

Pigs, mats and feathers

customary marriage in Vanuatu

Sue Farran

Abstract

Republic of Vanuatu law recognises three forms of marriage as valid: church, civil and custom. This paper reports on a preliminary survey to determine what forms of custom (*kastom*) marriage exist in Vanuatu and whether they are certain enough to establish that a marriage has taken place. The survey compiled information on procedures, participants, the role of property and the incorporation of civil or religious elements into the *kastom* form. It is apparent that the forms of *kastom* marriage, while varied, follow recognised procedural steps, most of which must be followed to validate the marriage. They are generally preceded by formal premarital negotiations. They usually involve negotiated property exchanges and transfer the bride from her own family's home to her husband's house. Preparations, the ceremony and the celebrations involve large groups of kin of both sexes, from both sides, providing many witnesses to the marriage. Persons of particular status, e.g. chiefs, may also play a significant role. The property exchange signifies the establishment of strong and ongoing social relations between social/kin groups. Though the sample was small, the survey strongly suggests the existence of identifiable *kastom* marriages in recognisable forms and fulfilling important social functions. Their recognition under the law indeed seems appropriate.

Keywords

Vanuatu marriage law; custom marriage

modified respondents' information or descriptions to reflect their own recollections, knowledge or views about certain *kastom*. To minimise these risks researchers were required to adhere to a pre-determined questionnaire and to conduct structured interviews with local people.⁸ Interviewees were not pre-selected: the student researchers were instructed to select a mix of age ranges of both sexes from a variety of islands. Most interviews were carried out in and around Port Vila, the capital, but five interviews were carried out in Malekula (the spelling Malakula is also used) and two in Tanna.⁹ A total of thirty-nine interviews was carried out over a two-week period in June 2003.¹⁰ The sample breakdown is shown in table 1.

Table 1 Interviewees by age and sex

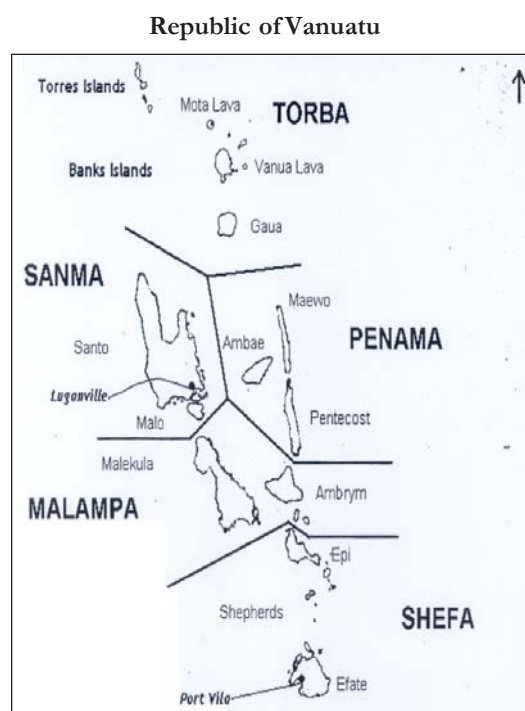
Sex	Age 20–29	Age 30–39	Age 40–49	Age 50 and and over	Total
Female	6	8	3	3	20
Male	5	2	4	8	19
Total	11	10	7	11	39

Asked whether the information they divulged had been acquired as a result of personal experience and/or personal observation and/or hearsay, interviewees indicated heavy reliance on observation and experience (table 2).

Table 2 Interviewees' source of information

Personal observation	19
Personal experience	17
Hearsay	3

Some interviewees indicated that they had acquired their knowledge from both personal observations and personal experience. This may possibly have been due to confusion regarding the first two categories. It is, however, highly likely that having grown up in, maintained contact with and frequently returned to villages where *kastom* marriage is practised, interviewees had in fact had both personal experience of *kastom* marriage and personal observation of others'



Source Reproduced from the *1999 National Population and Housing Census: Main Report* (National Statistics Office 2000).

The archipelagic nature of this nation is evident from the map.¹² Paama (unmarked) is just north of Epi, and Tongoa (also unmarked) is south-east of Epi.

Considerations of language

Interviews were conducted primarily in Bislama and then the questionnaires were written up in English. It is accepted that some minor detail and nuances may have been lost in translation. Some local words have been retained, namely *nakamal*, *nasara*, *laplap*, *namba* and *naio*.¹³ These are indicated in italics. Despite linguistic differences, the meanings of these terms are understood throughout Vanuatu. The terms ‘girl/boy’ have been used as these appear to be the terms used by interviewees to refer to unmarried males and females, even though it

The procedural steps are:

- The boy communicates his choice of bride to his parents. If he is old enough he may communicate this directly to the girl's father, family representative—who may be an uncle¹⁸—or chief.
- The girl's father and uncles, and the chief, consider this.
- Negotiations regarding bride-price and the date of the marriage take place between the father of the bride or the family representative and the boy's father or family representative, in the *nakamal* of the bride's father.
- (A pig-killing ceremony is held and mats, in numbers calculated on the basis of the number of pigs, are collected—shortly before the wedding day.)
- Food is prepared for the wedding ceremony and feast, and foodstuffs, which may include pigs killed during the pig-killing ceremony, are collected for the bride-price.
- The party from the bride's village processes to the groom's village *nasara*.
- The bride-price is displayed and listed by the chief of the groom.
- The chief of the bride distributes the bride-price.
- The exchanged cooked food is distributed to members of both families.
- The entire family of the bride departs and she enters into the house of the groom or his family. Alternatively, if the bride-price has been handed over at her village the bride will then be escorted to the groom's village.
- (The church blessing.)

It is apparent that a large number of people besides the couple are involved in the marriage procedure. The father and uncles on both sides play an important role, especially as regards the approval of the chosen bride, the negotiation of bride-price and the setting of the date. The women on the groom's side are involved in the preparation of the food for the ceremony. All the members of the groom's extended family are expected to contribute to the bride-price in varying proportions. Finally, the chiefs of both sides may chair the *nakamal* meetings and be responsible for the actual handing over or receipt of bride-price—which is then distributed to the relatives on both sides. The chief of the groom's village conducts the ceremony, starts the speeches and

Ambrym

Two of the Ambrym interviewees came from Linbul, one from Sanesup and one from Baiaf, and one did not indicate a village. The procedure described is a composite one.

- At the request of the boy his father asks the consent of the father or parents of the girl. Alternatively, the agreement between the parents may have taken place when the boy and the girl were children.
- If there is agreement, the date is set for its sealing.
- On this date gifts are exchanged and the date for the wedding—which must coincide with the harvest—is set.
- At her home/village, the girl and her family prepare food for the wedding.
- The procession of the bride with her family goes to the groom's village/home with all her goods.
- The bride is handed a broom by the boy's sister and must sweep a path into the boy's house.
- The parents, brothers and sisters of the groom give presents to the bride, and the family of the bride to family members of the groom.
- The parents of the boy pay the bride-price to the parents of the girl. (This may take place before the girl leaves her village.)
- Feasting carries on until dawn.
- Guests depart, apart from the immediate family of the girl, who may stay for about a week if the groom's village is distant from their own.
- (Church ceremony and registration.)

The extended family is involved, including the grandparents if they are still alive. The uncles and aunts of the extended family or tribe on both sides play important roles. The male members of the families on both sides—fathers and their brothers—provide most of the property needed for the wedding. It may be the father's brother—the girl's uncle—who takes responsibility for the entire organisation. One informant indicated that on the boy's side the uncles will be asked to help only if a ceremony that confirms the boy's special relationship with his uncles was performed when the boy was young. The aunts may also give special gifts to the groom.

The families, their representatives and their chiefs on both sides are involved. The chiefs play an important part in the ceremony, counselling the couple and overseeing the formalities.

The bride-price consists of mats, pigs, root crops and kava. However, the bride's side also has to provide live pigs, root crops and kava and the household items that the bride will take to her new home, as well as her personal belongings such as clothes. At the wedding ceremony, rings made of shell and headdresses made of feathers tied to a (probably coconut leaf) midrib are exchanged.

Efate

The three interviewees from Efate came one from Ngunu island just off the north coast, one from Lelepa island off the south-west coast, and one from Siviri village in North Efate.

In the formalities in Efate there are two distinct phases: the agreement, which is supported by the exchange of gifts; and the wedding ceremony. The procedure is as follows:

- The boy's father or uncles ask the girl's parents for the girl's hand.
- On agreement, gifts are exchanged and the agreement is sealed at the *nakamal* of the girl's family.
- The date of the wedding is set by the boy's family or by negotiation.
- Bride-price is paid before the wedding—at least two or three days in advance. Payment takes place at the girl's home. (This is the start of the second phase of the formalities.)
- Her family accompanies the bride, with all her personal and household belongings, to the groom's village or home.
- The wedding ceremony takes place in the village of the groom at his *nakamal*.
- Feasting, which may last 3 or more days, follows.
- The bride's family takes the bride to the groom's family home.
- (Church wedding.)

Relatives from both sides are involved, including uncles, aunts and brothers on the bride's side and sisters on the groom's side. The boy does not ask for the girl's hand himself but is represented by his father or a male relative.

out of a special type of fern, a wooden knife, an axe and a spade. The groom's family will also have to provide food and sugar cane as bride-price. The vows are made by the exchange of a roast yam. Both bride and groom wear *kastom* clothing: the bride a dress made of a mat with feathers and the groom a grass skirt made of banana leaves, with a special feather in his hair.

Futuna

In Futuna, unlike elsewhere in Vanuatu, there is often no bride-price. One reason for this may be the Polynesian influence on (perhaps origin of the population of) this island. The procedures and circumstances of marriage may depend on the age at which the marriage is agreed. The reason for this is that it seems that on Futuna marriages may be arranged when the girl is very young—or even before birth. In such a case the boy's family contributes to her maintenance as she is growing up, by providing gifts of food. The boy—who may be quite a bit older—starts to make a garden and build a home once he is old enough to do so. The boy's family also names the girl either at birth—if the arrangement has been made before then—or shortly after. To mark the betrothal of the girl to the boy, gifts are given at the naming ceremony and from then on she is regarded as a member of the boy's family. As she grows up there will be frequent visits to the home of the boy's family. There is no obligation on the girl's family to reciprocate any of these gifts, but nor do they receive any bride-price or additional property at the date of the marriage. If, when she grows up, the girl refuses to marry the boy to whom she has been betrothed since birth, then her family—which has been largely relieved of the cost of her upbringing—will have to pay compensation.

However, if the marriage is not an arranged one then the boy's family may have to provide mats, pigs, food and baskets to the girl's family once they have agreed to the marriage. According to the interviewees this is not regarded as bride-price but as a token of appreciation to her family and as compensation for the loss of their daughter.

If the girl has been betrothed at an early age there will be a ceremony and further gifts once she had had her first menstruation. This may be followed by a wedding ceremony or the latter may be delayed for a year or two while she matures.

- The bride-price is transferred symbolically: the boy places the rope of the pig in the girl's hand and she in turn passes it to her most senior relative.
- The bride-price is distributed to the members of the girl's family according to rank.
- The marriage feast is held.
- The bride and her family process to the house of the groom, escorted especially by the aunts on both sides.

The extended family on both sides is involved in the marriage, especially in contributing to the food, animals, root crops and money required for the wedding. The chiefs on both sides may also be involved, and family representatives may stand in place of the parents. Fathers, uncles and brothers may bear the main burden of assembling the property needed for the marriage but women on both sides will be busy making food, especially *laplap*, for the various ceremonies.

The bride must provide cooked food and kava for the pre-marital meetings of the chiefs and family representatives at the *nakamal*. The boy's family presents pigs and or mats to seal the engagement, and provides the bride-price on the day of the marriage. Both the bride and the groom provide property for the marriage, although the groom may provide more. For example, the bride may provide one pig valued at VT 3,000, while the groom, for the bride-price, must provide six pigs valued at VT 48,000, together with root crops. The bride will also have personal property such as clothes, calico and cooking utensils that she will take to the groom's house and wedding guests may give the couple joint personal property for their new home. The groom's family makes a special *laplap* for the girl's brothers in appreciation of their giving up their sister, and another special *laplap* is made for the couple.

A boy may be prohibited from marrying until he has a house and garden of his own. Indeed, one informant stated that it would be regarded as a disgrace for a boy to contemplate marrying before he has demonstrated that he can provide these things.

- The groom's family presents the bride-price, which is laid out in the *nasara*.
- The chiefs make speeches.
- The bride-price is given to the relatives of the bride according to a pre-determined ranking, with the bride's uncle or brother coming first.
- There is feasting and dancing.

The extended family is important, with uncles and brothers playing a part and also the aunts and sister of the boy. The chiefs are involved in the customary formalities on the day of the marriage. For large weddings members of the tribes of the two families may come from other parts of Pentecost and from elsewhere.

The bride takes with her a box of personal belongings for her new life, which may include household and gardening implements as well as clothes and bedding. Besides the usual property involved in the marriage, there is also the symbolic use of mats, the *namele* leaf and the yam. The mat that is used as a veil for the bride on her journey to the groom's village is a special long red mat. Mats are highly valued in Pentecost and a great many of them can be requested as bride-price.²⁴ Equally, however, the bride's family may be expected to provide pigs and mats in exchange. Many of the mats used in the wedding will be contributed by relatives, who will receive mats back in due course at weddings of daughters in their own families. Other property provided by the groom's side is the gift to the girl's aunts: live pigs—some of which must be tusked—and root crops as bride-price; and food to feed the guests. Part of the bride-price may also be in cash. The bride's family will also have to provide food and kava for the wedding feast.

Tanna

In Tanna, despite the fact that the Tannese chiefs have reduced *kastom* to writing,²⁵ the customs relating to marriage seem to be quite varied. There were eight interviewees from Tanna, from Lenakel, Middle Bush (2), Isangel, White Sands (2), Imaki area, and Lonow. The procedures appear to vary depending on whether or not bride-price is being paid and also whether or not the marriage is an arranged one. One of the features of Tannese marriage custom is that a girl from the groom's side—usually one of his sisters—may be given in

in a newly built house and the marriage is celebrated the following day, with speeches and feasting.

The parties involved in the marriage are the extended family, especially those who are resident in the same village, but more distant kin may also be involved. The chiefs also seem to be involved to a greater or lesser degree and in some cases may be the go-between for the two families.²⁷ In Tanna each clan also has a special category of people called *yeni*, who are the speakers of the clan. It is they who may negotiate the marriage and make the arrangements. As found in other islands, the brothers and uncles bear the heaviest responsibility in getting the property for the marriage together. It may be the uncle or another male relative who is responsible for the presentation of the bride-price to the bride's family.

The property involved is similar to that found in other *kastom* areas: animals—especially pigs and chickens but also bullocks—root crops, kava, mats, baskets and locally appropriated western goods such as calico, kitchen utensils and gardening tools. Both sides provide mats, baskets, animals and root crops, although the groom's side will have to provide more than that of the bride. Interestingly, none of the informants mentioned cash. The property brought to the wedding seems to be directed primarily at the young couple. So mats, pigs and chickens may be given to the groom by members of his extended family, while the sisters of the bride may give her similar things or more personal items for her own suitcase. One of the aspects that was consistent among those interviewed was the costume of the bride: a grass skirt—often dyed—with a piece of calico or banana leaves around her upper body, face paint and chicken feathers in her hair.²⁸ The groom, similarly, wears face paint and chicken feathers, and may wear a *namba* or a piece of calico around his waist. He will also wear leaf armbands and both may have their bodies lavishly anointed with coconut oil.

Tongoa

There were two interviewees from Tongoa, one from Bourao village and one from Barita village.

The prospective bride and groom may be from the same village or a different village. The procedure is:

negotiations regarding bride-price or gifts or items to be exchanged (to cement relationships and transfer reproductive rights in the woman) seem to be widespread. In all cases many members of the families on both sides are involved, often with specific roles. Although men may predominate in the initial negotiations, women, especially aunts and sisters, also have important roles. The actual ceremony is commonly held in public and witnessed by a large number of people. The location of the ceremony may vary, and may include the *nasara* or *nakamal*, the groom's house or the vicinity of the church. While the wedding ceremony itself usually takes only one day or part of a day, the lead-up to the marriage can take weeks, months or years and the wedding celebrations may last for several days. In almost all *kastom* the marriage is concluded by the bride entering the groom's house.

In general, interviewees thought that omission of any of the procedures was unlikely, because the senior member(s) of the family or the village elders would keep an eye on matters and make sure that each step was properly followed. Should certain procedures be omitted, though, the consequences vary. For some oversights, the marriage is invalidated, especially if the bride-price element has not been paid or the required number of pigs not killed. For others, payment of a fine or compensation seems to be sufficient to remedy matters. Alternatively, the breach may make it impossible to proceed to the next stage of the *kastom* ceremony or the subsequent church blessing/marriage. If the marriage is deemed to be incomplete or invalid in *kastom*, then the community may not regard the children as belonging to the family of the groom if the marriage breaks up. Alternatively, the parties may arrive at a negotiated settlement to amend the defect in formalities. On some islands it was believed that if a step in the procedure were left out, bad luck or misfortune would plague the married couple.

Religious and civil elements

It appears to be increasingly common for the *kastom* marriage to be linked in some way to a church ceremony, or even for the church to be the venue for the *kastom* marriage. Some interviewees indicated that it is thought that the marriage is illegal unless both the *kastom* and the church wedding are performed. Others were critical of the confusion between church and *kastom*,

Participants

Clearly *kastom* marriage is not a matter just for the bride and groom. Key players in the pre-marital negotiations and the marriage ceremony itself may be members of the family or non-members having particular status in the village or locality, such as chiefs. What is noticeable is the extent of kin involvement, often of both sexes, but sometimes predominantly of only one sex.³⁵

Property

There are a number of different categories of property involved in *kastom* marriage, ranging from the bride-price to the food for the wedding feast. There may also be pre-marriage gifts going in either direction, and personal property accumulated for the bride to take to her new home. The property arising from the marriage may be consumed, distributed among various family members or kept by the newly wed couple. Sometimes it would seem that the property is intended as an investment either for later use—such as the red mats—or to yield a return—such as the foodstuffs for planting or the young animals and fowls given to the couple. Most of the property the interviewees referred to was not cash but consumables, animals and plants.³⁶ It is important to note that under section 3(4) of the Marriage Act there is a requirement that the ‘pre-marital requirements of the custom’ must be fulfilled ‘before the marriage can be celebrated’.³⁷

Clearly therefore these pre-marital transactions, which may precede the actual marriage by some time, are very important and each step needs to be witnessed by the wider community. The outcome of disputes as to whether or not they took place in the correct form will depend on eye-witnesses.

Much of the property used is symbolic. The male tusked pig and mats are important in Vanuatu culture and play a central role in the bride-price and gifts exchanged at marriage. They are both utilitarian and indicative of status. Also important are certain food crops such as the yam, which may determine the time of the wedding or be used as a symbol;³⁸ feathers—especially as headwear; leaves—which may be used as symbols or for the traditional wedding clothes of *namba* or skirts.³⁹ It should also be noted that traditionally most people would have access to these resources, although access might vary according to rank,

marriage and later generations, into a complex web of reciprocal relations. In a country where social security or provision by the state is non-existent and where access to land is vital, the importance of these links should not be underestimated. The material and public commitment of families on both sides on the occasion of a marriage makes a public statement about the relationship of the couple and the two kin groups. It becomes part of the oral history and genealogy of the people and the place. It is significant for the future welfare of the couple and their children.⁴⁹ The involvement of so many people on both sides and the dedication of a variety of available resources to the ceremonies that take place emphasise the importance of marriage to the survival of the group in terms of both the reproductive capacity of both parties and the skills and labour they can contribute. Marriage and the present and future reciprocal obligations incurred bind together kin groups and communities, thereby providing stability and mutual support networks in addition to reproduction of social groups.

Conclusion

The forms of *kastom* marriage, while varied, seem to follow recognised procedural steps. Indeed it is clear that if certain steps are omitted there may be sanctions imposed by way of compensation payments or fines, or the marriage may be invalid. It is also evident that *kastom* marriage is not to be taken lightly. The human and material resources involved are considerable and *kastom* marriage is not something that can be rushed into. In some cases the preparation can take years. While it might seem that in some *kastom* the parties getting married have very little say in the matter—for example where a child is promised at an early age—it would appear that increasingly, the personal wishes of the individuals are taken into account. Nevertheless, given the number of family members involved in the event and its long-term social significance, the wishes of the individuals may seem insignificant in comparison with the common goal of the two families, and it may be difficult for an unwilling girl or boy to extricate him or herself from a planned marriage.

As has been acknowledged, this research draws on a limited number of experiences and it may be that the descriptions of *kastom* delineated here are only localised variants, representative of a wide range, and that weddings, even

5 In the Matrimonial Causes Act, provisions relating to invalid marriages are distinct from those relating to divorce. It is clearly and specifically stated (s. 4) that parties married under *kastom* can only be divorced according to *kastom*. The omission of any specific provisions relating to the validity or invalidity of *kastom* marriages would suggest that the general provisions cover all three forms of marriage.

6 The Law School of USP is based at Emalus Campus, Port Vila, Vanuatu.

7 The Melanesian Pidgin language Bislama, one of the three official languages of Vanuatu, is the widely used medium of communication in this country of possibly more than 100 languages. (Lynch & Crowley (2001: 1–4) discuss the possibilities for the number of languages, ranging from 81 to 113, the 105 suggested by D. Tryon being a commonly accepted one.)

8 Student research assistants who undertook the interviews were Paul Mae, Pamela Kenilorea, Avock Godden, Alain Obed, Carol Pitisopa and Auad Leon Malantugun.

9 Although most of the interviewees were urban based it should not be assumed that they are divorced from the *kastom* of their respective islands or villages. Indeed, many Port Vila residents return to their islands regularly, especially at Christmas when many weddings are held.

10 Thanks are extended to all those who gave up their time to participate in the interviews.

11 Given that Vanuatu's 105-odd different linguistic and cultural groups are scattered over 80 islands (some 68 of them inhabited) this would be a huge task.

12 The total land area is 11,880 sq km scattered in two island chains from north to south over about 800 km (between 12 and 21 deg S latitude and 166 and 171 deg E longitude). The main island, Efate, is about 2,250 km north-east of Sydney and about 800 km west of Suva, Fiji Islands.

13 In brief: a *nakamal* is a meeting place, sometimes reserved solely for men and traditionally associated with the drinking of kava (an infusion made by steeping in water the crushed roots of *Piper methysticum*, a species of pepper plant also called kava). The *nakamal* is the focus point of local association and the place where village or family matters are discussed and adjudicated. A *nasara* is similar to a *nakamal* and may be the place that marks the original settlement of the area by the people claiming the land. *Laplap* is a traditional dish consisting of a flat base of grated starch—such as banana or manioc—topped with fish, chicken, meat, green vegetables and coconut cream, wrapped in banana leaves and baked on hot stones in an earth (or ground) oven. In particular, the dish is served at feasts, especially weddings. A *namba* is a traditional penis wrap made from leaves or bark and fastened to the waist with a strap or belt of bark or vine. *Nai* are wands of feathers—often dyed chicken feathers or those of indigenous birds—usually worn on the head.

14 It is not uncommon in Melanesia for the social category of adulthood to be entered only upon marriage; physical maturity or the number of years lived is not the sole criterion, except in law.

27 Two informants stated that it is the chief of one side who takes the gifts from the boy's family—a pig or chicken and kava—to the chief of the girl's parents, who in turn approaches the parents with the request. If consent is given this chief returns similar gifts via the other chief to the boy's parents.

28 The feathers are dyed and attached to a stick. The headdress is called *naio* (see n. 13) and the number worn and their colours indicate status. The exchange of the *naio* symbolises the marriage. Different tribes or clans use different colours and designs of face paint.

29 Civil Status (Registration) Act Cap 61 s. 23(1). This contrasts with the situation in Solomon Islands, where registration of customary marriages would seem to be optional (see Corrin Care & Brown, 2004: 65–7).

30 In one case it was noted that the only registration was in the chief's notebook of village statistics.

31 Compulsory registration is in line with Article 16(2) of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), to which Vanuatu is a signatory. The seeming laxity about registration may reflect lack of information on the law regarding registration. Some interviewees indicated cases of chiefs who have been quite assiduous about keeping records.

32 The question of which laws or *kastom* may be applicable where parties are from different *kastom* areas has been judicially considered in the case of *Waiwo v Waiwo and Banga* [1996] VUMC 1.

33 The writer attended the wedding in Lamap, South Malekula, of a couple who had a two-week-old baby. The *kastom* marriage started in the bride's village, where the couple was living, with the presentation of food crops and a pig. Then the wedding party processed about a mile, the new baby being carried by a relative, to the man's village, where more gifts were given—mostly household goods such as pots, pans, plastic bowls, soap, candles and rice—and the new couple installed in a new home. Only then was the baby handed back to the mother. Whether this was symbolic or simply a practical move was not clear, but the father's recognition and his family's acceptance of the child into their village would both confer positive benefits on that child.

34 An example can be found in the Solomon Island case of *John To'Ofilu v Oimae*, [1997] SBHC 33, where the claim for a refund of bride-price was based on the duty of the defendant in *kastom* 'to disclose (this) material fact (that the bride was already pregnant) to the Plaintiff during the course of discussions and negotiations for the amount of bride-price fixed'.

35 This would seem to be a partial contradiction of the assertion by M. Jolly (1994: 133) that 'bride-price is almost exclusively an affair between men', although this may well be true of the actual negotiations as to dates and quantum.

36 Given that the National Council of Chiefs in Vanuatu has fixed a (maximum) sum in local currency, this is an interesting aspect ('The Custom Policy of the Malvatumauri', 1982). It may well be that when cash payments replace chattels and crops, different problems emerge, as suggested by Bennett (1991: 210; see also Hlope, J, 1984).

49 It is not the aim of this article to comment on what many see as negative aspects of bride-price, the raising of which can be felt as an oppressive burden—especially when the desired contribution is commuted into a cash payment; when it is used as a lever to compel the continuation of unhappy or violent marriages; or when its payment is used as an excuse or justification for abusive relationships, the abduction of children or the compulsion of non-consensual parties to enter marriage. All of these dimensions are worthy of discussion and need further research into actual views held by those involved, rather than just into received wisdom.

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