red volcanic soil before burning. This is the only island in the group where this art is followed.

(Cheeseman 1901, npa)

It is not clear from the above if Cheeseman actually saw pottery being made in some unnamed village, or whether he only had it described to him, but he details three known features of Wusi pottery: the moulding on the knee, the use of red slip and the fragile nature of the pots. His description of clay colour and firing quality suggest he must have at least seen finished pots. More complete descriptions come from Mawson and Speiser in the first decade of the twentieth century, Guiart in the early 1950s and M.E. Shutler in 1968 (See Chapter Three), but of these, only Shutler has given a possible eyewitness account of a firing, the most secret part. Most of the accounts are from watching a part of the process, usually the famous moulding of the pot on the knee, and supplementing this with descriptions from informants.

The time range however, gives a unique view of the changes in the Wusi craft over more than 100 years, starting with a very early eyewitness account from the naturalist Rietmann, who visited an unnamed village in the "Wusi Bay" area:

In one large house, several old women were engaged in making very pretty pots and dishes out of a black earth. The vessels were painted over with red clay and provided with many tasteful decorations

(Rietmann 1868: 177)

Mawson watched a pot being made around June 1903 and also saw a group of women working together to prepare clay, which was wetted and put through a complex kneading process before the potter made the pot by opening the prepared ball of clay on her bent knee, and turning and patting it, a process Mawson estimated to take around three minutes. The potter then used a wet bamboo tool and her fingers to scrape and thin the walls, shape the rim and mould the top, after which the pot was

decorated by applying rolls of clay and incised patterns (Mawson 1957: 83-5). This was the only part Mawson actually saw but he was told that the pot was left to dry for about five days so that it could be scraped again with a piece of sharpened coconut shell to reduce the thickness of the walls, and cracks were then repaired "...by cutting out the crack with a sharp-edged piece of bamboo wood followed by filling up the resulting groove with freshly prepared plastic pieces of damp worked clay" (Mawson 1957: 85). Then the whole pot was dipped in "a thin suspension of red ochreous clay" (the red slip). After some days of further drying, "...a number of the air-dried pots were assembled together and fire heaped around them" (Mawson 1957: 85).

Like Rietmann, Mawson saw women working together as a team, at least to prepare the clay which he describes (unlike everyone else) as "yellow". The extended preparation would act as a "blocking" process by which air was removed. He also describes the shaping of the "double-curved lip", by which the outward flare of the rim was interrupted to produce a sinuous curve (see Figure 10 and Figure 25 below). He indicates that the pot was entirely formed on the knee, and the narrowing of the mouth was achieved by scraping after the pot was formed. Decorating was performed straight away. The final shaping by scraping and repair of cracks is one of the phases I saw in 2010 and it was still performed exactly as Mawson described.

Speiser, who saw a pot made at Wusi in 1910, gave a very brief description mainly for comparison with the Pespia method. For him the clay was also prepared by kneading and forming into a ball, but he describes the colour as grey. Speiser's potter opened the ball of clay with her fist, not her knee, formed a shallow dish and then worked the pot on her thighs while her legs were straight, the pot sides being formed with a bamboo splinter with the potter's hand applying pressure from inside. The pot was only inverted onto her knee to form the rim, and the whole process took ten minutes (Speiser 1990: 232). Decoration was applied after the pot had dried a bit, however, Speiser did not describe this process.



Figure 25: An old Wusi pot in the Speiser collection at the Basel museum.

Speiser's account has several differences from those both before and after. His photograph shows the potter working in full view, outside a house with a mixed audience (Speiser 1990: Pl 62/4). The prohibitions that later would prevent the potter working outside or in front of men (M.E. Shutler 1968: 17) may not have developed at that time (see later note on *tabu*) or may have been ignored because this was not a real pot-making but a requested demonstration. And it was the wet season, which may account for both the colour of the clay, and the pot having to be dried before decoration could be added. Finally, the knee was used only for finishing the mouth. The method of forming the rim seems to have changed since Mawson's time and it is described as "...sharply bent over [and], concave upward....lt always comes away from the wall at a clearly-marked angle and not in a gradual curve" (*ibid.*). Small rims make their appearance in some of the pots Speiser collected.

Between Speiser and Guiart the only visitor to comment on pottery at Wusi is Harrisson in 1933, with more interest in putting pottery into a social and economic context than describing the technical procedure. He mentions seeing one "old woman" making pots at Wusi by herself (Harrisson 1937: 373). Elsewhere: The Wus pots, which are also made by the women, are simply moulded with a bamboo knife; they can be easily recognised by an invariable broad base with a circle of notches, and the lip broad and sloping outwards.

(Harrisson 1936a: 249.)

He is the first to mention "taboos" around pot-making and to point out that the patterns on the pottery are meaningful, as are patterns on such things as mats and amulets, and sand-drawings:

They call, in particular, simple angular marks on the lips of Santo pottery "writing"....Each type of system of lines tells a story; represents a grade, a privilege, a payment and legend....Garments and ornaments are not made without designs, nor is pottery.

(Harrisson 1937: 353)

Harrisson was also interested in the extent of Wusi pot trading, and it seems that at his time pottery was already scarce in Santo:

These pots are bartered to and fro inland as far east as the Yora and Lambe valleys,¹¹⁷ their value increasing with the distance....They are used in cooking, but not for storage ; and they have a certain scarcity value.

(Harrisson 1936a: 249-50)

Twenty years later Guiart (1958: 58) also commented on pot exchange and use in the interior, which he would have observed for himself during his journeys. Pots were traded to the bush people for taro (scarce in dry Wusi) or cash; they were on-sold among the "pagans" for money or store-bought goods. A pot that would sell for a couple of shillings in Wusi was worth a pound¹¹⁸ in Butmas (Guiart 1958: 58), the north-eastern bush village in Guiart's time, and still the entry to Midelbus today.

Guiart was touring inland villages for the Condominium government and spent a nightin Wusi on his way from Wunapi'on to the Saoriki River valley (Guiart 1958: 147-48). Like most observers, Guiart only watched the actual forming of the pot, but he

¹¹⁷ This is the inland Big Bay region on the other side of the western mountain range. Wusi has a traditional connection with the Ora (Yora) valley. The Ora and the Lape (Lambe) are the two main tributaries of the Jordan River.

¹¹⁸ This is in Australian currency of the time, which is hard to translate to today's money values -a pound would have been equivalent to NZ\$2, and a couple of shillings is a tenth of that. Probably worth 50 to 100 times what they are today.

obtained quite a bit of subsidiary information from Lulu, the mission teacher who was also a potter. This is the first mention of males making Wusi pots, and Guiart was also the first to talk about the location of the clay source. He said the clay was collected from the bank of a river to the south of the village, carefully cleaned and rested in a dark place for several days before use. Impurities were removed and no temper was added. The clay ball was punched open, the base was moulded on the bent knee, then the walls of the pot were raised by hitting on the outside while supporting the inside so that the diameter decreased and the walls thinned towards the top. There were two tools used this time, described as a pebble or piece of polished coconut shell as the anvil and a "slip of wood" as the beater (Guiart 1958: 54-56). As was reported by Mawson, the edge was evened up with the fingers before the lip was formed:

Now comes a particular hand movement and the worker turns her working outwards, inducing with the left hand a folding back of the top of the pot which thus, once again, opens upwards; the right hand supports this action with two fingers while making the pot turn in small movements on the worker's thighs. (Guiart 1958: 56 *My translation*)

Guiart briefly described smoothing the rim and decorating with a combination of appliqué and incising, and commented that while he only saw two other pot shapes there was a lot of variety in "details of form and in decoration" (*ibid*.). The pots were covered with a slip made with red clay obtained from the Kerewai River, and fired the following day, using only bamboo as a fuel to avoid damaging the pots (Guiart 1958: 56-7). This is the first mention of the firing process.

Like Speiser, Guiart was watching an out-of-season demonstration and he left the day he saw the pot-making, so would not have seen either the slip application or the firing. While his description of the forming of the pot is more detailed than either Mawson's or Speiser's it has features in common with both – as for Mawson the base of the pot was worked on the knee and ornament was added immediately; as for Speiser the clay was opened by hitting it with a fist and the walls narrowed in from the base. Guiart also covers prohibitions in more detail than Harrisson and was the first to observe that the potters were all immigrants to Wusi, and had learnt the craft as adults in the village itself. Guiart (1958: 58-59) believed this lack of expertise was the reason the

pots were made without temper, why they were inadequately fired, and why they broke so readily. But there is no record of temper having been used in Wusi pots, and there are other possible reasons for poor firing and high breakage (discussed in Chapters Three, Four and Nine). Speiser himself had commented on the declining quality of the pots (Nojima 2011: 170).

The last observer before Independence and the moratorium on research was archaeologist M.E. Shutler whose visit was facilitated by Presbyterian Pastor Bill Camden (who also arranged my visit in 1993). In 1967 she watched and photographed all parts of the pot-making process, a detailed record which formed the basis of Port Vila Cultural Centre displays of the working of pottery for several decades. She wrote two accounts of the process (M.E. Shutler 1968; 1971) the first being more detailed. Her description was made only thirteen years after Guiart's, but differs in several aspects. The clay was collected from a nearby "knoll", favoured because of "...impurities...[which] serve as a natural temper" (M.E. Shutler 1968: 15). It was mixed with water, kneaded and used straight away. It was started by throwing it down onto a stone, then worked on the knee, turning and patting in much the same way as previously described but Shutler gives different techniques used at this stage to achieve the desired shape of the pot. Again the bamboo tool is used and the pot is right way up on the thighs to raise and thin the walls, wet fingers are used to even the edge but the hands were reversed in Shutler's description of neck formation, and only a narrow outward turning rim was formed. Pots were then put aside until the rims dried, then turned over to dry the bases. It usually took several days, said Shutler, before the next stage, of thinning the walls of the pot by scraping and rolling the scrapings to provide the clay for decoration, for which Shutler gives details of patterns and pot types (*ibid*.), and describes the same technique of making holes in the pot wall to attach handles (or *chalnana* – ears) that I saw in 2010.

Shutler names the village of Mataype ("eye of the river", possibly on the upper Kerewai River) as the source of the red clay for the slip and details the preparation of this clay by mixing with sea water and drying for a couple of weeks then mixed again with seawater before application. After re-drying and going over the decoration the pots were "...polished inside and out, by being rubbed vigorously with the operculum

of a turbo shell" (Shutler 1968: 17)¹¹⁹, dried again for a couple of weeks or more, then fired before dawn on a preheated platform of stones, covered with dried coconut leaves and surrounded with what Shutler calls a "kiln" built up on a frame of green branches tied together and formed into a cone covered with dried split bamboo. The fire burns for half an hour, then the pots, which should be glowing red are removed and have seawater with arrowroot grated into it poured over them. Shutler sees this procedure as ensuring that all parts of the thick-based, thin-rimmed pots cool evenly so cracks do not develop.

On my first visit to Wusi in 1993, I was looking for technical terms for pot-making operations in the local language. I did not see pots being made but saw completed pots, was given names for various types of pot and the terms for parts of the pot-making process, and was taken to see the source of the clay and the hearths the pots were fired on. I was working from M.E. Shutler's photo essay¹²⁰, and nothing that I was told by potters and other people in Wusi village contradicted any part of that description, made 25 years previously. Many of the same names were given for the same pots or patterns (see Appendix B). Additional information given by my informants was that the clay was rested for a day after being soaked, the pot was scraped inside straight after being moulded on the knee and before the lip was worked, and that after the slip was applied the pot was dried over a fire or in the sun for three weeks before it was burnished and fired.

Outlets were much the same as during Shutler's visit. Small quantities of pots were sometimes sent to town for sale in the markets of Luganville or Port Vila, but most were sold to people who came down from the bush to buy them. Previously this was a barter system, but by Shutler's time they were usually sold at prices up to three dollars¹²¹ (M.E. Shutler 1968: 17-18). In 1993, the price was still 100vt in the village (equivalent to just over NZ\$1). Potters I spoke to at this time said they could not make very good pots. They said a lot of their old people had died from a sickness and

¹¹⁹ Another procedure first mentioned by Shutler. This is the same burnishing that was carried out in the Notwes using a *snekbin* seed (*Entada phaseoloides*; Crowley 1995: 224)

¹²⁰ At that time this was displayed in the old Cultural Centre. The presentation only differs from Shutler's first written account (Shutler 1968), in that it gives different drying times [for various parts of the process] and goes into a bit more detail about the digging of the clay.

¹²¹ Shutler does not say what currency she was referring to - she was writing for the *South Pacific Bulletin*.

they had no one to teach them proper techniques. This was a confirmation of what Jennifer West, the then proprietor of Goodies in Port Vila had told me. Goodies sold local handcrafts to tourists, but she felt the Wusi pots were no longer saleable as they crumbled and fell apart. She had even tried re-firing them, but there was little improvement.

Galipaud and Nojima both visited Wusi in the 1990s, but neither left descriptions of pot-making there. Galipaud was there as part of his archaeological survey in 1993 and 1994 (Galipaud 1996a, b, c). He recounted a Wusi pottery legend, and compared Guiart's and Shutler's descriptions (Galipaud 1996a, b). Galipaud thinks that a lot of the differences between the descriptions come from the preferences of individual observers or artisans (1996a: 97). Nojima visited Wusi in 1998, before her fieldwork in Olpoe but did not see pots being made there. She observed three cooking demonstrations with Wusi pots, but notes that in two of them the the pots cracked and had to be replaced (Nojima 2008: 129-30).

In 2009 I arranged another visit with Lenki Bilat, by then retired. Delayed by weather, I did not get there until October, by which time the season for pot-making was over and the potters were packing their wares to take them down to the Third National Arts Festival in Port Vila the following month. But I saw a demonstration of cooking and talked to potters. I also paid the tourist fees to see a potter's private workshop and her firing hearth. I accompanied the potters to the festival where they were supposed to be working pottery but did not, mostly because the secluded workspace they had requested was not made available and they had only a display tent like other participants. So they demonstrated cooking and some potters sold their pots. When I returned in June 2010, I was allowed to take part in clay collection and to witness both finishing and forming of pots, done in different operations on different days. These were not demonstrations undertaken for the researcher, but occasions where potters were already working when I was invited to visit.

If all the descriptions are taken at face value, there is a picture of fluctuating changes. Clay and slip are sourced from different places. Sometimes there is more care or skill with one aspect, sometimes another. Sometimes a purer clay is preferred, sometimes one with impurities (which act as temper). The famous knee moulding may not

always have been a standard process, and it is even possible that, at an earlier period, Wusi pottery was part of a continuum stretching most of the length of the west coast, as the early missionary descriptions suggest. A lot of the variation in the four main accounts (Guiart, Mawson, Shutler, Speiser) is in minor details like the method of first opening the pot, or the tool used for working the walls. As Galipaud surmises, these could be the results of individual choices or the circumstances of the observation. Weather and clay condition would affect decisions about how long to dry the clay between stages. There is also the possibility, for the three observations recorded by men (tabu), that the demonstrations were not expected to produce viable pots so niceties of clay preparation and proper drying of stages were skipped. All three early accounts emphasise the speed of making a Wusi pot, but Shutler describes days of careful work. However, the central technique shows consistency over a long period of time. The few descriptions of clay colour and source are interesting: only Mawson and possibly Guiart seem to have seen a relatively pure clay used. The clay I helped collect was not far below the top soil horizon so had a mixture of organic materials. Guiart and Shutler describe different sources – in 1993 I saw a riverbank source that corresponded to Guiart's location but in 2010 we collected clay from a hilltop much further from the village that would have answered Shutler's description of a "knoll".

Observers who saw more than one potter (Shutler and accounts before Speiser, see Table 4) described a process that was at least in part a communal effort. By 2010 when I saw pots being worked each potter worked for preference by herself in her own kitchen or workshop, sometimes with a helper – this despite the efforts of the Rural Skills Training Project to encourage the potters to work as a group.

The biggest technical difference is in the working of the mouth. The final shaping of the lip was done with a bamboo tool, knife or splinter or, for Guiart, a piece of coconut or a stone, but the older accounts, like the older pots, show more work being put into the rim. For Mawson, the shaping of the mouth was done not by extending the top of the pot but by scraping and moulding the already formed lip, from both inside and out (Mawson 1957: 83-85). This produced the double curve only seen on older pots, although Speiser has a unique account of working only the mouth on the knee. It seems that the technique of working the mouth was changing between the visits of Mawson and Speiser. Pot lips later become small or non-existent and Guiart

and Shutler spent little time on this aspect. Raising more of the walls by hand in fact requires more skill than knife moulding, and puts more strain on the materials of the pot, as well as requiring a skilful firing technique like that described by Shutler, but it is hard to know why the method would have been changed in that way. If not a loss of previous techniques, as suggested by Guiart, possible causes are a shortage of clay, or just changing fashion. A more economical application of the slip is described by later observers; possibly the red clay was also more easily obtained in Mawson's time.



Figure 26: Wusi pots for sale, 1993. Some of the traditional designs shown here are no longer seen.

Wusi pots from different periods are still accessible in museum displays, and what they add is a picture of continued deterioration and simplification. At the time of my first visit in 1993, pots were neither symmetrical nor "well-worked", although I saw one old pot with the extended rim, (Figure 26). The overall trend is a decline in apparent quality, at least until the mid 1990s. This trend may be associated with an increasing importance of *tabu*.

Tabu

Restrictions on practice in pot-making were first commented on by Harrisson:

"Elaborate tabus are observed by the potters, and these are still kept up in the mission village at Wusi"

The tabus on pot-makers on Santo, where it is women's work, are very elaborate. They include long periods of seclusion indoors, peculiar diet, periods when urination is forbidden. If any tabu is broken, all the pots will break.

(Harrisson 1937: 353)

(Harrisson 1936a: 250)

Guiart suggests the duration of the *tabu* observance was declining:

There are still some prohibitions. While someone is working at pot-making, they can neither urinate nor defecate, nor make love, nor breastfeed a crying child, but this only applies for the half day of work. A woman having a period can work. If she is pregnant she cannot work but this is because it is physically too difficult to bend.

(Guiart 1958: 58)

This list was added to by Presbyterian Pastor Bill Camden, who told me that men could not see pot-making before he watched it in 1966 when the potters were so sure the pots would break because he was watching, they had already made another lot so they would be able to show him a finished pot (Pastor Bill Camden, pers.comm., 1993). M.E. Shutler thought that the pots' survival caused the potters to have abandoned this *tabu* by the time of her visit, but I found it was still being observed in 2010, even after the RSTP intervention. Other *tabu* Shutler found that are still in existence today are the prohibitions on counting or naming the unfired pots or talking about them in their presence, and on eating or having food in the house where the pots are being made. But she thought the *tabu* were comparatively mild and intimates this may have contributed to the survival of the craft:

It is interesting to note that on Santo, where pottery is still made, both men and women make pottery and there are few taboos involved. On Epi, Aoba and Malekula, where pottery-making has been abandoned, only men practiced the art,

the process was hedged with many restrictions and in some places was connected with the esoteric activities of the men's societies¹²².

(M.E.Shutler 1971: 83)

The restrictions I saw were more extensive than any of the previous observers indicated, but at least some have been relaxed. When I went to collect black clay, we could not take food to the site so I had to leave behind the peanuts I had been given, but there was no restriction on my eating on the way and the potters are now allowed to eat during the working process. The reason given is that when only a few pots were being made this was practical, whereas now pot-making goes on for longer¹²³. Potters were not able to eat coconut at any time, but this is now only during firing, and some people say this prohibition has been abandoned. Unfinished pots cannot be taken anywhere near food. If a potter is using her kitchen to work pots, she goes outside to cook, or at least covers the pottery in progress while cooking.

My notes from 1993 say that the pots were dried in the sun after the red slip was painted on. In 2009, the potters said that pots could not be taken outside or put where direct sunlight would hit them. This seems to be a new *tabu*. Furthermore, it may have extended the drying time – three weeks was the time given in 1993, four to six weeks in 2009.

Information about firing was contradictory. I have been told both that each women had her own firing place (see Figure 27), and also that there were two or three firing places for all the potters. Firing places are said to be off limits to everyone else and people can be fined for going there. But there is a list of sightseeing prices in the guesthouse which includes fees for looking at firing places and I was shown firing platforms in both 1993 and 2009. I did not view an actual firing though, and it is said that only the potter and a friend, or a child under instruction will be there.

¹²² I have not been able to find where Shutler got this information

¹²³ "Longer" might also be an effect of the necessity, during the intervention discussed in the next section, for demonstrating pot-making out of season, when days could elapse before a pot was dry enough for further working, and firing had to keep being cancelled because of rain (Harrison 1999: 17, 62).



Figure 27: Naomi at her firing place

Dawn firing seems to have been universally abandoned. The potters now say that it was a *rabis tabu¹²⁴* and people are less likely to see them during the day. Another explanation given was that the women had been frightened firing at night and were pleased to abandon the practice. Firewood was usually dismissed as "brushwood" or described briefly as coconut and bamboo by observers (Galipaud 1996a: 98; M.E. Shutler 1968: 17). In fact, in both Wusi and Olpoe the wood used for the fire is

¹²⁴ A false or faulty prohibition, not genuine tradition

important. In Wusi, only *pihura*¹²⁵ or mango wood can be used for the initial fire that heats the stones. Coconut and bamboo are used for the actual firing. If pots are black after the fire it means they are not properly burned – they should be red¹²⁶. They can be re-fired, but I don't know if this is a practice instituted by the RSTP Project or whether people always had this option.

There are other restrictions that seem designed to stop the pots from learning their intended purpose ahead of time. The pots cannot be called by name but must be called *pikinini* or $pepe^{127}$. They cannot be counted until they are all ready to be fired, and then only in pairs. One is not supposed to talk about the process at any time while working, so I was told not to talk about the clay, and not to ask any questions when we were collecting clay.

Tzerikiantz (2006) discusses the importance of the handing down of esoteric knowledge of technical procedures, and I see the simultaneous importance and changing nature of *tabu* (as was discussed in Chapter Seven on the Notwes), not as contradictory (as first appears) but as evidence both for the belief among the potters that they have lost vital parts of their pottery knowledge and for the attempts being made to re-access that knowledge.

The Rural Skills Training Project Intervention

It is likely Wusi pots have always been made to trade, certainly since the introduction of cheap saucepans and European cooking items to the coastal villages. If not for the bush villages that either shunned European goods or still upheld the cooking practices of the traditional graded society, Wusi pots could have died out before the pottery of the Notwes. In 1993, the bush villages were still the main consumers for Wusi pots, which only found their way irregularly to tourist outlets in Luganville and Port Vila. But as the bush villages have slowly joined the cash economy the tourist market has

¹²⁵ Calophyllym inophyllum

¹²⁶ This is the reason given in the Notwes for the practice of night firing

¹²⁷ "Small child" or "baby". This was mentioned before, in the context of viewing pots as people (see Chapter Three).

become more important, and in 1998 the new Field Worker, Frank Lenki, applied for aid funding for marketing the Wusi pots.

The request fitted in with the agenda of the newly instituted Rural Skills Training Programme (RSTP), funded with NZ and Australian aid to improve rural economic life and the status of women (Aru 2004: 178, 186). The assessor sent in was not a marketing expert though, but an art advisor who had been involved with a previous pottery project in Indonesia, and who saw the project in terms of improving the quality of the pottery, not only for economic reasons but to support "...a unique part of the Vanuatu cultural heritage" (J.& J. McKinnon 2009: 148). However, the traditional restrictions surrounding pot-making were viewed as a problem¹²⁸. The original assessor made it clear in advance that she thought all aspects of the secrecy of the process were standing in the way of correct pot-making, which she saw as a community activity that would be enhanced by cooperation¹²⁹. Even night firing was seen as an impediment. In 1998 an RSTP team including a New Zealand potter went to Wusi to assess and train the potters, improve technical aspects and pot quality and look at market expansion (Harrison 1998: 6). Community involvement and questioning "Tapu" as well as upgrading technical skills were seen as important, and marketing took a back seat (J. & J. McKinnon 2009: 149). The goal of making pottery a better earner for the community was becoming subsumed into one of getting the village to put more resources into supporting pottery.

The follow-up programme to this intervention was scaled down from a lack of resources (Harrison 2001: 4). RSTP managed only one return visit before NZAid withdrew funding. Some of the remaining money was spent trying to get support from VKS (themselves underfunded), and to establish contacts through the RSTP with Fijian potters, but nothing came of either of these approaches before RSTP lost their independent budget. In 2001 however, AusAID funded a return to the village by the

¹²⁸ This was emphasised more in the written directions left with the potters than in any of the published material.

¹²⁹ Previous research in craft learning has found that horizontal and oblique transmission is at least as successful as vertical transmission (e.g. Puri 2013: 293) and there are also suggestions that vertical transmission is inadequate for long-term cultural retention of knowledge and that proliferation and horizontal transmission may be necessary for success (Morin 2016: 207). Views such as Monin's would certainly see learning from one sole tutor, with restrictions imposed by *tabu*, as impeding rather than facilitating learning and dissemination. This may be the theory the assessor was drawing on.

NZ potter-consultant who reported that some of the technical and community support recommendations had been acted on, although pot quality could still be improved and the women's workload reduced (Harrison 2001: 11). But the new community house was seen as inappropriate for its purpose, and it was thought the potters had largely failed to address issues of "Tapu"¹³⁰. A new programme was set up, focussed on having a demonstration at the 2002 Melanesian Arts Festival in Vila, but monitoring ceased completely at this point. Potters reported their participation in this festival as marred by failure of festival organisers to either transport their materials successfully or to provide appropriate workshop space at the festival itself (as happened again in the 2009 festival, see above). A report by the original advisor later put the blame for failure of the RSTP intervention on the VKS (J. & J. McKinnon 2009: 13).

Several of the changes recommended by the RSTP advisors were still evident in 2009 and the potters were very positive about the experience. Some of the technical changes they had advocated represented a return to previous practice in clay preparation and drying times, and people were finding other ways to achieve recommended results such as thicker pot lips. But the variety in the designs had suffered and apparently some of the older names were lost¹³¹. There was little sign of increased "community support" but I don't think this was relevant anyway, considering that potters make money only for their own immediate families. The advisors had realised that one community house for pot-making was impractical because of village divisions, and recommended two should be built. But most potters prefer the convenience as well as the secrecy and privacy of their own workshops and kitchens. They said they now called for help in various aspects of quality control, but informal family help must always have been available (especially where for women who were actually taught the craft by their husbands). I saw none of the tools recommended for ensuring even work, although the pots appeared to be more symmetrical. With the possible exception of the dawn firing, most of the tabu seemed to be still in place, including the one supposedly abandoned in 1966, of precluding men from observing the process.

 $^{^{130}}$ These issues were not specified – I can only think that the lack of an appropriate workshop and general reluctance to work in a group were the perceived problems. 131 There seems to have been a practice during the Programme of replacing the word *uro* (pot) with the

¹³¹ There seems to have been a practice during the Programme of replacing the word *uro* (pot) with the word *tano* (earth). This was possibly to prevent the pots hearing their names during the Programme.

Transmission

One of the most interesting aspects of the RSTP was the record it created of just who was making pots. In 1998 17 people were named as expert potters and four as learners (Harrison 1998: 53). To get some idea of succession I looked at the history of these people, who they learnt pottery from, who they passed the skill onto, and what they were doing twelve years later, in 2010. Some of the information was accessed from the work of Juliet Sumbe of the RTSP, the rest was put together by me, from conversations with Wusi potters and with the fieldworkers of the village.

The potters of today can almost all be traced back to the four families in the village in 1964, who either had been in Wusi since Guiart's visit in 1954, or came down with the migration from Wunapi'on. Guiart's informant, the potter Lulu, whose wife was also a potter has a daughter-in-law and a granddaughter among today's potters (see Figure 28 below). Two of the other men already resident in 1964 were potters. David, the local landowner who sold the chief of Linturi the ground for his village and plantations, married Lulu's daughter and now has six potter descendents. His brother, Liotmule, married into a family of three potter sisters; both his sons learned pottery from their mothers and have taught it to their wives. The last of the original residents was Laban, the Mission teacher born in Wusi (probably before 1920 since he was the teacher when Jino arrived in 1938), who was not a potter himself but married the youngest of the potter sisters. His family now also has six women potters living in the village.

Of the 17 potters who took part in the 1998 RSTP Project, ten had mothers who were potters, and the others had learned the art when they married into the village. The apprentices of 1998 had mothers or mothers-in-law who made pots. In 2009 thirteen of the 1998 potters were still making pots in the village, one had married and left the village, two had died and one had effectively given up pottery. Three of the apprentices had become potters, one had not. But there were two new potters who had not been part of the RSTP and they were the daughter and niece of active potters. However, the following year one of the two seemed to have given up, so there were still 17 potters active at Wusi village.



Figure 28: Simplified Tree of relations between first four families in Wusi.

Four of the five "trainers"¹³² on the RSTP were still making pots but did not seem to be training anyone other than members of their own families. Most of the potters I spoke to had learned pot-making from their own mothers. Since my last visit the two potters I learned most from have gone – Elda Manna died and Naomi married and left for East Santo. I do not know if any more potters have been trained – Elda Manna had no daughters or daughters-in-law in the village, but Naomi's younger unmarried sister would have inherited her workshop, and although not named as a potter in either 1998 or 2009, could quite possibly already make pots since she is descended from Rovoi and most of her female relatives have been potters.

To become a Wusi potter it appears two things are needed: an older relative willing to teach you, and a kitchen or workspace of your own to make pottery. Traditionally, as in the Notwes, the tutor would probably have been your mother-in-law, whose home you would go to when you were quite young, to be trained (cf. the Luo potters of Kenya, Herbich & Dietler 2008: 232-37). But with the advent of Christianity and colonial rule, the practice of taking small girls as wives declined, and to pass on their

¹³² I put this term in quote marks as it appeared to me to be a strictly honorary designation; one of these women was not really even a potter (but her English is better than that of most other villagers), neither of the two best potters in the village were trainers, and one did not take even part in the programme. The qualification may have been availability - in a west coast village, 3 of these women were childless.

skills, potters had to teach their own children. More of the present generation of potters have learned from their own mothers than from their husbands' mothers. Another solution was to teach sons, as was done in the Notwes. A number of Wusi men are able to make pots, and often women from outside the village have learned from their husbands rather than their mothers-in-law. But since the Wusi RTSP was part of an effort to improve the economic lot of rural women (J. & J. McKinnon 2009: 9), no male potters were part of the programme, or even mentioned in the reports. I have been told by several Wusi men that they can make pots. I don't know of any who practise on their own, but some help their wives.

The distribution of potters in the family trees recorded by the RSTP indicates that people do not teach young daughters, probably because they often marry and leave the village. It makes more sense to teach daughters-in-law, which may explain what seems to be the current practice of only passing on skills later in life. But another reason could be that potters are traditionally elderly. All observers (other than Speiser) before M.E. Shutler described the pot makers as "old women", and few of today's potters were taught by people who are still alive. Making pottery is better done when your children are grown, and you are no longer able to contribute as much to other village tasks. Several of the potters in 2009-10 were widows and would have had few other means of getting income.

A daughter-in-law would also be more likely to have her own kitchen to work in. Although in earlier times pot-making was often observed as a group activity in Wusi, today the women seem to prefer to work by themselves, in their own kitchens, or in private workshops attached to their houses. The RSTP requirement for a community workshop was the most effectively resisted of all their suggestions, and the village residents who gave up pot-making after the programme were women who were trained but had no immediate prospect of their own kitchen in the village. Although the population of Wusi increased from 84 in the 1998 census taken by the RSTP, to 120 in 2009, the number of kitchens (i.e. households) only increased from 21 to 24. This suggests that most households in Wusi had someone making pottery. There are several named potters in one household, but most of these women do not actually make pots.

Another reason for limiting the number of potters in a household is that a potter, while theoretically earning cash income for the household, is taking the time she spends working pots away from the time she can spend contributing to immediate subsistence (Arnold 1985: 105-6, also see discussion in Chapter Nine). When the cash income from *graonpot* is uncertain, as it has been the whole time I have been observing, more than one potter in a household is probably too difficult to sustain in a region that still relies on garden production.

It seems that households are important in the process of making pottery, providing both the workplace (the kitchen or secret workshop) and the means of passing on the tradition. While people are inclined to teach only members of their own families and work in their own private spaces, an intervention to widen the teaching basis of a traditional skill is likely not to be successful.

Discussion

It is possible that Wusi pottery technology was brought in by immigrants, either from nearby or further away. It has been shown that these technologies were already in the Remote Pacific, and that people may change their technology to suit the clay they have to work with. It may never be certain who the original potters of Wusi were or where they came from, but a yet unexplored alternative is that they came from elsewhere on the island of Santo. Tzerikiantz said about the area south of Tasmate:

The present coastal inhabitants are not mountain peoples, nor are they coastal peoples although they have been living there for several decades. These inhabitants of the coasts were and remain river peoples (Apuna, Raovi and Pua Rivers). They followed these rivers down to the sea...

(Tzerikiantz 2006: 194)

The Apuna River is one of several rivers that flow out of the Cumberland ranges into Big Bay near Tolomako and was singled out as the area which carried the most suitable soils for production of ceramics (Claridge 1985: 7). It is also the area where Glaumont (1899: 62-3) suggested the Big Bay pottery he saw in 1890 was made, and is close to the rivers Tavoli, where Speiser (1913: 162) encountered the "Pygmies" he

thought were the original pottery makers of Santo, and Tavol, a name associated with the Cumberland pottery legends (Nojima (2011: 161). Twenty years after Speiser, all these inland valleys were deserted (Bird 1935:224-25).

The suggestion that the ancestors of the Wusi potters crossed the mountains from Big Bay is made feasible by the geographic fact that the Apuna rises in the same area of the ranges as the Pualapa River that runs down to Kerepua on the west coast. The way between the coasts is through villages known to the people of Wusi - at the head of the Apuna is the village of Nokovula, and Wunapi'on is on the same track leading down to the Pualapa. The same language that is spoken in the villages of Wusi, Kerepua and Elia on the coast (Tryon 2010: 288), and was the language of Nokovula (Tryon 1972: 52), has recently been identified in the village of Tovot near the Apuna River in Big Bay (Tryon & Walter 1998: 7).

An objection to this theory would be the arguments by Guiart and Galipaud that today's potters are unrelated immigrants. But the ancestors of today's people also clearly had connections with the Big Bay rivers; and the pottery trail carried back over the mountains in the 1930s (Harrisson). My surmise would be that, like the people of the Notwes, the people of the river valleys of west Santo and Big Bay kept their ancestral routes and connections and retreated in times of trouble back into their river valleys. The original "masters of the soil" mentioned by Guiart may have been the non-potting people of the Saoriki valley, who came back down to the coast and reclaimed their land as recently as the 1970s.

For the whole of the twentieth century there have been people making pots from Wusi clay. While for almost all that time, it seems, the pots of Wusi have been derided as inadequate in appearance, size, texture, durability and adherence to *kastom*, it also seems that they have always fulfilled a *kastom* role in that area. Wusi may have started as a place for people from the inland villages to make a rough pot for *kastom* purposes (either as a convenient substitute for the clay of the Apuna valley, or because they had at some point lost access to that clay) but it has developed into a place of skilled potters with a remarkably consistent craft. At the times people were not living and making pots in the Wusi coastal village their near relations up in the mountains were still carrying out this industry with Wusi clay. Despite all the forces

of the influx of European goods, the faltering of the *Supwe* through Christianity and other influences, and depopulation attested on a scale that exceeded that of the Notwes villages, Wusi still has potters and still makes and sells traditional pots.

The RSTP intervention attempted to make Wusi pottery more marketable by improving pottery skills, largely through simplification and cooperation among potters. The potters took on some of the technical changes, including reducing the number of designs, thus losing some traditional patterns, but were more resistant to abandoning *tabu* or working cooperatively. Although one of the stated aims of the RSTP was to increase the number of potters, the potters of Wusi are probably exactly who they would be if the programme had never taken place. Potters, like other traditional artisans of the west coast, teach their own chosen family members as replacements, both the techniques and the traditions, and these learners step into their role when they have the means to work pottery according to *tabu*.

The most substantial change that has taken place in the Wusi pot is the early alteration of the mouth to a form which, while less spectacular to look at, may require as much or more skill to attain (see Chapter Nine). Again, the reasons for this change may be change in function, designation or just practical convenience. But there also seems to be a change in the people's attitude to their pottery and I would argue that the true value of the RSTP was that it gave the potters confidence in their skill and product. Like the people of the sandalwood era, the potters of Wusi have selected from the proffered repertoire of European incursions, and adapted those that can contribute to their own cultural objectives, as was suggested by Sahlins (1992). The next chapter explains more why the potters of Wusi are still making pots, while those of the Cumberland Peninsula are on the brink of losing their ancient knowledge and craft.

Chapter Nine: Survival of Pottery on the West Coast Today

Whether Wusi pottery is an offshoot of the Cumberland tradition or a remnant from elsewhere, whether the present potters are following a tradition handed down or reinventing as they go, today Wusi pottery seems to have the better chance of survival. While the Cumberland tradition is the richer, with a proven pedigree, better pots and a higher reputation, nevertheless, it is the Wusi pottery which seems more secure today.

This chapter surveys factors that contribute to survival or extinction of the craft, and hypotheses are advanced on how pottery survived so long in this one region when in the rest of Vanuatu, as in most of Remote Oceania, pottery was supplanted by stone ovens, wooden dishes, bamboo water holders and coconut shell kava drinking cups before European contact, and where, in most other island groups, cooking pots that faltered through to the nineteenth century deferred to the first metal saucepans to arrive.

Ideas on practical and cultural aspects of the survival of pottery are taken from the work of other scholars and applied to the west coast of Santo to try to explain why the simpler cruder pottery of Wusi seems to be surviving better than the finer richer pottery of Cumberland. The first section of the chapter follows a model of examining physical and social influences on the ability to work pots, and discusses how they have acted in both the Cumberland and the Wusi areas. The second section discusses the factors that affect the market and economic reasons for making pots. In the third section the social and historic factors discussed in previous chapters are brought to bear to explain the different outcomes in the two areas of the west coast.

The Parameters of Pot-making

Here I follow the model of Dean Arnold, who studied the pottery makers of Ticul on the Yucatan Peninsula of Mexico, for over 30 years (Arnold 1985, 2008), looking systematically at every part of the pot-making process and examining social and economic as well as physical and environmental constraints (Arnold 1985: 16). He voices a "frustration" (that I have also felt) "...over the lack of generalisation and theory in the massive literature on ethnographic ceramics" (Arnold 1985: ix). A cultural anthropologist, Arnold uses a cybernetic approach from archaeology to synthesise, from this literature and his own studies, what he calls "feedback mechanisms which stimulate or prevent ceramic production" (*ibid*.). His subjects are potters in horticulturalist communities, using traditional techniques, and learning and practicing their craft in a familial context. However, their pottery was commercial and they lived in small towns with males as the principal agricultural workers, factors which are not necessarily true in Melanesia. Neither is Arnold's assumption that, in the default, pottery will evolve into a full-time craft.

Arnold sees previous ethno-archaeological studies as ignoring the environment and behaving as though ceramics are completely a cultural construct (Arnold 1985: 2). He looks at the effects of source availability, climate, population pressures, and demand, and comments on the factors in archaeological interpretation of pottery. Although his own study was of professional potters in a semi-urban environment, Arnold put their practices into a context of other studies from around the world, including the work of Shutler in Wusi and earlier work of Tuckson and May in Papua New Guinea.

This section applies his categories of influence to the potters of the west coast of Santo in an effort to both account for their survival and explain some of the differences in the health of the craft as it stands today in each place. The influences he covers can be divided into those that affect the ability to make pottery and those that affect the reasons for making it.

Resources

Resources are factors of prime importance. The type of clay available is as important a factor as inherited practice, in whether temper is used in pots or not (see Rye 1976),

and the pot-making practices of the Ticul potters are affected by changing clay sources (Arnold 2008: 222-36, 276-78). Both the Cape Cumberland and the Wusi potters get their black clay from near the coast and their red slip clay from inland. But the clays are different: the Olpoe (Pespia) clay comes from riverbank deposits, as did the Nokuku clay, while the locations for the Wusi clay are on the shelf which has been pushed up from the sea floor by tectonic movement. This may account for the different traditions about the sea: Cape Cumberland pottery-working is antithetical to the ocean – you may not look at or talk about the sea while making it, and any contamination with salt water will ruin the clay forever (as is reputed to have happened at Nokuku); while at Wusi you not only need sea water for mixing the slip but it must be *Weskos* salt water.

It appears Santo clay resources are limited (Claridge 1985: 37), but at least the Cape Cumberland clay does not seem to be under any pressure of overuse at present. However, the failure of the pot-making attempt I saw seemed to be influenced by the quality of the clay, so possibly either the soil is deteriorating or the preparation was inadequate. At Wusi each potter collects their own - the advantage of this is not only the convenience of getting as much as is wanted when it is needed, but also because the potters know the type of clay they require and will be careful to get it (Arnold 1985: 21, 2008: 224).

The red clay for the slip comes from the inland hills. At Olpoe the source is quite near the village (less than a day's walk) and men of the appropriate *laen* must go and get it with the appropriate rituals (see Chapter Seven). At Wusi it is farther inland and traditionally the potters have not collected their own red clay but have been supplied by people living nearer the source¹³³. Initially this appears as though the people of Wusi are at a disadvantage in procuring their slip but in fact it seems almost the opposite. Anyone who wants slip clay in Olpoe must wait until the right people are available to get it (the sort of occurrences that can delay this are covered in Chapter Seven), while the Wusi potters have a secure line of supply, at least at present. This reflects differences in the role of pot-making in the two villages.

¹³³ Guiart (1958: 56) and M.E. Shutler (1968: 16) both described pots being traded for red clay from (different) inland sources (see Chapter Eight). In 2009 the potters indicated that they themselves collect the red clay for slip, but it is a long trek up a hill.
Resources other than black and red clay required in both places are fuel, material for tools, and water for mixing the paste and the slip. Arnold notes indirectly, in his extensive survey of traditional pot-making resources, that fuel seems to be unimportant in much of Melanesia. Again, this might be an artefact of the types of study that have been done there. Potters in the Pacific are reported as using left over firewood, bamboo, coconut wastage (husks and leaves); effectively any combustible material that comes to hand (Arnold 1985: 31). In previous studies of the potters of the west coast of Santo, both groups were described as using dried coconut fronds and bamboo (Shutler 1968: 17). I was therefore surprised when I found that each group had a preferred wood for firing and, furthermore, that the two woods were different (see Chapters Seven and Eight). Arnold (ibid.) describes woods preferred by potters as quick burning and smokeless, and notes that since the potters of Ticul changed from gathering their own fuel to paying for loads of firewood gathered by others, they use more fuel. This is because they do not know the source of the wood so have to estimate how much is needed and must take into account that there might be a high proportion of low quality fuel included (Arnold 2008: 284).

On the west coast of Santo, as for most other traditional Pacific potters, collecting the potter's own fuel is the usual practice. People who use fire daily for cooking know local fuel woods well and, as subsistence gardeners, have the ability not only to collect the appropriate wood but to grow it where it will be most useful. Wood that burns clean and hot is preferred for cooking as well as firing pots, but an observer seeing a cook or potter grabbing the nearest source of firewood may not take into account that the particular wood is there for precisely that purpose and is a managed resource.

Tools used by the peoples of Cumberland Peninsula and Wusi are few and not very specialised. While each Wusi potter has her own shell scraper and bamboo sliver to work with, these are probably easily replaceable. The additional tools used by the Cumberland potters are the *nakatambol* (*Dracontomelon vitiense*) buttress that the clay is pounded on, the pounding stick, the bamboo cylinder the pot is turned on, and the half coconut shell that holds the water the potter uses as he works. While the bamboo and the shell are easily obtained, the *nakatambol* requires selecting, cutting, shaping and drying for each episode of making pots. This is an innovation: in the

days of J.N. Mackenzie the female potters worked individually and pounded their clay on stones (H. Mackenzie 1995: 69). As was seen in Chapter Seven, the first nakatambol slab was rejected when I was there, and the process of selection and preparation was begun all over again. But it was the stick used for the pounding, which seemed to have been produced without much ado, which was eventually blamed for the failure of the whole process, as having been contaminated with seawater.

Although Arnold refers to Rye's (1976) work on temper and his findings on the role of seawater in the manufacture of pottery with calcite tempers (Arnold 1985: 26-28, 36), he does not discuss quality or type of water. Guiart (1956a: 58-59) saw lack of temper as a symptom of deterioration of craftsmanship at Wusi, but no observer has ever recorded temper being added by either Wusi or Cumberland potters. In both cases, the clays traditionally used must have contained natural tempers or non-plastic elements. The Cumberland clay, which has a gritty feel, is obtained from riverbanks, and mixed with fresh water from the same rivers. The Wusi clay is also mixed with fresh water but the slip has to be mixed with saltwater (Figure 29), probably because the natural tempers in the traditional Wusi clay are calcareous.

In older Wusi pots one can sometimes see a shell component to the clay and I have been told by potters that sherds they have found in the bush¹³⁴ sometimes also had the white specks that suggest a shell temper. Because the clay had this calcareous inclusion it would be vulnerable to hydrolysing and spalling¹³⁵ when fired. Rye (1976: 121-31) found the use of sea water encouraged a salt glaze that reduced surface porosity and acted to prevent absorption of water. It is likely that the Wusi potters had found that a sea water slip added a surface coating that was sufficient to seal the outside of the pot against spalling. This made the practice of Wusi pot-making difficult at inland villages so when Wusi was considered uninhabitable (because of either coastal raids or disease), if there was no access to sea water, pot-making may not have continued.

¹³⁴ Pottery sherds are never seen lying round a pottery village, either in Vanuatu or anywhere else I have visited where traditional pottery is made. ¹³⁵ Water damage and flaking.



Figure 29: Solwora blong Weskos – potters Lewia, Naomi, Lily and Elda Manna in front of the boat that brought them from Wusi to Tasiriki. The last thing they did before getting on the truck to continue their journey to the Cultural Festival at Port Vila was to collect some seawater to take with them for mixing slip for their pots.

Wusi is one of the harder places to live on a rather inhospitable coast, and the effects of this will be covered further in the next section. However, it can be seen that when times were good and there were no threats to staying on the coast, it might have been easier for individual potters to access resources and make pottery than it was at Cumberland. This is as much because of cultural practices as because of the resources themselves. Wusi potters can individually collect their own potting clay, when and as much as they need.

The supply of the red clay for slip seems to be rather mysterious. In Olpoe this is because of its supernatural connections (see Chapter Seven), and although no one discussed it, this might be the same in Wusi. Guiart (1958: 54-56) and Shutler (1968: 15) name different sources and different methods of obtaining red clay at Wusi (see Chapter Eight), which could be either because the source has changed or because different potters have different routes of supply. Most other resources are to hand, and a potter could work to her own schedule. This contrasts to the practices today on the Cumberland Peninsula, where potters who own no clay supply must wait for other people to make resources available, and the making of pottery takes on the nature of a community effort. Where this interferes with other economic and community work or the benefits accrue unevenly¹³⁶, supplying materials for pot-making may have low priority. This contributes to the decline of production: today pottery has neither an essential cultural role, nor any significant material benefit in the northwest.

Weather and climate

The west coast is the leeward coast in Vanuatu, which means it is the dry coast. Vegetation is less luxuriant, there is less rain, and rivers are lower and can run completely dry in winter. Being blocked from the trade winds by the highest mountains in the country, the Wusi area is exceptionally dry. Making pottery requires dry air so this means more days are available, another factor not always taken into account by archaeologists (or western potters, who are used to working in artificially dry environments and using kilns).

Moisture in the air is detrimental to pottery at every stage. Because clay readily absorbs moisture, it cannot be worked well, and pots will not hold their shapes; they will not dry enough in time to be fired, and they will absorb moisture during the firing process, all of which leads to deformation or cracking and failure of pots. In some weather conditions, such as river flooding, clay cannot even be collected. Ideally, it will be prepared and the pots formed, dried and fired in dry conditions. Both the ground and the fuel must be dry for firing, as well as the pots (Arnold 1985: 62-71).

Evidence from both archaeology and ethnography suggests full-time potters are more likely to be found in warm, dry areas (Arnold 1985: 90-96). In places where the weather is more seasonal, potters need some other means of support such as subsistence agriculture. This, of course, is not a problem in the small-scale subsistence economies of Melanesia, but most of the islands of the Pacific are essentially humid most of the time, which means that favourable conditions for potmaking occur less frequently than they do in inland areas of continents.

¹³⁶ Potters' work benefits only themselves and their immediate families.

The pot-makers of both Wusi and the Cumberland Peninsula use the drier months of the year, from June to August, to make pottery. Because they use only natural tempers, they cannot control the drying time of the pots. Potters who add temper can vary the amount according to conditions: increasing temper reduces drying time but can weaken the pot (Arnold 1985: 28-29). However, the red slip used by both groups does act as a control mechanism: since the surface of the pots cannot be allowed to dry out too much, timing of slip application is crucial, as was demonstrated at Ravlepa. Both groups of potters fire the pots on preheated stone platforms, eliminating one source of damp. As discussed in Chapter Four, among the potters of the Pacific the use of both slip and the stone platforms are unique to the southern Melanesian area.

Although on the same coast of the same island, Wusi and Olpoe have differences in climate that affect pot-making. Wusi is in a rain shadow, being almost directly on the leeward side of Mt Tabwemasana. With its low rainfall and dry climate, there is a guarantee of days from June to August every year when pottery can be made. In the northwest, geomorphology affects the weather differently. The Big Bay side of the Cumberland Peninsula is exceedingly wet, with rainclouds piled up on that side the whole time, and large rivers pouring down the eastern side of the mountains into Big Bay. These mountains are low at the Cape Cumberland end of the range and rainclouds can spill over to the western side. Even though the west coast of the Cumberland Peninsula is drier and sunnier than the east coast, there is still good rainfall in the hills, so although rivers do dry up there is usually an alternative source of water within reach.

When de Queiros visited Big Bay in 1606 he reported pottery was being made there (Markham 1904: 269). This may have been possible when populations lived mainly in the foothills, or perhaps the pots de Queiros saw had been made on the drier west coast. But the populations of the west coast also lived above the humid seaboard and only moved to the coast with Christianity. The people of the Pespia River, where potmaking persisted after it had died out in other Cape Cumberland villages, were among the last to move down from their cooler, more airy mountains. Harrisson (1937: 373) and others criticised the coastal Christian villages such as Nokuku and Tasiriki as

damp and unhealthy places. Locations that were prone to fever and malaria were also not good for pots.

It is possible that the severe and limiting climate of Wusi, lacking in environmental resources and disadvantageous for agriculture, could offer the best conditions in Vanuatu for making pottery, with both more suitable clay and hotter, drier weather. Since visits by pottery researchers have been few and brief, it is not surprising that any differences in the length of the pot-making season¹³⁷ between Wusi and the Notwes have not been noted.

Scheduling conflicts

The rain shadow cast by the southern Cumberland Mountains also means that Wusi is limited as to what foodstuffs can be grown. As Tzerikiantz (2000: 189) notes, even taro, normally a year-round crop (Weightman 1989: 88), is seasonal, so in the Wusi area people rely more on yams, bananas and manioc as staple foods. Between the harvesting of the yams in April and May and the preparation of the ground for replanting in September and October, there is a time of lower agricultural activity when pottery can be made (M.E. Shutler 1968: 18). This is a world wide pattern and Arnold quotes similar examples of farming people making pottery in the slack agricultural season in Africa, Europe, Middle and South America (Arnold 1985:100-101).

Early western observers admired the extensive and beautiful irrigated taro gardens on the Cumberland Peninsula (see Figure 6, Chapter One). While these have enabled taro here to be a year-round crop, it requires constant work. Furthermore, the dry season, the best time for making pots, has become the best time to visit and carry out church and political activities, when the rivers are at their lowest. This is the time of the year for national and regional festivals, women's and youth group meetings, and sporting tournaments, with a corresponding increase in hospitality demands, and a need for intensification of work in the gardens. The requirements of taro, which cannot be stored for any period of time, are very different from those of the more

¹³⁷ In Olpoe I was told pots were previously made just in June; in Wusi, July.

durable yams. While the people of the Wusi region are spending least time in their gardens, the Cape Cumberland people might be spending most time.

As has already been noted for the Notwes, the drier winter season of better weather also makes for usually calmer seas. This is also the time of year that one needs to have copra ready for the ship which might appear any day, and the time of year when, if one has any business in town, one can rely on being able to travel by ship to Luganville and to get back home again in a short time¹³⁸. Although this is the same, clearly, for the people of Cape Cumberland and the people of Wusi, there are different degrees of importance. Wusi is on the usual route for boats on their way to Tasiriki from Tasmate and Kerepua, and a cheaper trip to town is easier to obtain. Furthermore, the copra ships invariably start at the southern end of the west coast and, once they have filled up, return to Luganville, so more copra ships also pass Wusi. Olpoe is at the end of the line, it is a much longer, more expensive and more hazardous trip by either boat or ship, and there are fewer available. There are other reasons that Wusi has a closer relationship with Luganville, but distance is important, and in this context it means that the opportunity that has to be seized in the north is not so crucial in Wusi; there are other days and other means of getting to town¹³⁹. So, as well as having better access to materials, Wusi potters are more likely to have time and leisure to make pottery in the dry season.

Another aspect of the yam/taro dichotomy is the Melanesian sexual division of labour. Yams are grown by men (Jolly 2002: 62-68). It is the males of Wusi who spend time every year up in the hills, burning and planting. Water-taro, although a more reliable crop, is more labour intensive. The initial clearing of gardens, building of beds and channelling of water is done primarily by males. But taro is a female crop and most of the necessary year-round maintenance of beds and channels, weeding and harvesting, is done by the women. As was described in Chapter One, in Cape Cumberland, most able-bodied people of both genders spend their time during the day in either the gardens or the plantations, both of which are extensive.

¹³⁸ It is expensive to stay in Luganville where one has to pay for food.

¹³⁹ From Wusi any fit adult can walk to the road head at Tasiriki in one or two days, even though it involves a steep hill climb. Only relatively strong men attempt the walk to the road-head at Matantas from the west coast of the Cumberland Peninsula; the choice is between crossing the mountains or walking around the coast and fording the rivers, several days in either direction and really only possible in the dry season.

An aspect of part-time as opposed to full-time pot-making discussed by Arnold (1985: 101), is the suitability of pot-making for incorporation into a domestic schedule. A woman at home can use her kitchen for making pots and complete some of the tasks in between domestic duties such as cooking and child-care. This is feasible even in the conditions of strict *tabu* that the women potters of Wusi work under: they have two kitchens or a private workshop attached to their house, so pots do not come into contact with food¹⁴⁰ at all, until they are completed. As Arnold (1985: 101-2) points out, once the pot-making process starts, a pot must be continually worked at; so while the potter can do a little bit daily and keep an eye on her pots while doing other household jobs, she cannot go away for two weeks or even two days and leave the pots to fend for themselves. Furthermore, the pots of Wusi are small and the tasks are divided into small units that allow a bit of work to be done and then the pot put aside.

The work of men in the northwest tends to large-scale tasks that require a full day's attention: a day out hunting or in the plantation, or garden, or a trip to another village for a couple of days for a landowner, church or political meeting. If men are working around the village, they are completing a building project or something else that requires them to allocate several unbroken hours to their task. These do not have the episodic nature of the domestic chores which allow the women of Wusi time to make pots while doing other things. In most places, coil-built pottery is built to a certain height and then put aside to dry so it can support further work (Arnold 2008: 236). Although this building by stages is sometimes practised in Melanesia (see May & Tuckson 2000: 144, 245, 262, 344), more often potters build coil pots in one go, using supports for the vessel as they build, and drying before they decorate (May & Tuckson 2000: 29-30, 218-19). Olpoe pots are unusual in being built with no support, from first forming to decoration in one sitting, and only then put to dry before being slipped and fired, so a single pot at Olpoe takes several hours to complete. I am here suggesting that possibly the time commitment required to make a pot at Olpoe is more suited to the work patterns of the men then to those of the women in Christian Notwes Santo. But, even at Olpoe, there are signs that the workshop is more a teaching or demonstrating device than a routine pot-making environment.

¹⁴⁰ Thus Elda Manna was cooking a chicken in her outside kitchen while decorating pots in her main kitchen (see Chapter Eight). This *tabu* is to prevent the pots realising what they are going to become.

Arnold (1985: 106) postulates that intensification of pot-making and removing it from the household reduces female participation¹⁴¹. The workshop model, as practiced by the male potters of Olpoe and recommended by the RSTP for Wusi, would have this effect. According to Arnold's research, women tend to be the potters in places where pots are made part-time, and where the schedule of subsistence farming conflicts with the availability of men to participate in the appropriate season. Production of crops is a more direct means of feeding a family and, provided agricultural land remains available, there is no pressure to either increase or reduce the production of pottery as a secondary source of income, so the situation can stay in balance indefinitely (Arnold 1985: 101-6). This appears to describe the situation at Wusi, where the main crop is the yam (Tzerikiantz 2000: 186), attended to by the men.

Arnold sees the involvement of males in making pottery as associated with more complex societies and intensification of agriculture (1985: 171, 2008: 73). It is possible that in the northwest, increased production and accelerated pig-raising contributed to the extreme development of the hierarchy of the *Supwe*, and that, with the demands of pig-raising on the women, men were already involved in pot-making before the Cape Cumberland people came down to the coast, even before Christianity arrived. In both places the demands of the schedule of the Christian social and administrative cycle, and cash cropping of coconut and cacao plantations would have reduced the time available for making of pottery by either gender. Later I will discuss the other way Christianity could facilitate pot-making being taken over by males.

Thus it can be suggested that a combination of differences in weather and agricultural practice contribute to the fact that while pottery was formerly made by women in both areas of the west coast, while women are still the potters in Wusi, the craft in Cape Cumberland has largely been taken over by men. Furthermore, the agricultural and social schedule of the Notwes means that neither gender can rely on the sort of uninterrupted time required to make pots.

¹⁴¹ cf. the women potters of Nalotu (see Chapter Four). The large *kuro* requires the cooperation of all the women of the village; one possible reason pottery is hardly ever made (Le Blanc 2011: 27, 34.)

Demand

Declining demand is probably the strongest and most obvious influence on the demise of pot-making in recent times and there are subtleties in the west coast Santo situation which are worth discussing. The first aspect to be considered is why pottery is required and used in the first instance, but factors of conservation and circulation also contribute to changes in demand.

Uses of pottery

People in Oceania traditionally used ceramics for water-carrying and storage jars, for food and kava serving bowls, for food preparation and cooking, for preparation of concoctions for magic rituals, and in the rituals themselves. In Santo, other than the oval coconut preparation dish (the *trova*), cooking pots are the main recorded ceramics, although it is likely pottery was also used for sorcery (Kirk Huffman, pers.comm., 2 July 2012). *Laplap* leaves were used for food preparation and serving, and coconut shells as drinking vessels. Water was carried in bamboos (and still can be, on the west coast), and stored in gourds and coconuts (Speiser 1913: 130).

Leach (1982) surmises that because there were no grains and the staple was always a fruit or root vegetable, an earth oven was a perfectly sufficient means of cooking most food and there was no need for a cooking pot (see Nojima 2008: 21). The dropping out of rice and sago from the Oceanic diet, at least in Remote Oceania, has been suggested as the central reason for the demise of the cooking pot. And yet the cooking pot came into the region and persisted, in some places for hundreds, even thousands of years, after there were no grains or sago to cook. It seems that something else must have been keeping it in use.

Ceramic pots have their advantages. Food can be left unattended on a fire in a ceramic vessel, while alternatives, such as dropping hot stones into a container, need much more labour and constant attention. Pots hold water and cook slowly. This type of cooking suits green vegetables and small fish and game, as they hold their flavour and do not dry out. In areas where animal food was hard to come by and the diet was mainly monotonous root vegetables, making a soup to conserve the protein and

extend the flavour of small fauna would have been important (See example in Ludvigson 2005 [1981] prologue).

Nutritive values of several foods are improved by cooking in water. Foods such as bananas contain allergens, the effect of which is reduced by heating, according to Arnold (1985: 133). As well as improving the taste, soaking and cooking in water reduces toxicity of many foodstuffs, including several staples of the Pacific diet. Some varieties of taro are known to produce adverse effects if not prepared and cooked very carefully (the large pots of the northwest were especially prized for cooking taro), but according to Arnold's tables, yams and sweet potatoes¹⁴² also contain toxins that must be neutralised by soaking in water and thorough cooking (Arnold 1985: 130-31). This effect could not have been universally severe, but it may have been enough to encourage the making of ceramic cooking pots in areas where clay was available and there were not too many other factors against it.

The porous nature of clay vessels was also important for keeping foods cool, and this porosity could be controlled by surface finishing techniques. Both the Caribs of Brazil and today's Wusi potters use manioc solution to assist in sealing the surface of new pots (Arnold 1985: 140), and the Cumberland custom of polishing with a "snake bean" can be compared to the Nigerian one of boiling beans in water in the new pot to seal it (*ibid*.). If foods were to be kept, pottery was the only container available in the tropical pre-European Pacific that was not vulnerable to pests and growths which couldd either destroy the container or spoil the food. And clay can be shaped to provide almost any vessel required.

Cultural factors

Cultural or "non-utilitarian" uses, particularly those that take pots out of general circulation, contribute to demand. Burying pots in graves, breaking them ceremonially or confining their use to certain people or purposes can increase the number to be made. The obvious west coast candidate for this type of function is the *Supwe*. Santo was the place in northern Vanuatu where the *Tabu Faea*, the individual hearth for every high man, was most strictly adhered to (see Chapter Five). Other

¹⁴² Arnold does not give scientific names so it is impossible to tell if they are the same as the Pacific cultivars. Sweet potato is probably the same but the yams would most likely be different species.

than Seniang in Malekula, the Cumberland Peninsula had more grades and more elaborate rituals than have been described for anywhere else. The pots, in both the northwest and Wusi, were ornamented with the markings of the grade level they were designed for. Men of the *Supwe* could only eat from the appropriate pots. This probably meant a higher demand for pots than would normally be expected in a small population, as I have argued in preceding chapters. Although the population, the number of grades, and the availability of pigs was greater in the northwest, there is some evidence that Wusi was part of that system (Hagen 1893: 364-65). Wusi also had a greater hinterland to serve: at the time of Speiser (1990: 34-35) the southwest corner had a higher concentration of inland population than anywhere else in Santo and this is still the case today. When I visited in 1993, Wusi's main customers for pottery were the inland villages wanting "chiefs' pots".

In examining other factors that have contributed to demand for pots, Arnold (1985: 151-64) looks at breakage rates, demography and cultural change. More pots are broken where the pot itself is weak, where pots are used more, where they are moved around more, and where domestic animals are present. These factors are all at work on the west coast. Both pottery areas have domestic animals (see Chapter One, Figure 5). Cooking pots are utilitarian ware and carried around much more than a ceremonial or storage pot would be. Although not mentioned by Arnold, heating pots during cooking would also increase breakage rates. Although the little solid Wusi pot is less likely to break during manufacture, it is reputedly more likely to break on the fire, and has a typically shorter life than the Cumberland pot (Nojima 2008:130).

While population increase apparently does not cause an immediate increase in demand for pottery, the converse must have an effect. "Small isolated societies of low population size, density and growth would have little demand for ceramics", said Arnold (1985: 155), surmising that this situation would mean the only reason to make pottery would be replacement of broken vessels. The density of the Santo populations seems always to have been low, even by Melanesian standards, but on the Cumberland Peninsula, irrigated taro facilitated population growth, and, until the nineteenth century at least, it was well populated, especially on the eastern side. The mission population statistics (Miller 1990: 276, 294) suggest the population of the Nokuku parish area remained fairly steady until recording ceased with the First World

War. South of Nokuku the coastal population was reportedly sparse (see Chapter Five). As discussed previously, Wusi may not have had a permanent population before the sandalwooders and labour recruiters made it advantageous for inland peoples to live on the coast and trade. Gardening and pot-making may have been the main reasons for visiting this area, other than use of maritime resources in season. Certainly, nowhere in Santo was the population increasing, but factors other than depopulation of the potters' own villages probably had at least as much effect on the decline of pottery demand.

Distributive factors

Demand is influenced by the distributive mechanism. Potters who can get their goods to a wider network will make more pots (Arnold 1985: 165). Two factors are needed here: a market and a means of accessing this market. Wusi is, and was, in a more favourable position on both counts, having an inland, non pot-making population to serve, and being closer to the trade routes to larger markets to the south (see Huffman 1996: 184), both before and after the advent of European shipping. The Cumberland Peninsula was a district of pot-makers cut off from possible markets in the rest of the island by a region where there is a lower population in the hills and where one had to go down to the coast to proceed further south (Guiart 1958: 112, 147; Shutler 1971: 81; Speiser 1913: 180-181). Cumberland pottery was more widely found in the archaeological context in Santo, including the Port Olry area (Shing et al. 2007: 6), and even in the Banks Islands (Galipaud 1997: 16; Galipaud & Vienne 2005: 9). But by the nineteenth century, Wusi seems to have been the region with better overland routes. At the time of European contact, the people of Sakao in northeast Santo had developed marine trading routes to the south and southwest of the island, which would have linked with the major routes from southwest Santo to Malo and the small islands, and thence to Malekula and Epi (Tryon 1996a: 180). Wusi had better access to this network.

Distribution and "Central Place"

In archaeological writings, Pacific pottery seems to be viewed as primarily made for household and local consumption:

It is commonplace to imagine that women potters make work only for their own needs and perhaps for other members of their close circle.

(Vincentelli 2004: 201)

Nevertheless, export seems to be a vital factor in ensuring continuity of pottery. Whether one is making pots for modern tourism or to sell to traditional users, if there is an outlet for pots, this increases the chances that they will continue to be made (Arnold 1985: 154). A typical pattern is that there are a number of settlements of potmakers in an area that provides suitable clays. Gradually all cease making pots except at the central place in a trading network. But this central place seems to be always an area of impoverished soils (Arnold 1985: 190). It does not seem that the availability of ceramic clay is responsible for the overcrowding and soil impoverishment; rather, the inhabitants of this area have to make pots because they have no other assets and insufficient agricultural land. Arnold notes that the very type of eroding soil that gives poor returns for horticulture is the type where appropriate clay for pottery is most likely to be found.

Several studies of Melanesian prehistory used "Central Place Theory" (Arnold 1985: 166) in looking at trade networks. Studies of the Kula ring (Malinowski 1922; Brookfield & Hart 1971) and the Mailu trading system (Irwin 1974), were analysed by Hage (1977: 27-30) who found that Tubetube and Mailu were both geographically central in the trading networks they dominated. But he pointed out that both places were resource impoverished and relied on the networks to distribute the pottery that was their main export good.

This was a common factor in other Melanesian networks such as the Hiri, the Kula, and the trading systems of the Vitiaz Strait (Arnold 1985: 166; May & Tuckson 2000: 13). Pottery was always one of the goods involved in the trade, although it often had a minor role (Brookfield & Hart 1971: 326, 330), and the places where potters lived, where described, were often dry and marginal for growing foodstuffs (Y. Marshall 1985: 214; May & Tuckson 2000: 54, 70,148). In Melanesia, it seems it is not so much that potters chose a central location, as that a place became central because of the availability of clay and the necessity of earning a living through pot-making. The network was centred on the pottery village because it was the pottery village that sustained and was reliant upon the network.

Arnold (*ibid.*) draws a parallel with his Yucatán potters who live near road networks and cities to be close to markets for their pottery, which is to suggest that the location of the potters' village is chosen because it is a central place. Although it seems that Irwin and Hage apply the same argument to the Melanesian trade networks, in the case of both Mailu and Wusi the converse could be applied and to me at least seems more likely.

It seems clear that on the west coast of Santo, at least in recent years, while Cumberland pots were intended for a restricted domestic or local market, Wusi potters have essentially made their pots to sell. Wusi as a central place, with contacts both to the inland and to the marine trade routes, may have always been a location where people came to access clay and to trade. With a harsh dry climate, and as one of the few places in west Santo where taro growing is difficult; on an exposed platform with restricted agricultural land and nowhere to escape without climbing a mountain or taking to the sea; Wusi would never have been a particularly attractive place to live. Even now, when coastal access is more important and coastal living is safer and more desirable, Wusi does not appear to be growing as quickly as other villages in the district and pot-making may be one of the few reasons to live there.

Agricultural innovation

As archaeologist Roger Green often observed, people who make pots stop as soon as they can. In Melanesia subsistence economies there are many other things one can do that are quicker, more direct, and more interesting ways of getting food. Pot-making is slow, risky, sometimes viewed as dirty work, and furthermore it is an indirect way of making a living. Once the pot is made, it must be sold or exchanged to reap a return, unlike hunting or gardening.

Unequal access to resources is a trigger for the development of crafts and trade goods. As noted above, Arnold finds that potters tend to live in agriculturally marginal environments, where land is short or the quality is too poor for agriculture to provide an adequate living (Arnold 1985: 191-93). Where improved land becomes available, people often give up making pottery (*ibid*.). Pot-making in the Pacific may have declined as a result of people's improved ability to make an adequate living from their

island terrains once they learned how to manage the resources. Only those in marginal environments might keep on making pottery.

Agricultural innovation, such as irrigated taro gardens, may have contributed to the decline of pot-making on the Cumberland Peninsula. According to Galipaud (2004: 63), taro irrigation started in the Notwes about 1000 years ago, but the complex of intensification of taro growing, increase in pig husbandry, enhancement of the *Supwe* and increased local demand for pots may have arisen more recently, even as a result of contact in the nineteenth century. This may have meant that the local market absorbed all the pots that could be made. The shrinking of trade networks and the rise of Wusi as an alternative export centre could be connected to this. When the Supwe began to decline the Cumberland potters had already lost other markets.

Weathering and erosion are two ways previously productive land becomes less productive. Rich soils are not found on steep hillsides. Tectonic activity uplifts hills and increases steepness and erosion (Arnold 1985: 170). Clay is more likely to be exposed where topsoil is poor, and the very type of eroding soil that gives poor returns for horticulture is the type where new clay deposits are most likely to be found (Arnold 1985: 176, 198). Land that is not good for other horticultural practices is also the area where forestry and brush suitable for fuel are grown (Arnold 1985: 199). Large quantities of fuel are not as necessary for the firing methods of Oceanic potters as they are for kiln firing practiced in the Yucatan and other regions; but in both regions, land for growing the right types of wood is more likely to be available where it is not required to grow other crops.

In the Wusi area there is constant tectonic activity and the steepest and most rapidly uplifting land in the Vanuatu group. Furthermore, Wusi lost fertile soil and water sources when the Linturi people came down and reclaimed their Saoriki garden lands (Tzerikiantz 2006: 175-76). It is likely that while horticultural productivity, enhanced by irrigation technology, improved in the north of Santo so that people were less interested in trading pottery, availability of productive soils declined in the Wusi area, and these trends contributed both to the rise of pot-making in Wusi and to its decline in the northwest.

Technical innovation

Where agricultural innovation can reduce the making of pottery, particularly for trade, technical innovation can have the opposite effect. Usually traditional potters stick to tried techniques, and it is only in exceptional circumstances that it is worth experimenting with novel manufacturing strategies (Intoh 1990: 46-49; May and Tuckson 2000: 23). One of these circumstances is where the dependence on pottery and the increase of demand mean that less skilled family members or outsiders must be drawn in to increase the rate of supply. Arnold (1985: 204-7) uses the example of forming pottery in moulds, a simpler and easier technique that he observed was particularly popular with adult learners who do not have the facility of people who learned as children.

The Wusi method of pot-making by moulding is very quick and easy compared to the coiling method of Cumberland. To make a good pot in Wusi, as anywhere else, requires training and practice, but I would argue it is easier to make a poor pot that will endure, and even survive a firing, by using the pot-forming method of Wusi. For coiling, the clay must be better and the potter more skilled. There is also a psychological component here: a novice potter who is making a pot is more likely to attempt another when they are working in private and the work is fast. After five minutes any Wusi potter could tell if the pot was likely to be a success or not. Compare this to the Cumberland potter, working in the communal setting for around two hours, who then has their pot collapse. I have seen people at both Olpoe and Ravlepa go to extraordinary lengths to try to save a pot that was obviously failing. Once it had completely collapsed, the young men often simply walked away; few had the stamina to begin again (of course this in the artificial situation of a demonstration to an outsider).

In Chapter Four it was suggested that not only was more than one technique of working pottery present in most pot-making regions of the Pacific, but that more than one technique was most likely known to the same potters. Although today there is strict separation of the techniques of Cumberland and Wusi, this does not mean that it always was so. I have considered the idea that there were different pot-making techniques for females and males, or alternatively, for mundane pots and sacred (or *tabu*) pots, which could have been the case. Alternatively, from the strictly technical

viewpoint, a quick and simple method for trialling unknown or dubious clay would be a useful adjunct to the more skilled and time-consuming techniques preferred for making durable cooking pots. If Wusi was indeed a place where people came down to the coast merely to trade and to collect seaside resources, it is possible it was also a place where people could make a quick pot from the borderline quality clay available near the sea, using a generally known method which may have developed and become refined later, as permanent populations came into the area.

Throughout most of the Remote Pacific the main demand for pottery was for cooking vessels. Fiji is the only place in Oceania outside Papua New Guinea where pottery had other major functions (See Chapter Four and Palmer *et al.* 1968: 60) and the only other place where it has continued to thrive. Ceramic pots made safe food storage and boiling possible. The larger pots of the Cumberland Peninsula could be used to cook taro, which was plentiful in that area; the principal uses of the smaller Wusi pots were more likely for preparing garnishes and for individual meals for men of rank in the *Supwe*. Although Wusi clay was inferior (when used without appropriate temper), the location was more favourable for accessing trade routes, both marine and inland, and the higher breakage rate to be expected would also contribute to demand.

Other Factors in Survival

Here the work of other scholars is combined with my findings on the transmission of pot-making ability; and the particular contact history of the west coast, as it has been examined in previous chapters, is brought in to create a narrative that answers the question of survival or decline of traditional pottery in Santo.

Learning and retaining knowledge and skill

Transmission of knowledge is necessary for the continuation of the craft of potmaking. In Chapter Eight, the indication was that normal learning took place in households, that people learned from other household members who already made pottery, and that this was the most common and reliable method of transmission. Studies of traditional skills have found that these appear to be learned by imitation (see Crown 2001: 455, 456). In Notwes villages, children seem to pick up abilities by following and imitating parents, with little verbal instruction¹⁴³. However, Greenfield (1984), in a comparative study of young American children learning language and older Mexican girls learning weaving, found that in both cases the learning situation was set up by the mentors who demonstrated correct skills, then took over the task when the learner was floundering. Greenfield called this a scaffold, in that the learning framework was set up and an environment created where the student could succeed at tasks of increasing complexity. In both situations, she found that the teachers had no conscious idea of what they were doing; the learners were said to have just picked up the skills by themselves (Greenfield 1984: 135).

I have not found any such intensive ethnographic studies of methods of teaching potmaking, so can only point to my own observations and experiences to suggest how potters may have been taught in west Santo villages. Where I was learning skills in the villages, the usual method was to give me an easy part of the task to perform and for the expert to take over where I faltered, or to inconspicuously go over my mistakes and correct them, whether it was preparing vegetables or making mats. The one pottery activity I did take part in was collecting clay at Wusi. We went to the site, I was told how to observe the *tabu* when I got there and allowed to help, with an eye kept on my performance to make sure I was getting good clay and removing enough impurities. My observations support those of Arnold (2008: 45): that children and learners started with the simpler parts of the process and progressed to more difficult tasks.

I did not see any novice potters in Wusi, but in Cumberland, learners were involved in different parts of the tasks. The man who collected the red clay at Olpoe took his young son with him to teach him the necessary rituals involved. People at Olpoe who could not make pottery took turns pounding and preparing the clay. A learner potter was watched closely by the expert, his father, who in a couple of instances took over

¹⁴³ So three-year-old Madeleine, who went with her mother to the river each day when she did the family wash, could already do a rather impressive act of soaping her clothes and banging them dramatically on the rocks, while her six-year-old brother, who went for his swim with the men, did not know how to wash clothes.

and corrected an imbalance in the pot¹⁴⁴. Where pots appeared in danger of collapse, other potters would come in to help prop them up and give advice or supply rolls of clay. In the Ravlepa situation, anyone who wanted was encouraged to experiment with the prepared paste; in one case two people were building a pot together, and in another a father helped his small child start and work on a pot (and then completed it himself when the child lost interest and walked away). In a study of archaeologically found pottery in the American southwest, Patricia Crown (2001) suggests that smaller than average pots showing careful but incompetent work, or signs of having been worked by two people with very different skills, is evidence of children learning to make pots. The hypothesis was supported by a disproportionate presence of these clumsy pots in the graves of children (Crown 2001: 455).

In Ticul, the expert potters who had mastered all the tasks of making pottery had learned from a family member over several years, between the ages of six and 16. People who learned as adults commonly knew only parts of the process, and did not achieve the same mastery of the craft as people who learned in childhood (Arnold 1985: 206). Anold suggests that the motor habits of working pottery are learned by small increments as a child grows up and are embedded in "muscle memory". It takes long years for all the tasks of something as complex as pottery to be absorbed. One learns in childhood by watching a parent, performing small and simple parts of the process and by building up a repertoire of skills over several years (Arnold 2008: 42). Children may be better at acquiring skills by imitation and rote learning than adults, as well as having more opportunity to practice (Morin 2016: 72-73, 209). Other researchers give examples of early learning leading to greater adult expertise (e.g.: Puri 2013: 286). "Learning is not an event: it is a process" (Herbich & Dietler 2011: 234).

Relevant here is the concept of two different types of learning, sometimes conceived of as spoken and unspoken knowledge, the latter also being called physical skill (Puri 2013: 269).). Being able to talk about a knowledge or name its components may not mean that one is able to perform with it and the two learnings may be passed on by

¹⁴⁴ I did not see this man intervene in the work of any potters other than his own son, a slight count of support for the findings of Arnold (2008: 314-5) and Shennan (2000: 813), that transmission of learning in the traditional set up is more likely to be oblique or vertical than horizontal, ie. older relatives teaching younger.

different routes (Reyes-García *et al.* 2013: 206). What Arnold refers to as "muscle memory" (above) is the practical ability to perform a craft (or use a plant). This is the part of craft ability that needs either a simple task or many repetitions to acquire, while intellectual or esoteric knowledge is usually passed on verbally and lodged in cumulative memory (Reyes-García *et al.* 2013: 209).

Observations of, and statements from, people in west Santo support this. Tzerikiantz (2006: 249-50) suggests that, for some crafts, a family member who showed aptitude was chosen as heir and taught the secret knowledge, be it techniques, knowledge of *tabu* or specific spells for ensuring the success of the venture. The admission of the two old male potters of the northwest who told Galipaud that they were not taught pot-making but had learned by watching, possibly surreptitiously (Nojima 2011: 171), suggested that although they may have absorbed the techniques through observation and imitation, no one gave them the important secret knowledge. In Wusi a common lament was that the real knowledge had died with the old people.

Harrisson's (1936a: 250) observation, that the young women of Wusi did not seem interested in making pottery may have a sociological explanation. Common to both Wusi and Cape Cumberland today is patrilocal residence, which means that the daughter of a household will most commonly leave her own village to live in that of her spouse, unless the village is large enough for her to find a husband locally (only likely in present-day Olpoe, not in Wusi or Ravlepa). In Wusi the unique style of potmaking is a craft of the place so girls who leave on marriage will not make pots somewhere else. Therefore there is little point in teaching daughters since it will be the daughters-in-law who will come in and carry on the craft¹⁴⁵. As observed in Chapter Six, in pre-Christian times little girls were commonly married and sent to live with their husband's family at quite a young age. This would result in the child effectively being brought up in the village she would live in, and learning the customs and crafts of that village from childhood. But Christian girls stayed in their own villages until maturity and were then married out to a Christian. This would explain Harrisson's observation (1936a; 250 and see Chapter Eight): the young women he saw were probably going to leave the village soon, so there was no point in their

¹⁴⁵ A parallel situation was described for the Luo of Kenya who did not learn pottery until they went to their mother-in law's house, even if they came from a potting family (Herbich & Dietler 2008: 232-3).

making pots, or they had only recently arrived and did not know how. But there were no little girls learning to carry on the art.

Coupled with disease and depopulation, as has been recorded particularly in the Wusi district over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Christianity induced a crisis situation. Mothers in both places resorted to teaching their sons pot-making, in the hope of their imparting it to their wives. This explains how there are now male potters in both Wusi and Olpoe, but not that almost all the potters of the northwest today are males while most of the practising potters of Wusi are still women.

In the next section, historical factors are further examined. Here I will just note that it is early learning and constant practice that trains muscle and motor habits (Arnold 1985: 205-6, 2008: 73). Examples of the advantages of training young are found in every activity. For pottery, Arnold (1985: 221-22) also has a negative piece of evidence. When an attempt was made to introduce the potter's wheel in Ticul, traditional potters found it difficult to learn and disadvantageous to use. The posture they were accustomed to sitting in to work pots was antithetical to the way one had to sit to work a wheel; and working the wheel itself gave them calluses. The wheel slowed them down, and as in other places (see Vincentelli 2004: 14) it was easier to teach it to people who had previously not made pots. The converse is that when people are not making pots very often, they do not have the repertoire of moves embedded so that they can perform them without conscious thought; the less often pots are made, the more difficult and awkward it becomes. The dexterity of the potters of Olpoe, people who had the skills but who had not practiced them recently, can be contrasted firstly with the potters of Ravlepa, enthusiastic amateurs who were learning as they went and had no repertoire of accustomed moves to draw upon, and then with the habitual potters of Wusi, women who did not seem to think about what their fingers were doing as they quickly and skilfully worked the clay, often not even looking at their work.

Transmission practices contribute a crucial piece of the puzzle of the Santo pottery, and the next section will review the history discussed in Chapters Five and Six in relation to these factors and the limits they impose on the ability to make pots.

History, contact and Christianity.

In 1606 Big Bay was described as well populated by people who made pottery. These were most likely the ancestors of the present inhabitants of the Cumberland Peninsula, as there is neither linguistic nor archaeological evidence for an influx of any other people to the area. As outlined in previous chapters, today there is effectively no pottery regularly produced on the Peninsula, and that made at Wusi for mainly a commercial market is quite different. Why, under apparently the same influences, is Cumberland pottery fading while Wusi pot-making continues? This section summarises the historical factors that influenced pottery on the west coast and contributed to its survival or decline.

Although the contact with de Queiros and his men was brief, diseases against which people had no resistance were probably introduced (A.J. Marshall 1937: 232). However the population appears to still have been substantial in the 1860s, since the area of the Jordan River was an anchoring place for labour recruiters. But after 1896, during the time of the Presbyterian missionaries in Big Bay, the population was both sparse and hostile, and the area was rife with illness (Miller 1990: 330-32). By 1910, there were no traditional settlements left in the southern part of Big Bay (Speiser 1913: 136-37)¹⁴⁶, and the population had died, been taken away, or retreated into the western mountains. The first shore settlement at Wusi may have been a sandalwood camp in the 1850s. By the time of the labour recruiters there was a village with a chief, but mentions of pottery before Speiser (Mawson 1957; Rietmann 1868) suggest that groups of potters may have come down to the shore specifically to use the clay. However, the Cumberland Peninsula was well populated (*ibid.*) and it is from here that most of the descriptions of elaborate *Supwe* rituals came.

Pottery was abandoned in New Caledonia, as well as other places in the Pacific when there was sufficient access to iron pots. But still the ceramic pot persisted on the west coast of Santo – possibly the *Supwe* was the only thing that preserved it. Sandalwooders arrived in western Santo at the time that the *Supwe* must have been at

¹⁴⁶ There were probably never any coastal villages on the steep cliffs of the eastern side of Big Bay, but several of the villages on the western side have been historically recorded as populated from at least the late nineteenth century to the present day. It is only the southern shores of the Bay that were depopulated. Bonnemaison, given by Spriggs as his authority for the claim that the whole bay was depopulated right up to the present (Spriggs 1997: 234) was actually referring to the southeast corner of Santo Island (Bonnemaison 1994: 43), another area entirely.

the peak of its power. The Europeans were fitted into the traditional exchange system by the attested strategy on the part of the west coasters of demanding pigs in exchange for their sandalwood. I argue that this gave a boost to pottery making at exactly the time it was most threatened by substitution of European cooking pots and the destruction of the large trade networks and before depopulation factors took hold.

Epidemic disease and the iron cooking pot were both factors in removing the need for large ceramic pots. In the early days of blackbirding, men in canoes were easy pickings and interisland voyaging quickly died. This meant that pots were no longer traded over long distances in the northern islands of the archipelago, and fewer pots were needed for reduced populations at home (it is possible that the reverence for old pots and sherds in Malekula dates from this time). Because cooking was the main function of pottery, the iron cooking pot could be a complete replacement in most parts of the Vanuatu islands. The new pots were much longer lasting and larger, so once enough people had experienced waged labour, small pots used for chiefs in the *Supwe* (or for *posen*) may have been the only ones still to be made. For mundane use the iron cooking pot could conveniently replace the ceramic pot.

Christianity only enhanced the decline of pottery. The missionaries encouraged their converts to live in coastal villages and adopt an imitation European lifestyle, engaging in the money economy through garden and plantation labour. The European missionaries were not against pot-making, and even seemed rather proud of it in their writings, but no matter their attitude to the pots themselves, the missionaries emphasised the act of eating at the "common fire" as the encouraged means of showing commitment to Christianity (H. Mackenzie 1995: 50, 53). The *Supwe* chief who became Christian no longer needed the special pottery dishes he previously cooked and ate from (H. Mackenzie 1995: 50, 66). The indigenous teachers would have been well aware of the *tabu* nature of pottery, and its role in the *Supwe*. From local stories, it seems possible that later indigenous missionaries discouraged the practice of pot-making itself. In any case it was likely seen as part of the old fashioned *manbus*¹⁴⁷ way of life.

¹⁴⁷ *Manbus* "bush man, inland dweller". A common epithet to suggest someone is primitive or old-fashioned.

In other places in Oceania, pottery was brought into Christianity and used for such things as altar vessels, for example; but this does not appear to have happened in the Vanuatu islands, although missionaries sometimes deliberately replicated other aspects of the graded society in their leadership hierarchy, as much as could be done in the Christian community (Rubinstein 1981: 143-44).

Conversion to Christianity was blamed for contributing to or even causing depopulation, because, it was said, making indigenous people wear clothes and suppressing the traditional activities of feasting and dancing deprived them of their interest in life (Miller 1990: 15; Rivers 1922: 84-113). It may be in response to this that the missions instituted the busy pattern of Christian activities that persists today. There are youth groups, prayer and bible study groups, women's groups and sports groups, meetings of ministers and church elders and several church services a week, as well as church fundraisers and other inter-village activities. This all occurs in villages the largest of whose populations are numbered in the low hundreds, and where the entire population of a Session (a Presbyterian district) might be a couple of thousand at most. Most people in a village today belong to most of the activity groups, with a concomitant multiplication of obligations. Combined with tending gardens and plantations, exploiting bush resources and maintaining ones own and communal property, little time is left for traditional pursuits.

Christian education could also have contributed to pottery loss in another way. The Presbyterian missions on the west coast established schools as early as 1890 (Miller 1990: 242). In 1908 J.N. Mackenzie reported that nine per cent of school pupils in Notwes Santo were "...children under three years of age" (Miller 1990: 280). Despite the incredible nature of this claim, it is clear that the Nokuku Mission station was educating young children from an early period. Children who are being educated in school are not at home to learn to make pottery (Arnold 2008: 81). The potters of recent years in the Notwes have all been men from the inland villages where there was no school.

On the Cumberland Peninsula conversion was early and widespread, but even so, the last people did not move down to the coast until catastrophic epidemics in the 1960s or 1970s destroyed the inland villages. As Tzerikiantz (2006: 92) demonstrated for

Elia, later coastal migrants and converts continued such practices as grade taking. This pertained in the Notwes as well: the father of the present *Kastom Jif* of Olpoe was himself a *Kastom Jif* as well as a Christian. But the coastal Christian chiefs did not observe the *Tabu Faea* and a need for traditional pottery was gone – the ritual pottery joined the mundane pottery in being a thing of the past. But it is still recognised that food cooked in pots tastes better and making pots is a respected occupation.

By 1993, there were only three named potters in the whole Notwes, all elderly males; and two of these died within a decade. Today pottery is made intermittently by groups of males as demonstrations for researchers. It is said that other people make pots for themselves but most recent attempts are probably experimental; I have seen some very crude examples and the only pot I know of that is regularly used in the village of Olpoe was made by the owner's long-deceased mother.

In Wusi there was also early conversion, but the village did not have a resident pastor until the 1950s, and was surrounded by a much stronger, more hostile and larger non-Christian population. There are accounts of parishioners fleeing from *manbus* raids, and South Santo coastal villages being abandoned (Miller 1990: 104, 146-47; Tzerikiantz 1999: 212). Church records relate a trek of the Christian population from mountain village to mountain village in the early years of the twentieth century. On the other hand, from a relatively early time, Wusi was the renowned pottery village. Ironically, this was probably because of the patronage and interest of the European missionaries of the South Santo, under whose auspices Wusi fell from the 1920s. While Christianity was a threatened minority practice, Wusi potters were being encouraged to demonstrate pottery. Furthermore, they had a market for their pots: the inland people, even if not practicing the *Supwe*, continued their lifestyle of small settlements, large houses and individual fires. These people eschewed most European products and continued buying pottery from the people of Wusi.

Twentieth century tourism helped Wusi rather than Olpoe. Wusi is closer to Luganville so more accessible to tourists as well as researchers. In the early 1990s there was even a short lived tourist enterprise that specialised in organising trips to Wusi and Mt. Tabwemasana¹⁴⁸, and although fluctuating, the tourist market has continued to have some role in the Wusi economy. But a stronger reason, and one that fits in with all that has been noted in studies of potters in other places, is that Wusi needed the trade to survive.

When I first visited Wusi in 1993, pots were still being made primarily for local sale to the bush people in the hills behind. The tourist market was uncertain and difficult to access. As far as I could judge, almost the only means of carrying out pots was the annual trip of the VKS fieldworker to Port Vila, so it was limited to what he could take by boat and truck to Luganville and then by ship to Port Vila¹⁴⁹. Today the antipathy of the bush people to Europeans seems to have somewhat abated: there are Christian churches, clinics, schools and kindergartens in the villages of the southwest, and Wusi depends even more on the trade in town for marketing its pots.

Female potters and continuity

One of the strongest effects of Christianity was probably the prohibition on child marriages (see Chapter Six). Little girls were no longer introduced to the home of their future husband at an early age. Potters, deprived of daughters-in-law to teach pot-making to, began teaching their sons instead. This happened in both Wusi and on the Cumberland Peninsula. Why then, did women retain control of pottery in Wusi and not on the Cumberland Peninsula?

In the larger populations on the Cumberland Peninsula, it is common for a girl to find a husband nearby or even within her own village, whereas in Wusi, girls most often go some distance away when they marry¹⁵⁰. Furthermore, because Wusi is the only pottery village in that district, even in the next village a bride will not be able to practice pot-making. It would seem easier to pass pottery on to women in

¹⁴⁸ It foundered because, as well as logistic difficulties, there was not enough tourist interest (Fred Kleckham, pers.comm., July 1993).

¹⁴⁹ My later impression is that the situation would not have been quite as dire as that: people would have visited Luganville more often than once a year and Lenki would have help from other people to take the pots at least as far as Luganville. On the other hand, he would mainly have carried pots for his own wife and relatives, and potters from other families would have relied on their male family members to get their pots to market.

¹⁵⁰ In 2009 I met only one woman in Wusi who was born in the village and married within it. Conversely, in the large village of Olpoe there were only three wives who had come from outside the village language area.

Cumberland than it is in Wusi, bearing in mind Arnold's (1985: 206) finding that only early learners become truly expert. But this is not the case. There are other factors in the nature of learning and the technology of pot-making that favour the women of Wusi, as well as the different agricultural practices in the two places.

A first factor is the nature of the Wusi pot-making process. As I said above, it is easier and quicker to make a fireable Wusi pot than to construct a Cumberland pot. The Wusi pot fits well into Arnold's class of simplified technology which contributes to intensification of pot-making by enabling the non-expert to participate. This method probably originated before Wusi was occupied and was used for people visiting the coast to make a quick light pot to carry back inland with them. The squat and sturdy nature of the Wusi pot means it would be portable even before firing, a technique belonging to the place, not to a people. At least three groups of occupants have been recorded in Wusi during the twentieth century, and although, at least in the last instance, related to previous inhabitants, none of these people necessarily came from a pot-making tradition. Adult wives coming in can be taught by their husbands or by other women in their families.

As well as being quick to make, the Wusi pot is made in stages. To make pots at Wusi, one needs only to be able to devote a few minutes at a time as the pot itself is formed in less than five minutes and then put aside to dry before finishing, decorating and covering with slip. Furthermore, the timing of the further operations is probably less crucial, making this a process that can easily be fitted into a woman's daily routine. For the Cumberland pot, a much more definite time commitment is required: several hours must be devoted to construct the pot in the first place as it seems to be worked to completion in one session, and it then must be slipped at exactly the right time to prevent its cracking during the drying process, as was demonstrated at Ravlepa.

Because of the nature of the horticulture in Wusi, women are more likely to be in the village to work the pots. While most Olpoe women who are not nursing small children spend the normal day in the gardens, unless they are involved in some church or other business in the village, the Wusi women are only likely to be in the gardens in certain seasons or when involved in occasional plantation work or some other

project. Adult women in the village who are not teaching or attending church or meetings are a far more common sight in Wusi than in Olpoe, and of course a lot of women have business in the village attending to parts of the pot-making process.

Conversely, more adult men are visible most days in a Cumberland village. This is partly because there are a greater proportion of adult men in residence. Wusi men are more likely to be in Luganville, either employed or on some sort of business. Cumberland men also have a number of reasons that they are out of the village (see Chapters Six and Seven), but their garden work is more episodic and they are often engaged on large communal work projects around the village. The episodic and communal nature of Olpoe pot-making fits better with the men's working regime. This would have been very different in pre-Christian times and even in the more recent inland villages. But the practices that have evolved to fit the coastal Christian lifestyle seem to favour the male workshop model. The very contrast in agricultural practice that makes supplementary income more necessary for Wusi also makes the Olpoe women less likely to be the ones that work the pots. In Olpoe, women do the bulk of the routine work in the taro bed as well as helping their husbands in the plantations, while in Wusi the subsistence work is done more by the men and pottery is the economic contribution of the women.

Another question is how men would hand the practice back to women. There are three women in Olpoe who make or attempt to make pots. The most successful one was taught by her mother, while the other two are dependent on their husbands. But there are not many young men who can make pots, and older, more traditional men will attempt to pass their skills to their sons, not their daughters. A father-in-law teaching a daughter-in-law would be a virtual impossibility as this is one of the most formal and *tabu* relationships in the culture. All the males in Olpoe and Ravlepa who have any knowledge of pot-making are teaching their sons rather than their daughters, if they are teaching anyone at all. Despite my observations at Ravlepa, I also have the impression that males are less likely to teach younger children, but in support can only point to the fact that there were no children at all at the Olpoe sessions. Arnold says nothing about this either but it seems to me that in a household a child is more likely to pick up the skills of pot-making, as did the older male potters of the Notwes, from watching their mothers.

This all feeds back into the central question: why is pot-making still a strong part of Wusi daily life but apparently almost extinct in Olpoe? Part of the reason for this is, of course, the fact that women are still the pot makers in Wusi. The small sums paid for pots today are more attractive to women, who have few other opportunities to earn money, and pot-making is still part of the village routine. As Nojima (2011: 171) observed, when Shutler saw "an admiring audience" (Shutler 1971: 82) gathering round to watch a pot-maker, it was symptomatic of the rareness of the performance and the inevitability of the decline rather than supporting the continuance of this craft. This difference was reflected in my own experience of observing pottery being made in these two villages. When I watched pot-making at Olpoe, it was a demonstration put on for me, it was announced in the Sunday notices, and most of the male potters of that side of the village took part. By contrast, at Wusi my observation was almost casual as I was watching potters at tasks they were already performing for their own ends, as part of their work schedule.

The public demonstrations that both Nojima and I were given are not the only times pottery has recently been made in Olpoe. I know that other people have made pots privately at Olpoe, including a man who obtains his own clay from his own ground. But it is hard to assess how successful any of the recent attempts have been; the last time I attempted to do a survey of how many pots there were in the homes of people I knew in Olpoe village, I was shown three – a very old broken pot I had seen before, a crude and recent experimental pot made by a neighbour's son, and only one pot that was in use, in the home of the daughter of the potter who made it.

There is another related difference in that while the people of Wusi are making pottery for sale and have a reason to support outside interest, the people of the Cumberland Peninsula are not interested in selling to the tourist market other than on their own terms. As we saw (Chapter Seven), the Olpoe people were the least interested of all the Cape Cumberland villages in taking part in the Cultural Festival in Vila. This reluctance is not peculiar to Olpoe – the people of Ravlepa would rather demonstrate pots on their home turf than travel to town and make them there. Even the Wusi people, who go to every cultural festival they can, insist on complete privacy for the actual manufacture of the pots. This is because of *tabu*, which I have discussed at length elsewhere and the importance of which should not be forgotten.

Although seen by previous researchers as a comparatively sophisticated place with its connections to the market and its high use of imported foodstuffs (Tzerikianz 2000:) 190, Wusi is unusual in Santo in that its subsistence agriculture is reliant on seasonal crops, thanks to the rain shadow of the mountains and the limited land available to the village. While maintaining a constant presence in the produce market at Luganville, the Wusi stall often has nothing more to offer than *nakatambol*, the small hard orange fruit of the *Dracontomelon vitiense* tree, eaten as a snack food. But it is also a pottery outlet and if it were not for the contribution of income from pottery sales that funds the purchase of rice and flour, the Wusi diet would consist of nothing but manioc and bananas at certain times of the year.

On the Cumberland Peninsula today, more land and water is available for growing crops for both subsistence and sale, and the local subsistence horticulture economy is more intact. Partly because of the distance from town, there is a more self contained lifestyle; and the Christian conversion was earlier and more complete. All these factors act against the continued making of pots.

Discussion

This chapter has applied Arnold's physical and social parameters to the making of pottery on the west coast of Santo, and found that these, combined with social influences and historical factors, have meant that, after the initial impetus of contact trade that both areas received, the harsher conditions of Wusi actually facilitated the survival of pottery there rather than in the Cumberland Peninsula despite the longer tradition and apparently more favourable conditions of the latter. This advantage was also influenced by the different colonisation history of each area. An extraordinary perception is that essentially the same principles of cultural transmission in the two areas also contributed to the two different outcomes.

With the soils and climate of the Cumberland Peninsula, irrigation enabled an intensification of agriculture and surplus of production which led to increased pig-rearing and elaboration of the *Supwe* rites in the area. Under this stimulus, the local

market may have absorbed all the pottery available, leading eventually to a closing down of the trade networks of the Cumberland Peninsula, and thus the opportunity for the rise of Wusi as an exporter of pots. In the mid-nineteenth century, sale of sandalwood and labour caused more wealth to pour into the area, and the resulting enhancement reached its apotheosis in the grandiose *Supwe* displays witnessed by Gordon and Speiser. Depopulation and Christianity followed and the demand for pots in the northwest collapsed, but Wusi, essentially a supplier rather than a user of pots, continued manufacture and export. Although, in both places, potters were forced to teach their sons when Christianity forbade the introduction of prepubescent daughtersin-law into the household, because of the different technologies used and the different cultural practices which surrounded the making of pottery, enhanced by the differing agricultural practices and economic roles of women and men in the community, men have effectively taken over responsibility for pot-making in the north while women have retained it in Wusi. This difference, in my view, also contributes significantly to the decline of pottery in the northwest.

Conclusions

The topic of this dissertation is the pottery and pot-making people on the west coast of the island of Santo in Vanuatu. To examine how the art of working pottery has survived into the historic period in this one area, and to estimate its chances of continuing I look at aspects of the life and culture in the villages using several disciplinary approaches, although the main thrust is socio-historical. The enquiry is made both more complicated and more interesting by the well observed fact that the two surviving pottery traditions of the west coast of Santo use different pot-making techniques, a phenomenon usually explained in the past by postulating different origins for the two groups of potters.

Summary of chapter findings

The first question asked therefore concerns origins - where do the two traditions and their makers come from? In Chapter One, a description of the island and the people indicates that the pottery of the Cumberland Peninsula was made by a defined cultural group of people speaking closely related languages, who might have been in the Cumberland Peninsula area of Santo since first settlement of the island. The origins of the Wusi pottery were less clear. In Chapter Two, archaeological findings suggest that although both types of Santo pottery can be fitted into the reconstruction of the prehistory of pottery in the Oceanic region, only the pottery of the Cumberland Peninsula seemed to be related to the other islands of Vanuatu or to earlier pottery on Santo itself. No nearby antecedents have been found for the technique of Wusi potmaking. The pot-making methods and practices of the two potteries on Santo are looked at in Chapter Three to see if they can be related to each other; since the exercise is inconclusive, other historically attested potteries are examined in the following chapter. Since Fiji is the only other place in Remote Oceania where potmaking still survives, historic accounts from New Caledonia and studies of pottery technology in Micronesia and Near-Oceanic Melanesia are included. Although the Wusi technique remains unparalleled, other moulding techniques have been used throughout Oceania and my analysis of the literature suggests that differences in the nature of clay available in different locations often necessitated adaptations which may have forced changes from inherited practice in pot-making techniques. Another

strong lead is the finding that different manufacturing practices may be used for different intended functions of pottery, and that sometimes this is related to the gender of the potters. The idea, previously suggested in regard to Lapita pottery, that women make large undecorated cooking pots and men make small decorated pots for ritual and magical purposes, has ethnographic support in several potteries of Papua New Guinea.

While both Wusi and Cumberland Peninsula pots can be shown to have a clear Austronesian heritage, Santo pots were all traditionally well decorated, and there were indications from local sources, also picked up on by Nojima (2008, 2010, 2011), that wares that were essentially cooking pots had a connection with the rituals of the graded society, by which status and immortality was achieved in the northern islands of Vanuatu.

The second question of this dissertation, the late survival of pottery in Santo, considers the role of the *Supwe* in its perpetuation. This was an idea that first suggested itself to me in 1993 when I visited Wusi and saw several different pots described in Bislama as "chief's pots". Nojima's research in the Notwes in 2000 led her strongly to the same conclusion. Chapter Five of the dissertation examines the traditional grade taking institution of the northern islands of Vanuatu using anthropological studies in other islands and historic accounts of ceremonies in Santo. This institution took a very elaborate form in the Cumberland area, in both ceremonies and the number of grades to be attained and evidence is presented that this ritual was enhanced in the mid nineteenth century by the sudden availability of large quantities of pigs, brought in by early European exploiters trading for sandalwood. The area stretching from the northeast Cumberland Peninsula around to the west coast of Santo, the area of elaborated grade ceremonies, was also the only area where exploitable quantities of sandalwood were found in the islands of North Vanuatu, and the only area where pottery making still survived at contact.

Although all of my west coast informants believe pottery had a role in the *Supwe*, there was a disappointing lack of confirmation in ethnographic reports of the *Supwe* and its ceremonies, but the fact that pottery survived only in the area of both

sandalwood exploitation and the highest elaboration of the *Supwe* on Santo, is taken to suggest a strong connection between them.

With a basis suggested for the survival of pottery in both parts of the west coast of Santo, in Chapter Six the next part of the historic account deals with the later effects of contact and the role that the combined effects of missionisation and depopulation had in reducing both pottery and the *Supwe*. This starts to answer the third and most important question – having survived thus far, is pottery really in decline, and what are the reasons? It is shown that pottery-working was preserved in both areas, at least to the mid-twentieth century, by the continuation of grade taking in the inland villages, although there was a decrease in the use of pottery for both ritual and domestic purposes and, with reduced interisland trading and the introduction of European goods and monetary economy, pottery also lost importance as a trade item.

The next chapters focus on the individual pottery villages of today and consider for each how the history of the twentieth century has influenced the survival of pottery, with the aim of answering the question of whether the pottery making art in the Notwes is still viable and why it does not appear to be as robust as that of Wusi.

Chapter Seven covers the Cumberland pottery cultural area, with an account of how the history of the twentieth century and circumstances of today lead to a situation where only two villages claim to have retained the traditional rights and ability to make pottery, and only one is recognised by other people of the west coast as a pottery village. Examples of pot-making practice are described in Olpoe and Ravlepa, and the role of cultural factors in the continuance of making pottery is discussed. The lack of a role or a driver for pottery today may contribute to what looks like an irrevocable decline in the craft, but falling skills could also be a contributor. This introduces the issue of interruption in cultural transmission which is further discussed in the next two chapters

In Chapter Eight, the pottery of Wusi is followed through a succession of eye-witness accounts such that continuity of practice can be traced throughout the whole twentieth century. The ideas of discontinuity and reinvention brought up by other researchers are looked at and the techniques of pottery making are found not to have altered

substantially over that period, despite the interesting possibility that the present-day practitioners of Wusi pot-making may have no ancestral connection to even the pot makers of the early twentieth century. Unlike the pottery of the Notwes, place is more important to the pottery of Wusi than inherited culture. Nevertheless, recent intervention from outsiders underscores the importance of traditional practice and transmission, and records are put together from written sources to show that making pottery in Wusi is passed along family lines, and that cultural norms play a strong part in deciding exactly who makes pottery and when and how it is made. The physical environment and subsistence patterns of Weskos Santo combine with the history and the technology itself to provide some explanation as to why the potters of Wusi are still women, and why pot-making is still important to them.

A clue to the on-going pottery situation in both regions is provided in the recognition of the third reason for pot-making (other than domestic and ritual use) which is as a trade item. Wusi pottery has always been recognised as such and it is likely that this is what has saved it from the slow decline that seems to be being suffered by the pottery of the Notwes.

The importance of this is underlined in the discussion and comparison of the situation of both technologies in Chapter Nine, where the interaction of the technical aspects of pot-making with environmental factors and demand for pots as a product is examined and compared for the two pottery areas. I argue that Wusi's location in a marginal area for traditional subsistence and market agriculture has contributed both to the retention of the pot-making craft in the hands of women and to the need for pottery as part of the economic repertoire in a way that simply does not apply in the Notwes. The role of pottery as a trade item can mean it survives where other reasons for retaining it are not strong enough for pottery to still be made often enough to produce a viable end result. And the different working techniques have acted, along with the differences in historical experience of contact, missionisation and environmental factors, to preserve and enhance pottery making in Wusi and to adversely influence the practice of the craft in the Notwes.

My research finds that the technical nature of pottery manufacture, driven by the combination of transmitted knowledge with the different qualities of the raw
materials, interacts with other factors of environment that influence subsistence and social practice, and that these in turn contribute to the way that a simpler, less aesthetically desirable or durable pottery industry with a pragmatic rather than a cultural basis can outlast a more refined and culturally authenticated tradition.

Discussion of findings

A notable feature of the rise and fall of pottery on the west coast of Santo, as I reconstruct it, is the nexus of history, environment and culture. In the present state of knowledge, it must be assumed that the first inhabitants of Santo were the Lapita people whose pottery has been found in several parts of both Santo and neighbouring islands, and it is quite likely that the first colony was at the sheltered head of Big Bay, where Lapita sherds were quite recently found (Stuart Bedford, pers.comm., 13 March 2012). From there it seems that people spread in three directions, to the south, east and west, and that their descendents today are the people of the three main parts of Santo, the Queiros Peninsula, the Cumberland Peninsula, and the southern section of the island. The people of the Cumberland Peninsula may have retained not only the red-slipped pottery that appears to have descended from Lapita, but also the principle of hereditary chieftainship and the ritual that supports it.

The *Supwe* also appears to be an old institution on Santo, but the only possible speculation about either its development or the involvement of pig-killing comes from the evidence for intensification of taro growing on the Cumberland Peninsula about 1000 years ago. This would have enabled an increase in human and pig populations and it has been shown that both were reportedly numerous at the time of first European contact. Nineteenth century observers mentioned powerful chiefs in the hills of west Santo, and an association that held both the spiritual and economic power in the area.

Despite being the first island of the Vanuatu group discovered by Europeans, Santo was furthest from New Caledonia and not on whaling routes, so was one of the last islands of the archipelago to be exploited, and this turned out to be fortunate for its history. By the time sandalwood was discovered there, the trade was regulated (see Chapter Five) and the early abuses were modified, if not completely suppressed. The chiefs of the west coast and Cumberland Peninsula, the only area where sandalwood trees grew in Santo, were more than capable of negotiating favourable terms for themselves, and rejected European trade goods in favour of enhancing their own power. The arrival of a safe source of pigs and an increased local need for pottery could not have been more timely. The labour trade was also beginning to make inroads, and indigenous exchange routes were being disrupted by kidnappers and the fear of kidnapping, so the traditional pot-pig exchange between Malo and west coast Santo was threatened; metal cooking pots were arriving through the archipelago so traditional pottery outlets were drying up. Thus the sandalwood trade supported the enhancement of the *Supwe* and the retention of associated pot-making as a relevant industry, a concurrence that happened nowhere else in the Vanuatu archipelago. Another effect of the sandalwood industry on the west coast may have been the redistribution of the Cumberland people to the area they occupy now. Originally Big Bay was reported as well populated and the west coast as uninhabited. People may have moved down the river valleys to the west coast to trade with the sandalwooders, taking pottery with them.

Missionisation and depopulation had drastically adverse effects on the ability to carry on traditional practices in the last decades of the nineteenth and first of the twentieth century but the coast itself rose to its own defence. The remoteness of the west coast, the harshness of its climate, and its reputation for disease, gave rise to a belief that the place was too dangerous for Europeans to live. The manpower shortage of the First World War meant the already declining Presbyterian Mission effectively left the west coast to its own devices (see Chapter Six). Expatriate missionaries completely vanished from the scene and the rigorous suppression of traditional practices such as child marriage and grade taking faltered. Indigenous teachers and mission workers were few and often of local origin, so may have had sympathy or turned a blind eye to such practices as the *Supwe*. However, since Wusi never had a foreign-born missionary the Presbyterian suppression of pottery there reported by Guiart (1958: 59) must have been by indigenous mission workers. This is not noted at all in the Notwes.

However, the *Supwe* had not survived unscathed against diminishing population, Christian disapproval, and the loss of the large trading networks; and while reports from the 1890s suggest pottery was still available up and down the coast, by 1910

when Speiser visited, only two villages were reputed pottery makers. Twentieth century potters in Penaoru and Pesena areas may just not have been known by the outside observers who are the sources of the only reports. It was the presence of the mission in Nokuku that made the pottery of Pespia known.

West coast populations had always been sparse and there were no coastal dwellers between Wusi and Tasmate. This lacuna may at one stage have been filled by visiting people from the river valleys in south west Big Bay, occupying the coastal gap between the peoples of the Cumberland Peninsula and the inland populations of southwest Santo. But in the mid twentieth century this separation was complete in the inland as well and there were thought to be no non-Christian villages¹⁵¹ north of a depopulated inland area around the Saoriki valley. This seems to have protected the Notwes from the "Cult" movements of the southwest inland that reacted to population decline by not only having nothing to do with Europeans but also abandoning pigraising and the *Supwe*, in the name of getting rid of disease. There are no reports of large numbers of pigs being killed anywhere in Santo after the 1930s, but traditional practices seem to have managed to survive in the inland villages of the Cumberland Peninsula until at least the 1950s and in some places, until the 1970s. By this time, epidemics were rife in the inland villages and moving down to the coast and the Christian medical services was now seen as the saviour.

Coastal dwelling and the concomitant acceptance of Christianity and the market economy marked the beginning of the end for Cumberland pottery. Young daughtersin-law were no longer available to be taught how to make pottery, and the occupations of Christianity, church activities and cash-crop growing added to the women's traditional occupation of taro cultivation in the Notwes. It seems ironic that the very fertility of the northern Cumberland area, which supported the irrigated taro cultivation and enabled the original intensification of pig-rearing, should also contribute to the demise of pottery making. It is said that daughters (like those of Wusi) were not interested in potting and the craft passed into the hands of the men. In the Notwes, the combination of Christianity, traditional cropping and the market economy undercut the practice of pot-making. In the modern Notwes version of the

¹⁵¹ The population of the Cumberland Peninsula was reported by outside observers to be entirely Christian and coastal, although this could not have been the case.

Supwe, there are no more than four grades at most, only hereditary chiefs kill pigs and only one pig seems to be killed at any one time. Since chiefs are Christian, eating *tabu* are not observed, and pottery plays no part.

The last nail in the coffin of traditional Cumberland pottery appears to me to be the complexity of the process of pot-making. Children were taught while still young and acquired the skills by watching their mothers, or mothers-in-law. Young children under the Christian regime were in school, and the prospective women potters were in their home villages. Also by this time, there were few potters – I have been told of two, possibly three, traditional women potters, all from the inland Pespia villages, who were known in the post-Second World War period. By that time there may have been no others. Today it appears just one woman can make pots. She has no daughters in the village, and her daughter-in-law does not make pots.

Despite suffering the same vectors of Christianisation, coastal living and market economy, the Wusi pottery is saved from this arc of decline by several factors, including the technology itself. This was a technology adapted for the clays in this area to make a quick pot, very likely by potters who were only visiting the shore and not residing in the place where they got the clay. Thus, while the potters of the north were disadvantaged by coming down to the coast where they could no longer get their familiar clay nearby, the pottery of Wusi was designed for this situation. Potters living inland and coming down to the shore for clay are attested throughout the twentieth century and the speed and comparative ease by which a Wusi pot can be made means it is possible to teach adult women and for them to become skilled in the manufacture. The lack of child apprentices caused by Christian marriage practices did not prevent the transmission of the craft to new female residents of the village. For women, pottery is an occupation that fits well with child-rearing and domestic duties, especially where the work of making a pot is split into many small tasks as it is in the Wusi technology.

Wusi's location also facilitates the survival of pottery. Before the arrival of manioc with the sandalwooders and Fiji taro at the end of the nineteenth century, survival on the coast would have been marginal with the poor soils and limited garden land. The Wusi pot was probably a trade item from its inception and has been a necessary earner

throughout the twentieth century. Wusi's position, where the nearest neighbours were the traditional people of the mountains, enabled pottery trade right through the twentieth century, and the dry environment means that the principal crop is the yam, cultivated by men rather than women, so women are available to make pots. Today Wusi is closer to the markets of the Luganville, so is still in a position of comparative advantage in selling its pots. The twin motivators of an accessible market and a need for the income make Wusi a central place, in the style of the pottery villages of the trade rings of Papua New Guinea.

Further considerations

In most places in Oceania where pottery is known to have occurred, the reasons for its demise are not recorded, or decline is attributed to factors such as the introduction of European pots. But there are many extinct potteries in the Pacific; in fact, in most of the places where the first pottery, the Lapita ware, was found, pottery did not survive to the time of European contact. When there is nothing but pottery sherds left, such aspects of a culture as learning and marriage practices are lost, leadership structures must be surmised, and the picture of history from archaeology is rough-grained. Aspects that are left are the pottery itself, its forms and decoration, and the physical environment it was used in.

The initial Lapita inventory included large and carefully decorated pots. In some instances, they were also finely made, but not necessarily so. As the culture spread across the Pacific, both the quality of the manufacture and the quality of the decoration deteriorated. The height of the complex, in intricacy of decoration, competence of manufacture and size of pots, seemed to be reached in the island Melanesian centres of Reef-Santa Cruz, North-Central Vanuatu and New Caledonia. Some of the most ornate pots found were carefully buried, either by themselves or with human interments. These were clearly ritual pots, but also big pots, from which it can be argued that they had a feasting rather than a sacrificial function. But the burials indicate that they were associated with high-status individuals, in a similar manner to the pots associated with chiefs in west and northwest Santo.

The survival of pottery in several parts of Remote Oceania for several hundred years indicates that potters overcame the different nature of the Remote Oceanic clays to be

able to produce viable pots, although the rapid dropping out of decoration on Lapita ware suggests possible changes in skill and frequency of pot-making, or the role of pots may have changed with evolving leadership structures. But an aspect that hasn't been examined is the third function of pottery, as an exchange item. It is notable that pottery survived in Oceania for the most part in larger and more connected places, where the potters could out-sell their wares, and often (as was shown by the case of Wusi as well as the trading networks of the Papua New Guinea region), where there was a place that was marginal for agriculture but with appropriate clays for potmaking, surrounded by and accessible to places that could produce a surplus of food. It is the access to the market that supports the manufacture of pottery. If there is no mechanism that supports the cycling of large numbers of pots, potters do not get enough practice to remain skilled, and furthermore, opportunities for transmission of the craft decline (cf. Morin 2016: 133-4). It has been seen in both Cumberland and Wusi areas that the loss of skill leads to increase in failures. This is more likely to occur where pots are large and complicated to make, but whatever the reason, the failure of pottery is a self-perpetuating cycle. The practice of pot-making gets more hedged about with restrictions and *tabu*, which further restricts opportunities for making pots. Where this cycle is teamed with indifferent clays and a lack of market opportunities, a blip in transmission can mean the entire industry becomes rapidly extinct.

Looking at it from another angle, what makes a good pot? From the European viewpoint this is a pot that serves its practical purpose. If it is a cooking pot that does not break on heating, it lasts well. A large pot is better for a family than a small one, a thin walled pot will heat quicker than a thick walled one. However, for a potter there may be many other considerations. If this is a ritual or magic pot it may only be used once and a roughly made container with the right insignia may be what is required. A cooking pot must be able to heat without breaking, but may need only last a short time where it will be replaced regularly for prestige purposes. If the pot is being made for trade purposes (and I argue that traditionally many if not most are), there is no vested interest in durability. As long as the pot performs its function and there is only one source, fragility is an asset.

The other side of this coin, also difficult for Europeans to understand, is the sacredness of pots. Secrecy and *tabu* surround the manufacture of pottery in most parts of Oceania. It must be concluded, particularly in Santo, that pot-making has a spiritual aspect that has lasted, at least in part, through the transition to Christianity. Pots, to some extent, represent people, and it is the secret knowledge and the act of making pots according to traditional guidelines and strictures that is important, as much as the end result. To suggest that potters give up or "reconsider" *tabu* is probably nonsensical to any indigenous pot-maker in Oceania – it is the pottery itself that is *tabu*.

Suggestions for further research

A first concern would be to try to investigate, in much greater detail, the present-day manifestations of the graded society, and political leadership in west Santo. After Deacon's listing of grades and the fascinating accounts of ceremonies by early observers, there is no direct information on the membership of the *Supwe* as it was practised on the Cumberland Peninsula. Despite the linguistic indications that the *Supwe* is old in Santo, there is a contradiction between the achieved status model of attained leadership and the local insistence on hereditary lines of chiefs (Bolton 1998). The status of women in the Notwes, said by early observers to be higher and "better" than it was elsewhere in the archipelago, may have been supported by a women's graded society. The existence of such an institution, attested in Santo by writers up until the early years of the twentieth century, is another candidate for further investigation.

As regards the history of pot-making, I have outlined its interaction with the forces of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries and unhappily predicted its complete demise in the near future in the Notwes. But there still remains a fascinating prehistory to be discovered. How long have the forebears of the present-day inhabitants occupied the northwest quarter of Santo? Can a pottery sequence be constructed from stratified excavation? Are the people of the Cumberland Peninsula linked, as their language, culture and pottery suggest, with the original settlers of the island? More intensive inland archaeological site surveying and subsequent areal excavation on the west side of Big Bay in the hills of the Cumberland Peninsula is required. Another project would be the investigation of the Apuna valley (and

possibly the Tapapa area of the Tavoli), and the route to the pottery villages around Tabwemasana.

As for reviving the pot-making tradition of the Cumberland Peninsula, this would be a very difficult undertaking, the first part of which would have to be a more rigorous investigation of what exactly present practice is. It was only in 2012 that I learned that making pots in Olpoe is not confined to the men's demonstration workshops that were undertaken for myself and Nojima, and that seemed to be the only way pottery is now made at either Penaoru or Ravlepa. I still see the women's model of pot-making can only ever be seasonal. There may still be more women potters than either Nojima or myself found in the Notwes. There is also the possibility of reviving it in other villages that have not entirely lost the knowledge. But it seems that to maintain any momentum there would have to be an outlet. To establish a tourist market would be difficult: to create one that did not impinge on the sparse market that the people of Wusi access would be a very delicate procedure. And perhaps it would not be wanted by the people of the Notwes.

The people of the Notwes have been in an extended period of isolation and lack of support, which in recent times has only become more acute in comparison with the rest of the country. They need better services in education, medical care, transport, and links to the market economy. While they are proud of their *kastom* I do not think they see it as helping them in the twenty-first century. Useful artefacts are retained. People still set nets to catch flying fox, use bamboos to carry water for irrigation and practise traditional agricultural methods. A few old men still make traditional weapons such as clubs and fletched arrows. I do not think they still make boomerangs, and no one has made a traditional *tamtam* for many years. Most of the old languages of the hills are lost, but people still calculate their lineage by traditional means and take their marriage partners accordingly. They still use what seems to be a modified and simplified version of the *Supwe*. If making pottery was not so hard, so sacred, so ringed with *tabu* it might be easier to retain, as a *kastom* activity for Chiefs Day or a learning experience for children. This probably will not happen.

The coincidence of sandalwood, pottery survival and the elaborated *Supwe* gives a basis for hypothesis on why pottery survived on the west coast of Santo later than anywhere else in Vanuatu, and why it was retained past the advent of European utensils. It also helps explain why pottery, originally seen on the Big Bay side of the Cumberland Peninsula, migrated to the west coast, the sandalwood growing area. The sandalwood boom, expressed in pig riches, allowed the enhancement of the *Supwe* and the increase, rather than decrease, in demand for pots, able to be used for cooking small portions of food and decorated with the insignia of the *Supwe*. The advent of Christianity undermined the practice of pot-making and the retention of skills – only the pocket of traditional peoples in the southwest corner of Santo facilitated the continuation of pot-making at Wusi, in an area where making a living from traditional agricultural pursuits is exceedingly difficult. Environment, contact and precontact history, economy and effects of Christianity have all contributed to a situation where pottery is thriving more in Wusi than in the Cumberland Peninsula. As is predicted in the *tabu, solwora* may have destroyed the pottery of the Notwes.

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Figure 30: Elian and Dorika with pots found by Jonas in bush



Figure 31: Chief Franky Steven with pig's tooth and Wusi pot

Appendices

Appendix A i. Texts of Cumberland Potmaking Accounts I Speiser (1990 [1923]: 232-33):

Felix Speiser, who spent two years touring Vanuatu and recording and collecting artefacts and customs (Speiser 1990), visited the west coast of Santo in 1910 and described the pottery of both Pespia and Wusi. His description of Pespia pottery making is as follows:

The clay is thoroughly kneaded on a stone table with a fairly heavy piece of wood and the larger stones are also removed at the same time. The woman then sits flat on the ground and takes a bamboo cylinder about 25 centimetres high and 10 centimetres wide with the partition still at the top and places it between her knees. She then turns between her flat hands sausages of clay about 30 to 40 centimetres long and as thick as a finger and builds them up in coils on the clay cylinder so that the width of these coils corresponds to the size of the cylinder (...). These coils are continued in a cylindrical form up to a width of about 8 centimetres (...) and then widen out gradually so that an outwardly concave cup is produced which is opened out until the pot reaches the desired width. While this is being done the inner and outer joints of the coils are stopped up so as to give the pot a smooth surface. During this and the following operations, the pot and the bamboo cylinder are continually turned (not with the thighs but with a movement like a mechanically rotated potter's wheel), not so much to ensure the roundness of the pot, since this is achieved through the regular build-up of the coiled strands, but to have the part to be worked upon conveniently positioned. When about half the pot has been made, the woman kneads a clay disc which is of the same diameter as the foot and places this about a hand's breadth above the bamboo to form the bottom of the pot which so far has had none. It is carefully joined to the inner wall of the pot and all is made smooth (....). She then continues building up the pot. The rim is then raised with a convex surface by adding more coils of the clay but squeezing them thin and bending them over with the fingers. Then the inside and outside surfaces are carefully smoothed over with the wetted finger so that the coils of the clay are no longer visible. Then the ornamentation is applied: small strips of clay are pressed onto the surface and patterned by pressing on them with a fingernail (...) or the designs are incised with an orange thorn. Once the pot has been completed it is broken away from the foot (....). The broken edges are smoothed under the previously inserted bottom so that the vessel now actually has a double bottom. The pots of Pespia

therefore stand on a pointed end and the bottom is thick, which always serves to distinguish them from the pots of Wus.

....In shape the pots of Pespia are not unlike those of Wus. They are distinguished from the latter by the pointed bottoms and the curved rim placed round them. The dimensions of Pespia vessels are usually greater, since the Wus method is clearly not adapted to producing large pots out of the solid. Again, the style of decoration in Pespia is different from that of Wus. Pespia pots vary between 16 and 37 centimetres in diameter with a maximum height of 23 centimetres (...).

Apart from pots, shallow dishes are also made in Pespia (...), the coiled method again being employed. They have two or four handles and sometimes an attractive beaded edge. In form they are reminiscent of a wickerwork edge round a plaited dish (...).

In Pespia and Wusi the vessels are coated with slurried ochre and consequently they acquire a bright red colour when fired. Although I have not witnessed the firing process myself, I have been told it is simply done on an open brush fire. The earthenware receives no glazing.

II Yoko Nojima (in Taylor & Thieberger (Eds.), 2011: 164-169)

Nojima stayed a year in Olpoe studying cooking techniques. She recorded potmaking in 2001:

The basic process of pottery making remains the same as that recorded by F. Speiser, M.E. Shutler (1971), and more recently by Jean-Christophe Galipaud (1996). The following description summarises the pottery making carried out in 2001.

Preparing clay and bamboo platform

The clay is spread on a large flat board made of *nakatambol* wood (*Dracontomelon vitiense*). Before pounding a lump of clay, gravels contaminating the clay must be removed. Some water is added while pounding to attain ideal plasticity.

Shaping pottery

A bamboo cylinder is planted upright in front of the potter who is seated on the ground, on which clay, made into coils, is placed to form the body of the pots. Bamboo cylinders are occasionally rotated, serving as turntables for pottery making. After placing several layers of clay coils, it is smoothed and adjoined with wet fingers. Then the coiling process is repeated until the bottom half of the

body of the pot is finely shaped. Then a flat disk of clay about the size of a palm is placed inside to create the bottom of the pot. The upper body of the pot is then shaped in the same manner of coiling. When making a *weanlan*, one or two sets of handles (*anlan*=ear) are attached. Handles are created by applying 3–4 short clay strings of about the length of a finger. This style is considered easier to form because of its simple vessel shape and open profile, and is often chosen by young people in their pottery-making practice

Decoration

It seems that the systematic decorative patterns or motifs are no longer in practice and that much knowledge regarding the decoration of pottery has vanished. While Shutler (1971) notes that Olpoi potters at the time of her visit possessed precise names for each decorative motif, I was unable to hear any explicit explanations¹⁵². As a knowledge base for the decoration of pottery, the application of clay ropes and the use of fingernails, coconut midribs or citrus thorns for creating incisions are commonly shared. These are identical to the set of techniques recorded by Speiser. A motif employing a series of semi-circle clay ropes around the rim, known as *patpat* or 'a boar's tusk', is an exceptional case of well-known pottery design. When decorative patterns are applied to the surface, the pottery is finally removed from the bamboo base, and its exterior bottom surface is smoothed with fingers.

Applying red slip

Red clay (*ta'me*) is applied to the entire surface of the pot after a week of production, and pots are subsequently dried in a cool place for about a month. This process took longer than the case recorded by H. Mackenzie in which red paint is applied after two days and pots are dried for only five days (Mackenzie 1995: 69). Red clay is mixed with water inside a bamboo container, and softened fibre from a coconut husk made into an application brush is used for painting pots. When pots are dried and ready to be fired, extra red clay is scraped off and the scabrous surface of the pot is smoothed with large, disk-shaped seeds of snakerope (*Entada phaseoloides*). A sharp bamboo edge recorded by Mackenzie (1995) was not used in my observation.

¹⁵² I had the same experience as Nojima – Wusi people had exact names for their old motifs, Olpoe people were much vaguer. Furthermore, when looking at pictures of museum pots, Wusi people were more confident in recognising them- whether they came from their own tradition or that of the Cumbeland Peninsula.

Firing pots

Firing was done at midnight (some villagers mentioned that it should be before dawn). Some stones are lined on the ground to create a hearth platform to place pots ready for firing. This hearth is first pre-heated by making a fire on top. The pot surface is rubbed with specific kastom leaves before firing. This magic ensures a successful firing without any cracks. Pots are then placed upside down on top of the pre-heated platform, and firewood is set against pots to cover them from the surroundings. Firewood for this purpose is supposed to be navenu (Macaranga), although people used burao (Hibiscus tiliaceus) at the time of my observation. Only two to three pieces of pottery were fired at once, but a larger platform could accommodate more pots. Firing takes only about 25 minutes. Although Shutler (1971: 82) writes that 'the pots are fired in a slow smouldering fire and left in the ashes until completely cold,' I observed firing done with a strong, flaming fire. Fired pots are immediately removed from the fireplace with wooden tongs. Fired pots are believed to be as strong as iron, so they could be picked around without any particular attention. These pots are then left outside until the next morning, with some charcoal pieces placed inside.

There are some taboos and magic (or what villagers also call *kastom*) associated with pottery making. It is said to be taboo for a potter to eat salt when he/she is making a pot (Shutler 1971). This is generally taken literally and even consuming food containing salt is avoided. 'To eat salt' in fact is a connotation of sexual intercourse, and this is what has to be avoided before making pottery. The red colour symbolises Olpoi pottery as a product of strong *kastom* blessed by their ancestors. The red colour is a metaphor for the blood of ancestors. When villagers dig red clay, the names of the clan members who were deceased or killed are called, so that the blood of the dead will redden the soil. Digging sticks must be cut from a tree named *a'a* (*Myristica fatua*), whose sap is also red. When pots are fired, they have to be left outside so that spirits of the dead will come around to decorate them with their blood.

Appendix Aii. Wusi Potmaking

I Speiser

Speiser visited Wusi in 1910 before Pespia (alternate translations of the German in square brackets):

The grey clay is first thoroughly kneaded and then made into a ball about the size of a fist. The woman sits down on the earth with her legs stretched out straight in front of her and works on her thighs without anything to rest the pot on.... Using her right fist she hollows out the lump of clay, which she holds in her left hand. In this way a flat [shallow] dish takes shape. This she places on her closed thighs near the knees; the walls are then formed, using the convex side of a small bamboo splinter, by pressing the side of the dish upwards, counter-pressure being exerted by the left hand from inside while the pot is kept turning continually. At the same time the outside of the wall is smoothed with the bamboo splinter and scraped until it is straight, the horizontal rim taking shape where the curved bottom passes into the straight side wall. During this process the side wall is thinned while the dish-shaped bottom retains its original thickness. To form the outward-turned rim, the vessel is inverted and rotated on the bent knee, the sharpness of the upper edge once again being produced with the bamboo. The vessel is then turned over again and the rim is given a more regular form from inside with the bamboo; while this is being done, the ball of the left thumb applies the counter-pressure outside. Finally the rim is smoothed with the wetted thumb and index finger. In this way the raw pot is completed in barely ten minutes and, considering that no potter's wheel is used and there is no model, the shape is remarkably harmonious [symmetrical] and often beautiful. The pots vary in size between 14 and 28 centimetres in diameter and 12 and 18 centimetres in height. The ornaments are added only when the pot is half dry. In general form the pots are hemispherical dishes with a built-up slightly narrowed straight wall and a sharply bent-over rim which is, as a rule, concave upwards or, at least, never convex. It always comes away from the wall at a clearly-marked angle and not in a gradual curve.

(Speiser 1990: 232)

II Guiart

Guiart came down from Wunapion on a Saturday in late September or early October, watched the women¹⁵³ making pots on the Sunday, talked to Lulu who was in fact a potter himself, then went off to the Saoriki valley the same day (Guiart 1958: 147-49). I have included here the part that he would have seen himself:

The procedure of constructing the base, which is the first rough outline of the pot, is first to hollow out the lump of clay with a blow of the fist, then to mould it on the knee which is bent as much as possible; in one hand the worker makes the clay lump turn while with the other she strikes small blows with the flat of the hand in such a way as to stretch it regularly. This way a half sphere is obtained from which the walls are raised while supporting the clay from the inside with a round pebble or a polished fragment of coconut shell, and tapping at the same point with a slip of wood; in this way the pot sides are raised conically, the diameter regularly decreasing towards the top; towards the end of the operation, a constant pressure, maintained on the interior by the piece of coconut shell, and on the exterior by the palm of the hand, allows the process to be carried out more rapidly while thinning the walls of the pot. When a suitable height is reached, the worker evens out the upper edge with her fingers making little folds which she works back into the clay with the pressure of two fingers. Now comes a particular hand movement and the worker turns her working outwards, inducing with the left hand a folding back of the top of the pot which thus, once again, opens upwards; the right hand supports this action with two fingers, while making the pot turn in small movements on the worker's thighs. It only remains to smooth it, even up the neck and the rim, pinch the line where the curve of the rounded side breaks to establish an incised ring, single or double, sometimes with symmetrical protuberances, and finally to decorate the surface between this ring and the neck with motifs applied in parallel bands of simple or broken lines.

The varieties of this sort of pot are numerous, both in details of form and in decoration. Two other shapes were observed: one, much simpler, takes the form of a flared dish or cup, decorated on the upper edge with a double row of nubbins; the other exactly reproduces the form of a soup bowl with two, three or four ears for holding.

(Guiart 1958: 54-56)¹⁵⁴

¹⁵³ Guiart uses terms throughout that indicate that the potters are female.

¹⁵⁴ My translation

I Olpoe Pots

In 2000 Nojima recorded four pot shapes and names:



Pottery in Northwest Santo is called *welep*, meaning 'a saucepan of ground'. There are four major forms in Olpoi-style pottery [see below]: 1. a pot with neck and an outcurving rim (*wepran*); 2. a pot similar to 1., but with a narrow neck relative to the large diameter of the body (*weaotot*); 3. a tall, bowl-like pot with a straight rim (*weanlan*, *wepatpat*, or *wepatmot* depending on the decorative motifs on the rim); and 4. [6. in actual illustration above] a shallow dish or bowl (*ov*). Among them, the first three are used for boiling, and are associated with the preparation of crops, cabbage and meat respectively, although the same pots are often used for any kind of food (Nojima 2010). Based on my observation, a particular fish called *maj* (a kind of freshwater goby) was the food most commonly cooked when pottery was used for cooking.

(adapted from Nojima 2011: 161-62)

The first two pots are said to be for taro and "cabbage" respectively. The three variants of the third pot are all the same open-mouthed shape but with different decorations on the rim: *weanlan* has four "ears" (*anlan*) attached as handles on the rim, illustrated in (4) above; *wepatpat* has a border that represents pigs tusks: (5) above, which means it is a "chief's" pot (Nojima 2010: 66).

Nojima gives a range of sizes for both the *wepran* and the *wepatmot*. When I visited these seem to be the only two shapes being attempted, and both at the smaller end of the size range quoted by Nojima (2010: 66). On the other hand the occasional older pots I saw, treasured because a parent or grandparent had made them, were mostly pots with restricted mouths in the *weaotot* shape, but much larger than the dimensions given by Nojima (*ibid*). There is an older pot in the *wepran* shape at Ravlep, and this pot probably came from the Pespia. It was smaller than the older *weaotot* pots. I have never seen an 'ov in the Cumberland peninsula area, but when I showed a picture I had taken of a little oval dish in the museum in Manchester, the people of Olpoe recognised this as an 'ov. In 2004 there were not enough pots left in Olpoe for me to do a comparison. I only once was served food from a pot, and the occasional pots I saw were old ones (see Figure 30). More recent pots I have seen completed at Olpoe (since 2007) are much smaller, most closely approximate the *wepran* in shape, and fairly similar to Wusi pots in size and appearance. However, the people of the Notwes still cite size as an advantage of their coiling pot-making technique: they can make pots big enough to cook taro in, whereas all Wusi pots are small.

Speiser's photographs give pot sizes but not names. Four of the pots described by Nojima are recognisable, but the *weaotot* is much larger than Nojima's measurement and the *weanlan* falls at the high end of Nojima's range, while both the *wepatpat* samples are at the lower end, as is the *wepran*. These are more like the sizes I have seen of each of these pots.

The range of shapes described by Nojima (above) seems limited but I have never seen a Cumberland pot, anywhere (including in museums and photographs) that was not covered by that range. Undoubtedly there were different sizes and decoration styles and there is some indication that pots were named individually.

II Ravelepa Pots:

James Boe knows six pot designs which he has written in a workbook. A problem with comparing pot designs and types is that there is no clear distinction between form and surface decoration in naming pots. So the same pot shape will have more than one name depending on the decorative pattern used. Furthermore, names of pots can describe the appearance or the function the pot is supposed to have. Different

shapes are said to have different functions but both Nojima (2011: 162) and I have witnessed pots being used to cook something other than what they are said to be for. All of the pots I saw being made at Ravlepa were on the list in James' book (except for creative forms made by the younger boys), so it may cover the entire traditional repertoire. Here is the list of pots copied from James' workbook in 2009, noting where a pot can be compared with the Olpoe repertoire. Spellings are from James; glosses are essayed with the use of linguistic information from Ross Clark.

- *Kirinolma*Cooking pot with narrow neck, opened out mouth, and a
wavy coil decoration appliquéd after it is finished. This probably
corresponds to the design or pattern called $We \ olm^wa$ at Olpoe, where
the name means "colour of Olm^wa rope". Rope in the Pacific is
commonly made from the bark of a plant, *pipiturus argenteus* and
 olm^wa is possibly the local name¹⁵⁵, in which case *kurinolm^wa* would
be the skin or bark of the Olm^wa plant.
- TankoSame shape as previous pot but different design appliquéd or
scratched vertical design (Figure 30). There is a *kastom* story of how
the name came about from a taro basket topped up with
breadfruit. *Pek(o)* means breadfruit and *tan(a)* is a type of basket;
when I tried the name in another village they recognised it as
meaning breadfruit, so it possibly applies to a type of breadfruit.

Both these first two dishes are high sided, come in at the neck and then have an opened out lip. The other dishes appear from illustrations not to narrow at the neck, and to have no lip.

WesarvoServing dish – more open at top, has four "ears" or handles.This is similar to the we anlan (anlan: ear, we: pot) at Olpoe, but that
is a cooking pot. The meaning of sarvo is not known.

¹⁵⁵ *Pipturus argenteus* has similar reflexes in a number of Oceanic languages (see Ross, Pawley & Osmond 2008: 245-46).



Figure 32: Old tanko pot at Ravlepa

Ov patpat

Dish used for serving or for grating coconut. The top edge is finely incised with a stick when it is complete (N.B. Tony's version had a roll of clay loosely appliquéd on the outside, more similar to the Olpoe design for that name). In Olpoe there is both a pot called *we patpat* and a flat pottery dish called '*ov*. The '*ov* is used for grating and serving coconut; the *we patpat* is an open dish with a pigs tooth pattern, used for cooking meat. Both are shallower in Olpoe than the dish illustrated in James' book but this could mean the illustration is for the purpose of displaying the design only.

WetapramiA big pot with an open mouth. After it is finished, coils are
appliquéd on top to give a scalloped edge, similar to the Olpoe patpat
design. the name could pertain to the design: - peran means edge
(peran tos: edge of the sea, or seashore). In the Ravlepa case, the
design is right on the edge of the pot. The scallop does not appear to
be securely attached so the pot looks to be both fragile and clumsy.

The pot called *wepran* in Olpoe is different as it has a straight-sided mouth with a lip.

Ri'onkato (the path of the *Nakato* – hermit crab). Another cooking pot. James was given the name of this design by an elder, Jack Wori – I did not see a sample. The illustration looks like any of the open mouthed pots, but again, was probably done to illustrate the design, rather than the pot shape. *Rion kato* means "path of the hermit crab" and refers to the pattern.

To summarise, the four basic pots of Ravlepa are the serving dish or *wesarvo*, the *ov* for grated coconut; and the two types of cooking pot, with wide or narrow mouth. The only one I have seen used to demonstrate its function is the *tanko*. Other than the *wesarvo* (and possibly *wetaprami* – but see below) all names refer to the design used to ornament the pot. No-one could give me the meaning of *we sarvo*.

These names are old and their meanings – and in some cases the type of pot associated with the name – have often been forgotten. A case in point is the *weteprami*, described by James as a large pot with an open mouth. The function of this pot is cooking yam or taro and the closest name in Olpoe is either

 wepran - the pot for cooking taro (Nojima 2008: 124), which is deeper than the Ravlepa pot,

or

 we repran – an open pot for frying (a term collected at Olpoe). Osmond and Ross (1998: 70) record *palaŋa* as the proto-Oceanic term for frying pan. Both we repran and we taprami could be reflexes of this term.

Weteprami could also be an archaic word from the Penaoru language.

Pottery-working vocabulary

As in Olpoe, the terms used in pot-making are, for the most part, common terms from everyday language. Other than the names of the pots themselves, some of which may be archaic, few terms are different from what would be expected. The term for clay itself, *lep*, is that used at Olpoe, not in the Penaoru area, supporting the suggestion that the technology is a relatively recent import from the Pespia.

III Wusi Pots:

According to M.E. Shutler there are only two basic shapes of pot made at Wusi, the lipless shallow bowl and the deeper pot with the outturned mouth. In 1993 I recorded nine different named pots, but most variation was in the decoration or function: *trova* were bowls without handles, other bowls had either handles or lips and the taller pots were more or less restricted in the mouth. Nojima formalised this as follows:



1: uro turi, 2: uro wari, 3: najova, 4: uro hou /uro jalnaine veho

	Name	Description	Use
1	Uro turi	Globular base, everted rim,	cooking taro, yams, pork, fowl,
		different decorations denote	not fish.Special pattern for
		different uses	island cabbage
2	Uro wari	Globular base, everted rim, vertical	Cooking cabbage, pork
		handles representing pigs' tusks	
		(wari). Chief's pot.	
3	Najova	Shallow ellipsoidal dish with	Grating coconut, serving plate
		incurved rim	(occasionally used for cooking)
4	Uro hou/ uro	shallow ellipsoidal ¹⁵⁶ dish with	cooking small fish and naora
	jalnaineveho	handles (hou)	(freshwater crayfish)

Wusi Pot Styles in 2000 (from Nojima 2010: 69)

The potter's workbook from the 1998 project listed 4 pot types which included the *uro turi* and *uro wari* listed above as well as 2 bowls, one with handles (4), but the second is the lipped shallow bowl I photographed but failed to record in 1993, named in the workbook *Tano vela* [*sic*]. The sample I saw in 2009 was a small pot being used to cook crab and octopus. The *trova* was not mentioned in the workbook.

Wusi pots do not display the variation of Northwest pots since the method of manufacture is much more restrictive in both size and shape (Fijian pots give a better idea of the variation that can be achieved by coiling). Speiser gives a diameter of 27cm for the largest Wusi pot he illustrates (Speiser 1990: pl65.12) down to 14cm, easily overlapping the lower end of the Pespia pottery range (37cm to 16cm). The Wusi pots I collected (dating from 1993 to 2010) are 16cm to 11cm in diameter.

IV. Tracing the Trova

The *trova* was quite exciting to me as it was the only dish that shared both name and function in Wusi and the northwest. The word appears to have come down in each language and not be a borrowing one from the other (Ross Clark, pers.comm.), which suggests that the dish itself derives from an ancestral culture and has been handed down in each pottery tradition. The *trova* was in use by the time of de Queiros, as recorded by Markham:

¹⁵⁶ The small bowl I have with handles is round mouthed.

The natives make from a black clay some very well-worked pots, large and small, as well as pans and porringers in the shape of small boats.

(Markham 1904: 269)

I have never seen a sample of this dish in Vanuatu but had the impression that it was oval, although Nojima's illustrations (2008: 122, and above) suggest that the Olpoe 'ov was a round shallow dish while the Wusi *najova* was a regular sized pot, in shape more like the illustration of the Ravlepa *ov patpat* in James Boe's workbook. But when I took the picture of the strange little pot I photographed in the Manchester Museum in February 2012 (Figure 11) back to Santo in September, everyone¹⁵⁷ spontaneously recognised it as a *trova*.

May and Tuckson mention only one place in Papua New Guinea where coconut preparation dishes are used, and that is in the Markham valley where the Azera men make a pot for coconut oil, which is a basis for magic (May & Tuckson 2000: 132). The pot is called *gur isim* or *gur asam*, "small" or "ginger" pot. It is impossible to say how this (or any of them) may be related to the *trova* without further linguistic backup.

When I enquired at the Newcastle Oceanic Linguistics conference in February 2013, I got many examples of this word. In every case it was applied to an oval wooden dish, usually for grated coconut. From this it is clear that the term describes the shape and function of the dish, and not the material from which it is made.

¹⁵⁷ Both Wusi and Olpoe people claimed this pot as one of theirs. It was listed as a Wusi pot in the Museum,] which seems confirmed by the shell temper, but the construction method is more reminiscent of Olpoe.

Appendix C: Early accounts of the Grade Taking Ceremony in Santo I. Rev. J.D. Gordon (in Steel 1880: 335-7)

Gordon was in Nokuku on the west coast of the Cumberland Peninsula, for five months in 1869:

The officiating priest on that occasion then brought his bag of mysteries, and set it upon a stone altar. These altars are numerous. One appears to be reared annually. Some are made of stones about five feet long by three in width and a foot in depth, resting on four strong pillars about a foot high. Soon after, I saw the second and third chiefs, each holding above his head at arm's length a green vine with leaves, about six feet long, running hither and thither capering over the ground, and the priest running after them, holding his bag of mysteries. The three were painted red from head to food, and fantastically decorated with the branches of certain kinds of plants. After thus playing the fool they approached the altar, upon which the priest hopped and commenced to dance. In one hand he held his bag, and in the other a stick about fifteen inches long, for which he soon had use. Meanwhile others were busy bagging young pigs, putting about twenty in one large bag, and fewer in smaller baskets. Soon I heard something like rockets being let off in rapid succession, or rather like the cracking of whips, which in reality it was. This part of the proceedings was called apromos, and was performed by young men. A number of these were stationed on the feasting ground, about two or three yards apart, in two lines. Between these two men ran, one from each end, halting an instant before the stationed men to receive a lash from a long, stout, tapering fibre, resembling the mid-rib of a small cocoa-nut leaf. These switches were about two yards long and it was the lash given to the two men about their bare chests, their arms being held above their heads, which produced the cracking sounds. Before rushing from one end to the other they rubbed grated taro over the upper part of their bodies, to protect them somewhat from the lash. A whip was only once used, then a fresh one was taken, so that the ground was strewn with them. The victims seemed wild with excitement or pain.

There being many parts in the play, and all going on simultaneously, one needed to have his eyes about him to get a conjunct view of the whole; and I may say that I felt bewildered, for I had not knowledge of what was coming. I have heard of a shower of meteoric stones, and even of a shower of fishes, but not until that day did I know of a shower of pigs. The sucking pigs which had been previously bagged, were taken out one by one, and were thrown as high in the air and as far as a man could chuck them. They were thrown to fall on the heads of four or five dancing men, who tried to catch them as they fell. More ugly or awkward balls could scarcely be, as some of them found them when a little pig's foot would graze their ears or brush past their eyes. These when caught in the air, or (much oftener) as they fell with their whole weight on the ground, were immediately carried rapidly to the priest, still dancing on

the altar to the music of the drum beaten by children with splinters of bamboo. The priest despatched the pigs with the stick which he held in his hand, by giving each one a blow on the forehead. They were then thrown into heaps. As many as two hundred were killed in this manner, and towards the evening several larger ones-all to be baked and eaten. While busily occupied in viewing sometimes this and sometimes that of the multifarious performance, I heard, and immediately after saw, a company of dancing women issuing from the bush by a path. There were about one hundred, coming four abreast. Their faces were elaborately painted in angular stripes, in different colours, all over. Nothing more hideous can well be imagined. Some carried spears or rods, which they held pointing outward on each side of the rank. Others held short bent staves or clubs in their hands, upon which they leaned, bending forward, as they proceeded. Each woman had tied round her ankles several strings of dried nut shell, about the size of horse-chestnuts, a score or two of these being on each string. The four women who held the band went backwards and held in their hands each a bamboo drum, about fifteen inches long, which they struck with precision, the other women stamping simultaneously on the ground, producing a sound like that of dumb-bells. They stamped forward about three feet, then, without changing position, moved backward about two feet, and thus continuing onward at the rate say of one hundred yards in an hour.

II. Alfred Hagen (1893: 364-65)

(Hagen was a ships doctor on the ship Lady Saint Aubyn, recruiting in the New Hebrides in the early 1890s for labour for New Caledonia. He does not give dates and Shineberg says the account amalgamates four recruiting voyages Hagen made, from 1890 to 1891 (Shineberg 1999: 285). This account is from a visit to Wusi ("Poussey"):

The great gathering of inhabitants which we observed at the market at Wusi was a pretext for feasts and national dances. I very much regretted arriving several days too late; I would have been able to witness a bizarre ceremony peculiar to this island.

Although I did not see it myself, I cannot resist the desire to speak about it, based on the description I was given by some indigenes. This feast is led by the chief of the tribe, who is painted red and crowned with flowers. Some little suckling pigs are tied and piled into the village square, nearby to where the young people are sitting. At a given moment two men begin to run among these young people, stopping in front of each to receive a blow from a lash or whip. Often the upper part of the body is covered in crushed taro to deaden the force of the blows. Each man of the tribe is obliged to take part in the ceremony. During this time five or six natives are dancing and jumping in the area of the feast; this is when the small tied pigs are thrown into the air so that they fall on the heads of the dancers who try to catch them

either in the air or on the ground. They are then carried to the sacrificer who finishes them off by striking them on the forehead with a blow from a club.

[My translation from the French].

III. Felix Speiser (1913: 172-78)

(In 1910 Speiser stayed for several weeks with the trader, Fish, at Tolomako in Big Bay. This event took place on the east side of the Cumberland Peninsula, possibly around Arivi near the Pualapa River):

Some days after this we went to see a "sing-sing" up north. We rowed along the shore, and as my host was contributing a pig, we had the animal with us. With legs and snout tightly tied, the poor beast lay sadly in the bottom of the boat, occasionally trying to snap the feet of the rowers. The sea and the wind were perfect, and we made good speed; in the evening we camped on the beach. The next day was just as fine; my host continued the journey by boat, while I preferred to walk the short distance that remained, accompanied by the pig, whose health did not seem equal to another sea-voyage in the blazing sun. It was touching to see the tenderness with which the natives treated the victim-elect, giving it the best of titbits and urging it with the gentlest of words to start on the walk. It was quite a valuable animal with good-sized tusks. After some hesitation the pig suddenly rushed off, Sam, his keeper, behind. First it raced through the thicket, which I did not like, so I proposed to Sam to pull the rope on the energetic animal's leg; but Sam would not damp its splendid energy for fear it might balk afterwards. Sam managed, however, to direct it back into the path, but we had a most exhausting and exciting, if interesting, walk, for the pig was constantly rushing, sniffing, grunting and digging on all sides, so that Sam was entirely occupied with his charge, and it was quite impossible to converse. At last we proudly entered the village, and the beast was tied in the shade; we separated, not to meet again till the hour of sacrifice.

I was then introduced to the host, a small but venerable old man, who received me with dignified cordiality. We could not talk together, but many ingratiating smiles assured each of the other's sympathy. The village seemed exceedingly pleasant to me, which may have been due to the bright sun and the cool breeze. The square was situated on the beach, which sloped steeply to the sea. Along the ridge were planted brightly coloured trees, and between their trunks we could see the ocean, heavenly blue. On the other side were the large, well-kept gamals, and crowds of people in festival attire; many had come from a distance, as the feast was to be a big one, with plenty to eat for everybody.

Palo, the host, was very busy looking after his guests and giving each his share of good things. He was a most good-natured, courteous old gentleman, although his costume consisted of nothing but a few bunches of ferns. The number of guests increased steadily; besides the real heathen in unadorned beauty, there were half-civilized Christians, ugly in ill-

fitting European clothes, of which they were visibly vain, although they made blots on the beautiful picture of native life. All around the square grunted the tusked pigs.

At noon four men gave the signal for the beginning of the festivities by beating two big drums, which called the guests to dinner. Palo had sent us a fowl cooked native fashion between hot stones, and, like everything cooked in this way, it tasted very delicious. Shortly afterwards the real ceremonies began with the killing of about two hundred young female pigs which had been kept in readiness in little bamboo sheds.

Accompanied by the drums, Palo led all the high-castes in dancing steps out of the gamal [sic] and round the square. After a few turns the chiefs drew up in line in front of him, and he mounted a stone table, while everyone else kept on dancing. His favourite wife was next to the table, also dancing. Palo was entirely covered with ferns, which were stuck in his hair, his bracelets and his belt. He still looked quite venerable, but with a suggestion of a faun, a Bacchus or a Neptune. It was a warm day, and the dancing made everybody perspire more than freely.

Now one of the other men took hold of a little pig by the hind-legs and threw it in a lofty curve to one of the dancing chiefs, who caught the little animal, half stunned by the fall, and, still dancing, carried it to Palo, who killed it by three blows on the head, whereupon it was laid at his feet. This went on for a long time.

It was a cruel sight. Squealing and shrieking, the poor animals flew through the air, fell heavily on the hard earth, and lay stunned or tried to crawl away with broken backs or legs. Some were unhurt and ran off, but a bloodthirsty crowd was after them with clubs and axes, and soon brought them back. Still, one man thought this troublesome, and broke the hindlegs of each pig before throwing it to the chief, so that it might not escape. It was horrible to see and hear the bones break, but the lust for blood was upon the crowd, and on all sides there were passionate eyes, distorted faces and wild yells. Happily the work was soon done, and it front of Palo lay a heap of half-dead, quivering animals. He and his wife now turned their backs to the assembly and a few high-castes counted the corpses. For each ten one lobe was torn off a sicca-leaf, then the missing lobes were counted, and after a puzzling calculation, the result was announced. Palo turned round and descended from his pedestal with much dignity, though panting from his exertions, and looking so hot that I feared an apoplexy for the old man. I did not know how tough such an old heathen is, not that his efforts were by no means at an end. *Noblesse oblige* and such high caste as Palo's is not attained without trouble. As female pigs may not be eaten, those just killed were thrown into the sea by the women; meanwhile, the chiefs blew a loud blast on the shell-bugles, to announce to all concerned that Palo's first duty was accomplished. The deep yet piercing tones must have sounded far into the narrow valleys round.

Then poles were driven into the ground, to which the tusked pigs were tied. Some were enormous beasts, and grunted savagely when anyone came near them. I saw my companion of the morning lying cheerfully grunting in the shade of a tree. Now came a peculiar ceremony, in which all who had contributed pigs were supposed to take part. To my disappointment, Mr F. refused to join in. Palo took up his position on the stone table, armed with a club. Out of a primitive door, hastily improvised out of a few palm-leaves, the chiefs came dancing in single file, swinging some weapon, a spear or a club. Palo jumped down, dancing towards them, chased each chief and finally drove them, still dancing, back through the door. This evidently symbolized some fight in which Palo was the victor. After having done this about twenty times, Palo had to lead all the chiefs in a long dance across the square, passing in high jumps between the pigs. After this he needed a rest, and no wonder. Then the pigs were sacrificed with mysterious ceremonies, the meaning of which has probably never been penetrated. The end of it all was that Palo broke the pigs' heads with a special club, and when night fell, twenty-six "tuskers" lay agonizing on the ground. Later they were hung on trees, to be eaten next day, and then everybody retired to the huts to eat and rest. Some hours later great fires were kindled at both ends of the square, and women with torches stood all around. The high-castes opened the ball, but there was not much enthusiasm, and only a few youngsters hopped about impatiently, until their spirits infected some older people, and the crowd increased, so that at last everybody was raving in a mad dance. The performance is monotonous: some men with pan-pipes bend down with their heads touching, and blow with all their might, always the same note, marking time with their feet. Suddenly one gives a jump, others follow, and then the whole crowd moves a number of times up and down the square, until the musicians are out of breath, when they come to a standstill. The excitement goes on until the sun rises. The women as a rule, keep outside the square, but they dance too, and keep it up all night; now and then a couple disappears into the darkness. Next morning Palo, who had hardly closed his eyes all night, was very busy again, giving each guest his due share of the feast. The large pigs were dressed, cut up and cooked. This work lasted all day, but everyone enjoyed it. The dexterity and cleanliness with which the carcases are divided is astonishing, and is quite a contrast to the crude way in which native meals are usually dressed and devoured. We whites received a large and very fat slice as a present, which we preferred to pass on, unnoticed, to our boys. Fat is considered the best part of the pig.

The lower jaws of the tuskers were cut out separately and handed over to Palo, to be cleaned and hung up in his gamal in the shape of a chandelier, as tokens of his rank.

IV. Felix Speiser (1913: 129-132)

(This is a description of a ceremony at Hog Harbour, a few weeks earlier than the previously described):

Unnoticed we entered the dancing-ground. A number of men were standing in a circle round a huge fire, their silhouettes cutting sharply into the red glare. Out of a tangle of clubs, rifles, plumes, curly wigs, round heads, bows and violently gesticulating arms, sound an irregular shrieking, yelling, whistling and howling, uniting occasionally to a monotonous song. The men stamp the measure, some begin to whirl about, others rush towards the fire; now and then a huge log breaks in two and crowns the dark excited crowd with a brilliant column of circling sparks. Then everybody yells delightedly, and the shouting and dancing sets in with renewed vigour. Everyone is hoarse, panting and covered with perspiration, which paints light streaks on the sooty faces and bodies.

....All this goes on among the guests; the hosts keep a little apart, near a scaffolding on which yams are attached. The men circle slowly round this altar carrying decorated bamboos, with which they mark the measure, stamping them on the ground with a thud. They sing a monotonous tune, one man starting and the others joining in; the dance consists of slow springy jumps from one foot to the other.

On two sides of this dancing circle the women stand in line, painted all over with soot. When the men's deep song is ended, they chant the same melody with thin shrill voices. Once in a while they join in the dance, taking a turn with some one man, then disappearing....The spectacle lasts all night, and the crowd becomes more and more wrought up, the leaps of the dancers wilder, the singing louder. We stand aside, incapable of feeling with these people or sharing their joy, realising that theirs is a perfectly strange atmosphere which will never be ours.

Towards morning we left, none too early, for a tremendous shower came down and kept on all next morning. I went up to the village again, to find a most dismal and dejected crowd..... About once in a quarter of an hour a man would come to bring a tusked pig to the chief, who danced a few times round the animal, stamped his heel on the ground, uttered certain words and retired with short, stiff steps, shaking his head, into the gamal. The morning was over by the time all the pigs were ready....

In the afternoon about sixty pigs were tied to poles in front of the gamal and the chief took an old gun-barrel and smashed their heads. They represented a value of about six hundred pounds!...

As it is not always easy to borrow the number of pigs necessary to rise in caste, there are charms which are supposed to help in obtaining them....On this occasion the "big fellow-

master [sic]¹⁵⁸ had sacrificed enough to attain a very high caste indeed, and had every reason to hold up his head with great pride.

V. John Baker (1929a: 24-29)

(This description is from Baker's 1927 visit. Yekul is in the same general cultural area as Hog Harbour.):

At each change of rank except the first a night-long dance takes place, at which there is said to be considerable sexual licence....I have witnessed one of these dances at Yekul, in Sakau, on the occasion of the rise of a *vonere*, one Tekara, to the rank of *vuriar*.

...The path led us up one side of an oval enclosure perhaps seventy yards long, in which the ceremony was taking place.[...]We sat down just within the fence of closely placed 3ft. posts which bordered the dancing ground, and watched the spectacle by the fitful light of a great bonfire which burnt in the middle.

The ground within the fence was absolutely bare, having been cleared for the purpose of the ceremony. A house (presumably the neviul) had been built beyond the fire, and on each side of the house were five huge baskets filled with yams and coconuts for the dancers. Each basket had been made by fixing some half-dozen 20 ft. saplings upright in the ground so as to form a cylindrical framework about 2 ft. in diameter, and binding these round to a height of eigth or nine feet with rope-like lianas. Each sapling was stripped of branches and leaves except just at the top, where a little bunch of leaves was left, giving the whole structure a most grotesque appearance.

No one could have witnessed what was going on in the arena which I have described without a thrill of intense excitement passing down his spine. A couple of hundred savages, each with white fowl-leathers in his hair, his face hideous with bright pigments, a great club or musket in his hand, and a twisted garter just below each knee, were throwing themselves into the dance with such abandon as only savages can command.

The older men had arranged themselves in lines radiating from a bundle of bamboos on which yams were hung. Round this they revolved, chanting what is said to be a saga of their history, and beating time upon the ground with thick eight-foot bamboos....The young men half-surrounded the bonfire, facing it, at dancing about, alternately raising their knees high in the air and then stamping their soles flat on the ground. Occasionally they uttered loud shouts in syncopated time with the singing of the older men, but they did not sing themselves. All the time they were gradually approaching the bonfire. When they had nearly reached it they

¹⁵⁸ Today this would be written as *bigfala masta*. It is possible Speiser misheard the term for *Wuster*- a very high grade (Speiser 1990: 356) – for the term commonly used for a *waetman*.

would suddenly rush back, screaming as though afraid. Their gradual approach would then begin again.

The women were in two long rows with linked arms, and swaying voluptuously up and down all night long, singing with shrill voices.

Shortly after the beginning of the ceremony, Tekara strode proudly round and round the arena outside the dancers with all his near relatives—male and female, adult and young—following in his wake. Last of all was his mother, holding a coconut before her to represent the great *vuriar* as a baby. Before our arrival he had killed the ten pigs required for this ascent in rank. ...A body of women (naked as always) next approached and surrounded my wife. I was not a little apprehensive when the put their arms round her and began to draw her away. For a little I lost sight of her in the flickering light of the bonfire, and then I saw that the women had incorporated her in one of their two lines, and were teaching her the dance. Afterwards she told me that they had signed to her to remove her clothes, but to this request she preferred not to accede. A little later I was surrounded by some of the men and drawn into the dance. That which had appeared easy to the spectator was soon found to be difficult to the unpractised participator; but however unskilfully I might dance, I had sufficient of the herd-instinct to share with my savage companions the wild joy of their ceremony. I was sorry though tired when the time came to say "Tavwa" and start out weary journey back to Hog Harbour. The *ndre* is not eaten at these ceremonies [.]