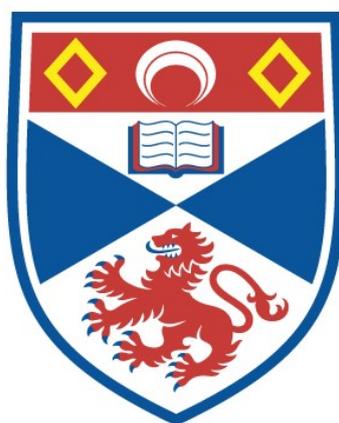


WEAVING THROUGH LIFE: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF
THE SIGNIFICANCE OF PANDANUS WORK TO THE PEOPLE
OF FUTUNA ISLAND, VANUATU

Lucie Maxine Hazelgrove Planel

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
at the
University of St Andrews



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Weaving Through Life: An Ethnographic Study of the
Significance of Pandanus Work to the People of Futuna
Island, Vanuatu

Lucie Maxine Hazelgrove Planel



University of
St Andrews

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
at the University of St Andrews

November 2018

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| Project Title: | Weaving Pandanus: Interwoven Ideas and Relationships in Vanuatu and New Caledonia | | | | |
| Researcher(s): | Lucie Hazelgrove-Planel | | | | |
| Supervisor(s): | Dr Stephanie Bunn, Dr Craig Lind | | | | |

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Sumari

Mimi wan riseja long side blong anthropology we mi kamoat long England mo Franis. Mi stap long Futuna long yia 2014-2015 long mekem wan filwok long ol wifing blong ol mama longwe.

Risej blong mi stap long saed blong ol wifing long Futuna. Mi wantem save wanem nao tingting blong olgeta long Futuna long samting ia, mo hao ol wok blong wif i stap insaed long laef blong aeland. Ol mat mo ol basket oli save holem yumi taet, oli mekem se yumi stap gud, mo yumi save holem taet of famli mo ol save blong aelan.

Long tingting blong mi, wif hemi wan bigfala wok fromse yu mus lukoutem ol pandanas mo mekem gud ol lif festaem. Risej blong mi i defren lil bit long ol narawan long saed long wif from hemi stap long saed blong ol mat mo basket we yumi usem evriday. I no ol kastom mat we i gat tabu long hem. Long Futuna nogat, oli mekem wan kind nomo. Samting blong evriday olsem hemi impotent tumas from yumi livim samting ia. Hemi ol smol samting we yumi no lukluk tumas, be hemi save shoem stret tingting mo idea blong yumi.

Yumi everiwan i stap tingbaot futia blong yumi mo yumi traem mekemse futia ia hemi wan gudfala futia we yumi everiwan i glad long hem. Long buk ia, mi telem se wok blong wif hemi wan method long mekem tingting mo long mekem wan futia. Wif hemi wan wok blong mekem man mo woman, mo wif hemi wan wok blong mekem famli.

Buk ia i telemaot hao wok blong wif hemi stap insaed long komuniti, religion mo ples. Hemi telemse ol wok blong evride hemi impoten tumas long yumi mo hemi usem wok blong wif olsem wan example long samting ia. Buk ia i telemse ol mama long Futuna i stap wifim life blong olgeta taem oli stap wifim pandanas.

Abstract

This thesis investigates how workers of pandanus on Futuna Island engage with and navigate the world around them through their work. Pandanus work is integral to social life: it nurtures, sustains, creates meaning and relations. Through focusing on the handicraft and considering pandanus work as a process: from the upkeep of the plants and the treatment of the leaf materials, the creation of structured artefacts and decorative plaited patterns, to the exchange and sale of baskets and mats and the final discarding of the artefacts, the research explores the complex set of meanings, sensibilities and challenges inherent in this multi-faceted and productive activity.

The ethnographic study fills an important gap in current research by exploring the pandanus baskets and mats used in the everyday rather than the artefacts of ceremonial importance. The quotidian interests and concerns of people in Vanuatu and how these are expressed through activities and material forms creates the very fabric of the thesis and reveals what is important in life on Futuna.

The study is set in a context where local knowledge and ways of doing things are actively reflected on and discussed as people navigate conflicting ideologies and ways of being. I argue that pandanus work is fundamentally a process of production where not only artefacts, but knowledge, subjects and relationships are created, nurtured and developed. Fundamental ideas about life are questioned in processes of pandanus work.

Thus through considering the social, religious, and environmental aspects of pandanus work, the research furthers anthropological understandings of how ideas, beliefs and challenges are explored and explained in the quotidian production and use of plaited mats and baskets in Vanuatu. This project explores how women on Futuna figuratively weave the story of their lives.

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank my supervisors Craig Lind and Stephanie Bunn for their continued guidance throughout this project. Their respective specialisms provided me with invaluable perspectives and I am very fortunate to have had such thoughtful and engaged supervisors.

Long ol man, woman mo pikinini blong Futuna, mi wantem telem wan bigfala tankiu. Projekt ia i kamout long frenjip blong yufala. Mi no save fogetem yufala we yu lukoutem mi, we yu storian witem mi mo we yu spel mo wokbaot witem mi. Mi hopese buk ia hemi stret long tingting blong yufala. Fafetai fakasore.

This project has also benefitted from many conversations and discussions in the writing up seminars at St Andrews, with members of the Bergen Pacific Studies group and with Ryan Schram, Kirk Huffman, Jadran Mimika, Gaynor Macdonald, James Flexner and Rob Williams in Sydney. Staff and colleagues at the Vanuatu Kaljoral Senta, Glasgow Museums, National Museum of Scotland, Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Ethnography, Macleay Museum and the Australia Museum also facilitated and broadened my approach to this work.

I particularly want to thank Janet Keller for the interest and support she has shown and my examiners Lissant Bolton and Melissa Demian. Any errors or shortcomings in this project are nevertheless mine alone.

I also wish to thank Claire Planel, who was a sounding board throughout the whole process and the rest of my family, whose support got me through fieldwork.

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Note on Language

I have loosely followed the Bislama.org dictionary (Government of Vanuatu 2007) but Bislama is not standardised and my choice of spelling and grammar highlights the high variability of Bislama within Vanuatu and the frequent inclusion of English and French words (Jarraud-Leblanc 2012). I have followed Janet Keller's (J. W. Dougherty 1983) orthography in Futuna-Aniwa, except for place names, which despite its discrepancies with current spelling on Futuna of Ishia for example, are in accordance with the Government of Vanuatu's topographical map (Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources 2007).

Text in italics is in Bislama.

Text that is both italicised and underlined is in the local language of Futuna-Aniwa.

In Futuna-Aniwa, the bilabial stop is infrequently used and so pronunciations of 'v' and 'b' or 'p' and 'b' are similar. The Futuna-Aniwa 'j' is pronounced 'sh' and 'g' is pronounced 'ng'.

To preserve anonymity, some names have been changed.

1 Introduction

When working as a volunteer teacher at Ranwadi Churches of Christ College on Pentecost Island in 2006 I developed a deep appreciation of the pandanus artefacts I saw around me and quickly began to use in my every day. I'll never forget the straw-like smell and padded feel of a pandanus sleeping mat. I even became friends with a woman living in a nearby village after I saw her carrying a particularly beautiful brightly coloured pandanus basket on her walk home through the school grounds one day. A fascination with the materiality of pandanus and an interest in plaiting as a handicraft meant that I became keenly aware of the pandanus artefacts I saw about me both in and out of the school. Researching plaited pandanus work in Vanuatu was an obvious choice for me. After working at Ranwadi in 2006 and 2007 I had been left with unanswered questions both about pandanus work and about what Vanuatu life was really all about. I was aware of many contradictions but didn't know how to make sense of them.

This thesis explores some of these contradictions and considers how ni-Vanuatu, people of Vanuatu, balance diverging interests to weave the story of their own lives and that of their children. Moving away from Pentecost and Ambae Islands, where I had lived for twelve months, the research is focused on Futuna Island in Vanuatu's southern group of islands. Exploring what motivates craft workers and what goes into the work establishes pandanus work as a creative, meaningful and socially productive activity. The various stages of preparing and working pandanus into artefacts creates connections to the physical *ples* (place), establishes a worldview incorporating different social relations and is an opportunity for creative competition and skill development. Pandanus artefacts are also important in establishing and maintaining social relationships, with a particular focus on those relationships that reach beyond the physical confines of the island.

By focusing on what everyday, mundane, acts of plaiting pandanus means to people and by considering plaited pandanus things as artefacts reveals what is important in life on Futuna. The ethnographic study therefore explores pandanus work as a process of production; a means of making knowledge, making subjects, and making relationships. What is important to people is their rootedness in the *ples* and their connections within

and beyond the island. These ideas and the tensions between them are made manifest through the work of pandanus plaiting and the uses to which pandanus artefacts are directed.

In this introduction, I contextualise the study thematically and theoretically. I then outline my methodology and highlight some aspects of note from my fieldwork. Finally, I present an overview of the thesis chapter by chapter.

1.1 Research Context

1.1.1 Approaching Pandanus Work

Pandanus baskets and mats are made by women on a regular basis on Futuna to furnish their houses and to be used as clothing accessories, but also to be given locally in non-monetary exchanges and sold to pay for household expenses, such as children's school fees. Pandanus things accompany people in the day to day but are also central to some of the ceremonies that puncture this routine. A subsistence activity, pandanus plaiting is also an educational and community-strengthening tool, as well as a local symbol of history, *ples* and sociality.

I approach pandanus work through a craft worker's perspective, that of those who work pandanus, and am interested in what they say and think about their work. As craftwork, a form of skilled handwork (Marchand 2016), is a process of production, this leads to consideration of the social life of pandanus basketry, where rather than focusing on the social use value of artefacts as potential for exchange (Appadurai 1986), I consider the life-cycle of the artefact as prepared, used and ultimately destroyed by people on Futuna. The meanings of pandanus leaves as they are transformed from live plant matter, to handicraft material, to plaited artefact and then as they decompose and return to the soil from which they grew progress through a series of stages with new meanings and understandings being added cumulatively, rather than taken away or exchanged. These are overlapping domains of knowledge (Ellen 2009).

1.1.2 Basketry in the Pacific

Pandanus artefacts are biographical objects writ large. They are given meanings and capabilities that in turn shape and represent a person or a people's identity. On the one hand, individual artefacts tell the story of people's lives (Hoskins 1998), often quite literally in Vanuatu, where pandanus baskets and mats are frequently made with plaited text to commemorate events and people. On the other hand, pandanus artefacts as a category of objects tell the story of a whole people through their social history (Appadurai 1986). Plaited pandanus sails for example evoke the great migrations of Pacific Islanders, first west to east across the Pacific and then back eastwards. On Futuna, Capell (1984) refers to both pandanus sails, *mwengafara*, and coconut leaf sails, *meiro*, however these are not used in contemporary canoes on the island. Elsewhere in Vanuatu, it is recorded that pandanus sails were used for long voyages while coconut frond sails were used for small trips close to the shore (Tilley 1999, 121-123); a use of materials that mirrors their use in basketry, where pandanus is differentiated from coconut basketry as it is considered a valuable, long-term fibre suitable for exchange. Pandanus mats similarly suggest an entangled history of cultural exchange and trade as new styles, techniques and ideas have been adopted and new relationships made. Pandanus baskets, in some places compared to bodily containers such as stomachs and wombs (Leenhardt 1979[1947], 9), tell the stories that describe local ways of life, the resourcefulness of ancestors and the vital relationships that generate and govern social life.

Throughout Oceania, pandanus trees are cultivated, their leaves harvested and prepared and a variety of artefacts are constructed. The use of pandanus is gendered; women prepare and transform pandanus into artefacts that are used by all. The exchange of basketry is however often associated with men (Rodman 1981). Yet plaited pandanus is interesting in and of itself as a textile and craft. It is a form of malleable cloth: indeed a pandanus mat may in the past have been called *menga* (cloth) on Futuna (Capell 1984). The construction techniques of cloth are significant as they offer a huge potential for communication and instil the textile with the capacity to protect, reveal or conceal (Schneider and Weiner 1989). Moreover, cloth, and pandanus artefacts more specifically, is frequently a metaphor for society, a point that is discussed further in

Chapter 5. Pandanus work across the Pacific Islands is embedded in social life and its renewal.

The earliest anthropological studies in the Pacific region note the local significance of pandanus artefacts in life on the islands. Te Rangi Hīroa, also known as Sir Peter Buck, undertook several in depth technical studies of pandanus work in Samoa and the Cook Islands with the aim of preserving the local knowledge (Buck 1927, 1930). In Vanuatu, following an expedition around the country between 1910 and 1912, Felix Speiser reviewed the material culture of the archipelago and drew attention to the diverse practices involving pandanus artefacts (Speiser 1996[1923]). Over the last century these reports have been complemented and expanded by in-depth research that explores specific aspects of pandanus work by both indigenous and international researchers within and outside of academia, constructing a web of knowledge about pandanus work that spans the Pacific region. The majority of the published work on pandanus basketry still comes from international researchers.

While there are overarching similarities in Pacific Island pandanus work – notably the role of women in processes of production and its association with society and social reproduction – the great variety of uses, meanings and forms of pandanus basketry make it difficult to organise the artefacts into a meaningful region-wide categorisation. Whereas artefacts may have the same form or appearance, the ideas inscribed within their structure, their patterns and their uses differentiate them. It is therefore impossible either to follow structural definitions such as baskets, mats and clothing; or functional concepts such as ceremonial and every day artefacts; or even symbolic understandings of the artefacts such as whether they can be classified as alienable or inalienable wealth (Weiner 1985, 1992).

Despite seeming commonalities between traditions of pandanus work in the Pacific Islands, the difficulty of forming meaningful categories through which to understand pandanus artefacts through the whole Pacific Island region is testament to the great heterogeneity of this area of the world. There are numerous pandanus varieties, differences in the harvest and preparation methods of pandanus materials and a diversity of meanings inscribed within these artefacts. Research on pandanus work to date is

therefore characterised by localised studies that draw out particular aspects of relationships engendered by the production and use of these artefacts. The focus of these studies is for the most part directly informed by the local significance of the pandanus artefacts within that community: publications on the pandanus work of Tonga and Samoa therefore centres around the historic social value of these artefacts and their ability to connect and communicate social rank and identity (Herda 1999, Kaeppler 1999, Schoeffel 1999); in New Caledonia, Deterts (2009) considers the relationship between gifts of pandanus mats and different familial relationships; in Fiji, the historic relationship between the weaving of fine mats and ritual clowning on the island of Rotuma is discussed (Hereniko 1995); in Vanuatu, the relationship between pandanus, *ples* and chiefs is highlighted on Tongoa (Kelly 1999), while in Penama Province pandanus work is shown to be connected with women's lives and status-altering systems (Bolton 2003a, K. W. Huffman 1996, Mabonlala 1996, M. C. Rodman 1981, Tarisesei 2013, Walter 1996)¹. In contrast, some studies have given priority to the new contexts in which pandanus artefacts exist. More recent work by Geismar (2005a), considering property rights in regards pandanus basketry patterns made for sale, Were (2013), studying materials and the effect of different material properties on the pandanus mats and their uses and Ngata, Ngata-Gibson and Salmon (2012), considering the impact of digital museums and access to digital versions of *taonga* (ancestral treasures that include plaited pandanus artefacts) have pushed the study of pandanus work into new directions.

While much of this literature stresses the importance of processes of production to pandanus work, these processes are for the most part viewed as a means to an end. This is in part because the focus locally is also on the extraordinarily rich uses and meanings of the finished artefacts. While research into these artefacts can be said to reflect this local interest, there is in general a wider tendency in material culture studies to focus on the use of artefacts rather than their processes of making (Ingold 2007b). Moreover,

¹ These studies are complemented by regional publications from authors with a special interest in either the craft (Arbeit 1990), the craft community (Godin 2003), or contemporary events, for example Winch-Dummett and Buli's (2011, 2012) work on the monetary value of mats on Pentecost in light of the 2007 'Year of the Traditional Economy' in Vanuatu.

there has been an additional bias in the literature towards artefacts of ceremonial importance over the artefacts of the everyday, which is perhaps another reason why processes of production are not given more attention. Yet artefacts of the everyday are important as often they are so much part of the fabric of our lives that we do not notice them (D. Miller 2005, 5). This thesis therefore considers the entire range of plaited pandanus artefacts made on Futuna island and focuses on the processes of production and the meanings inherent in these.

1.1.2.1 Basketry in Vanuatu

The significance, use and meanings of pandanus work within Vanuatu varies as much as it does in the whole Pacific region, however some regional commonalities can be identified. There is notably an important difference in the pandanus work of the Northern and Central region and the South of the country, as pandanus textiles were historically not made to be worn in the South (Bolton and Tarisesei 2013) – recent innovations on Futuna have however redefined their *kastom dres* (traditional clothing) and complicated pandanus textiles are now worn by men around their hips and by women around their chests. Interestingly, this division between textile forms does not follow the boundary line between hereditary and non-hereditary chieftain systems that splits the country in two, a division that lies below Ambrym Island (K. Huffman 2005, 218). There is nevertheless a close relationship between pandanus work and social status, as highlighted in Bolton and Tarisesei’s overview of textiles in Vanuatu. Moreover, there is an additional connection between pandanus textiles, social rank and regions where pig’s tusks are highly valued. In the South, in contrast, where textiles were not historically worn and where chieftainship was hereditary, turtle shell adornments were the ornamental equivalent of pig’s tusks (Kaufmann 1996, 39-40).

On Futuna Island, in the South of the country, where there are no status-altering systems, there are therefore no pandanus artefacts connected to social rank. There is indeed no hierarchy within pandanus artefacts on the island; particularly interesting given the Polynesian influence on the island. There is however an important hierarchy between plaited artefacts that pervades most of Oceania: pandanus artefacts are more highly valued than plaited artefacts made from coconut fronds, although a recent ban on

the importation of single use plastics into Vanuatu may add new value to the ‘throw away’ and ‘fast’ coconut frond plaited work (Vanua 2018).

Instead, pandanus artefacts on Futuna are used in the everyday whilst also being tied to “social and cosmological reproduction”, like in Tongoa (Kelly 1999, 23). Pandanus basketry on Futuna is embedded in the very fabric of social life. During fieldwork I saw baskets carried to church with bible, hymn book, small towel and a small donation inside; lidded baskets hanging around the necks of boys and men as they went about their business in and around Ibau; hanging baskets in kitchens, heavy with parcels of laplap left over from a communal meal; fans to light fires tucked into the rafters of kitchens; sleeping mats carpeting the inside of houses on beds of coral and coconut frond matting or lain outside as special seating for guests; sleeping mats lain carefully in a grave, providing bedding for the coffin and ensuring that the spirit will leave the living and remain with the deceased; garlands and vases to decorate churches; textiles wrapped around the hips and chests of graduating students at the local secondary school as they paraded around the school field; layers of baskets hung around the necks of departing guests to the island; rolled sleeping mats, presented to the married couple at a wedding or shared out between districts at a ceremony to cement a grave; piles of baskets and mats displayed as part of a Bring and Buy or other fundraising event for the local Presbyterian Church; but also knots of baskets, temporarily taken outside of the house at the moment of a sale to a visitor to the island.

As artefacts that materialise our existence, it is important to understand our engagements with them and how and why they develop meanings and affect us. The basketry work of Futuna is however notable in Vanuatu and has earned workers of pandanus a reputation around the country for their skill and creativity in working patterns and developing new basketry forms.

Vanuatu is a particularly interesting country in which to locate this study as ni-Vanuatu continually discuss and develop their ideas concerning their traditions, such as pandanus work, and their local significance in both formal and informal contexts (Jolly and Thomas 1992, Keesing and Tonkinson 1982). As a direct consequence of the skill, knowledge and status embedded within local pandanus work on Ambae, the local

concept of *kastom* (custom, tradition or cultural heritage) was redefined as a practise that belonged to both male and female domains of life in Vanuatu. Through the Women's Culture Project, run by the Vanuatu Kaljoral Senta (Vanuatu Cultural Centre, hereafter VKS), women's pandanus work and its importance in the status altering system on Ambae brought women's work into the national domain and transformed the idea of *kastom* away from its original political connotations tied to land rights (Bolton 2003a) to mean the collective shared practices of a place (Bolton 2005).

The creation of this women's fieldworker program in 1991 to complement the existing male network at the VKS led to a number of projects undertaken by women fieldworkers that continue to assert the value of the knowledge and practices of women in the country. This has had varying degrees of success (Geismar 2003, Kelly 1999). On Futuna Island however, it is recognised that women have *kastom* of their own despite there being no woman fieldworker – a young mother recently took up the position but unfortunately had to resign her post due to childcare issues. Contemporary understandings of *kastom* on the island is probably testament to Takaronga Kuautonga's work; Takaronga has had a distinguished career within the VKS as curator and fieldworker and more recently within the Tafea Cultural Centre on Tanna. *Kastom*, its relation to basketry on Futuna and local meanings and understandings of the term is however not the focus of this thesis but rather an implicit theme that runs throughout.

1.1.3 Theoretical Underpinnings of Pandanus Work

This thesis explores the multiple meanings of pandanus work to the people who work it. It is a phenomenological study (J. S. Thomas 2006) of artefacts being made in a specific social context. I ask why women work pandanus and what they get out of it. The conversations I had during fieldwork guide the direction of this thesis and for the most part demonstrate a very practical and concrete relationship between people, materials and artefacts. In this section, I consider the theoretical background to this research and the key concepts that underpin the thesis.

1.1.3.1 Persons, People, Artefacts

Pastor Maurice Leenhardt quoted a converted friend of his in New Caledonia as having said “What you have brought us, is the body”, insisting that as Kanaks they were familiar with spirits (Leenhardt 1979[1947], 164). This idea, that Melanesians have a complex understanding of the spirit world but that ‘the body’ or ‘the individual’ is a foreign concept has been noted, analysed and explored by successive anthropologists who largely agree that Oceanic peoples see themselves more as ‘dividuals’ (M. Strathern 1988, 13). As a dividual, a person is fractal (Wagner 1991:163) and the sum of their social relations. They relate to the world according to and through these relationships and so who the person is or how they define themselves differs according to who they are relating to in that moment. Encounters with Christianity, colonialism and capitalism have complicated this concept of personhood, encouraging individualism (LiPuma 2001).

In Melanesia, artefacts and the material world can be thought of as persons on a similar plane, where particularly in an exchange, artefacts can for example stand in for persons in a very real sense (M. Strathern 1988, 145). Relations between persons and artefacts therefore cannot be taken for granted, neither can the relations between persons and the things that they make. Artefacts, and the things around us, have meanings in and of themselves (Henare, Holbraad and Wastell 2007).

The extent to which one incorporates oneself into one’s work as a craft worker is as relevant a question in Vanuatu as it is in Scotland; the question and its inverse, how much the work becomes a part of the worker, is however commonly understood differently within the fields of most Melanesian anthropology and the anthropology of material culture. Firstly, let us consider the Melanesian ethnography understanding of the relationship between people and things, where “(o)bjects are created not in contradistinction to persons, but out of persons” and meaning is constructed through activity – making and using artefacts (Tilley 1999, 103). For example, carefully grown and decorated giant yams are direct substitutes for people during Abelam exchanges in Papua New Guinea (Coupaye 2009, 56). Such ideas were however never raised by women on Futuna with respect to pandanus work and the artefacts they make. This is

because the context of pandanus work on Futuna is notably different from that described by Strathern in Papua New Guinea or Jolly (1994) on Pentecost, Vanuatu; as described in the Part 3 of this thesis, the pandanus artefact economy on Futuna is a complex hybrid of *kastom*, commodity and religion. It is for the most part only within the *kastom* or gift economy that artefacts can stand in for people; in gifts of pandanus, as indeed gifts of food, calico or other goods, people place more importance on the person who presented the gift over the form the gift takes (M. Strathern 1988, 176) or the person who made or produced the artefact. On Futuna, both women and men emphasise the economic, commodity use value of pandanus artefacts above and beyond all else. Discussions about pandanus artefacts elicited stories of relations and relationality through the economic value of these baskets and mats. A different set of capabilities of these artefacts, that is the possibilities inherent within them, is therefore put forward. The motivations for creating artefacts however, remains the same as the focus is on maintaining and extending networks of relationships.

Secondly, the manner in which a craft worker embeds themselves into the fabric of their work and vice-versa can be considered through the lens of the anthropology of material culture. Here, the focus is on the acts of making and what is communicated or felt during these experiences of making. Craft work is recognised as a form of work, but the craft worker and their artefact are both said to grow, learn and mature (Ingold 2000, Hallam and Ingold 2014, Jarvis 2013, Venkatesan 2010). The domestic context of pandanus basketry encourages such an understanding of craft on Futuna, where ideas and sensibilities are woven into a plait and the pandanus worker ultimately comes to know the world through their engagement with the materials. This theme is explored in Parts 1 and 2 of the thesis as the different processes in pandanus work elicit different ideas and experiences in the person. Chapters 3 and 4 in particular consider how craft work facilitates an understanding of belonging, *ples* (place) and social relationships locally. In Vanuatu, a person's capacity to be productive is said to socially define them (Wagner 1981) and pandanus work is central in social reproduction; it is also closely connected to women and is therefore important in how they express and assert themselves. Women become known on Futuna through their work and for many,

pandanus basketry gives them social visibility; “the things that people make, make people” (D. Miller 2005, 38).

1.1.3.2 Materials and Their Materiality

While pandanus work is associated with *had wok* (hard work) on Futuna, as craft workers, there is an appreciation and understanding of the materials they produce and work with. Women who work pandanus comment on the material qualities of pandanus every time they see or touch the plant material. There is an island-wide understanding of what makes ‘good pandanus’ for basketry and the materials and their materiality are constantly evaluated throughout the preparation and plaiting of the leaves as well as in the finished artefact. Chapters 3 and 5 of this thesis consider local ideas about the materials used in pandanus basketry and the possibilities they offer craft workers when creating designs and colourful patterns. The materials and their physical properties (Ingold 2007b) are fundamental to pandanus basketry on Futuna.

The sensual properties of materials such as pandanus leaves highlights “the more subtle connections with cultural lives and values that are objectified through these forms... because of the particular properties they possess” (D. Miller 1998, 9). Materials and creative processes of making materialise and give form to social life in ways that may otherwise not be verbalised (Leblic 2013). Preparing pandanus leaves and plaiting pandanus strips together for example highlights Futuna Island’s micro-climate and forms the basis for a discourse on the distinctiveness of the island and what it means to belong. Engaging with the craft of pandanus work connects people with different realms of experience (Geismar and Horst 2004) and therefore expands the craft worker’s understanding of the world around them.

Craftwork is, as described by Marchand (2016), a polysemous category that includes skilled handwork, but which is also entangled with ideas of self-reliance, identity, locality, morality, tradition and innovation, bodily movement and presentation, the bespoke, functionality, and particular ways of learning and problem solving. This thesis demonstrates how it is an activity and mode of communicating that creates deep-rooted connections between and amongst people and their environments.

1.1.3.3 Terminology

In Vanuatu and throughout much of the English-speaking Pacific, pandanus basketry is described in English as ‘weaving’ and in Bislama, a pidgin English that has become a creole in urban centres around Vanuatu, the word *wif* (pandanus construction work) clearly has the same root. The technique used, following Connor (1983) who draws on Emery (1980), is oblique interlacing or oblique plaiting, a construction technique that involves a set of elements that are worked together at an oblique angle. For simplicity, I refer to the process of construction as plaiting. The distinction between weaving and plaiting is important as in plaiting, the elements play the same role within the structure. This offers greater possibilities of play in the subversive use of the gendered imagery in the techniques as discussed in Chapter 5. Rather than the plaiting of pandanus, this thesis is however concerned with ‘pandanus work’, a holistic term to include all aspects of the craft; the concept of work is also central to the topic.

In addition, in referring to the artefacts themselves, I differentiate between baskets, mats and fans following local usage. It should also be noted that I use the term ‘artefacts’, rather than ‘objects’ or ‘things’ (Henare, Holbraad and Wastell 2007) for clarity and to emphasise the handmade quality of pandanus work. My focus on pandanus plaiting to the exclusion of other forms of plaiting work on the island follows local distinctions between artefacts and the materials from which they are made.

1.2 Situating Futuna

Like most of the islands around the Pacific, Futuna is best understood from a relational perspective; it is a small rocky island at the centre of a web of networks and connections that radiate out from it (Hau'ofa 1994). Futuna is often joked to be *fatuana* (just a rock) which may be how it got its name (Keller and Kuautonga 2007, 41-3). Before colonisation and subsequent independence, the people of Futuna had closer connections to the Loyalty Islands of New Caledonia and eastwards to Tonga than they did to the Banks and Torres Islands in Northern Vanuatu (Bonnemaïson 1996, 175).

Futuna, like neighbouring Aniwa is in fact a Polynesian Outlier as the local language is Polynesian in form, in contrast to the Austronesian languages that make up the rest of

Melanesia. Much of the indigenous religion is also of Polynesian form (Capell 1938). Polynesian outliers in Melanesia and Micronesia however have few common traits; the Polynesian influence is the result of distinct ‘blowback’ voyages westwards after Polynesia was first settled (Besnier 1998). Most islands, including Futuna, were first settled in about 1000BC (Shutler and Shutler 1966) and so the existence of Polynesian Outliers is testament to the historic complexity of interactions in the Pacific (Kirch 1984). Computer simulations tested by Ward, Webb and Levison suggest that Futuna was settled from Tonga (Ward, Webb and Levison 1973), however the language has been classified as Futunic, linking it to East Futuna, of Wallis and Futuna (Early 2012).

The first European explorers did not include the southern and northern islands that make up Tafea and Torba provinces within the group that they identified as the New Hebrides (Speiser 1996[1923], 17). The Southern and Central islands of Vanuatu have now been found to be geologically connected (Bedford 2006) but whilst colonisation and the creation of the new nation have brought these islands together politically and therefore now culturally, social differences are still felt today and are often couched in the rhetoric of Futuna’s position as an outer island.

Edward Natapei’s long career within the Vanuatu Government and as President of the Vanua’aku Pati elevated his native Futuna within the country but changed little on the island. The almost island-wide conversion to Christianity at the end of the nineteenth century arguably had a greater impact on life on Futuna than the creation of the New Hebrides as a French and British condominium in 1906 and its subsequent independence in 1980. Conversion to Presbyterianism ideally entailed the rejection of the local belief system and the desertion of customs and practices associated with these. Ibau for example used to have a high priest figure, perhaps similar to those found in Tonga and the Cook Islands (Küchler 2009, 12), who would preside over a *fare ariki*, a temple built in the centre of the village. This spirit world on Futuna continues to be both actively pacified and denied. Missionaries on the island introduced formal schooling; new forms of medicines (and new illnesses); new ways of relating to people.

In contrast, the condominium was nicknamed the pandemonium due to the disorder caused by the French and British ruling not together, but side by side



Figure 1. Futuna within the Pacific region. (The World Factbook, 2018)



Figure 1. Topographic map of Futuna. Courtesy of the Vanuatu Government. (Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources 2007)

(Molisa, Vurobaravu and Van Trease 1982). Futuna came to have both an English and a French school and a clinic during the condominium. Post-independence, some of this vital infrastructure has been maintained and developed: an airport was constructed in 1985 at Ibau (Fakamura, et al. 1995) and the footpath precariously circumnavigating the island on the edge of cliffs was cemented and made secure in 2006. There are now talks of a road being carved into the hillside at Herald Bay to facilitate transport of cargo to and from ships and the villages above. Christianity and *kastom* continued to develop and flourish in local ways throughout all of this period.

As highlighted by Rio and Hviding (2011), social groups throughout Oceania innovate and experiment with their cultural heritage to promote unity in various forms of nations at a range of scales, from the island nation (Scott 2011) to the inter-island nation of a Christian denomination or the national state. This is also true of the Futuna community, for whom unity is a central theme. While Bonnemaïson states that island-wide unity on Tanna is based on a shared *kastom* but is inhibited by internal conflicts and rivalries (1987, 60-61), Futuna stands out from other islands as it is united not only by its *kastom*, but by its political views and Christian beliefs. In Vanuatu these are historically related and arise from the nationality of the first missionaries who lived in the country and created schools in their own mother tongue: English in Anglican and Presbyterian missions, French in Catholic missions. This created ideological divides, which were exacerbated in the run up to independence (Miles 1994, Morgan 2008). The main political party, the Vanua'aku Pati, initiated the fight for independence and was formed by educated Anglophone Presbyterian and Anglican pastors. Its main opposition was the largely Francophone Union of Moderate Parties.

Elections around the time of independence demonstrate the overarching Presbyterian influence on the island.

Table 1. Election results on Futuna as a percentage of valid votes. (Fakamura, et al. 1995)

| | 1979 | 1983 | 1987 | 1991 |
|----------------|-------|------|-------|-------|
| Vanua'aku Pati | 94.8% | 100% | 97.3% | 89.9% |

Similarly, from the 2009 census, the vast majority of people on Futuna share similar religious beliefs.

Table 2. Religious affiliation on Futuna 2009. (VNSO 2009)

| | Number of People | Percentage |
|-----------------------------|------------------|------------|
| Presbyterian | 399 | 76% |
| Assemblies of God (AOG) | 57 | 11% |
| Neil Thomas Ministry (NTM) | 58 | 11% |
| Anglican | 7 | 1% |
| Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) | 4 | 0.8% |
| Churches of Christ | 1 | 0.2% |
| Total | 526 | 100% |

With their roots in Protestantism, the doctrinal similarities of the Presbyterian, AOG and NTM churches is important and is likely to be a key factor in the island’s current unity. Indeed the island wide community that is based on shared beliefs is made visible during Christmas celebrations where all people from Futuna on the island and beyond come together, with the exception only of members of the SDA Church. This spiritual accord is in complete contrast with neighbouring islands, which are divided by opposing beliefs.² At Ibau, the district where this research is based, the whole population identifies as Presbyterian.

Nevertheless, divisions exist on Futuna, where a weakening moiety system, thought of as *yaka* (canoes), can determine marriage, residence and is even said to distinguish people by different character traits: Namruke are quieter, speaking modestly or evasively (depending on the perspective), whilst Kawiameta are louder and speak directly or embellish on reality (depending on the perspective). A third, small group called Fana, are mediators between the moieties and are of mixed parentage. Cross-

² The population of Tanna is split in equal parts between Presbyterians, Customary beliefs and Other beliefs (likely to be John Frum); the population of Aniwa predominantly follows Other beliefs (also to be understood as John Frum); the populations on Aneityom and Erromango are similarly divided equally for the most part between Presbyterians and the SDA (VNSO 2009).

cousin marriages in the past were arranged within moieties and often between districts to extend a family's network of relationships and ensure access to resources and a warm welcome throughout the island. Indications of the weakening of the system are visible in the physical environment and in changes to local customs. For example, the Namruke and Kawiameta sides of a district used to be physically separated by some form of fence and each would have its own *marae*. There would also be large competitive exchanges between moieties that could result in warfare (Keller and Kuautonga 2007, 63, Lynch and Fakamuria 1994).

Despite its small size – the island can be circumnavigated by foot in a day – the districts have different histories, identities and even climates and environments. For example, Matangi, particularly around Tabei, is wet and particularly suitable for growing taro whilst Ishia in contrast often has water shortages; Mouga maintains a strong *kastom* and many *kastom* stories originate here; Ibau is the fishing centre of the island. In the past, exchanges of food through *kiripuga* and *rugaika* within moieties ensured a spread of resources around the island and maintained close relationships. The contemporary reliance on rice and flour has perhaps surpassed the use of intra island exchanges and replaced it with inter island exchanges between households on Futuna and their families in town – island food in return for store bought foods.

Yet Futuna is a small island, with about five hundred inhabitants, and so regular island-wide events and festivities can and do bring the island community physically together, making apparent relationships, histories and belonging. Feasting is always a part of the celebrations and rather than providing an occasion for competitive exchanges, the careful sharing of food fairly between all, both those present and those absent who remained at home, is stressed as the most important point.

“If some people from the komuniti didn’t come, you have to think about them. Feasts are important so you must think about those who didn’t come.”³ Sarashi 30.08.17

Food and goods are split between the five districts of the island, with an added pile for teachers and Pastors: a way of incorporating potential outsiders of the island into the system. Within each district’s pile, the goods are first divided between the two moieties, and then split between *tarik*, sharing groups based on descent within these moieties. This ensures that no-one is forgotten and that goods can be shared in an egalitarian manner. On occasions when a significant number of visitors resident outside of Futuna are present, a seventh pile of foodstuffs will be arranged, whether these visitors are from Futuna or not. An increase in migrations out of the island and greater mobility within Vanuatu means that there are approximately three times more people from Futuna who live outside of the island than on Futuna itself (Fakamura, et al. 1995) and this, along with community ideals promoted by Christianity, has affected relations on the island. New distinctions are emerging in the meaning of being *blong Futuna* (of Futuna).

1.3 Ibau district

Ibau is the largest single district and in 2014 had about twenty-one households and just over one hundred residents. As in much of the Pacific, the population is young, but Ibau has a relatively high proportion of older women. The number of houses, households and household members fluctuated throughout my fieldwork as life events made people move. Some moved within Ibau, creating their own household; others maintained their connections around the island and frequently moved between their houses in the different districts; and yet others moved between islands according to their work and family commitments. In contrast to this movement, the layout or structure of Ibau district is however fairly constant due to people’s ties to land and their *mrae* (household plots).

³ “*Spose i gat sam man long komuniti i no kam, yu mas tinkbaot olgeta. Kakai hemi heavy, so olgeta wea i no kam, yu mas tinkbaot.*”

The residential centre of Ibau is laid out on a circular plan, with houses forming a loose ring around Narawia, the central green where people come together for village-wide events and to play sport. The Provincial House, communal kitchen and Presbyterian Church and Kindy are all within or on the fringes of Narawia. Nevertheless, it is perhaps more accurate to think of Ibau as two semi-circles; the moiety system splits the village in half and each half has its own *marae* (ceremonial tabu ground) at either end of Narawia. Important meetings are held in these *marae*, under banyon trees. The village therefore looks inwards for community events.

Many prefer to focus instead on what is outside the village. Beyond the village, gardens and coconut plantations stretch out up Ta Tafu hill and down as far as the coast. Like the village itself, access to gardens and the reef is similarly ordered around a central division between moieties. The central plateau of Tafu used to be the site of many gardens until about thirty years ago when a disease affected the taro grown in the cool mists and led people to abandon these plots altogether. Ibau is a relatively dry district and so manioc, kumala, bananas and yams are now the staple crops. Few households at Ibau have pigs (just one in 2014), but all have fowl.

1.4 Methodology

The idea that the ways in which we learn to know leads to different kinds of knowledge is as true for plaiting work as it is for anthropology (Kovach 2009, Venkatesan 2010). My approach to fieldwork in Vanuatu was qualitative, with participant observation guiding how I spent my time and the form of information I collected. Apprentice-style learning (Marchand 2008) was therefore also central to my methodology and many conversations were had sitting in the midst of pandanus and other basketry materials.

1.4.1 Apprentice-Style Learning on Futuna

Following Goody (1989), learning a craft, in my case how to work pandanus and coconut fronds, offers the apprentice three key insights: bodily knowledge of the craft, the context of the work within life on Futuna, and knowledge about learning itself. In Vanuatu however, skills and knowledge can take the form of property (Geismar 2005a). On Ambae, for example, Bolton (2003a) recorded that there are restrictions surrounding

the ritualised dyeing of *singo*, a type of pandanus textile. On Futuna, where people pride themselves with the quality of their pandanus basketry, it is *tabu* to teach those who identify as coming from another *ples*, for example neighbouring Aniwa, local plaited pandanus techniques.

I was encouraged to work coconut frond mats and to help harvest pandanus, prepare the leaves, or to help with the finishing touches of baskets and mats from the start. This is also how girls become initiated to plaiting work. Although there was reluctance from some, one *mama* told me that to find out about pandanus basketry I would have to learn to work pandanus myself. Two households encouraged this and sitting in conversation with the women of the household I was sometimes handed baskets to work the central body section, initially in a plain plait and later in patterns. Seieke also encouraged me to learn to work pandanus mats, which despite my best efforts I never managed to keep rectangular. Living in Seieke's household meant that I was also always near Wawi, who had been renowned for her pandanus work before arthritis made the movements harder. She nevertheless regularly had baskets on the go and was generous in her attentions: Wawi taught me how to work *fakajikijia* and *tarabunia* to close the rim of a basket, and in my last month on Futuna taught me how to put the four corners into the base of a basket, thus giving me the knowledge to make a basket on my own.

This knowledge was important to me for the bodily and technical understanding it offered. Experiential and tacit knowledge is central to craftwork, but such knowledge is also tightly connected to a person's life experience, their relationships, emotions, values and memories (Bunn 2014, Naji 2009, Niedderer and Townsend 2014). Learning about craftwork is therefore best communicated through shared practice; the co-experience and collaboration of which lead to greater understandings of the craft and its social context (Dilley 1999, Lassiter 2005, Marchand 2008, Reichard 1934). It is important to note here that I will not put that knowledge to commercial use, nor will I document it in this thesis in order to comply with the *tabu* described above.

1.4.2 Working with Women

In much of rural Melanesia, activities and social life is gendered. The majority of my time on Futuna was therefore spent in the company of women, engaged in activities that

were 'gender-tagged' as feminine (Eriksen 2008). This bias was compounded first by the subject matter of my research, second by living with Seieke at Witaroa, a very strong and independent single mother, and third by my closer friendship with three widows in the district. This gave me a different perspective of life on Futuna (Brison 2007).

There was a notable difference in the focus of conversations I had with men compared to those I had with women. The brothers of Seieke, Teata and Takaronga, the men with whom I had the most sustained conversations, were eager to discuss aspects of life that had a spiritual or a leadership dimension to them. For example, in the evenings I spent at Teata's house, her brothers would often start telling me *kastom* stories about Futuna, talking about the *ples* and the creatures which inhabit it. Women, in contrast, would rarely initiate conversations about such topics and often when there was mention of spirits, would usually state that these *devel* (devils) were no longer a problem on the island as *yumi stap long laet* (Christianity has come), and *tabu* sites have been prayed over to dispel the spirits.

Two points are of note here: firstly, following Bolton (1999a, 5), "to make a broad generalisation, in Vanuatu, women often communicate more through action than words". In Vanuatu, techniques and methods of communication are to a certain extent gendered. This adds further emphasis to the importance of using methodological approaches like spending time with women and joining them in their activities for this type of research. The second point has also been raised by Eriksen (2008), who notes that on Ambrym, while men were the church's first converts, women came to form the main congregation and developed the church according to their own interests and needs. This turn of events is also the case on Futuna, where women now make up most of the congregation and drive new developments. On Futuna, early missionary Dr. Gunn notes that Popoina was his first official convert to Christianity on the island, but Saloki was a more fervent believer. Thus in Vanuatu there is not only a sense that women communicate in different ways to men, but many are also more energetically Christian and work to transform their society into a better Christian society, sometimes at the expense of *kastom*. These interests have directly informed and shaped this thesis.

1.5 Fieldwork

In June 2013, the VKS imposed a 12-month moratorium on all new incoming research projects to take stock of research that had already been undertaken and to look into how best to protect local heritage from exploitation by foreign researchers (Abong 2013). This moratorium coincided with my preparations for fieldwork and left me unsure right until I arrived in Vanuatu whether I would be able to undertake research in the country, let alone on the island of Futuna.

Following the moratorium, which was lifted in March 2014, the Vanuatu Cultural Research Policy was revised and updated. This policy is lauded as one of the most extensive in the region (McCormick 2017), putting collaboration with local researchers from the VKS's *filwoka* program at its heart (Regenvanu 1999) and requiring the researcher to contribute positively to the local community.⁴ However as I was to find out, obtaining a research permit from the Vanuatu National Cultural Council unfortunately does not ensure that permission from the local community has been obtained. While Takaronga Kuautonga, the long-time and well-respected *filwoka* from Futuna, was eager for research to be undertaken on local cultural heritage, this interest was not shared by some of the local chiefs. This resulted in my being granted permission to undertake research in Ibau district only⁵. I am very grateful to community leaders for this authorisation. I am also grateful to the Futuna community members living on Futuna and in Port Vila who tried to formalise and extend the agreement⁶.

⁴ In keeping with my research interests and with the aim of offering assistance to those who had helped me, I donated funds to the Women's Project. It was thought that this would be of benefit to the whole island and therefore both discourage jealousies between districts and encourage other districts to welcome researchers in the future.

⁵ I was not granted permission to do research beyond Ibau district by the High Chief of Futuna – at about Christmas, after three months on Futuna, the people of Ibau told me that they had stepped in on my behalf to welcome me and help me in my work. I never met the High Chief and the little communication we had was always indirect, through third parties.

⁶ Two Port Vila based men told me on different occasions that the Futuna community in Port Vila were frustrated by my situation and were working to obtain permission for me to work on Futuna. The dynamics between communities in Port Vila and Futuna interested me and I got the impression that these

It is likely that the difficulty of obtaining local permissions affected how people on Futuna related to me. My experience as a researcher on Futuna certainly felt very different to previous experiences as a voluntary teacher on Pentecost Island, where my curiosity in local life was mirrored by my new friends' interest in my own life in Europe.

On Futuna, I was based at Ibau and only visited the other districts when accompanying friends during the regular inter-island festivities or on walks around the island. Ibau is in a sense the entrance point to Futuna: situated in the North East of the island, it is more accessible than the other districts both by sea and by air. In fact, Ibau district has a reputation for being more open to outsiders and new ideas – *kastom* is said to be less closely followed, perhaps a consequence of the airport.

My arrival on Futuna coincided with the last days of a circumcision ceremony at Ibau district and the following week, the Agriculimaptation Festival instigated by CARE International. I was therefore fortunate as Takaronga Kuautonga, who at that time lived on Tanna, was present on Futuna for the festivities and was able to make initial introductions and arrange accommodation for me. This was a very busy time for people on Futuna and preparations for both the circumcision rituals and the Agriculimaptation Festival had been going on for months.

In the end I was looked out for by two households at Ibau. For my first three months, guesthouse owners Teata and Pastor Kofia took on the responsibility of looking out for me at Taroumara with assistance from Teata's brothers Sarashi and Naumeta. Teata's father was a chief and Sarashi now represents the district as leader of the Community Liaison Committee. Concerns for my safety, sleeping on my own in the Provincial Building in the middle of the village, led to me moving in with Seieke's household at Witaroa, the other side of the village. Seieke's father was an Assessor during colonisation and her elder brother Mailesi worked as a carpenter, travelling internationally around the Pacific to train others. It is important to note that Mailesi has

urban communities felt more concerned by my case than anyone in Ibau. Conversations with friends on my return to the field in 2017 however suggest that they were hesitant to discuss this with me at the time.

read Dr Gunn's two books describing his experiences of working as a missionary on Futuna and will have discussed these writings with others. Taroumara and Witaroa are the respective *marae* (meeting places) for Kawiameta and Namruke groups at Ibau, however Seieke and Kofia are closely related.

The two households were quite different and gave me different perspectives on life at Ibau. While both Teata and Seieke's children were grown up, Teata's were furthering their education in town while Seieke's either already had jobs or had decided to make a life for themselves on the island. Teata looked out for several of her bachelor relatives; Seieke lived with her elder sister and two of her own children and their young families at Taroumara. Teata was married; Seieke was an independent woman and a single mother. Teata was kept busy at Taroumara by cooking and cleaning for her extended household and the guesthouse; Seieke in contrast was happiest in her gardens, away from her yard. Both women and their families offered me support and friendship for which I will always be grateful.

An additional particularity of my time on Futuna was an initial rota system during my first month which saw me visiting the different households in the village for my lunch and evening meals. This initial rota meant that I got to know everybody at Ibau and they me. Rotas are frequently used on Futuna in organising district and island level community programmes. At Ibau for example, a rota passes anti-clockwise round the households in the village to organise who will make the daily prayer on Nokoruai hill⁷ in which people pray for the community. At the island level, significant festivities are in addition shared out between the districts according to a rota that also moves in an anti-clockwise direction. It was moreover initially suggested that I share my fieldwork out around the island and spend a few months in each district to appreciate the similarities and differences between each *ples* and its *kastom*.

My fieldwork on Futuna was marked by Cyclone Pam, a tropical cyclone that swept through Vanuatu in March 2015 half way through my time on the island (Hazelgrove-

⁷ The use of this hill is a direct reference to the prayer mountain in the Bible.

Planel 2015). The cyclone disrupted the routine at Ibau. The atmosphere in the village changed. Thoughts went out to those on neighbouring islands, worse hit than us. Many crops were ruined at Ibau and although most buildings were unharmed, the environment was scarred by the strong winds. The Government of Vanuatu's National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) organised relief efforts, which were gratefully received on Futuna. My fieldwork came to an end as the newly planted *kumala* (sweet potato) started to produce its first crop after the cyclone, however its effects, particularly with regards the availability of coconuts were still being felt two years later.

Finally, I was very fortunate to have the opportunity to return to Futuna for two weeks in September 2017. This was a fantastic opportunity for me to discuss the research again in person with the people on whom it depended and to get a longer-term perspective of the rhythms of life at Ibau. I presented my research progress and tentative findings to Ibau's Presbyterian Women's Missionary Union (PWMU) and put up posters in each district with a short summary of my thesis. I had previously sent what could be called a 'plaiting pattern dictionary' to the PWMU to be kept as a visual record of patterns worked into pandanus baskets with their associated names. On this return visit to Futuna I was lucky to see Takaronga again, who had by now moved back to live at Ibau and at that time was working full-time with Robert Williams, an archaeology PhD student undertaking fieldwork on Futuna, but who nevertheless took the time to catch up with me.

1.6 Thesis Overview

The thesis is divided into three parts according to the key aspects of pandanus work on Futuna Island and how these offer different ways of engaging with the world: Part 1 considers the migrations and movements of people and plants that have shaped basketry on Futuna; Part 2 explores the processes of construction of pandanus artefacts; Part 3 explores the uses of these artefacts. I focus on the workers of pandanus as the makers of pandanus artefacts and so the chapters of this thesis are organised as a sequential progression through the different stages of working pandanus and what these stages mean to people, from gardening and harvesting the materials, plaiting pandanus and

working elaborate decorations and patterns, and finally to the use of the pandanus baskets and mats.

Part 1, Locating the Roots of Basketry on Futuna, lays the groundwork for the thesis by asking where pandanus basketry on the island comes from and what it means for basketry to come from this island. The local history of pandanus basketry and classifications of pandanus are considered; an underlying thread to the first two chapters highlights the importance of the migration and movement of people and things.

To contextualise the subject, Chapter 2 discusses the history of pandanus work on Futuna. Combining oral histories from Futuna, artefacts and photos in museum stores and anthropological texts concerning the history of Vanuatu, a picture of a rich and varied handicraft emerges. A singular interest in gaining benefit from trade and exchange spurs on the incorporation and development of new practices. The creation of such novelties is seen to be further encouraged by interactions with other peoples and technologies. Women's responsiveness to demand and their efforts to create, adapt, and incorporate new techniques and styles in their pandanus work has enabled Futuna to maintain its advantage in trade. This chapter clearly demonstrates the importance of pandanus work on Futuna now and in the known past.

The third and fourth chapters consider the ways in which these pandanus baskets and mats are thought to be unique to Futuna. The connections between people and place in Melanesia have long been argued for by anthropologists and it is widely accepted that people gain their name, their identity, their history, from a place. In the third chapter, I consider the local classification of pandanus varieties on the island that turn on the axis of being either 'ours' or 'theirs' and compare how pandanus becomes *iotea* 'of Futuna' to the way that people become 'of Futuna'. A striking similarity emerges between how people and pandanus plants become connected to a place. Chapter 4 examines the materials, pandanus leaves, and their preparation methods in greater detail, analysing the concept of 'good' pandanus and looking at its effect on people. People are seen to make themselves through making artefacts.

Part 2 of the thesis, *Moving Parts: Constructing Baskets and Social Worlds*, focuses on the work of plaiting pandanus. Artefacts are given form in Part 2 and the social meanings and reasons for this are discussed.

In Chapter 5, I argue that processes of plaiting, that is the processes of constructing form in an artefact, also creates particular kinds of gendered persons. The gendered imagery inherent in plaiting two elements together is a metaphor for social life and reproduction and the activity provides opportunities and a language through which women can discuss social relationships. Local stories, the techniques of pandanus basketry and the meanings in the visible form of finished baskets capture and explain the basics of social life on Futuna.

Chapter 6 focuses on the visible patterns worked into baskets and asks what their significance is and what makes them appeal to people. The sharing of knowledge concerning patterns directly contrasts with the taboos involving the sharing of knowledge of basketry construction: identical patterns worked into pandanus baskets and mats can in fact be found throughout Vanuatu. Building on the work of Morphy and Gell amongst others, I discuss the technology of plaited pattern work and consider the specific techniques that make them successful decorations for everyday baskets.

The thesis concludes with Part 3, *The Object of Baskets: Balancing Diverging Views of the Future through Monetary and Non-Monetary Exchange*, two chapters considering the use of these baskets and mats as artefacts of exchange in the current day. Whilst basketry sales are frequently said to be important as a local source of income on Futuna, basketry plays an important role both in local exchanges, exchanges that have been a focus for anthropologists throughout the Pacific Island region for the last century, and in fundraising for Church activities, a more recent focus of study. Chapter 7 considers how women sell their artefacts, exploring the different markets they access and the difficulties of pricing basketry; Chapter 8 looks at what these sales are for, reflecting on the local tripartite framework created by school, church and *kastom*. The chapters analyse why pandanus work is associated first and foremost with paying for schooling, to the detriment of its role in church work and local life-cycle ceremonies. Part three of the thesis ties in with the second chapter concerning the history of pandanus basketry on

Futuna and demonstrates that pandanus artefacts are still tightly connected to the reproduction of social life despite becoming increasingly associated with the world beyond the island through their exchange.

The thesis therefore comes full circle as the exchange of pandanus baskets and mats is identified as a leading motivation for life on Futuna.

Part 1

Locating the Roots of Basketry on Futuna

2 Working Pandanus: A History

This chapter considers the history of pandanus basketry on Futuna Island and looks at the relationship between basketry, people and change. As a craft that is both central to women's *kastom* throughout Vanuatu and that also plays a vital role in the local economy, pandanus basketry is a contemporary craft rooted in the past. This chapter demonstrates, firstly, the importance of the connections of basketry with local spiritual beliefs and secondly, that through trade and exchange, pandanus work has in fact been a central force in the changes that are detailed below. The chapter situates the ethnography in a particular time period and highlights how local ideas about basketry are connected in the flow of activity – past and present – on the island.

Pandanus work thrives despite the large-scale epidemics⁸ and social upheavals that spread throughout Vanuatu in the last two centuries. As social relations and ways of life have continuously regenerated and renewed themselves on Futuna, so pandanus work has been reworked and transformed to fit into these emerging contexts. These changes in basketry are shown to be creative and improvisational, where to follow Hallam and Ingold (2007), life is itself creative, in a constant state of becoming and entangled within a field of relations. This chapter recounts the contextualised story of the changes to pandanus basketry on Futuna.

The discussion reaches into this history using fieldwork data – oral histories and contemporary observations – from Futuna, stories implied by objects in museum stores and a range of missionary and more contemporary anthropological texts. I draw these sources and the different perspectives they represent together to tell a new, more complete story of how and why certain aspects of pandanus work on Futuna has changed while others remain the same, and how people respond to and discuss these changes. My approach to the sources concords with a view of the world as composed of

⁸ Amongst others, there were epidemics of dysentery in 1893, followed by tuberculosis (Gunn 1924, 36-8) and measles in 1899 (Miller J. G., 1981, p. 9, 17).

things that are intertwined in a meshwork of relationships and assemblages. It is also understood that the past, just like the present, is a complex temporal melange of part-present-future and is perceived and authenticated in a variety of ways to suit the needs of the present (Hirsch and Stewart 2005, James and Mills 2005). Moreover, particularly in Pacific Island postcolonial states, “versions of the past... are always politically inflected, partial, and interested” (N. Thomas 1991b, 298).

My focus here is on continuity through disrupture; by using a variety of sources this chapter reflects a history on Futuna that is characterised by the input of many people and many ideologies and beliefs. These new ideologies and beliefs disrupted time and expressions of continuity in basketry can be understood as a way of overcoming these changes.

This discussion places emphasis on the meanings and ideas inherent in the use of pandanus work. Continuity in these beliefs is stressed by people on Futuna to legitimate their practices and claim that the past is in the present as much as the present is in the past (Handler and Linnekin 1984). This contrasts with Schoeffel’s (1999) historic reading of Samoan ‘fine mats’, which she argues have changed in both their use and meaning as Christianity and a cash economy have gained in importance. Schoeffel argues that fine mats, once exclusive artefacts used by Samoan aristocracy representing gifts of virgin brides, have become democratised, represent a more general Samoan identity and are used in a range of ceremonies. While the democratisation of fine mats and textile wealth is also noted in Tonga by Herda (1999), she highlights a different perspective: that new materials and techniques, in the form of patchwork quilts, have been incorporated into Tongan categories of textile wealth. Textile wealth previously consisted only of barkcloth and pandanus fine mats but quilting also enables women to work their status and experiences into the textile, thus giving the quilts a recognisable status as textile wealth. Women’s interest in developing craftwork on Tonga has therefore facilitated ongoing wealth exchange practices.

Through the vital role of pandanus work in trade and exchange in Vanuatu, and pandanus workers’ keen interest in the skills, techniques and styles of their work as well as their awareness of markets, pandanus work has always been at the forefront of

change. Improvisation, the processual aspect of creativity, is generative, relational, temporal and “the way we work” both now and in the past (Ingold and Hallam 2007). Nevertheless, pandanus work is inherently connected to spiritual beliefs and together, this has ensured continuity through its material and physical transformations and the wider social changes.

As Bolton and Tarisesei highlighted in 2013, there is great breadth to pandanus work with an impressive variety of pandanus work styles across Vanuatu; this chapter demonstrates that there is also great historical depth to pandanus work by considering basketry on Futuna Island. I discuss pandanus baskets and mats only here, as these are the focus of attention on Futuna; they are also historically objects of exchange. Pandanus fans and coconut frond artefacts are disregarded as these are of little interest to people on Futuna, are not typically objects of exchange and are locally considered to be unchanging; three inter-dependent points.

The chapter follows a chronological order and is divided into three historical settings following the key periods for people on Futuna and to a lesser extent, my different sources of data: pre-Christian (the time of darkness), which for the most part draws from oral stories discussed during fieldwork on Futuna; Missionary (the time of light), with an emphasis on museum collections and missionary texts; colonisation and independence (also the time of light), which is based on anthropological texts and my own observations from Futuna. Colonisation in Vanuatu is perhaps unique for its relatively minimal impact – particularly in the outer islands – and so this timeframe did not directly impact basketry or trade markets in the same way as Christianity and independence. The theme of continuity within basketry between and through these divisions separating different social contexts on Futuna is striking.

2.1 Pre-Christian

Pandanus work had a high place in pre-Christian times, a time that is thought of locally as the ‘time of darkness’, and which is markedly distinct from the present. On the island, life on Futuna before Christianity is discussed with some hesitation: many practices and beliefs have been renounced following conversion and only some have

been revived or maintained (Jolly 1992a). Oral histories on Futuna nevertheless highlight the respect and awe people continue to have for their ancestors and their powers and abilities. For example, there were pandanus competitions held at Ta Fareriki, a religious building at Narawia in Ibau district that was the site of many religious ceremonies up until 1859 (Gunn 1914, 219). Stories also recount great exchanges of pandanus artefacts and food between Futuna and its neighbouring islands, a form of gift exchange that have been at the heart of anthropological theory for almost a century, see Mauss (1969). The different districts of Futuna had long-term trading relationships with people on the islands nearest to them and so Southern districts were linked to Aneityum, Eastern districts to Tanna and Northern districts traded with Aniwa⁹. Different produce was exchanged according to the islands: taro and bananas were given to Aneityum, whilst yams were exchanged on Tanna (Fakamura, et al. 1995).

Local *kastom* stories moreover serve to glorify the skill of pandanus workers on the island whilst emphasising the gendered and gendering (M. Strathern 1988) nature of this work for present generations. Where women plait pandanus, their sitting positions and the attention they give to their work is always specified in these stories, which noticeably all seem to conclude with the appearance of suitable male partners. Skill at pandanus work was highly valued on Futuna and beyond and the artefacts formed the fabric of social life and in trade. During fieldwork, three kinds of basket and a form of pandanus mat were described to me; their characteristics and the ideas and concepts they are connected to are discussed below. It should however be noted that this is only a very limited view of pandanus work in pre-Christian times and it can be safe to assume

⁹ Relationships with people on Erromango were not good. Differences between the relationships between islands is demonstrated by the following story of a failed expedition from Futuna to Aneityum that due to bad weather ended up in Erromango. The Futunese crew were all murdered and the Erromangans had the audacity to make use of the Futunese canoe for their own voyages. Another bout of bad weather put the Erromangan crew off course and they arrived at Aneityum. Recognising the canoe of their friends from Futuna, the Aneityumese worked out the sad fate of the original crew members and murdered the crew from Erromanga in retribution. They then made a trip to Futuna to return the canoe and recount the sad tale to their trading partners.

that what is presented below is only a sketch of the many stylistic innovations that characterised basketry in previous centuries (Thomas, Adams, et al. 2016).

2.1.1 Baskets

As today on Futuna, pandanus baskets, *kato*, existed in many forms before the arrival of Christianity. There are however crucial differences in the physical form and context within which these baskets were used and it is on these particularities which I focus here. The physical form of baskets cannot usefully be discussed without reference to their contexts of use and so these are intertwined below. Discussing past forms of baskets on Futuna therefore additionally provides us with a picture of life on the island before the arrival of missionaries.

2.1.1.1 Water baskets

Futuna baskets, *kato Futuna* are said to be the oldest basket type on the island and are found in some missionary photographs, see for example ‘Heathen natives of Imouga’ in Gunn (1914) and Dr Gunn’s album of photographs from his time as a missionary, compiled in 1899. The baskets were often said to be initially used at Ibau as water carriers and are often called *kato bai*, water basket, despite their current lack of use as such. There are no springs or rivers that pass through the coastal areas of Ibau district,¹⁰ and so I was told that in the past water would be collected from a spring just off the path that circles the island, on the border with Iraro district. This spring is currently an important water source for the people of Iraro. Water would be transported back to the household in pandanus baskets holding hollowed out bamboo canes or empty coconuts, covered with *bura* (*Hibiscus tiliaceus*) leaves to help prevent the liquid from seeping out, similar to historic baskets on Niue (N. Thomas 2016).

¹⁰ Water access is not distributed equally around the districts of Futuna island. Itavai district even derives its name from the quantity of freshwater springs that run through it, whilst further north, Ishia often runs short of water despite a number of large water storage tanks around the district. At Ibau, water is currently piped from a spring that is a 30 minute walk up Ta Tafu hill on Ibau land. Through a complicated series of rubber pipes and joins, each household has its own tap that provides them with seemingly inexhaustible quantities of fresh water for cooking and washing.

At this time, freshwater was not needed in such great quantities as it is now. The sea provided all that was needed for personal hygiene and was the location for many *kastom* celebrations of life-cycle events where cleanliness is key. Food was also not boiled as it frequently is now but was roasted or baked in stone ovens or directly on the hot ashes of a fire. Water in the past was therefore of most use for drinking and as a direct source of life.

When the history of *Futuna* baskets was described to me, both men and women would always highlight the necessary characteristics of such a basket; notably the tight nature of the plait and its strength.

“They wove them very tightly; they wove them to make them strong.”¹¹ Fitu 21.03.15

It was also said that *Futuna* water baskets needed strong handles – which is why, I was told, basket handles have the characteristic multiplicity of small plaits merging into one, unitary plaited handle. The past use of pandanus baskets as water carriers on *Futuna* is frequently used in contemporary speech as proof of the skill of pandanus workers in the past; it should perhaps be understood as a metaphor for this. Indeed in Dr Gunn’s (1899) photograph album, one photo, entitled ‘Natives cooking, *Futuna*’, indicates that baskets were used to carry food (both cooked and uncooked). It is notable that any mention of water baskets on *Futuna* are also often followed by a comment to the effect that pandanus workers today do not have the same skill or interest in working high quality baskets as they did before.

These *kato bai*, the highest class of basket necessitating great basketry skills and providing the water of life, were *Futuna* baskets, considered the original basket on *Futuna* and the epitome of pandanus work on the island. It is to this skill and ability that people refer when they discuss basketry on *Futuna*.

¹¹ “*Oli wivim oli fas gud...oli wivim oli strong.*”

2.1.1.2 Dance baskets

Less commonly discussed baskets that have no contemporary use on Futuna are the dance percussion baskets and food baskets described below. Dance baskets had a three-cornered base and are called *kato bokia*, clapping basket.

“This basket, they would make kastom with it. They would make it bang.”¹² Fitu 21.03.15

The basket was used in *kastom* dances by women in a similar fashion to current practices on Tanna Island where *napen-napen* dances require the use of added percussion to complement the singing and dancing. *Napen-napen* dances are performed during the famous *nekowiar*, or *toka* ceremonies, where women also use a small pandanus basket type of percussion called *numeinfeng* (Ammann 2012, 269, 279). There is a strong case for a link between these dances as according to Ammann (2012, 262-64); *toka* ceremonies originated as a peace-making festival between the Koyometa and Numrukwen,¹³ the two moieties of Tanna from which Futuna gained the moiety names Kawiameta and Namruke (Lynch and Fakamuria 1994). Indeed according to Liros, these baskets were used on Futuna in *nap napa* dances, a name that bears a striking resemblance to the Tannese *napen-napen*, although whether the dance originated in Tanna or Futuna is not however clear. Ammann, drawing from a conversation with Takaronga Kuautonga from Futuna, goes on to say that Futuna in fact used to have *toka* festivals of their own in which the whole island took part (2012, 291). There is evidence that in addition to moieties, which are said to have originated on Futuna with borrowed Tannese Kwamera language names, Futuna affected its neighbouring islands by introducing kava (Lynch 1996) and many fishing terms (Lynch 1994).

During fieldwork, these baskets were mentioned by several people at Ibau but I was not able to see one for myself, a situation that Janet Keller also discovered during her

¹² “Basket ia oli stap mekem kastom long hem. Oli mekem se hemi faerup.”

¹³ Many similar alternatives of these names exist in the literature.

fieldwork in the 1970s (J. D. Keller 1988). I was told that before the dance begins, a small clapping basket was placed on each hand and worn like a glove – in comparison, on Tanna each woman uses just one basket, held in the hand using loose pandanus. Such percussion baskets are in addition filled with dried leaves to create more sound when clapped together and on Tanna, it seems that small fertility stones may also have been included. There is moreover an unclear connection between the movements of these dances, the baskets and grasshoppers (Ammann 2012, 277-8).

Lily told me that she had made several *kato bokia* a few years ago for a dance troupe based in the capital in preparation for a tour abroad. As performances of *kastom danis* have for the most part become a male activity, male performers have started using the percussive baskets in their dancing too. The arrival of missionaries on Futuna Island altered the story of the *kato bokia*, the basket used in dances: they banned local dances on the island as these were not considered to align with a Christian ideal of morality (Gunn 1914, 193).

2.1.1.3 Food baskets

Another key basket described as a historic basket on Futuna is classed as a *kato vaka* (boat or canoe basket) in reference to its two-cornered base that resembles a canoe, but is also called *kato si mo tu kai* (small basket for eating). Like *kato bokia*, social changes have made this basket rare in contemporary Futuna.

Food baskets were not containers as might be expected, but instead were a form of protection. A taboo on touching food following touching a dead body – for example when preparing it for burial – meant that people would use a small basket to cover their hands and protect themselves from ingesting the spirit of the deceased. This taboo continues to this day; it is thought that the spirit of the deceased can enter the body of the living through contact with either the body or the belongings of the deceased. The taboo therefore also extends to the people with other crucial roles in funerals who do not necessarily have direct contact with the body, such as grave diggers. It is said that touching one's food following contact with the body of the deceased will lead to rotten teeth, but accordance with the taboo is also a sign of respect and mourning and so may be practised by many close relatives.

This basket, the *kato si mo tu kai*, was therefore primarily to protect the body and to act as a barrier between the food and the skin. Seirangi described how the basket would be pierced by a stick through the base by which food could be speared and eaten off. Such baskets would be of no other use and so would be stored carefully between uses during the day but also for the months in-between deaths.

Discussing these baskets with Seirangi and Klenta on the green outside of church one Friday afternoon, Klenta said that *kato si mo tu kai* were replaced by coconut husk fibre, which was then in turn replaced by plates and forks, leaves, or even plastic surgical gloves. Seirangi thought that these baskets were perhaps last used in the 1960s as they were in use when he was a child.

Unlike water baskets where the physical form of the basket has been maintained but the use has changed, for food baskets the underlying concepts of pollution, spirits and respect have persisted as has the manner to avoid contamination, but the artefacts, or tools, have changed.

2.1.2 Mats

Pandanus mats, *potu*, also sometimes referred to simply as *fara* (pandanus), are currently distinguished between *kete*, the new style of wide-stripped thick mats made of many layers of pandanus and *bakhaunea*, the narrow-stripped thin mats in the Northern style. These distinctions between types of pandanus mat seem to have developed since Janet Keller's fieldwork, from which her dictionary identifies a distinction only between *kete* as "square, woven mat for sitting on" and *potu* as "matting used as bed" (J. W. Dougherty 1983, 324, 446). It is however possible that this use of *kete* refers to the small mats young children would take to school with them a generation ago, or to the mats used by menstruating women. Moreover, pandanus mats may in the past have been called *menga*, cloth, on Futuna (Capell 1984). That there have been changes in the history of pandanus mats is in addition apparent through a contemporary distinction between mat selvage types: a 'Futuna' style serrated edge is contrasted with a *niu gini*, possibly referring to New Guinea, straight style of edging.

2.1.2.1 Sleeping mats

Although there is little evidence to indicate the origin of either selvage styles, these differences point to a greater change in the physical form of local pandanus mats. Indeed before the importation of cloth on Futuna, the local mat bore a closer resemblance to the *bakhaunea* mat as they were constructed from narrow pandanus strips and were just a single leaf thickness. Unlike the contemporary *bakhaunea* mats found on Tanna and in the North of Vanuatu, however, the mats on Futuna had no midrib to them: “ours have just one side”¹⁴. Their dimensions were also different. I was unable to find any such *bakhaunea* mats either locally or in museums, but whilst in Vanuatu was told that the old Futuna mats were similar to those from Aneityum Island. The collections of the National Museum of Edinburgh have such a mat in storage, see Figure 3, acquired in 1889 by the Rev. Lawrie whose collections are discussed in Section 2.3. Finely plaited with thin strips of pandanus, the mat is much smaller than contemporary mats throughout Vanuatu (it measures about 100cm x 150cm, half the size of contemporary mats). It is also noticeably different because of its two fringed edges and its fully patterned body that creates a chequered affect without the use of colour.

In the past, pandanus mats on Futuna served to carry children in, for sleeping under as a blanket, and to wrap the body of kinsmen in their death. Museum records describe the above mat as a “piece of blanket” that was “in use before European blankets were known” (National Museum of Scotland n.d.). The use of narrow strips of pandanus to create a fine plait does indeed produce a malleable textile that can wrap snugly around the body and this was a common practice throughout Vanuatu (Bolton and Tarisesei 2013).

On Futuna, while sleeping mats were and are used daily, it was their use in death that was highlighted as most significant, see Tarabe (2015) for a detailed analysis of the use of mats in Fijian funerals. On Futuna, local stories describe how, before Christianisation, the dead were rolled in a *potu* then wrapped in a *turo* (coconut frond

¹⁴ “*Blong mifala wan saed.*” Teata 08.04.15

mat) before being thrown into the sea or placed in a carefully prepared cave on Ta Tafu, the central hill rising above the island. Rock shelters, or land caves, would be sought out and made ready by the elderly in preparation for their death:¹⁵ spaces would be cleaned and stones brought from the gardens. A *ngarauniu* (coconut frond mat) would be placed around the burial site in preparation of the wrapped body: on the ground and around the sides, but also then on top of the body once lain down.

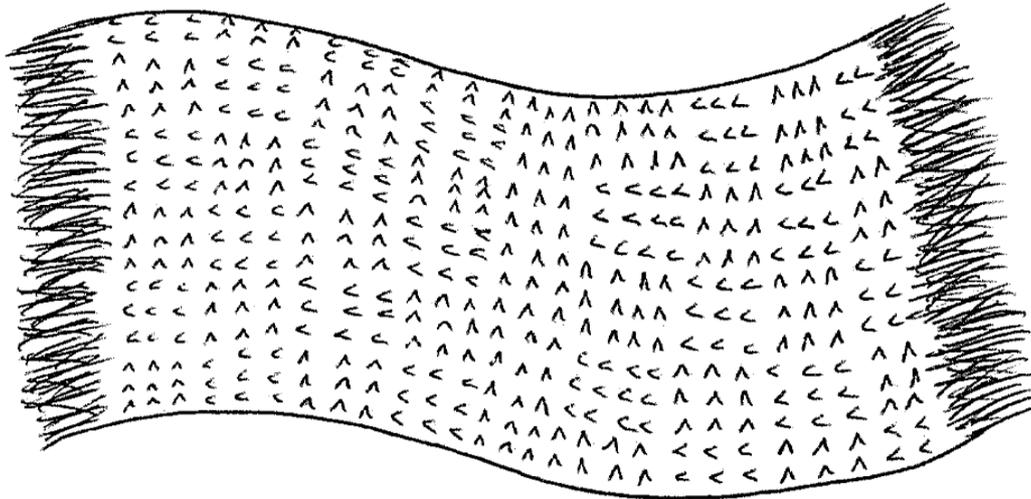


Figure 2. National Museum of Scotland, accession number A.1889.543.

According to Capell (1958, 19) and Mrs. Gunn ("In Memoriam" 1932), there was in fact an important distinction between land and sea burials although this was never referred to during my fieldwork: land burials were reserved for chiefs and leaders only, whilst sea burials were for their workmen, see Chapter 8. An alternative distinction, suggested during fieldwork, may have focused instead on the origin of people: land burials for people of Futuna descent and sea burials for foreigners to the island. The sea cave at Nakiroa in Iaso district has the particularity that all *manples* (people from the *ples*) are washed into the cave whilst foreigners are washed out to sea. This confirms the close relationship between the people of Futuna and their island, between people and *ples*, discussed in the next chapter.

¹⁵ Manogi thought that bodies were hidden to prevent others from 'spoiling' or ruining the bodies.

Key to the burial of bodies is the dyadic aspect of *potu*: pandanus mats have a right side, the side of the living and a wrong side, the side of the dead. During one's living, a person will sleep on the 'right side'; the better side, with the upper surface of all pandanus leaves uppermost. The right side is accordingly reserved for the living. During burial therefore, the sleeping mat, *potu*, of the deceased must be placed wrong side up in the grave for the body to lie on the wrong side of the mat. The use of *potu* in burials ties in with the pollution taboos described above in the use of food baskets. As previously mentioned, a person's spirit imbues their belongings during their lifetime. This is the case with many 'inalienable possessions' that come to take on the identities of their owners (Weiner 1992), however on Futuna a person's spirit has the potential to cause problems for the living if not properly managed in death and so in the past, all objects that belonged to the deceased were burnt, thrown out to sea or otherwise destroyed to protect the living from the revengeful spirit. The *potu* is of particular importance as it has sustained continuous close contact with the person; moreover, wrapping the body with a *potu* is also a way to physically contain the spirit and ensure that the spirit of the deceased accompanies the person in death – using the underside of the mat perhaps communicates this to the spirit.

We again see that as with food baskets, although the outward appearance of pandanus sleeping mats may have changed, the thought processes and beliefs that accompany these artefacts have been maintained despite the social changes brought about by Christianity and the creation of a nation. This highlights the importance, firstly, of the spiritual beliefs that are connected to these practices and artefacts. The dance baskets that have not been maintained are an interesting exception to this and while the connotations of the dances and the dance baskets used on Tanna Island suggest that these had complex meanings for the people on Futuna as well, it is possible that this was actually not the case. Secondly, these stories highlight the respect people have towards their ancestors and the skills and knowledge they held. The impressive pandanus skills of ancestors is repeatedly discussed to make a statement about the current state and quality of pandanus work on the island: the past is imagined to serve the present.

2.2 Futuna and Christianity

The time of Christianity, the time of the light, is the second, contemporary, yet historical, time period commonly referred to on Futuna. The social changes were so great that this section only considers the beginnings of Christianity on the island. Pandanus basketry, it seems, moreover played an important role in spurring on these changes and so it is important to bring this aspect of the craftwork to light.

For Dr Gunn, long term missionary on Futuna, the character of the people of Futuna played an important role in the ‘implantation’ of Christianity in Vanuatu; whilst Aneityum is considered the ‘nursery’ of the mission (J. G. Miller 1981), Futuna is the ‘key’ (Gunn 1914). While this may also be due to linguistic reasons, the literature concerning the conversion of Futuna islanders more specifically suggests in contrast that their initial interest in Christianity was due to the possibilities that missionaries represented for trade and exchange. As discussed below, missionary ships provided transport to facilitate existing trade links around the islands, but they were also sources of new goods and new skills.

Futuna was in fact the first island in Vanuatu to be visited by missionaries. The people of Futuna greeted the Rev. John Williams with interest as, already accustomed to trading with passing ships, they paddled out in canoes to meet his ship, accepted gifts of scissors, fish-hooks and a pig, offered food in exchange and communicated willingly (Prout 1843, 382).¹⁶ Elements of shared language was important in this meeting and all involved spoke a language of Polynesian origin, greatly facilitating communication.¹⁷ Thus it was arranged between the Rev. Williams and Chief Kautiama of Mouga, Herald

¹⁶ By the time the Camden made this voyage, people on Futuna would have been aware of the trade opportunities that the European trade ships presented. Although no sandalwood grew on Futuna in the 19th century, an important sandalwood trade started on all other islands in Tafea province in 1829 (Shineberg, 1967). Sandalwood has since been introduced and is an important source of income on the island. Whalers were also frequent visitors to the seas of Futuna and a large processing station was situated on neighbouring Aneityum. Adams (1984) notes some of the earliest encounters in the region.

¹⁷ Rev. Williams was an experienced missionary who had worked in Polynesia for about thirty years with the London Missionary Society and was travelling with ten native Samoan missionaries.

Bay, that the Chief would house a Polynesian missionary¹⁸ when Williams next passed through Vanuatu.

Although John Williams did not spend more than a few days on Futuna, the positive reception he and the other missionaries received at Herald Bay motivated and encouraged him to visit Tanna and Erromango. Existing relations between the Tannese and people from Futuna and Aniwa meant that the Tannese were able to converse in this Polynesian Outlier language and thus receive Samoan teachers. On Erromango, in contrast, where there exist few historical links with Futuna, communication was difficult and ended in the death of the Rev. Williams. This first voyage of missionaries through Vanuatu in 1839 leads Dr Gunn to describe Futuna as “the gateway of the Light, the KEY to open the door for the gospel message to the group” (1914, 6).

The death of John Williams did not alter the agreement between himself and Chief Kautiama and thus at some point between 1840 and 1841, missionaries Samuela and Apela arrived from Samoa. It so happened that Kautiama had with him an Aneityumese friend and trading partner who was visiting Futuna at that time to exchange baskets and mats from Aneityum in return for food (J. G. Miller 1981, 13). The two men therefore immediately made use of the missionary ship to make a return trip to Aneityum and to make further exchanges. Indeed Gunn notes that Kautiama took with him “mats, baskets, and all kinds of native trade” (1914, 6). The positive relationships between Chief Kautiama, his Aneityumese trading partner and the missionaries meant that Samoan missionaries were also settled on Aneityum. Thus as described by Gunn, the relationships developed on Futuna really were key to the arrival of Christianity in Vanuatu.

Nevertheless, the arrival of Samoan missionaries on Futuna did not entail the sort of changes that were aimed for by missionaries. In about 1843, a deadly epidemic spread through many of the islands in the Province and local islanders on both Futuna and

¹⁸ In missionary literature, a distinction was made between European missionaries and local converts turned missionaries, who were frequently called ‘teachers’. In recognition of their work I do not reproduce this division here and put Polynesian missionaries on a level with their European counterparts.

Tanna blamed their Samoan missionaries, sacrificing them and their families.¹⁹ Following these deaths, Futuna was avoided by missionaries for many years.

Meanwhile, in 1848 Dr John Geddie, a Canadian Presbyterian medical missionary, settled on Aneityum Island at Anelgauhat and a flourishing Christian community grew around him. Three years later, he visited Futuna and another chief from Futuna again made the most of the mission ship to travel to Aneityum – probably to further his own trade interests. Following this visit, the chief from Futuna agreed to receive missionaries from Aneityum and so in 1853, the first ni-Vanuatu missionaries, Waihit and Yosefa from Aneityum, arrived on Futuna with their wives, working in Matangi and Iakana, a district that is now uninhabited following repeated deadly epidemics.

People on Futuna did not readily convert to Christianity. Despite the existence of close trade links between Futuna and Aneityum, these first missionaries did not meet much success at their work; difficult relations led to Yosefa attempting to escape back to Aneityum. People on Futuna ordered the other missionaries to leave the island. These events did not deter the Presbyterian church. They printed booklets in the language of Futuna for worshippers and continued to send Pacific Islander missionaries such as Ru, a missionary from Tonga who was settled at Ibau with his wife in 1859.

Although Futuna was the first island in Vanuatu to come into contact with the Church, it is clear that the ideas were not welcomed for many years. There are indications in Dr Gunn's texts that suggest that what eventually changed local attitudes to Christianity was an increased interest in the opportunities of trade and wealth that European missionaries represented:

“They would do almost anything so long as there was hope of gain ... it was this fondness of the Futunese for bartering that secured a footing for teachers and missionaries, and enabled them, when sorely bested, to retain their hold on the island.” (Gunn 1914, 14)

¹⁹ It seems this might have been due to rumours started, or at least encouraged, by traders for whom missionaries disrupted the status quo (Miller J. G., 1981, p. 32).

Dr Gunn describes trade as the central motivation for people on Futuna, an objective seen throughout the Pacific (Shineberg 1967, 15). Islanders were already accustomed to trading pandanus mats and baskets “to passing ships” (J. G. Miller 1981, 13) and it is notable that the interest in missionaries by people on Futuna coincides with the end of the sandalwood trade in the area. Shineberg notes that sandalwood traders were preferred by ni-Vanuatu to missionaries on the 1840 and 1841 return voyage of the John Williams ship to the Southern New Hebrides. Indeed “the missionaries made very little headway, in fact, until the trade ceased to exist” (Shineberg, 1967, p. 13).

It is significant that on yet another visit to Aneityum by a group of Futunese, the ‘trade tourists’ are said to have declared that they would convert to Christianity when they saw the abundance of mats, women’s clothes and food with which they were presented (Gunn 1914, 12). At this time, missionaries represented not only the possibility of free passage for trades with other islands, but the possibility of new trade partnerships for new goods: cloth or fishhooks, for example. Dr. Gunn recounts numerous examples of people on Futuna eager to board missionary ships to travel between islands and even of the use of their conversion to Christianity as bargaining tools for better trade deals with the missionaries.

With missionaries came new opportunities for trade and the disappearance of other trade vessels meant that it was therefore not long before people on Futuna requested their own (European) missionary for the island. The Rev. Joseph Copeland arrived at Ibau in 1886 with his wife, having previously held appointments in both neighbouring Tanna and Aneityum, where he worked with Dr. Geddie. The couple were to spend ten years on the island. Missionary reports emphasize local interest in the objects missionaries brought with them: from the Rev. Copeland to Dr. Paton, Futunese requests for a European missionary were often explicitly motivated by an interest in the material gifts they came with (Gunn 1914, 15, 17).

The Rev. Copeland however made little impact on social and material life according to Dr. Gunn, his successor, who states that the Rev. Copeland believed that people on Futuna drove a hard bargain as they were neither eager to work as domestics nor offer gifts to his family; instead, they were eager to acquire what they could out of the cloth

and other objects he had with him (Gunn 1914, 17-24). Blackbirding, an indentured labour trade between Pacific Islands, Australia and other colonies, was however a problem during the Rev. Copeland's time on Futuna: many workers were tricked and enslaved and over one hundred men and women went to Fiji to work.

Dr. Gunn, who arrived on Futuna with his family in 1883 as Medical Missionary, the first Presbyterian Medical Missionary in the country, and his local missionary teacher colleagues had more success in converting people to Christianity. Still, he notes that trade was foremost in the minds of people on Futuna:

“The coming of the Dayspring [a missionary ship] was their holiday, and they brought fowls and baskets in exchange for tobacco... they had not come for work, but for play.” (Gunn 1914, 32)

While Dr. Gunn considers the exchanges people on Futuna wished to make as a form of enjoyment, such trades are a form of work. The passage of missionary and trade ships through Vanuatu presented valuable opportunities for ni-Vanuatu to further their own trade and exchange agendas. On the island, exchanges were also regularised: Fridays were barter days at the mission house and villagers would bring food and other articles to be exchanged for fishhooks, iron and cloth. Dr. Gunn's systematic payments in exchange for food and services made him a valuable resource for people on Futuna, as they had clearly hoped, and he eventually came to gain converts, shaping the future of life on the island.

2.2.1 Scottish Missionaries, Museums and Basketry Collections

Scottish Presbyterian missionaries like Dr. Gunn played an important role in converting Southern Vanuatu. Missionary artefact collections and the letters and texts they produced are now an important source of information through which to understand the history of the country. The collections of early missionaries are notable as their time in the Pacific was characterised by long-term, close contact with local people, in contrast to traders and other European voyagers of the time. The close relationships developed would have affected the objects being exchanged and there is evidence to suggest that Pacific Islanders offered tools of war to short-term traders, whilst long-term exchange

partners were given the opportunity to exchange a greater variety of things (Flexner, 2016; Thomas, 1991a). Missionaries sold or donated their collections to museums back home, motivated by a need to raise funds for themselves, for their missionary work, or out of personal interest in the objects they came across in the field. There are therefore important basketry collections in Scottish museums; missionary collections in fact currently make up almost half of the Vanuatu collections around Scottish museums (Denner 2015). Museums in Australia, where missionary headquarters were based, also have significant basketry collections from Southern Vanuatu as missionaries visited the country on furlough and on their journeys home.

The collections acquired by the Rev. James Hay Lawrie, who became the Pastor for Aneityum Island in 1885 (Adams 1998) are most relevant here. Lawrie took interest in the local practices he saw around him in Vanuatu and collected artefacts from his travels around Vanuatu²⁰ that he later donated or sold to museums back in Scotland.²¹ Amongst these collections are a variety of baskets and plaited pandanus mats from Futuna, Aniwa and Aneityum. As previously mentioned, there are unfortunately no examples of pandanus mats from Futuna, however the pandanus baskets are of interest and help provide a picture of basketry practices in the region at that time. The collections also provide clues as to how, why and when changes were made in pandanus work on Futuna and the role of missionary encounters in these changes.

Whilst unavoidable that a missionary's collections will have been influenced by their own interests, a missionary's interest in specific artefacts can have many influences, including to highlight areas in which the church has an interest or has had influence (Flexner 2016). Artefacts could be used by missionaries as physical proof of the transformations their work had produced that would complement their published texts

²⁰ Missionaries would often visit other islands within Vanuatu for church meetings, as contemporary representatives of the Church do today.

²¹ Denner found that in earlier years, Lawrie donated his artefacts to museums, whereas later offerings were sold to museums, with the occasional artefact being gifted. She suggests that although the sales may have been to raise funds for the mission, they may also have been out of personal need as the dates coincide with the illness of his wife and mother – he had also to pay for the education of his children at this time (Denner 2015).

and lectures. However collectors were only able to obtain what they were offered or what they saw: the people from whom missionaries made their collections had as much say in what was bought as the buyers (Brunt, et al. 2012, N. Thomas 1991a).

Given the complex relationships surrounding collection practices in the nineteenth century, it is difficult to ascertain why some artefacts from Futuna are well-represented in Scottish museums and others are not. The number of pandanus baskets identified as ‘church baskets’ suggests that these caught the eye of European missionaries. It seems that these baskets were favoured by missionaries for their connection to the Church as no other basket forms are represented in museum collections. Conversely, these church baskets may have been knowingly offered to missionaries by people on Futuna as gifts they would have been eager to acquire.

Nevertheless, both pandanus mats and baskets on Futuna changed their form following interactions with missionaries. Handicraft skills played an important role in the lives of European missionaries both in the Pacific and back at home as Presbyterians saw female domesticity as crucial to the Christian home (Godden 1997, Jolly 1991). The Victorian ideal of men and women as working in separate spheres of life, the public and the domestic, and the lasting impact of this on Futuna is discussed further in Chapter 5. At the time in the UK, women were contrasted with men and were connected to motherhood by emerging – mistaken – understandings of the female body and social reproduction (Yanagisako and Collier 1987). As highlighted by Jolly (1991), Presbyterian missionaries were shocked by the gendered divisions of work they saw in the islands; they connected domesticity with religious purity and morality and the hard physical labour they saw women do went against this. Missionaries and colonial expatriates introduced new ideas about morality, work, the body and relationships that have severely changed ways of life in Vanuatu (see for example Bolton 2015).

Presbyterian missionary wives therefore organised many classes and lessons to promote this idea of female domesticity. Cooking, cleaning, ironing and handicraft skills were vital to this enterprise. For example, sewing lessons were organised on Futuna and throughout Tafea province (Gunn 1914). As Douglas (1998, 2002) and Jolly (2014)

argue, there is evidence that these sewing classes in particular were much appreciated by ni-Vanuatu women and were analogous to the local handicrafts.

“Sewing is evidently a zone of serendipitous conjuncture between otherwise dissimilar missionary projects and indigenous female interests and desires.” (B. Douglas 2002, 4)

In fact, ni-Vanuatu women learnt sewing skills from European missionaries, but they also learnt new pandanus basketry skills from the Polynesian missionary wives, whose role and experiences are unfortunately almost invisible in letters and texts from the time (Munro and Thornley 2000).

Douglas suggests that ni-Vanuatu women might have enjoyed the sociability of sewing classes, or that they were a female ‘road’ to gain power within the church. She also indicates that some women would have had an interest in learning the new craft skills, but does not take this idea further (1999, 119). When contextualised within local and missionary accounts of life around Vanuatu at that time and with more recent fieldwork on Futuna, it seems to me that handicrafts present sources of enjoyment and pleasure for women mostly because of their own interest in the skilled work and the new opportunities it offered them (Küchler and Were 2003b). Nevertheless, central to both pandanus and cloth craft work are their products and the uses of these artefacts: the importance of trade and the sociality that results cannot be overemphasised. In the past as today, new handicraft skills are sought after on Futuna for a handicraft workers’ own interest in their craft, but equally for the advantage that this will give them in trade. Missionaries were perceived both as sources of trade and sources of new skills, notably handicraft skills.

2.2.1.1 Baskets

Missionary collections of basketry from Tafea province can be thought of at once as demonstrating a clear attempt to establish the effectiveness of their work in the South Seas and simultaneously as evidence of people on Futuna differentiating between artefacts for local trade and artefacts for trade with Europeans. For people on Futuna, a distinction between missionary trade and local trade would have enabled them to

maintain control over the value of their own basketry. Museum collections do however indicate that a story was being told with artefacts that represent either the ‘time of darkness’ before the arrival of missionaries, or the ‘time of light’: tropes that remain in common usage on the island today. A sorcerer’s basket filled with mysterious objects and herbs from Aneityum can be contrasted with church baskets; artefacts that would have the greatest impact and tell the greatest story of change are represented in these collections.

A missionary’s selective choice of artefacts as physical evidence of their work is further hinted at by what artefacts are missing from museum collections. What is not represented are the pandanus artefacts that are not immediately evocative of either the ‘darkness’ or the ‘light’. There is an evident lack of the three-cornered dancing baskets, *kato bokia*, or of the food baskets, *kato si mo tu kai*, used when observing pollution rules. Despite their use in local beliefs and practices, these baskets would not have been able to fully represent pre-Christian beliefs in all their exoticism for Scottish audiences. They would also not have been suitable artefacts for local exchange.

Two basket types are discussed below. I suggest that while missionaries thought that these baskets were the best representations in basketry of the new Christian life-styles of people on Futuna, people on Futuna thought that these baskets would gain the highest value if exchanged with missionaries rather than in local trade spheres.

2.2.1.1.1 Church baskets

The arrival of the Church on Futuna created a new use for baskets. One basket²² collected by the Rev. Lawrie carries the description, “Used by native Christians for carrying books to church”, and missionary photographs show men and women carrying short-handled, rectangular-based baskets in front of the church.²³ Such baskets

²² National Museum of Scotland, accession number A.1889.549.

²³ See for example photographs taken by Dr. Gunn. Copies of his photograph albums are held by the National Library of Scotland (Archive file Volume26/imp-a-nls-75654066-1.tif) and the Mitchell Library (catalogue number PXA 1579) in Sydney, Australia, but some are also available in digital format in the University of Southern California’s International Mission Photography Archive online.

demonstrated to people back in Scotland the ‘civilising’ effectiveness of their missions in the South Seas. Baskets are notably particularly suitable due to their connotations with domesticity for Europeans.

This basket, see Figure 4, and several similar ones held in the Glasgow Museums collections, resembles a smaller version of the contemporary large pandanus garden baskets of other islands. Of plain twill, these church baskets are either rectangular based or of the *vaka* style with a two-cornered base. The construction of the basket is of the same style as what is seen in the region now as there are no tassels or fringes on the base, but unlike contemporary baskets on Futuna, no *buraō* is worked into the handles, which are short, and few baskets feature patterned twill work. The closing rim of such baskets is also different: not many baskets have *toya*, the section near the top of the basket where pandanus strips are torn into narrower strips and where patterns are worked; *fakajikijia* for the most part seems unchanged, however *tarabunia*, the closing of the basket rim, has the plaited ‘tail’ that is now characteristic of other islands in Tafea province but that has since been improved upon within Futuna, see below. From museum collections, it seems that this form of basket was common throughout the region at the end of the 19th century. By the 1970s, people were using *Futuna* baskets in church (J. D. Keller 2018).

Museum collections demonstrate several variations on this form of church basket: such as greater or smaller sections of *toya*, the subdividing of pandanus strips into narrow strips; pattern work, for example *hlisi*; pattern work formed by the addition of coloured materials in the midst of the twill. There are two baskets in the National Museum of Scotland however that really stand out from this group due to the white colour of their pandanus and for the all-over pattern work that covers base and sides of the basket. Interestingly, considering contemporary styles of basketry, one such basket is from Aniwa, an island that produces few baskets for sale in urban markets; the origin of the other basket is unknown.²⁴ The sizeable basketry collections from Tafea Province at the Australian Museum in Sydney shows that this rich decorative work was however

²⁴ National Museum of Scotland, accession numbers A.1889.548 and A.1900.389.



Figure 4. 'Basket', Glasgow Museums, accession number 1897.143.dh.2. Reproduced courtesy of Glasgow Museums.



Figure 5. 'Basket', Glasgow Museums, accession number 1897.143.cv. Reproduced courtesy of Glasgow Museums.

common in the region; the museum has a number of large patterned baskets from Erromango and Aneityum and an even greater number of unprovenanced examples. It is notable from these museum collections that there was incredible similarity between baskets from Tafea province; contemporary basket styles in the area are in contrast regionalised and islands have for the most part developed their own, recognisable style.

2.2.1.1.2 Box baskets

Small pandanus lidded boxes seem to have been collected by the Rev. Lawrie with similar aims in mind to the church baskets: to demonstrate the progress made by the church in Vanuatu. Described only as ‘trinkets’, these baskets suggest a way of life that would be recognisable and agreeable to people back in Scotland.

Interestingly, these baskets also provide a clue to the origin of the contemporary rectangular based *boks* and *hanbag* baskets on Futuna. The unusual width of the pandanus strips and the serrated ‘*niu gini*’ edging evoke contemporary wide-leafed pandanus mats that, as detailed below, are known to be the result of knowledge exchanges with Polynesian missionary teachers. They bear a close resemblance to Hawaiian pandanus baskets in the Bishop Museum (Brigham 1906). It is also interesting that these boxes are no longer made or remembered on Futuna, suggesting a lack of interest or need in them.

2.2.1.2 Mats

Pandanus mats underwent large changes after the arrival of Polynesian missionaries. As described above, the old *bakhaunea* of Futuna were replaced by the new *kete*.

Tagaronga Kauatonga explained that the contemporary mat style came to Futuna via Aneityum, who currently work the same wide-leafed mats as on Futuna, but who, prior to the arrival of missionaries, also made plaited pandanus mats with a narrower weave and single thickness of leaves. The women’s fieldworker on Aneityum, Nelly Nepea



Figure 6. *Potu*, pandanus mats, in the *kete* (left) and *bakhaunea* styles (right).

Tamalea²⁵, helped complete this story and attributed the new wide-leafed thick mats to Samoan missionaries who had worked on her island. It will be remembered that Samoan missionary teachers played an important role in introducing Christianity to Tafea province, as described above, but clearly these missionaries and their wives introduced more than Christianity. It seems that in the past there was as much local interest in new styles and techniques of pandanus work as there is now: historically, people borrowed songs, dances and sculptural practices from elsewhere “in a way that drew attention to their foreign origins and emphasized their exotic nature” (Jolly 1992b, 59) and this suggests why the origin of these mats is still discussed on Futuna.

Nelly explained that Aneityum was the first island to adopt this new style of mat but that the nearby islands in Tafea (Futuna, Tanna, Aniwa) soon copied the style. Indeed women are keenly aware of the advantage that a unique style or skill will give them over others in trade and are quick to take up opportunities. Dr. Gunn stated that trade was the greatest motivation for people on Futuna in the 1800s, meaning only the

²⁵ I was fortunate to meet Nelly whilst on a short visit to Anelgauhat and am very grateful to her for having spent the afternoon with me discussing pandanus work.

exchange of objects, and this tendency to think of trade only in terms of the immediate objects being exchanged seems to continue within anthropology; however the current and historical basketry practices on Futuna suggest that new skills were just as interesting for islanders. The exchange of skills with missionary wives, such as those that could produce new pandanus mat styles, offered women a chance to develop their knowledge and to further their advantage in exchanges.

Samoan missionaries were sources of new pandanus plaiting skills, but Scottish missionaries brought cotton cloth (Jolly 2014). Cloth was quickly recognised to be a quick and labour-saving alternative to the pandanus work that was previously used as blankets and for wrapping the dead: it was considered ‘easy’. Kuchler and Were (2003b) suggest that as a material, it was also considered powerful, yet cloth did not however replace pandanus mats in all respects. Pandanus mats are notably still essential artefacts in exchange and trade and sleeping mats are also still fundamentally linked to an individual’s spirit in life and in death. Cloth may only have replaced pandanus textiles where the meanings of these pandanus artefacts were of little importance.

2.3 Colonialism and Independence

The third historic period I consider is that within living memory. It is still the ‘time of the light’, but there are other political and economic factors at play. This section focuses on how the creativity of pandanus workers in reimagining *kastom dres* and ‘traditional’ baskets maintains the contemporary relevance of their work while communicating their connections to skilled and powerful ancestors to legitimate their practices (Mageo 2001, 5).

There are few museum collections that document life on Futuna after the formal annexation of Vanuatu by the British and French governments in 1906.²⁶ After Dr. Gunn left Futuna in 1917, few Europeans lived on Futuna for any length of time and of these, none published reports or letters describing life on the island. Neither, unfortunately, did

²⁶ The University of Sydney’s Macleay Museum holds three baskets from Futuna collected by Dr Peter Elliott, a private collector, during his travels in the 1960s or 70s.

anyone actually from the island. Other than government reports and early anthropological texts, information on this period of time is therefore limited.

Although colonisation proved problematic and inefficient by many accounts (Trease 1987), its effects still trickled down to Futuna through the work of both government representatives and the travels of the people of Futuna. For example, local hereditary leadership patterns were disrupted following an Anglo-French protocol in 1911 that established indigenous ‘Assessors’ in communities to settle disputes in the colonial courts (Bolton 1998, 183). On Futuna, this disrupted the existing leadership of Kawiamieta and Namruke chiefs. Changes initiated by traders, planters and missionaries in the previous century were gradually reinforced and developed, however the condominium made little impact on Futuna until the 1960s (Fakamuria, et al. 1995). The arrival of greater numbers of Europeans led to a small increase in trade and the need for stores to meet both the local and colonial needs. Coconut plantations to produce copra also introduced added cash into the local economy and represented a new form of employment.

The period of colonial rule was however marked by the Second World War, which unsettled and transformed both the politics and economics within the country (White and Lindstrom 1989). In contrast to the destruction seen elsewhere, for Vanuatu, the Second World War mostly brought about opportunities, although some people were severely affected on Futuna (J. D. Keller 2018). Vanuatu was a place of transit and of rest for armies²⁷ as battles were fought in Solomon Islands; military cargo came through the ports of Vanuatu on its way north. Many of these opportunities were of an economic nature; goods and labour were exchanged between ni-Vanuatu and soldiers.

The war effort required labour and 950 men from Tafea province were recruited to work on Efate: some of whom were from Futuna (J. D. Keller 2018, Lindstrom 1989, 401, Samana 1998). Where there were encounters between Americans and ni-Vanuatu, local goods were traded for American goods or cash in an exchange that benefitted both

²⁷ Although the New Zealand, Australian and New Caledonian armies were also stationed in Vanuatu, the American army came in greater numbers and made the greatest impact.

parties. On Espiritu Santo as elsewhere in the Pacific, for example Kiribati (Talu, et al. 1979), there was “a lively trade in carvings, bows and arrows, pigs’ tusks, and grass skirts” (Lindstrom 1991, 49) and this would have been the case on Tanna too, when the Americans arrived and built themselves a base there. Indeed the scale and regularity of trade during the war gave rise to the central marketplace in Port Vila (Burlo 1989).

The war left behind infrastructure that helped develop tourism in the region (White and Lindstrom 1989). Airports and roads facilitated the movement of tourists and opened up new access routes. Port Vila developed into the nation’s capital and administrative centre and more locally on Tanna Island, Lenakel and neighbouring Isangel became the Provincial centres for Futuna. Both became important new centres for trade in Vanuatu, especially in the 1970s when it was announced that Vanuatu was a tax-haven (Forster 1980). Hotels, banks and markets opened and there was a need for artefacts for the tourist market as well as for the growing number of ni-Vanuatu urban drifters.

After World War II the condominium government had greater financial resources and could now not only help fund but take control of the countries’ education and health care services, although these were either British or French according to their funders (Philibert 1981, Van Trease 1995). Futuna too became caught between the British and French governments as the French government enlarged its sphere of influence through the creation of many well-funded primary schools in the 1960s (Forster 1980, 370). The French school was attended by many of the older generation at Ibau as unlike British schools, school fees were covered by the government. Some parents sent alternate children to the two schools in efforts to maximise the available opportunities, however the dual educational system reproduced local distinctions between Kawiameta and Namruke moieties. For example, a Kawiameta chief and government representative used his relations with the French to further his own political aims (Fakamura, et al. 1995, 403). This school was forced to close in 1988 due to lack of funds following independence and a consequent shortage of pupils.

As part of the process of independence, the Malvatumauri, the National Council of Chiefs, was created in Port Vila to advise government on matters concerning *kastom*. This, along with the previous establishment of Assessors, also created difficulties on

Futuna, as just one chief was to represent the whole island which had heretofore been governed separately by both Kawiameta and Namruke chiefs. Nevertheless, independence united Futuna. As discussed in the Introduction, island-wide membership of the Presbyterian Church meant that Futuna supported the Vanua'aku Pati whole heartedly (Fakamura, et al. 1995).

2.3.1 The New Nation: *Kastom*

The trope of 'darkness' and 'light' that was developed by missionaries to differentiate between pre-Christian and Christian ways of life in Vanuatu was added to and complicated during colonisation as a new division became apparent: the way of the white man was clearly different from the way of the black man. Frequently discussed in these terms, *fasin blong waetman*, *fasin blong blakman*, the local 'black man' way of life became known in Bislama as *kastom*. In practice, skin colour is however no longer a defining characteristic of a person's way of life and Melanesians living in town are often said to live like, if not be, white people (Bashkow 2006).

The concept of *kastom* developed in opposition to the white man's ways and played a particularly important role in the fight for independence as it was felt that the colonial governments had disrupted normal practice (Jolly 1992a, 340). Initially a concept linked tightly to land, politics and therefore male areas of life in Vanuatu, *kastom* has become a term that encompasses a way of living and acting (Bolton 2003a). The changing nature of the term is due in large part to the New Hebrides National Party and the work of the VKS. In the 1970s, the New Hebrides National Party presented a unique combination of church, education and *kastom* ways and promoted this as a uniting identity for ni-Vanuatu. This re-configuration and suggestion that *kastom* and Christian beliefs are not antithetical is now a guiding principle of Vanuatu's constitution. At the same time, as mentioned in the Introduction, the VKS initiated an Oral Traditions Project in the 1970s to document and revive aspects of pre-Christian culture (Bolton 2003a). The program grew in size and scope and developed into the VKS fieldworker program where trainees conduct research on their local islands and meet once a year to discuss the outcomes of their work, select a research focus for the following year, and undergo further training. Fieldworkers actively reflect on the nature of *kastom*, its uses and its possibilities

(Bolton 2007). *Kastom* has therefore become a positive force in Vanuatu and is a defining feature of what it is to be ni-Vanuatu (Regenvanu 2005). The politics of the term in Vanuatu and neighbouring countries has been the focus of much anthropological analysis, see for instance collections by Keesing and Tonkinson (1982) and Jolly and Thomas (1992).

This re-appraisal of *kastom* means that it is now a valuable system and a resource. Bolton describes it as “the knowledge and practice of the place” (Bolton 2007, 35). Intimately connected to land and place, *kastom* arises from the local ways of doing things and so can incorporate innovations and changes as the way of the place changes. Crucially for this discussion, as noted above, *kastom* is now a concept that is as applicable to women’s activities as to men’s. Women’s work, notably in the arenas of handicrafts, has become not only validated as *kastom*, but also valued as such. The Women’s Culture Project brought women’s work into the limelight in Vanuatu, but it in particular showed that pandanus work was a highly skilled occupation with important connections to the spiritual and the prestigious aspects of social life: it was to be valued as a significant aspect of *kastom*. It is therefore perhaps not a coincidence that the intense development of two aspects of pandanus work described below, *kastom dres* and baskets, have coincided with the revival in interest in past practices that marked the fight for independence (Jolly 1992a, 341).

2.3.1.1 Kastom Dres

The changes to *kastom dres* (traditional clothing) on Futuna demonstrate the creative side of *kastom* and highlight the multiple and varied origins that make up the way of life and practices of people on the island. What is important to people on Futuna is shown in their *kastom dres*, a visible ‘social past’ (Schapera, 1962 in Hirsch & Stewart, 2005, p. 268). Contemporary *kastom dres* therefore expresses an idealised view of the past, in line with the mores and needs of the present as people break with the present (Dousset 2018) to appropriate the future. It is a reclamation of history through local means; where other Pacific Islanders use dance and poetic texts (Hermann 2005, Stillman 2001), or re-make grave inscriptions (Lannoy 2005), women on Futuna use pandanus work.

On Futuna in 2015, women's *kastom dres* was composed of 'grass' skirts made of *bura*o and a plaited pandanus vest-like top; men wore knee-length plaited pandanus textiles decorated with *bura*o fringes and *wiri-wiri* (over the shoulder pandanus and *bura*o sashes). This is very different from the *nambas* and 'grass' skirts worn by men and women respectively before Christianity became widely adopted; clothing that was complemented by shell necklaces and earrings for both genders. This clothing was rarely mentioned during fieldwork; women only remarked on the range of skirt types used by their ancestors, which were made from either banana leaf fibres, *bura*o or pandanus leaves depending on the occasion and were twinned together rather than plaited. Christian ideas of prudery and colonial ideas of sexualised bodies (Reed 1997) have been embraced within a form of clothing that previously shocked missionaries for its minimal coverage of the body, but this clothing has also been developed and enhanced to suit its new use as performance attire. *Kastom dres* is rarely worn on Futuna itself as people living on Futuna don't feel the need to wear it and express their identity visually; they say that unlike people in town, they are connected to their past through their way of life. It is a view of *kastom* as the practices of a place and in particular as a way of living that is defined in contrast to European ways. Jolly also notes this in discussing the authenticity of *kastom*: the village is deemed more authentic by islanders than the town (Jolly 1992b, 57).

In 1974, Queen Elizabeth II visited Vanuatu and celebrations were put on for her in Port Vila as well as on Espiritu Santo and on Pentecost Islands, which she also visited. The first Futuna stringband based on Tanna were asked to perform in the capital (Fitzgerald and Hayward 2009). Men's *kastom dres* was altered for these performances; dancers wore knee length tasselled plaited pandanus textiles to fit in with the fashions of the time and to emphasise their dance movements (Keller and Kuautonga 2007, 87-8). In 1979 too, the first National Arts Festival was held in Port Vila and the National Council of Women funded the participation of six women from Futuna. Seieke remembered the preparations as she was asked to perform a *kastom danis* with her friends to represent Futuna Island. The women were critically aware of the need to cover their breasts for this public occasion and so devised bra-like plaited pandanus tops to complement their grass skirts. In both occasions, it was felt that *kastom dres* should reflect the mores of

the island and the clothing became both more covering and more spectacular, in a sense using *kastom dres* “not just as expressions of a new context, but technologies that created that context anew” (N. Thomas 2003, 94).

Futuna Island dancers have gone on to skilfully build up a reputation for themselves with both tourists within Vanuatu and tourism professionals around the world as they have moulded a place for themselves as representatives of Vanuatu. The all-male Futunese dance group Futuna Fatuana hold regular concerts and shows in Vanuatu, but frequently travel further afield to represent Vanuatu on a larger stage: for example at the Universal Exhibition hosted by Milan in 2015. *Kastom dres* worn by these performers demonstrates a clear understanding of what is expected by tourists, with natural fibres, brightly coloured nylon string and dyed or painted cloth used to great effect to make three different types of costume that resonate with tourist concepts of tradition and an island paradise. Plaited pandanus skirts and *wiri-wiri* (over the shoulder sashes) are plaited with pandanus and decorated with a frill of *buraio* tassels that sway with the dancers. Fluorescent nylon grass skirts are used in other dances, with similar decorations tied around the biceps and calf muscles; but singers also wear ‘island shirts’, brightly patterned shirts, to represent a more contemporary, idealised aspect of life in the country.

Although the Futuna diaspora on Efate and Tanna islands have captured the tourist market through their *kastom* villages and performers, *kastom dres*, as previously mentioned, is rarely worn on Futuna itself. Indeed matching ‘uniforms’ of calico, island shirts or island dresses²⁸ are favoured for local celebrations on the island whether directly church related or not: *kastom dres* is only used by people on Futuna when looking outwards, beyond their own island. Uniforms highlight the unity of a group and so within Futuna, smaller-scale identities are more important. It is when looking beyond

²⁸ See Bolton (2005) and Pains (2003a) for discussions on the history and contemporary role of island dresses in Vanuatu and New Caledonia respectively.

the island that people feel the need to visually express their island identity and bring attention to their ancestors, their skills and expertise.

During my fieldwork, *kastom dres* was only worn twice on Futuna: once at the Agriculimaptation Festival in the closing ceremony which featured *kastom danis* and music and once during graduation at Ishia secondary school. The graduation ceremony is remarkable as in contrast to the graduation uniform of other schools in the country and the overarching importance of island affinity in the country, at Ishia all students wear *kastom dres* in the Futuna style irrespective of where they are from. Students come from Futuna and its neighbouring islands and in a contemporary version of the trade partners that existed before the arrival of Christianity, students are paired up with host families on the island with food, gifts and care being exchanged. Close relationships are developed between families and graduation is a visual demonstration of the new alliances created as students parade around the school in their adopted island's *kastom dres*.

Contemporary *kastom dres* is therefore used as a visual representation of Futuna to outsiders. It is designed to demonstrate the creativity, skill and the wealth of Futuna in the present and in the past and so less is definitely not more here. The graduation parade is in fact treated by pandanus workers as a fashion show. Crop tops for girls are particularly elaborate and women experiment with a variety of complicated straps, styles, patterns, designs and text to make the tops extra special and unique.

Kastom dres has come a long way from that worn in early missionary photos. It has been transformed to fit changing ideas of propriety and has been elaborated to visually demonstrate an idealised view of Futuna and its past to outsiders. This clothing is *kastom* and will clearly remain *kastom* as further alterations are made; innovative practice in pandanus work is itself *kastom*. This is clearly seen if we consider recent changes in pandanus baskets on Futuna.



Figure 7. Graduating students parading at Ishia.



Figure 8. Teata and Ruth with daughter and host daughters

2.3.1.2 Baskets and Large-Scale Tourism

Although this chapter has highlighted a number of forms of tourism both originating in Futuna or concluding in Futuna, tourism at a large scale has only developed recently, with an exponential increase in numbers visiting Vanuatu in the last three or four decades. Pandanus workers on Futuna have ensured that their artefacts are widely available in these markets and as discussed in relation to *kastom dres*, women have a keen awareness of the interests and needs of their customers, are responsive to feedback and are aware of trends. Creativity in pandanus work, which sees incremental changes, has been “a strategy for moving away from the past while retaining a link with it” (Hughes-Freeland 2007, 219).

Futuna baskets, for example, the ‘water baskets’ previously discussed, have not always been constructed from plain, undyed pandanus as is the current trend: the previous generation of women used to routinely incorporate dyed pandanus strips, but also wool. At this time, baskets were only made in the *Futuna* style on the island.

Magret told me that Nai, the mother of Vanuatu’s previous Prime Minister Edward Natapei, was skilled at working baskets with wool decorations and would often work names into baskets. However sometime in the 1980s, women stopped using dyed pandanus strips in *Futuna* baskets:

“They didn’t want dye because it ruined their clothes. When it rained, the dye would go onto their t-shirts. It’s something from before... they’ve stopped that now.”²⁹ Papra 04.06.15

Women on Futuna noticed that their customers found their baskets problematic when it rained. Bolton (1993, 386) notes that the first commercial dyes used in pandanus work in Vanuatu were imported during the period of colonisation for use on copra sacking. Available in several colours, it was not as colour fast as contemporary textile dyes. This

²⁹ “*Oli no wantem peint from i stap spoilem ol klos blong olgeta. From rentuem, bei peint i ko long tisot blong olgeta. Samting bifo... bei oli lego.*”



Figure 9. Macleay Museum, accession number ET 86.19.21. Collected by Dr Peter Elliott during his travels in the 1960s or 70s. Reproduced courtesy of Macleay Museum.



Figure 10. (Above left) Boks baskets

Figure 11. (Above) Fone basket



Figure 12. (Left) Laptop basket

move towards undyed baskets however interestingly also coincides with the independence of Vanuatu, when *kastom* and old ways of life were at the forefront of everybody's minds. Added to this, there was also an increase in the numbers of tourists to visit Vanuatu following independence; pandanus workers say that tourists like the natural look of undyed pandanus that is characteristic of *Futuna* baskets and the *kastom dres* worn by performers of *kastom danis*. Women on Futuna have noticed that tourists come to Vanuatu in search of the 'traditional' – exemplified by handmade baskets from natural, undyed fibres. These changes to *Futuna* baskets are therefore a direct response to both local ideals of the future and tourists' perceived ideas of the past.

Recent innovations in pandanus basketry with the development of *hanbag*, *boks* and now *fone* and *laptop* baskets shows how women on Futuna are continuously reworking their craft, setting trends and actually driving the national market forwards as they work to create different futures. These baskets are expressions of modernity. Interestingly, this is reflected in their structure, which is different to that of the 'traditional' *Futuna* baskets.

Women are keen to lay claim to new innovations in basketry. For example, the contemporary version of basket closing techniques, *fakajikijia* and *tarabunia*, are said to be the work of Seieke's father's sister, Meisiri's, work. Meisiri worked out how to close *tarabunia* in a way that makes *tarabunia* come full circle to conceal the finish – which previously featured a little plaited tail in which a knot would be tied to hold the plait tight.

Small alterations over time can amount to greater stylistic changes as they are accumulated and improved. The *hanbag* baskets were for example developed over a number of years as women modified and developed each other's alterations. Kapiapi described herself as a creator of this new style, describing how she had worked out the new form of basket in anticipation of a basketry show held in Matangi a long time, perhaps 30 or so years, ago. At this time, Kapiapi made a *Futuna* basket, but altered the handles in order for it to sit on the back: holes were punched into the base of the basket in order to thread through the plaited pandanus rope so that it could be worn like a backpack. Though popular, this style was found to be impractical as the rope handles

would soon tear holes in the base of the basket where they passed from the inside to the outside. There are therefore few examples of such baskets that still exist around Futuna.

The concept of the *hanbag* basket was not however abandoned, but reworked. To strengthen the baskets, inner baskets were introduced. As noted above, these inner baskets bear a striking resemblance to the base of the lidded boxes found in Scottish museum collections, see above. The wide-leaves of these baskets is crucial as it enables the doubling up of pandanus strips and thus the construction of an outer basket that emerges from the base of the inner basket. However despite starting these *hanbag* and *boks* baskets with a wide-leafed plait, pandanus workers nevertheless always divide the pandanus strips into regular narrow strips as per *Futuna* basket styles. Indeed a fine plait is recognised as the work of a skilled pandanus worker both on Futuna and further afield and this suggests that women on Futuna are keen to maintain their reputation for skilled pandanus work. The new styles of baskets are therefore a marriage between the past (fine plaiting) and the future (new construction techniques and styles of basket).

Basketry techniques on Futuna have therefore been developed as pandanus workers converse with each other through their work, incorporating their clients' interests too. Regular innovations in basket work have created two types of basket: the 'traditional'



Figure 13. Hanbag basket with punctured holes for straps.



Figure 14. Contemporary hanbag basket with inner box.

Futuna baskets and the range of contemporary basket styles. Nevertheless, a recognisable and distinctive island-wide style is maintained; baskets are a means to express respect for the power and skills of ancestors and this is most visible in fine plaiting work, a common feature of all baskets from *Futuna*. Innovations in the craft, using the inner box structure, also make explicit pandanus workers' concerns to situate themselves in a future: a future that is nevertheless steeped in the skills of ancestors.

2.4 Conclusion

Pandanus basketry on *Futuna* has been altered and developed in response to the changes in the lives of the people who make, work and use it. It seems that large transformations in religious beliefs and in the material of the everyday have not however affected some of the underlying meanings and beliefs about and surrounding pandanus work, which seem to have persisted in different forms. In some cases, for example the food baskets used following a death in the family, pandanus baskets have been abandoned in favour of new materials but the taboo and the ideas concerning the human spirit are extant. In other cases, such as for pandanus sleeping mats, the use of imported foam mattresses and coffins have neither altered the meanings inherent in these artefacts nor changed the ways they are used. A history of basketry on the island therefore reveals the importance of spiritual beliefs (despite Christianity) and the deep connections between these beliefs and pandanus work.

A second theme in this chapter is the importance of basketry in trade and the impact of this on social life on *Futuna*. Pandanus workers on *Futuna* have been engaged in trade beyond the island for centuries. In their engagements with each other and with other islanders, traders, missionaries, the military and tourists, pandanus baskets and mats have played a crucial role. There is much to suggest that it was a local interest in trade that paved the way for Scottish missionaries and Christian conversion. Basketry is therefore not just the background to social life on *Futuna*, but a tool through which life is managed and given form.

Moreover, a desire to gain an advantage in trade has created an eagerness to learn new handicraft skills and to explore these skills to create innovative new designs and styles

of pandanus basketry. Throughout history, pandanus workers on Futuna have demonstrated their keen awareness of the interests of their clients and trade partners by altering their wares and responding to feedback. As such, great skill and creativity are eagerly fostered and made use of on the island. The concept of water baskets and the new sleeping mats are referred to as indications of great craft skills and their ancestral origins on the island are highlighted. This history of basketry creates connections with skilled ancestors and brings additional value and legitimacy to contemporary practices. In the face of Christianity and colonialism, continuity is an important theme for people: continuity enables them to overcome rupture and find stability in an uncertain present (Fardon 2005, 88).

Pandanus workers have always been at the forefront of change locally and this, I argue, is their *kastom*: their historically based practice that is closely related to the particular *ples* that is Futuna Island and the people who inhabit and have inhabited this place. In the context of change, exchange and innovation discussed above, the next chapter asks what it means to belong: how plants and people come to belong to a place. This is particularly important given the extent of current movement and migration patterns of both people and things. The processing of pandanus ready to be used as a craft material is also explored, as the particularities of the *ples* determine how the materials are best grown, harvested, prepared and stored. This consideration of craft materials and belonging is the first step in the construction of a pandanus artefact.

3 Rooted People, Rooted Pandanus

Pandanus work on Futuna is not thought to start at the moment the pandanus leaves are harvested, or when they are prepared and ready for use. Pandanus work, as other handicrafts, is a holistic, embedded activity which has no clear start or end to the process: indeed in pandanus work, what comes from the land is returned to the land. As previously noted, people are buried with their sleeping mat, whilst the purpose of other mats and baskets are reinvented and reinterpreted as they age and degrade. Mats are repurposed as weatherproofing covers for the apex of ‘grass’ roofs or as insulation for baking in earth ovens, whilst baskets go from ‘Sunday best’ to having solely kitchen or household uses before being ultimately thrown onto a rubbish pile to decay.

The preparing of pandanus leaves for work is in fact central to pandanus plaiting on Futuna, as Peri and Paterson (1976) argue with respect to the preparation of sedge roots for Pomo woven baskets in North America. The materials of craftwork, the care of them, where they come from and the ideas that go into growing, preparing and processing them are as much a part of the craft of pandanus work as the processes through which the materials come to take on form in a basket, mat or fan. As Drazin notes, “materials are not just about making” (2015b, 13) and this chapter answers his call to give proper appreciation to materials, their social journeys and the relations and associations they entail.

This chapter demonstrates that pandanus trees have meaning on Futuna: meaning comes from the land, from the *ples* or place, as described below. Pandanus, people and the local environment are deeply intertwined. People on Futuna claim that their island produces the best kind of pandanus: a distinctive leaf, bleached by the surrounding sea and strengthened by the rockiness of the land. The *ples* shapes the pandanus and therefore also determines local preparation methods: just as pandanus mats and baskets on Futuna differ from other islands in Vanuatu, the methods of preparing leaves for plaiting also differs. Pandanus, people and *ples* on Futuna are closely connected and form the basis from which pandanus work should be understood on the island.

Pandanus trees are rooted in a *ples* in a way similar to how pandanus work is rooted too. Yet this chapter argues that on Futuna, the worker of pandanus must in addition be themselves rooted in the *ples*.³⁰ On Futuna Island, pandanus work starts in the gardens: before that even, it starts in the family for to have land on Futuna, you must have family. To work pandanus, you yourself must be rooted in the *ples*. As marriage is virilocal on the island, with land access rights passed on through the male descent line, women, the workers of pandanus, must negotiate land for their pandanus cultivations. This poses particular problems for women from, or who grew up in, another place. It is an increasingly important problem as more men and women from Futuna are growing up in settlements on Tanna or Vila without setting foot on their island. Far from resulting in overgrown and disused garden plots, other families with access rights to the land often lay claim to them.

Much has been published that highlights how craftwork is part of the land and part of a people's history, but less attention has been given to the materials, the processes of work and the complex relationship between people, their work and their *ples*, although see Leach (2003) and Were (2013). Migrations of people between islands within and beyond Vanuatu has changed the human and plant face of Futuna. The previous chapter demonstrated how the travels of people changed the physical form of pandanus baskets, mats and fans, but this chapter explores how this movement also impacts the people and the materials with which they work. I compare the movement of people, mostly women, to Futuna with the movement of plants, notably pandanus, to the island, asking how people and plants become rooted in a *ples*.

I introduce Futuna Island as it is experienced by people on Futuna, then outline the concept of *ples* to provide some context from which to understand ideas of how people belong somewhere and access land. I then consider local classifications of pandanus

³⁰ My use of the metaphor of 'roots' is to emphasise the relationship between how people and plants come to belong to a place; as far as I am aware it is not a reflection on local ways of talking about belonging on Futuna, unlike Kraemer's research with youth in Port Vila (Kraemer 2013) or Taylor's work on representations of relationality on North Pentecost (Taylor 2008).

varieties on the island and compare this with classifications of people to shed light on this fundamental way of categorising the world.

3.1 Experiencing Futuna Island

Futuna is known fondly by people from the island as ‘just a rock’, *wan rok nomo*, due to its unusual shape and geography. This nickname has a double meaning: in certain instances, such as the quality of pandanus on the island, the isolated rocky nature of Futuna is a positive characteristic. At other times, it is used in a denigrating manner, implying that Futuna is often ignored by others, who consider it a lone rock isolated from and of little interest to the rest of the country (Keller and Kuautonga 2007, 41).

Following Bolton (1999b, 2012, 165), the landscape in Vanuatu is considered dynamic and changing. This is seen in changes due to geological and meteorological activity, but also in *kastom* stories that recount and explain the movement of geological features. On Futuna for example, Cyclone Pam temporarily removed all sand from Sinou in 2015, and what had previously been a startlingly white sandy beach became an exposed white coral bed. More permanent changes to the landscape have also recently occurred within the same district; since the 1980s the large cave at Ta Fasua beach has irreversibly crumbled following earthquakes and a number of important cyclones. These recent, visible impacts of weather systems are complemented by *kastom* stories that explain and describe the apparition of the island and how and why its form and shape have changed over time. One of the most well-known *kastom* stories on Futuna describes, amongst other themes, how the island came to have some of its more noticeable coastal features. Entitled ‘The Monster and Majijiki’ in Keller and Kuautonga’s (2007) volume, this story features a chase between the monster and cultural hero, Majijiki. To slow down and prevent the monster’s movement, Majijiki progressively creates the reef that fringes the North coast of the island and produces noticeable – named³¹ – rocks and cliffs along that coast. The elements of this story directly link to physical reference points in the

³¹ Naming places adds an additional layer to a person’s experience of a place and connects the place to stories, memories and biographic events (Feld 1996, 109-113).

landscape and explain their existence. The landscape therefore changes as a result of the movement and actions of the spirits and people who live in it.

I demonstrate below how a *ples* creates people, but clearly engagement of people and spirits with the land also creates a particular *ples*. In some cases, this is quite literal: both on Ambae and on Futuna there are *kastom* stories that describe how the island came into existence. The stories describe how Ambae island was formed from the local culture hero's upturned canoe (Bolton 1999b, 45), while Futuna island is said to have risen up out of the sea to save Majijiki's pregnant wife who had been pushed into the sea after having been usurped by a monster, *ta pasiesi*, at a time when Majijiki lived on Tanna island.

Other stories talk of a floating island and of bridges between islands. Kuautonga and Keller (2007) and Thomas and Kuautonga (1992) note that both songs and *kastom* stories from Futuna include precise references to particular locations around the island. History and the spiritual realm are thereby grounded in the landscape and people's experiences of this;³² the landscape becomes a map of the movements and activities of people and spirits. Recognising this added layer of meaning to the island has been seen to be essential to fully understanding the lived experience of people on Futuna (Keller and Kuautonga 2007).

Local ideas about the island form a vital aspect of pandanus work. Below, I consider how people come to belong to this island and compare this with concepts of belonging in pandanus classifications to understand the relationship between people, pandanus and *ples*.

3.2 *Ples* and Belonging

Curtis explains that for people on Tomman Island off Malekula, "It is not just that they are *of* the place, nor only that they *make* the place, but that in many respects they *are* the

³² The diverse ways people can sense and experience places is perhaps under-researched. Feld's work on sound in Bosavi, Papua New Guinea is a notable exception (Feld 1990).

place and the place *is* them” (original italics) (Curtis 2002, 4). *Ples* is the Bislama term for place and incorporates both the sense of land as a substance to be worked and land as “a social reality” (Bolton 1999b, 45). In the local language on Futuna, these are differentiated as *kere* and *fanua*, the latter of which will be recognised from the ProtoPolynesian *vanua*, from which the name Vanuatu was imagined. Lind notes that “both place and person are so mutually constituted that they are inseparable” (2014, 78); the formation of Tanna Island was for example thought to occur at the same time as the appearance of humans (Bonnemaison 1985, 36). This for example leads people to remark on the events occurring around them (Toren 1995), but it also means that to be human, a person must belong to a *ples*.

Ples is “the source of knowledge and practice itself” (Bolton 1999b, 46). This merits further clarification. In the wider Pacific Island region, knowledge of stories, names and medicines are tied to particular places and people gain the right to these through both descent and through inhabiting and working the land (see Bamford 2007, Harrison 1990 and Moutu (2013, 145-191) on Papua New Guinea and Nabobo-Baba 2006 on Fiji). Lindstrom (1990a) discusses this form of knowledge and its use in relation to power on Tanna, a connection also noted by Bonnemaison (1985), but the view that knowledge comes from and is attached to *ples* is typical of Futuna too. Much of this knowledge is attached to men’s names.

On Futuna, a name situates people within the social and environmental landscape. Personal names are inherited through familial lines so not only do they indicate parentage, but they also specify access to land. Bonnemaison notes that on Tanna: “Identity and territory went hand in hand: to be human was to be from somewhere, to have a name, and to belong to a ‘canoe’” (Bonnemaison 1985, 137). The metaphor of the canoe, *vaka*, is also central on Futuna and describes everything from a moiety or a womb to a ship-shaped container.

Ples is moreover connected to practice, in the sense of what people do. Crucially, “a person demonstrates his or her affiliation to a place by what they do in it” (Bolton 1999b, 48). To belong to a *ples*, a person must sustain a continued relationship with it (Bolton 2015, Jolly 1994, 60, Kraemer 2017, 9, M. C. Rodman 1981). This can be

through close observance of local *kastom*, or through continued engagement and activity in the area. This is particularly important for women, who due to virilocal marriage and the *kastom* of male naming, affirm their connection to *ples* through their practice and their productivity (Bolton 1999b, 2015). For example, Bolton (1999b, 47-8) gives the example of a particular textile type, a *vola walurigi*, that was inspired by a type of invisible woman met at Walurigi. The production of this textile is now restricted to women from this place, who proudly assert their attachment to the area through their practice. Similarly, at the island level, women on Futuna assert their position as *ol woman Futuna* by regularly working the *kastom* of the island: notably baskets in the characteristic Futuna style.

There is therefore an important difference in how men and women gain access rights and come to belong to a *ples* throughout Vanuatu. Land and land access are for the most part discussed through a male perspective (Bolton 2015): it is passed on by descent, usually through male lines. Women, in contrast, gain access to land through their marriage, which can also serve to maintain familial connections to land. Women's ability to develop new connections to land has inspired many metaphors around the country: on Ambae, it is said that women are like a branch of a *nanggalat* tree, that grow and thrive wherever they are planted (Bolton 1999b); similarly on Paama, women are considered to be like breadfruit (Lind 2016, 228); on Tanna, however, women are compared to birds³³, light enough to fly, to wander and to settle anywhere (Bonnemaison 1985, 37). These metaphors for virilocal marriage suggest that women can grow roots and be productive wherever they marry; that through marriage, they can come to belong to a new place. Men and women therefore become attached to *ples* in different ways, although the distinction is less clear when people have migrated.

³³ Interestingly, Jolly (1994, 21) notes that Europeans were described as birds by people on Pentecost Island; in contrast to ni-Vanuatu, who are banyans, rooted in the place through *kastom*, Europeans can fly and settle anywhere.

3.2.1 Relocation and Access to Land

While men and women who belong to the *ples* they grew up in, married into and currently reside in face few difficulties in asserting their connections to the *ples* and making the most of what this entails, those who have relocated from other districts and islands face a harder time in accessing resources and demonstrating their belonging. In migration, continued engagement with the *ples* gains new relevance (Kraemar 2013).

Despite the proverbs that highlight women's adaptability and the ease with which they become rooted and attached to a new place after marriage, in reality, this is not always the case. Appropriation of a new *ples* does not always come easily. While a woman's personality may affect the extent of their integration into a new place (Bolton 1999b, 49), more often than not it is their ongoing connections to their family's *ples* (Kelly 1999, 247) that prevent full attachment to a new *ples*. Connection to a *ples* does not end through marriage or relocation (Lind 2014) and so a woman's allegiances always have an element of uncertainty. Access to land, like belonging, can pose difficulties and is therefore very different for women from another district within Futuna and for women from a different island altogether. In this section I briefly consider people's difficulties in accessing land to grow pandanus trees and how, following relocation, working pandanus helps people to belong.

3.2.1.1 Belonging to Another District

Men and women have always married between districts on Futuna. Yet the increasing mobility of people within Vanuatu, their migration within and between islands and the increasing number of Futunese living in settlements in Aneityum, Tanna and Efate has created several marriages on the island where couples from Futuna move to the island to start a new life with their partner. Elen, for example, grew up on Tanna, married Antoni, a man from Ishia, and now lives in Ibau, where her father is from. Unlike other women who grew up in the district they belong to and married within it, Elen does not have access to pandanus trees used by her close female relatives as they are based in Tanna and have perhaps not maintained appropriate ties to land on Futuna. Families living in the islands are known to 'hide' ground from their relatives based in town (Kraemer 2017, 9). In fact, not only is pandanus an issue for the couple, but so is land: the two go

hand in hand. Elen and Antoni must ask permission to use land from family members who have directly inherited and maintained their right of access to land in Ibau district.

Realising the importance of pandanus plaiting to life on an outer island, Elen has twice tried to create her own pandanus garden. Initially, she decided to plant some pandanus shoots of her own. With restricted access to land, she chose to plant her pandanus shoots on a piece of disused, difficult land: rats and crabs, I was told, eat any crop grown there. Elen thought that the difficulty of gardening this area of land would mean that her use of it would not be an issue to others, however not only is this land in the Matangi district, but neither her family nor that of her husband has a connection to it. This resulted in the destruction of her new pandanus trees: the trees were set on fire, a clear sign that such gardening activity was unwelcome there.

With a first failed attempt at planting her own pandanus trees, Elen proceeded to clean up the pandanus trees of a relative of hers currently living in Port Vila. These trees were unused at that time and so she pruned them and worked to remove old, unharvested pandanus leaves to let the new leaf crop grow straight, long and unimpeded. This time, her progress was blocked by other relatives of the family. Elen, a woman who does not have direct ties to the land on which she lives, is therefore left in a difficult position: she needs pandanus to furnish her household, to give to friends, relatives, the chief or the church and to sell to make an income, see Part 3; but accessing pandanus is not so simple. Without clear family relations to this place, Elen has little access to land and has difficulty finding pandanus to work.

3.2.1.2 Belonging to Another Island

When a woman marries in to Futuna from another island, the success of the marriage and of the woman's transition into Futuna is measured by her productivity and engagement in community activities and social life, which is largely equivalent to what Bolton (1999b) calls her practice. In addition to childbirth and agriculture, on Futuna the extent of a woman's participation in district and island-wide events demonstrates her commitment to the *ples*. This is similar to the need for men to give gifts and participate in rituals to maintain their access to land, noted by Rodman (1987b, 44) and Kraemer (2017, 9).

Learning the language, adopting local ways of doing things, taking part in community events and having children creates visible connections for a woman who has married into a new *ples*. For instance, returning to Futuna after a number of years away, old Mailesi noted with approval Ruth's integration in social life at Ibau: seeing her take an active role in community work, he commented that she had become a *woman Futuna* now. Through her practice, Ruth seemed to belong to the island she had married into.

Living at Ibau, I noticed that pandanus work was an interesting lens through which to measure a woman's integration in the local community. This contrasts with Geismar (2003, 228) and Arbeit's (1990, 18) findings in Pentecost and Fijj respectively and is perhaps a reflection of the importance of the meanings of pandanus work on Futuna, discussed in Chapter 5. The longer a woman from another island had been married in to Futuna and the stronger her dedication to this *ples*, the greater her knowledge and skill in local basketry. Were (2013, 594-5) also notes that in New Ireland, women who marry in to the island are landless and work a new type of pandanus mat using a non-native variety of pandanus. It takes time for women to feel settled enough in the new *ples* to learn the new *kastom*, and it takes time for the husband's female relatives to trust the bride enough to teach her the *kastom* of their *ples*.

There was a clear progression in knowledge of local pandanus work between the three women at Ibau who had married in to Futuna from another island: from the most recently married who only worked contemporary forms of Futuna basketry such as the *boks* variety, to the elderly widow who worked all forms of pandanus basket, fan and mat from the island. Whilst this progression may have coincided also with different generational interests, the importance of *Futuna* baskets on the island and the significance of having the knowledge and skill to work such a basket makes it unlikely to be the only reason.

It is important for women to lay claim to their new identity as women from Futuna as women from other islands are often blamed for problems on the island. Unexpected seasonal changes, for example, are due to people not following the *kastom* of the *ples*. Women from other islands are considered not to know local *kastom* and so are thought to instigate changes to the environment through their actions – whether by ignorance or

through lack of concern for Futuna and its people. The breadfruit harvest season, for example, is dependent upon women following specific ways of cooking the breadfruit. In much the same way as the taboos on fish-cooking methods lighten up over the course of the first week of mourning, the cooking of breadfruit is regulated through the season. Breadfruit can initially only be roasted directly on hot coals. As the breadfruit season progresses, the number of ways breadfruit can be prepared broadens. Like fish during mourning, breadfruit can be prepared by frying, boiling and baking as the week progresses. For people – mostly women – who don't belong by birth to Futuna, family, engagement with the *ples* and visible demonstrations of commitment to the *ples* is vital to ensure good social relations in the islands.

3.2.1.3 Church and Belonging

Access to land is therefore tied up in concepts of belonging on Futuna, which are themselves directly concerned with familial relations either through descent or marriage and practice. Remarkably, the Ibau PWMU has initiated a project that gives all women access to pandanus.

With permission from church leaders, the PWMU planted a small grove of harvestable pandanus trees on the Mission land attached to the Pastor's house. This land had been given to the Mission for the church and the Pastor's house to be built in the early 20th century. The land happens to be a taboo ground, the home of a spirit, where previously no-one would pass.³⁴ The PWMU gives women access to the pandanus leaves, the trees of which are now fully grown, in exchange for a monetary contribution to their group. Women can therefore now access pandanus on Futuna through the Church.

The role of the Church on the island is a theme that comes up throughout this thesis as it does in life for people on Futuna. Here, we have come across a suggestion that the Church is starting to supplant the role of family relations in access to land for women; women can become rooted to the *ples* through affiliation with the Church, which

³⁴ Similarly, on Aniwa Island, the first mission was built at Imarae, taboo land due to its association with Tagaro, the sea snake god (Flexner, Bedford, et al. (in press)).

provides an alternative way to access land and in consequence facilitates women's engagement, their practice and productivity on the island.

This section has highlighted how, to belong to a *ples*, a person must both have access rights to the land and must maintain continued engagement with it: to belong, a person must be a part of social life. I now turn to pandanus plants, which, as demonstrated below, are categorised through the same concept of belonging and engagement.

3.3 Pandanus and *Ples*: Classifying what Belongs

Pandanus plants are classified following three axes on Futuna: the material attributes or characteristics of the plant, the environment in which it grows and its status as a cultivated or wild plant. Two of these axes join together to form three main pandanus types: 'our' pandanus, 'their' pandanus and wild pandanus. *Fara iotea*, literally meaning 'our pandanus', is the pandanus that is cultivated locally and used in basketry. *Fara fo* or *fara fou*, new pandanus, designates all pandanus that has been newly introduced to Futuna and which I translate as 'their' pandanus as it denotes pandanus that is rarely used in basketry on the island. *Fara tai*, meaning pandanus of the sea, denotes all uncultivated, wild pandanus that grows of its own accord and which has few uses. This central distinction between cultivated pandanus used in plaiting and wild pandanus not used for plaiting is also seen in Tongoa (Kelly 1999, 204).

Whilst it may be largely based on an etic dichotomy (Dwyer 1996), a form of distinction between cultivated and uncultivated, the wild and the domestic, is prevalent on Futuna in local ways of thinking about the environment and the plants that grow or are grown there. It is a dichotomy that Strathern (1980) and Majnep and Bulmer (1977, 157) have noted, who argue that the European nature-culture dichotomy is irrelevant in Papua New Guinea. What is cultivated or domestic is positively associated with social life and is frequently a symbol for this (Giambelli 1998), if not itself recognised as part and parcel of a social life organised by types of relations (Ingold 2000). Classifications of plants therefore highlight a fundamental way of understanding the world. Here, I show that the concept of belonging is a fundamental categorisation tool on Futuna. The way belonging is defined is moreover seen to be processual, emerging from continued

engagement and use in social life: it bears remarkable similarities to Ingold's (1996, 2000) theory of dwelling.

Pandanus on Futuna is usually only associated with the species identified as *pandanus tectorius*, also known in English as the screw pine or screw palm. There is another species in the *pandanaceae* family on Futuna, but these plants are only found on Ta Tafu hill³⁵ and have no history of use on the island; they are far removed from social domains of activity and are therefore of no interest to us here. *Pandanus tectorius*, in contrast, grows on the borders of Futuna Island, clinging to cliff tops and beach edges; *fara tai* is a barrier against the sea winds and a buffer for gardens and houses. *Pandanus tectorius* is also crucially grown in gardens and next to houses as a cultivar. For example, one *mama* plants her pandanus on the edges of her manioc gardens: the manioc then halts the phenomenal spread of pandanus roots that dry the surrounding ground. There is thus a clear physical and geographical difference between wild pandanus, the pandanus that nobody cultivates, and the pandanus that is planted, cultivated, cared for and used.

Cultivated pandanus is identified with social life: it is the 'real' pandanus, the pandanus that occupies thoughts and that requires actions, the pandanus that is woven into and around human lives. It is domesticated by the attention people give it. There is a clear dichotomy between varieties of this tree: cultivated pandanus is either 'ours' or 'theirs', that is, imported. It is notable that the idea of belonging is integrated into local classifications of pandanus plants as the primary method of classification. However, in contrast to what the names suggest, which pandanus is *fara iotea* (our pandanus) is determined more by the characteristics of the pandanus itself and its possible use, than its origin. This classification highlights how what is important to people is used to organise their engagement with the world (Ellen 1982, 204-35).

³⁵ Called *fara tafu*, Tafu pandanus, the tree has very small prop roots and grows vertically from a single shoot.



Figure 15. *Fara iotea* in a house garden.

To help collect information about pandanus varieties on Futuna, I used a list of pandanus varieties to encourage and stimulate discussion. I had found this list in Janet Keller's West Futuna-Aniwa dictionary (J. W. Dougherty 1983), who in turn obtained these from Capell (1958), although Keller notes that her research did not replicate the same information when it comes to varieties of pandanus. Ellen (2005) highlights that many peoples do not use a taxonomic approach to classifications but are guided by a sense of prototype with many possible logical connections. As will be seen, much like many Latin names, names of pandanus varieties on Futuna generally describe the characteristics of the leaves or the tree itself: these names are a technical and an



Figure 16 (above). Buffeted fara tai on a cliff top.



Figure 17 (below). Fara tai clinging to the cliffs and cascading down them.

aesthetic way of classifying the plants (Were 2013). This however means that names of pandanus varieties are not fixed, or universally agreed upon on Futuna, and that several names can be used to describe the same type of pandanus.

My list of pandanus names proved successful in encouraging discussion on the topic, but it also led to some confusion due to the variability in names. There being no clear meaning of *tu*, *tumeta* or *pialau*, I am unsure of the existence or exact meaning of *fara tu*, *fara tumeta* or *fara pialau* as only one woman recognised these names and she was not able to describe them.

Moreover, there are other ways to describe pandanus as highlighted in Keller's vocabulary list of plant species. From the characteristics of pandanus leaves (*fara sa* – bad pandanus), to the method of preparing the leaves (*fara tuna* – cooked pandanus), to their use (*fara ranga* – pandanus for plaiting). As well as names of the different parts of pandanus: from the leaves (*rau rufara*); the roots (*kai fara*, which can then be differentiated between *pu fara* or *noakai fara*, the new roots and *puru fara*, the long prop roots); or the shoots (*fara singano* or *fara casingano*). During the actual process of plaiting, pandanus is also gendered and called woman pandanus, *fara fine*, or male pandanus, *fara tane*, as the movement of the strips has gendered associations, see Chapter 5. However, pandanus trees themselves are also dioecious and so there are male plants and female plants, also called *fara tane* and *fara fine*. My identification of pandanus varieties is therefore separate from these descriptive terms and arose from conversations about these names.

The three varieties of pandanus and their defining characteristics are described below. I consider first cultivated pandanus, both *fara iotea* and *fara fo*, then uncultivated pandanus. Each variety is defined and then its social uses and history are discussed along with its properties as a craft material.

3.3.1 *Fara Iotea*, Our Pandanus

Fara iotea (our pandanus) is the pandanus of Futuna, the pandanus of here, *iku*. It is the pandanus for plaited work on the island and is strong, white and durable. Bigger, leafier,

stronger than other pandanus varieties and with shorter prop roots, *fara iotea* is considered the ideal pandanus.

*“Fara iotea is good. You can make baskets from it that last a long time. Before we used to only use fara iotea. Fara iotea is different, it’s not like fara fo... But the new one [fara fo], grows plenty of shoots on its stalk. It grows a bit, then already there are three or four shoots.”*³⁶

Fitu 26.05.15

What counts as *fara iotea* has changed in the last fifty or so years as new kinds of pandanus are introduced from other islands following women’s trips abroad. One elderly woman told me that women in the previous generation introduced the pandanus that is currently considered to be *fara iotea*; the original pandanus on Futuna being very tough and therefore hard to work. The new *fara iotea*, she said, is relatively pliable, which makes it easier to work, but which also makes the plaited material less hardy. According to this woman, it is due to the softness of this new pandanus that people must work mats with a three- or four-leaf thickness, they must *doublem mat*.

Regardless of changes in what constitutes *fara iotea* and remarks to the effect that previous versions of *fara iotea* were stronger, and therefore either better or worse for basketry work (harder to work but long lasting), current views concerning contemporary *fara iotea* are overwhelmingly positive. Indeed, people on Futuna claim that their rocky island produces the best kind of pandanus.

*“It is a good gift to the people of Futuna. [On other islands] it isn’t white like that.”*³⁷ *Seieke 26.05.15*

What constitutes ‘good pandanus’ is a key concept in the basketry of Futuna and as discussed in the next chapter, is closely linked to the characteristics of *fara iotea*. In

³⁶ *“Fara iotea hemi gud. From yu save mekem basket long hem i stap long taem. Before mifala i stap usem fara iotea nomo. Fara iotea i difren, i no olsem fara fo... Bei niu wan [fara fo], i fulup i grow long stamba blong hem. i grow bakagen, bei tri, foa i stap bakagen.”*

³⁷ *“Hemi wan gudfala gift long man Futuna. [Long narafala aelan] hemi no waet olsem.”*

fact, good pandanus can only ever be *fara iotea* as it is the only pandanus used in basketry on the island. It is clear here that the uses of the plant determine its classification (Ellen 1998).

3.3.2 *Fara Fo*, Their Pandanus

Fara fo is newly introduced pandanus, an umbrella term for all varieties that have been recently brought to Futuna for cultivation:

*“... fara that has just come. There are now a lot of kinds of fara fo...
My brother’s wife brought the kind that is like fara tai, I planted it.
When it’s dry, its leaves are very soft. It’s good for plaiting... she
brought it from Tanna.”³⁸ Fitu 26.05.15*

The different types of *fara fo* are differentiated according to their very visible physical attributes that clearly distinguish them from *fara iotea*. The most notable of these are *fara maru* and *fara kanu*, described below, which refer respectively to a smooth pandanus leaf without thorns and a variegated form of pandanus that has colourful white and green leaves.

3.3.2.1 *Fara Maru* = *Fara Marari*

Fara maru refers to all kinds of pandanus that have no thorns, literally translating as ‘smooth’ or ‘soft pandanus’, whilst *marari* means ‘smooth’, or ‘hairless’. *Fara maru* has no thorns on the outer edges of leaves or on the back of the midrib. As well as a lack of thorns, *fara maru* often has exceptionally long, wide leaves.

Fara maru is not common on Futuna. Only one or two women at Ibau have access to *fara maru* and despite its lack of thorns it is not highly prized. Many women do not enjoy using this variety: the exceptional length and width of the leaves make it difficult to prepare and work with. *Fara iotea* leaves are commonly in good proportion with the

³⁸ “... fara we i jus kam. Naia i gat fulup kaen fara fo... Wife blong bratha i karem hemia wea i olsem fara tai, mimi planem. Taem i drae, lif blong hem i sofsof. i gud long wif... hemi karem long Tanna.”

human body and so the action of removing thorns or straightening a leaf can be accomplished in just one smooth movement. In contrast, a *fara maru* leaf is longer than an arm span and so any manipulation of it will have to be made in several movements to maintain proper tension in the leaf. Some women therefore complain that this pandanus creates a lot of work.

Despite the lack of thorns on the outer edges of leaves and on the back of the midrib of a leaf, the sides of the pandanus leaves are nevertheless hard and slightly discoloured and so women remove the outer edges and midrib in the same way as with *fara iotea*. The lack of thorns does not therefore reduce the workload and the extraordinary length of the leaves makes handling difficult.

3.3.2.2 *Fara Kanu*

Meaning striped, spotted or coloured, *fara kanu* is variegated pandanus and its leaves feature alternating stripes of white and green when still fresh. During my fieldwork there were no variegated pandanus trees growing at Ibau but some women had grown some in the past for medicinal usage. For plaiting work, variegated pandanus is considered weak and liable to tear when wet. There is therefore little interest in the variety.

*“That’s all the different leaves we brought to plant. We want leaves that are long... you hold them it’s strong and white. That’s all the leaves we brought now. All the new ones that have come after I don’t know.”*³⁹ Seieke 26.05.15

3.3.3 *Fara Tai*, Wild Pandanus

Fara tai, literally meaning sea pandanus as it grows on the coastline of the island, is uncultivated, wild pandanus. With short, strong leaves – harder and less malleable than

³⁹ “*Hemia ol defren lif mifala i karem long planem. Wantem lif i long wan... yu holdem i strong mo i waetwaet. Hemia ol niu lif mifala i karem naia. Ol narawan wea i kam behind mimi no save.*”

cultivated varieties – it is not used for plaiting work on Futuna and is not therefore associated with social life.

The leaves of *fara tai* do not lend themselves to handling: they have large, sharp thorns or *nil* as they are called in Bislama. Fitu told me she once tried to work a pandanus mat with *fara tai* but did not get very far:

*“[the leaves] are strong, so so strong. And they’re thick. I harvested some to make a mat, but no.”*⁴⁰ Fitu 26.05.15

There are however a few varieties of *fara tai* on Futuna that are suitable for other, non-plaiting uses and this creates an additional distinction between cultivated pandanus and *fara tai*. *Fara fatu*, meaning ‘stone’ or ‘strong’ pandanus in reference to the strength and rigidity of its leaves and *fara tu* or *fara tutu*, standing up pandanus, the reduplication creating emphasis (J. W. Dougherty 1977b), are varieties of *fara tai*. Leaves of *fara tai* can be used for making rough rope, but it is their prop roots that are more commonly used on Futuna: the roots can be used to make fences, rope or, apparently, a kind of European-style bed frame. Nevertheless, wild pandanus is rarely used around Futuna although it is thought to be used on other islands, in comments that perhaps say as much about local ideas about life on these other islands as the pandanus itself.

Wild pandanus on Futuna is undomesticated, opportunistic and a plant of and from the ‘bush’. As such, it is a class apart from cultivated pandanus and is not theorised or considered to belong to the island in the same way. In contrast, cultivated pandanus, the very fabric of people’s lives, can come to belong. Defined by the material characteristics of the leaves, cultivated pandanus becomes *fara iotea* when it is appropriate for local usage: when it becomes part of social life on the island. This is the same as how people come to belong: continued engagement with the land, the people and things are seen as essential to developing and maintaining a sense of belonging for people as for plants. While connections between a *ples*, things and people and can never

⁴⁰ “*Oli strong wei strong wei strong. Mo oli tik. Mi karem sam long mekem mat long hem, bei no.*”

fully be broken; this does not prevent new relationships from being formed. What people and plants do and what they produce demonstrates their commitment and close relationship with the *ples*. Belonging is therefore processual and cumulative, emerging out of continued engagement with the *ples*.

3.4 Conclusion

The concept of belonging is critical to people on Futuna as it is used to classify people, things and plants. It is second only to the distinction between what is cultivated and what is wild. These classifications however are a gloss for what is really important to people: the value of the people and plants to the local way of life. Therefore people and plants can come to belong through their own engagement with social life.

Pandanus is categorised into three groups: ‘our’ pandanus, ‘their’ pandanus and wild pandanus; *fara iotea*, *fara fo* and *fara tai*. Crucially, cultivated pandanus is either ‘ours’ or ‘theirs’: either it belongs to the *ples*, or it doesn’t. However despite a system of reference which seemingly differentiates according to the *ples* in which the pandanus originates, in practice, the difference pivots on the material characteristics of the leaves and therefore the use value of the pandanus (Ellen 1998). A pandanus tree on Futuna that produces strong, durable, white pandanus will be called *fara iotea* as it is the most appropriate for local plaiting work. This is the pandanus that will then carry, support and sustain life on the island. The tree may have been introduced to Futuna from elsewhere, but what is important here is that its productivity and behaviour is transformative: what belonged to another island comes to belong to Futuna.

Similarly, we have seen that women can come to belong following their involvement in local life: their ability to carry, connect, gift and sustain life. Working pandanus is a materialisation of this (Bell and Geismar 2009) as “through the process of fabricating and using... people make both themselves and their social relations” (Tilley 2002, 25). Growing and processing pandanus plants is moreover a way for women to root themselves in the *ples*: in rooting pandanus to the *ples* they root themselves too and make or reveal themselves to be women of the *ples*. There is an important relationship between growing plants, making materials and making people.

The concept of belonging is moreover crucial in determining how pandanus crops are used, cared for and managed. Pandanus work, from the growing of the plants to the preparation and processing of leaves is specific to a *ples*. As discussed in the next chapter, not only is pandanus rooted in *ples*, but pandanus work is rooted too.

4 Growing and Making Pandanus

Pandanus work is a holistic activity and the production of high-quality materials requires the care and respect of the plants as well as the land and spirits it is attached to. Through growing and making pandanus, people develop a form of experiential knowledge that is in a continual process of emerging and being recreated as they engage and work with their craft materials (Ingold and Lucas 2007, Keller and Keller 1996). Through their work, people come to know themselves and their materials and when working with live plants such as pandanus, people also come to know the place.

Working skilfully with plant materials calls for an understanding of their capacities and capabilities as these shape what people do (Ingold 2000, 2007b, Olsen 2003). On Futuna this is quite literal: good pandanus is said to make a person plait carefully and skilfully. Materials are central to craftwork (Bunn 1999), they have ‘vitality’ (Bennett 2010) and are therefore ‘active’ in processes of making. Materials moreover have their own social journeys and histories that need to be appreciated to understand the contexts of their use (Drazin 2015a, xxiv). This chapter demonstrates that on Futuna the processes of preparation of pandanus are fundamentally directed towards the creation of ideal, ‘good’ pandanus, something of beauty (Bunn 2018). These processes are rooted in *ples* in the same way as are the plants themselves.

Pandanus leaves, as the foliage of a live plant, necessitate care and attention to be transformed into pandanus ribbons, a handicraft material. Women transform the dead, coiled and dirty leaves into a clean, smooth and malleable material from which the artefacts of life are made. The quality of the materials affects the craft worker and the quality of the final artefact: the form of artefacts emerges out of this process of engagement (Ingold 2000, 347).

Women on Futuna think of themselves as gardeners:⁴¹ women are productive through their agricultural work according to Jolly (1994, 61-2), and as we will see, this is both a

⁴¹ I sat in on some one-on-one interviews led by CARE International where women were asked for their occupation: most responded that they were farmers or gardeners. A few others described themselves as housewives.

process of growing and making. These concepts are closely related: Ingold (2000) argues that artefacts grow or emerge out of engagement with materials, while Bunn (2014) notes that the plants and artefacts that people grow in turn grow and make people. It is this latter point that I am interested in here. A close relationship between the growing of artefacts, plants and people is for example seen in the old mask-making work of the Sulka of east New Britain, which followed local gardening seasons so that the ceremonially important masks grew as the crops grew in the gardens (Jeudy-Ballini 2001). The skills and techniques to grow plants, as with making artefacts, is based on improvisational capacities and emerges out of engagement with the plants in the moment (Richards 1993). On Futuna, through growing and preparing pandanus, women come to know their materials and they come to know and belong to the *ples*; they also mould it and make the *ples*.

Pandanus trees are selected, planted and looked after to produce a plentiful crop of healthy, straight pandanus leaves to be harvested and worked, see Godin (2003). Once collected, pandanus leaves have their thorns removed, are split lengthways to produce leaf strips, cleaned then rolled. Before use, these pandanus leaf ribbons, the prepared leaf strips, are then straightened and their sides re-cut or tidied up to produce what is considered a suitable handicraft material: something soft, clean and with regular dimensions. In what follows, I describe how pandanus on Futuna is prepared in the correct manner of the *ples*, from the care of the plant and the harvest of the leaves to the process of selection before pandanus is plaited into form. From these varied engagements with materials comes an understanding of the *ples* and a sense of belonging; workers of pandanus come to know and make the craft, themselves (Sennett 2008) and the world around them (Ingold 2011, Pallasmaa 2009).

4.1 Growing Pandanus

Parental and familial trees hold a dual significance on Futuna: they are simultaneously of practical use and of emotional importance as a physical memory of a person.

According to Mailesi, fruiting trees used to be planted on or near the grave of a parent to allow the deceased's spirit to maintain a connection and continue providing for their family; trees planted by someone's mother or father are pointed out with pride. Plants

are remembered and cherished on Futuna for the connection they create between current generations and previous ones, they are physical evidence of the close relation between people and *ples*, see also Munn (1977, 41-2) on Gawa, Papua New Guinea.

Pandanus plants require care and upkeep. Shared concepts of good pandanus and the characteristics of the species mean that the methods are similar throughout the regions where these are grown for basketry work. *Pandanus tectorius* grows from a single trunk that forks into many different branches, each of which ends in a tuft or head of spiralling leaves, see Figure 18. Firstly, the growth of branches must be carefully managed to ensure longer leaves: new offshoots are therefore routinely removed to ensure that the plant's energies are focused on a smaller number of heads. As a tree ages, the increasing number of branches results in shorter leaves, of little use to basket workers.

*“You must clean it often... or it won't grow well. Leaves hold it up;
when the tree has lots of leaves it stops it from growing well.”*⁴² Sepoa
29.05.15

Secondly, leaf heads must be cleaned: the older green leaves at the base of the heads are periodically removed, see Figure 20. This ensures not only that the leaves will dry quickly on the plant, but also that more new leaves are quick to grow.

*“In March, April, May, you must clean the pandanus. It's up to you: if
you don't want that devil – the snake – to hide in it, then you must
clean the tree.”*⁴³ Fitu 26.05.15

In growing pandanus, women are already starting to become acquainted with pandanus leaves and are starting to make their pandanus artefacts. To produce the best pandanus

⁴² *“Mus cleanim by hemi quick... Hemi no grow gud tu. From lif i holem nao, fulup lif i stap long stamba blong hem i holem se hemi stap daon nomo ia.”*

⁴³ *“Long monis Marj, April, May, yu cleanim. I stap long yu, sponse yu no wantem ol devil – ol snake ia – i stap long hem, yu cleanim.”*

baskets, they work with the *ples*, ‘listening’ to it to cultivate and shape the form of their pandanus trees.

4.1.1 Pandanus as a Seasonal Crop

As highlighted by Fitu’s quote, pandanus is a seasonal crop: there is a time for harvesting pandanus and a time for working pandanus. As already mentioned, respecting the seasons of various crops and foodstuffs, whether these are breadfruit or pandanus, demonstrates knowledge of the *ples* and therefore creates belonging. In the case of pandanus, this results in the good health of people, but also in good quality, workable leaves. Futuna, a specific *ples*, not only gives meaning to work but orders it too.

The seasons of pandanus fit into the greater seasonal scheme of life on Futuna. Following the importance of the sea on the island, there is a primary distinction between the time of the sea, *taem blong solwota*, and the time to stay at home, *taem long stap long haus*. On South Pentecost, in contrast, seasons follow the cycle of yam cultivation (Jolly 2001, 185). The year on Futuna is then divided into four or so smaller seasons named after trees and their visible changes, such as the appearance of blossom and fruit. *Sinu*, a tree with small round leaves – *sinu* is when the leaves dry and turn yellow; *ngateimea*, a tree with red flowers; *narikai*, a tree that produces berries from which a local glue can be made; *faghamasi*, a tree with small, purple, bitter fruit. *Ramaga* season, the time of flying fish, is the most celebrated time of year and is between the time that *faghamasi* are in flower and *sinu*, when the leaves turn yellow.

The time of *sinu* is the start of the season on dry land. Its start is marked by the New Yam festival held in April that opens the harvest season by scaring devils away from gardens, thus allowing yam gardens in particular to be worked. This, the dry season, the time of the land, is the time when pandanus is ready to be harvested.

Pandanus is ready to harvest, that is the lower, or outer leaves have dried, from about May or June. Men prepare ground for planting yams, everybody weeds gardens and women harvest pandanus. This is the start of the dry season in Vanuatu, when humidity

levels are lower and plants dry: “the sun burns, and it’s dry”⁴⁴. Weather conditions affect many aspects of pandanus work and women experience this through growing plants and manipulating materials. The months between July and November are marked by working pandanus; the harvesting and preparation of it for storage, but also plaiting work. This is why, for women, the dry season is quite literally the time to stay around the house, the *taem long stap long haus*.

The yam planting season starts from about August onwards. These are busy months, especially as August has become the month for large funeral feasts that close the mourning period of deceased relatives. During the harvest season for pandanus, women must consider their pandanus needs for the coming year. Having too little pandanus in storage will inevitably lead to trouble, when mats or baskets are suddenly required as gifts, or to contribute towards various fundraising events and activities, see Chapters 7 and 8. Pandanus leaves are a finite resource and so the unharvested pandanus of others is viewed critically, as a wasted crop.

By December, all pandanus should be harvested and much pandanus will have been worked. The dry season has come to an end and both temperatures and humidity levels soar. *Ramaga* and the time of the sea are approaching; pandanus work becomes difficult. *Ramaga*, the flying fish season, is the high point of the time of the sea and runs from approximately Christmas to April. *Ramaga* is the time of plenty on Futuna as men spend their nights out at sea catching flying fish by the net load; it is particularly important at Ibau district, which is surrounded by relatively calm waters. *Ramaga* is therefore thought of as the season where people gain weight and *yu karem bak bodi blong yu*. This season is however subject to a complex list of taboos which in the past resulted in partial segregation between men and women. It was suggested to me that historically, *ramaga* culminated in large festivities held in the *fare ariki* that brought men and women back together for competitions and debauchery condemned and later stopped following Dr. Gunn’s involvement.

⁴⁴ “*Sun i hit, i drae*” Sam Seru 31.05.15



Figure 18. A pandanus branch after its dried leaves have been harvested. Green and semi-dry leaves remain.



Figure 19. Teata concentrating as she uses her thumb to split a pandanus leaf into five strands, separating the thorny midrib and edges of the leaf to create two useable pandanus strips.

4.1.2 Harvesting Pandanus

As previously mentioned, on Futuna, pandanus leaves for plaiting are left to dry on the tree. Only when the leaves are dry, when they have lost their green colour and waxy sheen, are they harvested. The pandanus needs no further treatment as the environment on Futuna is said to be unique, as detailed above. Indeed, in much of the Pacific, pandanus leaves are in contrast harvested when still green and heated over a fire, soaked, often in sea water, and sun-dried to bleach them white (Bolton 2003a, Godin 2003, Walter 1984). The material qualities of pandanus leaves on Futuna are therefore different to those around much of the Pacific.

Women around Ibau use various approaches to harvesting pandanus depending on their knowledge and use of the material. Some, for example Pamali and her family, systematically remove all dried leaves from the whole, or a part of a tree; climbing into its branches and using forked sticks to dislodge leaves still attached to the branches or caught up in amongst other branches and leaves. Others, who in comparison have little need for pandanus, follow a much less systematic approach and selectively harvest leaves that look nice and are good for working with. Expert plaiters for whom pandanus work is a key activity consider every leaf to have potential – unsightly leaves can be hidden in a pandanus mat – but more importantly, they are aware that every year they run the risk of running out of pandanus and becoming unable to meet their numerous projects and commissions.

4.2 Processing the Leaves

Once collected, many women start the process of preparing their pandanus leaves immediately, whilst still at the tree. The base of a leaf is thick and is usually partly rotten; each leaf has three rows of thorns running the length of it – one row of thorns along each side and one along the back of the midrib. In such a state, pandanus leaves are difficult to handle. Another important consideration for women is the *doti*, rubbish, preparing pandanus leaves creates, see Figures 20 and 22. A large proportion of a pandanus leaf is thrown away in the initial stages of preparation and so ideally, women will start the process of preparing the leaves immediately, while in the bush where such *doti* can be left.



Figure 20. Pandanus leaf offcuts at the base of a tree.



Figure 21. Slightly damaged pandanus strip - eaten by a caterpillar - that has yet to be rolled (and therefore cleaned).

Processing pandanus leaves and plaiting pandanus are considered messy activities on Futuna as they produce quantities of pandanus waste. If preparing leaves, there will be a pile of the sharp, needle-covered outer edges of pandanus leaves that were removed before the leaves could be rolled, and when working a mat or basket, there will be a softer pile of left-over scraps. These are mostly made up of thin strips of ribbon that were shaved off to make all ribbons of a similar, regular width, but the ribbon tips and bases tend also to find their way into the pile of scraps, being thicker or thinner than the rest of the ribbon. These off-cuts, the *doti blong pandanas* are collected together and folded into a bundle that is tied together using the loose ends. The bundle is thrown away onto a nearby rubbish heap, or into the bush: it is taboo for pandanus scraps to be dealt with in the same manner as other combustible rubbish.

Although maintaining a clean house and yard is important on Futuna, careful clearing of the *doti* of pandanus is not primarily to do with this aspect of cleanliness. Pandanus waste and old baskets and mats are carefully picked up and thrown away to prevent them from being burnt. This also seems to be the case for the Nalik in New Ireland (Were 2013, 593). The burning of pandanus waste will cause the ruin of one's stocks of



Figure 22. Siki working a basket in her kitchen. A small bundle of scraps, the *doti* of pandanus, are in the bottom right hand corner on the borabora.

rolled pandanus ribbons: harvested and rolled pandanus will become *gongon*, gone off, rotten, stained and overall unusable.

This taboo relates to the world of spirits that both form the *ples* as well as care for it. The spirit of pandanus, *takaloa*, will cause problems if not carefully respected.

“Before, it was too dark; devils were everywhere... in trees, in leaves... when you touched it, you knew, that it’s a devil.”⁴⁵ Fitu 27.05.15

All spirits are referred to as devils in Bislama, a possible consequence of Christianity where there can only be one real spirit. Respect for the pandanus spirit, which takes the form of a snake, is demonstrated through correct adherence to *kastom* and the ways of the *ples*: whether this is by not burning pandanus ribbons, only working pandanus in the correct season, or not working pandanus excessively. Snakes are linked to pandanus in three ways. Firstly, as its spirit, shared by both pandanus and coconut trees. This is for example highlighted by a *kastom* story from Herald Bay that recounts how coconut trees originate from a man-snake on Futuna. Secondly, the medicine to treat pandanus or coconut illnesses, caused by working too much pandanus, for example, attracts snakes and third, land snakes like to hide in pandanus leaf crowns, using the thorns to shed their skin.

Nevertheless, while dried coconut fronds, husks and shells are essential fire and torch making equipment, it is taboo to burn dried pandanus on the island. The reason for this taboo is unclear: is pandanus an anomaly? What is more likely, is that the taboo highlights a particular aspect of another key concept on the island, like Gell (1996a, 116) found when he breached an Umeda taboo against eating oneself when he sucked a small cut on his hand. Old pandanus basketry and roof thatching is for instance also not burnt; it is possible that the taboo is connected to ideas of the house and home. The concept of *doti* and the relationship between pandanus and coconut trees would be an interesting avenue for future research.

⁴⁵ *“Befo, tu dak nomo; ol devil i stap nomo... ol wud, ol lif... taem yu tujem nomo yu save, wan devil ia.”*

Tagaronga, highlighted the importance of respecting taboos on Futuna:

“Someone can get ill if you harvest or kill things in the wrong season.”⁴⁶ Tagaronga 02.02.15

The threat of the taboo concerning pandanus rubbish therefore highlights the power of the spirit of pandanus and the importance of pandanus as something of the *ples*. The spirit safeguards and preserves pandanus leaves, that are both the product of the *ples* and the *ples* itself. Through pandanus workers’ selective use of pandanus ribbons and careful disposal of pandanus waste, we see that it is a powerful resource. Pandanus should be thought of as a spirit and a human like us (Rival 1998); it demands respect because it comes from the *ples*.

4.2.1 Removing Thorns

The first step in preparing pandanus leaves for plaiting is to remove the thorns that run the length of a leaf on both outer edges and along the underside of the midrib. This is done using any kind of tool that is sharp enough to cut through a leaf, but not so sharp that it will cut its own path down the length of the leaf: the implement must cut down the natural grain evident in pandanus leaves to create regular sized leaf strips with smooth edges. Women may use the back of a knife, a small shard of bark from wild cane, or their own hands as they puncture the leaf with their thumb nail, push through and push their hand down to the tip of the leaf with the flesh of their thumb to divide the leaf in two, see Figure 19. The edges of dried pandanus leaves curl in on themselves and so cutting the leaf while following the grain requires skill in the positioning of the hand or implement and an awareness of the force applied. It is a skill that is used repeatedly in pandanus work; leaf ribbons are also trimmed to a regular size and then subdivided before plaiting and subdivided once more for *toya* and decorative pattern work around the rim of a basket.

⁴⁶ “*Taem yu kilim ol rong samting long rong taem, man i sik.*”

Four such cuts are made into a leaf starting at about 20 cm from the base of the leaf going all the way to the tip to create a sort of five toothed comb separating the midrib, two pandanus strips and the two, thorny, outer edges of the leaf. The tip of the leaf, where the width of the leaf starts to narrow noticeably, is also generally cut off at this stage. The coup de grace is given by cutting along the base of the leaf where the five strands join. This separates the smooth-edged strips of pandanus leaf on either side of the midrib from the heavy, fibrous base of the pandanus leaf and the thorny edges. A pile of these pandanus leaf strips is made with the prepared leaves, with care being taken to give each ribbon the same orientation, at which point time and motivation will usually have run out.

4.2.2 Rolling Strips into Ribbons

The second step in the preparation of pandanus leaves, usually done in the household yard, is to roll the leaf strips to transform them into pandanus leaf ribbons. This is a common preparation method for pandanus across the regions where it is used in basketry. On Futuna, coming straight from the tree, pandanus leaves often have their sides curled inward, hiding dirt and a host of insects, notably caterpillars, and so rolling pandanus leaf strips therefore involves cleaning leaves as well. A pandanus leaf strip is rolled around the index and middle finger, with the thumb used to hold the roll tight and to keep it from unravelling. Leaves are rolled with their top edge, the waxier, weatherproof edge, on the outside of the roll. This is also the side that when dry, curls in on itself and hides insects and dirt, see Figure 21. As the strip is progressively rolled up around the fingers, it is straightened, cleaned and softened between the thumb and the index fingers of the other hand, see Figure 23.

Rolling pandanus leaves is vital preparation for its use as a craft material:

“We don’t want it to roll up when you weave. We roll it...you must roll it to make it soft.”⁴⁷ Seieke 01.06.15

⁴⁷ “Mifala i no wantem se bei yu wif, hemi rol up long yu. Mifala i rolem... yu must rolem long mekem se i sofsof.”

Rolling pandanus serves the same purpose as that of straightening it, see below. The two activities stretch the inner structure of a leaf and in doing so, make the leaf strip soft, malleable and responsive to the hand's movements. When soft, leaves will not only lie flat and not roll back on themselves, but they will be easier to handle.

The weather changes how rolling pandanus leaves is experienced: too dry and the sides of the strips curl in on themselves; too humid and the strips become soft and roll themselves up. When the leaves curl in on their sides, the cleaning and rolling process becomes slightly more difficult and time consuming as care is needed. In contrast, when the leaves are soft with humidity, the rolling process will be too easy and the internal structure of the leaf will not be sufficiently stretched to soften the leaf strip up in the long term. Once rolled, a humid ribbon is also more prone to mildew.

Around the Pacific, several authors have commented on when and where women work pandanus, but there is a direct relationship between these issues. On the one hand, cool, damp weather provides the ideal conditions for working pandanus (Godin 2003, Kelly 1999, 234): Brigham (1906, 29) mentions a visit to Puna in 1864 where he saw Hawaiian women working pandanus mats in caves, describing the “comparative coolness and dampness” as beneficial to their work. On the other hand, the early mornings and evenings are the preferred time of day for pandanus work. Walter (1984) and Were (2013, 594) cite the evening as a favoured time to work pandanus after the evening meal when the work of the day has been finished and family members sit together and talk into the night, whilst Keller (1988) explains that women on Futuna will work pandanus at dawn and dusk to leave the day free for other tasks.

Although it is certainly true that women are generally busy with other work during the daytime and so often only have time to work pandanus in the early morning or evening when there is not enough light for other work, dawn and dusk are also the times of day when the weather conditions are most suitable for working pandanus. The sun will not dry up the pandanus ribbons and the air is relatively humid. The pandanus is therefore soft enough to be easily manipulated and not only is plaiting therefore easier, but a finer plait can be achieved. Neglecting to suitably prepare pandanus leaves by rolling then straightening them before their use leads to very rough plaiting that is ‘full of holes’ as

the pandanus resists manipulation (Knappett 2007, Malafouris 2008). I therefore distinguish between leaf strips and leaf ribbons according to their level of preparation.

“Weather like this is good...the pandanus is good...I’m happy to weave. The rain just now means that the pandanus is soft. The sun makes pandanus strong.”⁴⁸ Papra 02.07.15

The reality of working pandanus on Futuna does not however always allow people the luxury of sticking to the most suitable time of day and weather conditions for plaiting. Large or last-minute commissions sometimes mean that women rush to complete their work in time, spending whole days and nights at the task and even working on Sundays. Many women will therefore end up working their pandanus in the heat of the midday sun, when the pandanus ribbons are crisp with dryness and rustle as they touch each other, like fallen leaves. The ribbons are hard and resist at every step; they are quite literally *strong*, as they are described in Bislama. Strong ribbons are difficult to work with and result in loose plaits and paper cuts. Indeed, the sound and softness of pandanus ribbons is an important indicator of the correct conditions for working pandanus.

Pandanus work on Futuna is not a communal, public activity as has been described elsewhere in the Pacific (Brigham 1906, Herda 1999). However rolling pandanus leaf strips is boring, relentless work and so it is not uncommon for women to take a small bundle of leaves to community events to work on them while waiting around whilst cooking, for example. To occupy their own hands, women will frequently lend a hand in preparing somebody else’s pandanus at these events, but also during neighbourly visits, they are quick to pick up pandanus leaves and roll a few strips while talking. Rolling pandanus, unlike plaiting pandanus, requires little concentration and is ideally done with others to help make the work go quicker. In addition, as rolling pandanus strips is only a preliminary step in the preparation of the leaves for plaiting, the combination of many hands does not change the appearance or affect the finished plaited work in any way.

⁴⁸ *“Taem olsem i gud nao...pandanas i gud...mi glad long wif. Rain naia i mekem se pandanas i sofof. Sun ia i mekem se pandanus i strong.”*

This is not the case in a plaited mat or basket, where irregularities in the plait are said to show up as tell-tale signs.

4.3 Preparing Ribbons for Use

4.3.1 Storing Pandanus Ribbons

Pandanus is always stored in rolls, but these rolls may be individually fastened and tight, loose and gathered together on a string, or coiled together into a large disc containing enough ribbons to make a mat. The storage method depends on the quality of the leaf and the requirements of the woman.

More frequent workers of pandanus, such as Seieke, prefer to store their pandanus in individual rolls, often gathered together in empty 25kg rice bags. Individual pandanus rolls allow the characteristics of individual leaf ribbons to be seen: their colour, width and length, all important aspects of pandanus basket work on Futuna. Moreover, individual rolls are more appropriate for basket workers due to the small number of ribbons used; mat work is in contrast quite literally said to *kakai lif*, eat (use up) leaves. Each ribbon is rolled up tightly onto the left hand (if right handed) in a clockwise direction, then fixed closed by pushing the tip of the leaf through the centre of the roll. Alternatively, a bundle of ribbons can be created by stringing together loose, rolled ribbons.

For compact, long-term storage of pandanus, large rolled discs are preferable to individually rolled ribbons, which not only take up valuable space within the home but are also at risk of man-handling. Large discs can withstand many of the pressures household items are put under in a frequently used house or kitchen: pandanus discs can withstand being thrown, sat on, weighed under by other heavy items, squashed, squeezed and smoked with little impact to the ribbons. It is no coincidence that infrequent workers of pandanus such as Teata, Latu and Shina all prefer to roll their pandanus into large discs, see Figure 24.

Pandanus discs are created by rolling each ribbon first clockwise around the left hand, then back anticlockwise onto the right hand. This stretches both the upper and under



Figure 23. The author rolling pandanus into loose rolls with Ruth in her kitchen.



Figure 24. Teata creating a disc of prepared pandanus leaves for storage.

side of the leaves and creates more malleable ribbons. Once the ribbons have been thus prepared, a continuous coil is started by repeatedly feeding in new leaves between the end of the previous pandanus ribbon and the growing disc. When a sufficient size of disc has been obtained, scraps of pandanus are used as string to fasten the pandanus disc tight at three or four critical points; passing through the middle and along a radius out to the outer edge of the disc. Such discs can be preserved indefinitely provided they are stored in the right environmental conditions. This is the format for selling pandanus ribbons in urban markets in the Pacific.

4.3.2 Straightening Pandanus for Plaiting

The final stage of the preparation of pandanus leaves before plaiting on Futuna is to straighten them, see Figure 25. Whether pandanus ribbons are being used immediately after their harvest, or whether they have been put in storage for several months, the process of straightening is necessary both to literally create a more manageable, straight ribbon, as well as to further loosen up the inner structure of the leaf to make it more malleable. Methods of softening up pandanus ribbons vary across the Pacific region and on Futuna pandanus is not thought to require beating, unlike in Kiribati, or scraping, unlike in New Ireland (Were 2013, 593).

“Once you’ve harvested your pandanus leaves, you roll them, then they’re soft. When you leave it as it is [unrolled], it’s strong. When you roll it, it’s soft. When you straighten it, it doesn’t bend too much.”⁴⁹ Nai 24.06.15

In the same way that a ribbon is curled to decorate the wrappings of a present, pandanus leaves are straightened to remove any curl and flatten their surface. Unlike curling ribbon, where a sharp-edged implement works best, to straighten pandanus, the back of a knife, or a very blunt knife, is generally used: the idea is of course to straighten the leaf, not to curl it. Pandanus leaves have much greater inner strength than ribbon and so

⁴⁹ “Yu karem aot lif blong pandanas finis, yu rolem, hemi sofsof. Taem yu lego olsem, i strong. Taem yu rolem, hemi sofsof. Taem yu stretnem, i no bendbend tumas.”

do not have the same tendency to curl so easily, although this does happen to a certain extent at the thinner tip of the leaf. To prevent curling, women use an even pressure across the length of the knife as it encounters the whole width of a leaf, but they also straighten both the top and underside of a leaf – straightening it on one side and then the other, to counteract any curl created as well as to soften up the reverse side of the leaf. When straightening leaf ribbons, workers of pandanus must be attentive to the different characteristics of each leaf, rapidly getting a ‘feel’ for it and immediately responding to it; altering the amount of pressure and where they apply pressure.

Straightening pandanus leaves, like removing their spines, are activities that are recognised as being unpleasant and painful: they can leave physical impressions on the craft workers body. The impact on the body is not positive, like for Warao basket makers in South America whose hands whiten and develop a small ‘hole’, indicating their skill and by consequence their expertise as shamans (Wilbert 1975). On Futuna, pandanus work either causes cuts and grazes, or sicknesses brought about by the pandanus spirit.

‘Me, those thorns, they cut my hand it’s so sore!’⁵⁰ Teata 26.10.14

The edges of pandanus leaves frequently give women paper cuts, which can be a problem when straightening the fifty or more leaves needed to work a mat. Straightening pandanus leaves is therefore thought of as glove work, *wok blong hanklav*. Any kind of glove will do: cotton gardening gloves, nylon or latex work gloves, or even, why not, winter ski gloves! A *hanglove* offers protection and allows women to work faster as the placement and position of their hand is now less critical.

Once straightened, pandanus ribbons are described as *sofsof*, *smuth gud* and *maru* or *marumaru*; they are soft, smooth, and easy (*maru*). *Maru* also means large, and this is also true of the flattened out ribbons. In English, the softened pandanus can be described as either pliable or malleable, although neither word is a perfect match. Straightened pandanus is flexible and easily manipulated with a light touch; no tools are

⁵⁰ “*Mi, ol neel ia, oli kutem han blong mi i soa i soa!*”

needed as the word malleable may otherwise suggest. Straightened pandanus is pliable, but ironically to bend it ruins the ribbon by weakening it.

Pandanus ribbons are considered ready to be plaited on Futuna after they have been harvested, stripped of their thorns, cleaned, rolled and finally straightened. We have seen that while much of this long process of preparing leaves is the same throughout the Pacific, many aspects are particular to the island and the specific *ples*. Pandanus workers come to know both the materials they are working with and the *ples* through growing and processing pandanus.

The quality of the materials they produce will also affect the plaiting form of the basket or mat they will produce and so in growing and processing materials, women are already starting to make the artefact. Skilled pandanus workers therefore carefully sort and select their pandanus ribbons prior to using them in their work. Ribbons are often cut and sorted into regularised widths and colours during the straightening process and this, finally, marks them out as ideal materials for handicraft work.

4.3.3 Selecting Good Pandanus

When working pandanus into a plaited form on Futuna, the characteristics and properties of the materials are regularly commented on, discussed and thought about by workers of pandanus. Materials in craft work are not uniform, regular substances that ‘grow’ into a form in a regular manner or respond to a hand’s movement in the same way. Materials like pandanus leaves have different characteristics which skilled craft workers recognise and react to accordingly. For Bunn (1999), this ordering of materials is the first step towards the creation of patterns. Pandanus leaves on Futuna are therefore carefully analysed and sorted; reserved for projects corresponding to their properties. As will be seen, the qualities of pandanus grown on Futuna is considered to directly affect the quality of plaiting work.

Seieke is particularly thorough with her selection of pandanus ribbons; it is her sorting process that follows. Seieke not only divides her pandanus into different categories when first preparing it for storage, but also later when straightening leaves for immediate use on a basket or mat. During the initial selection process, Seieke will

differentiate between good quality pandanus that can be stored for a long time and lower quality *roten* (rotten) pandanus that will need to be used first. She cleans and removes all thorns, but the good pandanus will be rolled up into tight individual rolls, whereas the ‘rotten’ leaves will be rolled, then left loose, untied, as a sign to use those first when working a pandanus basket or mat. Rotten leaves are those with any form of damage to them – they may have suffered caterpillar damage or may have other forms of environmental damage as touched on above. These rotten leaf ribbons are invariably used in pandanus mats where they can be hidden in the middle layers of the mat: useful in adding bulk, but not worthy of being seen.

When straightening leaves, Seieke follows a more complicated process of separation between pandanus ribbons. She generally divides her straightened ribbons into three to five piles, for example:

1. For baskets – white, no *sik blong pandanus*, marks of illness
2. Mat making pandanus ribbons – narrow width
3. Mat making pandanus ribbons – medium width
4. Mat making pandanus ribbons – wide width

Seieke describes her method as an economical one. Separating pandanus ribbons by their widths saves her pandanus as she doesn’t waste wide ribbons by cutting them down to fit narrow leafed mats. It in addition saves her time and energy as once sorted by width, less time is needed in the final alterations of leaves before using them in a mat or basket.

“You have to do it like this... you must not waste leaves. If you tear a wide leaf into a narrow leaf, you’re wasting leaves.”⁵¹ Seieke

01.06.15

From this perspective, the selection process method of sorting pandanus ribbons before their use seems to be a highly efficient and valuable practice. But straightened pandanus

⁵¹ “*Yu must mekem olsem... yu no spoilem lif. Spose yu terem big wan i kam smol, yu spoilem lif.*”

ribbons do not remain straight for more than a few days. Straightening a large number of different types of pandanus ribbons therefore has the downside that it produces materials for a number of different projects, which must be completed within the space of a few days if the work of straightening pandanus ribbons is not to go to waste. When Seieke straightens her pandanus rolls and separates these into four piles as above, she will then usually embark upon plaiting three mats simultaneously; the white basket pandanus ribbons will be re-rolled, ready for use at a later date in a basket. The three mats will be worked in sections: Seieke will work the straightened ribbons of each width type into the beginnings of a mat, then will straighten and categorise another large quantity of ribbons to work the next section of the mats, and so on until the three mats meet the local idea of correct dimensions. Seieke cannot allow too much time to pass between plaiting the sections of her mats, as the ribbon ends of the plaited work will curl, stiffen and dry up. Her three mats must therefore be worked within the space of a few days if she wants to avoid re-straightening her half-worked pandanus ends attached to each mat.



Figure 25. Seieke straightening individually rolled leaves with the back of a knife blade.

Pandanus workers therefore choose what works best for them according to their needs and interest. Pandanus for basket work is always set aside: this pandanus is the speciality of the land and it is what sets Futuna baskets apart. Such pandanus is valued and it is thus used where it will be most visible.

4.4 Good Pandanus

While pandanus on Futuna is valued as a whole for its unique characteristics – which as discussed above consequently defines it as *fara iotea* – the search for ‘good’ pandanus ribbons drives the whole process of growing and making pandanus materials.

Good pandanus is locally defined firstly by the lack of irregularities and diseases on the leaves, secondly by the strength and size of leaves, and thirdly by the colour once dried. I consider these in turn.

Recently, dry pandanus *iotea* leaves are often blemished. An unidentified pandanus illness, *sik blong pandanus*, is spreading around the island and spoiling the pandanus they are so proud of. Dark spots and swollen sores discolour the pandanus ribbons. The colour irregularities cause frustration as they are an indication of the ill health of the plant, but they are not otherwise said to impact the material qualities of the leaves. Swollen sores, in contrast, change the inner structure of leaves and cause irregularities that can lead to breakages, particularly during the processes of straightening ribbons before plaiting.

Swollen sores were moreover caused by the strong winds of Cyclone Pam. In March 2015, the beginning of the dry season when pandanus leaves are starting to dry, the winds shook the plants until the leaf-ends became shredded, swollen burn-like scars appeared mid leaf and some branches broke off. At worst, this treatment rendered leaves unusable; at best, the leaves were used strategically in plaiting work where damaged sections were carefully hidden in the plait of a mat, for example.

The second valued characteristic of the pandanus on Futuna is the strength of the leaves. Pandanus should be tough, sturdy and durable: vital qualities for this kind of craft material. The strength of pandanus leaves on Futuna is celebrated around the island and

is thought to be due to the particular environment, the *ples*, in which they were cultivated. The distinctive leaves on Futuna are bleached by the surrounding sea and hardened by the rockiness of the land. It is the harsh environment of the *ples*; the rough seas, steep cliffs and inaccessible gardens that is thought to make for good pandanus that is ideal for basketry. The rocky nature of the island creates the environmental conditions that allow pandanus to dry on the tree and retain its strength. The quality of the pandanus is also an indication of the power inherent in this island that to others is ‘just a rock’.

The colour of pandanus leaves is the third criterion by which good pandanus is defined. Dry pandanus leaves on Futuna range in colour from a creamy white to a dark greyish brown and a brown ribbon from pandanus on Futuna is known to be no less strong, pliable or long-lasting than a white pandanus ribbon, but it is the lighter colours that are highly valued. The whiteness is a feature thought to be caused by the sea. All cultivated pandanus on Futuna grows and is grown in gardens around the coastal fringes of the island, where the houses are, and rough seas mean that salt water is often carried onto the coastal fringes of the land – even when these are thirty metres above sea level.

*“It dries until it’s only white. I think because of the sea... the wind blows and... the sea washes it a bit. Because when the sea is rough, it’s like rain. It means that when [the pandanus] is dry then it’s strong. But the one where they cook it, they cook it until its soft. When you make a mat, or you make a basket, it doesn’t last long.”*⁵² Sepoa

29.05.15.

White pandanus ribbons are explicitly preferred not for their material characteristics, but for their visual appearance.

⁵² *“Hemi drae ale i waet nomo. From I ting solwota... wind i mekem nao ale... solwota i stap wasem lil bit. From taem solwota i faet, ale i olsem rain i go. i mekem nao taem hemi dry bei hemi strong. Bei hemia wea oli stap cukem ia, cukem ia i sopsop nomo. Yu mekem mat, o yu mekem basket bei hemi no save stap longtaem.”*

“White [pandanus] means that the basket is colour[ful].”⁵³ Papra

04.06.15

The concept of *kala* used here by Papra, that is colour, or perhaps more specifically brightness, clearly implies more than just the fact of colour as we may understand it in Europe; not all languages have the concept of colour (Wierzbicka 2008). There is no specific term for colour in Futuna-Aniwa, however *kanu*, the word used to describe variegated pandanus, can be used to describe something that is colourful, patterned or striped (J. W. Dougherty 1983, 263). Keller (who first published as Dougherty), was influenced by Brent and Kay’s (1969) research on the universality of colour terms and explored local usage of colour terms on Futuna (J. W. Dougherty 1977a). This research highlights the influence of Bislama and the Anglo-French educational system on the island: while many colours could be named in Bislama or by referring to coloured flowers and plants, an overarching light-dark dichotomy is the primary means of categorising the visual appearance of things.

White pandanus looks clean and new. It is appreciated throughout Vanuatu; from Tafea province where dried pandanus is used straight from the plant, to Shefa and Penama provinces, where pandanus is heated, soaked and sun-dried to achieve an ivory-white colour. Unlike *mwari*, kula shell valuables, where history and ancestry add value to shells (Campbell 1983, 244), these are positive characteristics for pandanus. Campbell notes that in the Massim area of Papua New Guinea, whiteness in people is however connected to ideas of purity with darkness associated with impurity, ugliness and undesirability. Yet on Futuna, people’s bodies are distinguished between those with bright, shiny skin, and skin that is mat and dry. Boys had their skin oiled for their return to the village after the circumcision ritual: dancers oil themselves before important performances; oiling the hair and body is an essential part of the Sunday morning preparations for church. In contrast, unhealthy skin, for example due to too much kava drinking, was described as dry, scaly and interestingly enough, white. What distinguishes white pandanus from brown pandanus and blemished pandanus is

⁵³ “*Waet i mekem se basket i kala.*”

therefore perhaps not the colour as we may understand it, but its brightness and shine: *hkego* and *htea* mean both white and light or bright in Futuna-Aniwa and can be contrasted with *hkosi*, meaning ashen, greyish or washed out (J. W. Dougherty 1983).

The Austro-Pacific region is important in the field of visual semantics, where instead of colour, people have been found to foreground their experiences of, for example, the visually conspicuous: shine that features contrasts and patterns (Wierzbicka 2008, 411-2); shimmering brilliance created by cross-hatching (Morphy 1989); surface features that are either bright and glowing or dull and dark (Munn 1977, 1986, 97-101, O'Hanlon 1989, 122, Strathern and Strathern 1971, 152-3). In the Pacific Islands, the focus is notably often on the contrast between light and dark, which in fact seems to be connected to a bright-dull dichotomy. Rather than an interest in colour or hue, people in the Pacific seem to be historically interested in brightness and luminescence. The complexities of local ideas of aesthetics is discussed more fully in Chapter 6 in analysing the importance and use of patterns in plaited pandanus artefacts, but for now it suffices to note the broader significance of the term 'white' when used in relation to pandanus.

Good pandanus on Futuna is therefore 'white' pandanus. White pandanus is however not only important for its attractive, visually appealing qualities but for its specific role in plaiting pandanus work. Indeed I was told that white pandanus can actually cause the pandanus worker to plait a nice basket.

“For me, it’s the pandanus. If the pandanus is good, the basket will be nice. But some people... If you think about the basketry work, then the basket is good. But some people just work roughly. But I think it’s the pandanus. If the pandanus is good, then you make baskets that are really nice.”⁵⁴ Papra 04.06.15

⁵⁴ “*Tingting blong mi, ol pandanas. Spos pandanas i gud, basket i naes. Bei sam, spos tingting blong yu basket i gud, bae i gud. Bei sam, raf wan nomo. Bei mi tingse, ol pandanas. Spos pandanas blong yu i gud, bae yu mekem ol basket i naes we.*”

Papra explained to me – in a quote I wasn't fast enough to copy down with precision – that 'white pandanus makes you glad and so you weave a nice basket as you concentrate on it'. It is not however clear whether it is the very brightness of pandanus that enhances and focuses the worker's skill, or whether it is the pandanus worker's pleasure in working with good quality materials that results in a high-quality basket, as Sennett (2008) defines skill. The emotive side of craftwork could be a profitable area for future research in this region, where emotions and feelings are rarely openly spoken about. Either way, the material characteristics and their qualities are clearly thought to affect the pandanus worker and how they work. This is perhaps the textility of making as discussed by Ingold (2010), where craft workers actively 'follow the materials'.

The way pandanus colour, or in Pacific Island terms, light, is perceived in Vanuatu may explain why Futuna is reputed for its finely plaited baskets. As discussed above, not only is this *ples* reputed for producing particularly white, bright pandanus, but the women are reputed to work especially fine baskets. It seems that the quality of the material is linked to the quality of the final plaited artefact through its stimulating and motivational characteristics.

Thus on Futuna, pandanus is deeply rooted in the island. Pandanus on Futuna is held in high regard due to the unique environmental characteristics of this rocky *ples*. The strongest, the most durable and the whitest pandanus is *fara iotea*, so *fara iotea* can be any pandanus variety, so long as it is the best.

*"Futuna's [pandanus] is very white, and it is strong."*⁵⁵ Lifa 03.07.15

4.5 Conclusion: Women, Pandanus and Belonging

Cultivated plants are intimately connected to both people and the island of Futuna through their use in everyday life and their associations with ancestors and the spirit world. Growing and processing pandanus is therefore not only a process of coming to know craft materials but a process of encountering and working with the *ples*.

⁵⁵ "Blong Futuna tu i waet wei waet, mo i strong."

As highlighted by Nabobo-Baba (2006, 74) discussing life in Fiji, working with the spirits of the land – through for example respecting pandanus and the seasons of pandanus work – allows people to maintain their good health. More than that however, we see that as in the previous chapter, by working with the *ples* and coming to understand it, people on Futuna become a part of it. Making materials makes people and *ples*.

Moreover, good materials make for good pandanus artefacts. Good pandanus ribbons are long, durable and white. This whiteness is not so much considered to be their colour in the English meaning of the word, as their brightness and luminescence. Importantly, this not only makes baskets more attractive, but it incites pandanus workers to pay close attention to their plaiting work, which is how well-made baskets are thought to be made.

Part 2 of the thesis examines this process of constructing baskets. It creates form from the materials and the people who belong to the island, the focus of this chapter. The chapters focus on the gendered imagery in the construction processes of pandanus artefacts and the work of creating plaited patterns.

Part 2

Moving Parts: Constructing Baskets and Social Worlds

5 Women's Work and Relationality

As we saw in the previous chapters, ideas about access to land – and therefore space to garden – are different for men and women. Gender is a source of imagery and creativity in Melanesia and it is frequently used to highlight and order difference (M. Strathern 1988). Thus on Futuna, the relations between men and women are central to the plaiting work of pandanus baskets in contemporary pandanus work. Local ideas about gender determine the social role of women; for example, who works pandanus and how pandanus is worked. Ideas about the relationship between men and women and what the categories 'man' and 'woman' mean are moreover used to describe plaiting techniques through gendered imagery. Ideas about gender are wrapped up in processes of working pandanus and so this chapter looks at how local concepts of gender are materialised and worked through plaiting pandanus, considering the (in)significance of these ideas to women and their work.

I begin the chapter with a *kastom* story that highlights central ideas about men and women on Futuna. This story is important as it clearly identifies pandanus work with women and the home, an association that I later contextualise historically. The second section of the chapter considers the gendered imagery of plaiting work where men and women are plaited and therefore bound together. This imagery provides a space for women to explore and discuss their relations with men. Finally, I compare this material with MacKenzie's research on bilum-making in Papua New Guinea, another case study of gendered relations in the construction of textiles.

5.1 Why Women Work Pandanus

I was told the following story at different times by Seieke, Seirangi and Fitu, who were explicitly using it to explain to me why women work pandanus on Futuna. The small variations in what I was told are taken as indications of how story-tellers adapt the narrative to the context, audience and their own interests (Keller and Kuautonga 2011).

A female pidgin (*tuvurutoi*, a short-legged bird) was weaving inside her house. She was an exceptional woman and so her parents had built a special house that was surrounded by 7 fences to keep her safe inside and to keep out outsiders.⁵⁶ The female pidgin spent each day weaving and was so focused on her task that she never moved from where she sat; she gave weaving her full attention.

Male pidgins often came up to the outer fence and called out to her, trying to get her attention, but she wouldn't so much as lift her eyes up off her work. They would wash and clean themselves in preparation, making sure they smelt good, but nothing they did could get her to stop weaving and notice them. She was so focused on her weaving that she did not even notice the voices of her admirers as they called out to her.

The male pidgins were not the only ones interested in this female pidgin. The flying fox (a male), was also captivated by her. One day, he had a clever idea as to how he could get noticed. He went into the bush and collected a range of different nice smelling woods. The flying fox then made a big fire to burn the wood. He proceeded to wipe the burnt wood all over himself so that his body would take on its nice smell.

At the sight of the flying fox, the male pidgins mocked him: they laughed and told him that if they couldn't get the female pidgin's attention then he certainly would not have a chance, after all, he was not like them, he spent his time hanging upside down! Undeterred, the flying fox tried his luck. He called out to the female pidgin, asking to be admitted through the fence. The female pidgin smelt him straight away. She did not even look up from her weaving; she had already smelt something special in the air and was interested. Distracted from her weaving for the first time and hearing the flying fox, she called out "come inside". The flying fox went through the first outer fence surrounding the pidgin's house.

⁵⁶ In the past, it was common for houses to have a minimum of two fences surrounding them for security reasons.

Wanting to get closer, the flying fox again called out to be let in. Still interested, the weaving pidgin called out “come inside” and allowed him through to the next fence. Fence by fence, the flying fox slowly got through the barriers and eventually got to the last fence separating him from house where the pidgin was sitting, her head still bent over her weaving. Here, he called out one more time, saying “I want to come in and stay with you”.⁵⁷ The pidgin had still not seen the flying fox, but entranced by the sweet smell, she allowed him in.

So the couple lived together.

That’s it.

The practice of working pandanus is tied up in ideas about what makes a good woman on Futuna, based in large part on an idea of “economic and political interdependence [between husband and wife] commonly understood as the basis for most ‘traditional’ marriages in PNG” (Demian 2017, 418). People on Futuna were often keen to point out that though different, the social positions of men and women are not necessarily imbalanced. This has been picked up by many anthropologists in the region (O'Brien and Tiffany 1984, M. Strathern 1988, Weiner 1976), who note that “all activities are work, and all work is equally important” (MacKenzie 1991, 42).

5.2 The Work of Men and Women

The presumed equivalence of all work can be understood through the concept of productivity and of producing and maintaining a family. Personal relationships are the central focus and so all activities that are directed towards social reproduction are productive: producing things is moreover analogous to producing persons (Jolly 1994).

⁵⁷ In Bislama, I was told the flying fox would ask: “*mi wantem kam inside, stap witem yu*”. I have translated this above as “I want to come in and stay with you”; however, this does not convey the full meaning of ‘*stap*’, which in this context implies a long-term sexual relationship.

“... ‘production’ is what men and women, or men, women, and children do together; it defines them socially in their several roles, and also symbolizes the meaning of the family.” (Wagner 1981, 25)

Work is therefore a human, social characteristic that is not only something that a person does, but it is something that defines a person. According to Wagner, marriage, or the family, is work in its most essential form. On Futuna, extended kin relations are for example considered *had wok*, hard work, due to the continual requests and obligations they entail.

On Futuna, work is distinguished linguistically by its physicality and its actions. There is: *vere*, concerning agricultural garden work and one’s duty; *karoji*, that involves hard physical labour; *pena*, where one prepares, fixes and makes; *fijikau*, referring to a specified activity; *tanoa*, that in contrast refers to a more unspecified sense of being busy and occupied (J. W. Dougherty 1983). However cross cutting all of these terms, work is in addition characterised as male or female.

One of the important points that come out of the *kastom* story above is that men and women are clearly understood to be different. The female pidgin was not interested in the male pidgins, only in the flying fox: it was precisely because he was different that he was able to get her attention and male flying foxes are known for their pungent smell. This difference between marriageable men and women also draws attention to the ideal of cross-cousin marriage on the island.

Similar to McDowell’s (1984) discussion of complementarity between male and female in Papua New Guinea, on Futuna, the ideal is that male and female work together to produce a whole. Men must therefore facilitate women’s work and enable them to care for their family. Similarly, women are important as protectors of their family and supporters of their husbands. Ideally, both men’s and women’s work is focused on developing the collective good but they do so in different ways (M. Strathern 1981).

Thus as suggested in the story that opened this chapter, women’s work on Futuna is currently said to be centred on the house and the household, some of the reasons for which are discussed below. A *mama* “*must know how to cook, how to weave, all the*

house things... look after children...”.⁵⁸ She prepares food, washes dishes, scrubs clothes and looks after children. Women also do the less onerous agricultural tasks (weeding, planting, harvesting) and construction tasks (working temporary plaited coconut frond house walls and thatching), they collect seashells and they fish from the shore, gather firewood and care for their free-roaming fowl around the house. Men also work to provide for the household, but they do the ‘strong’ tasks with ‘hard’ materials. These activities can take men further away from the household. Men on Futuna therefore build houses, canoes and paths; fish in canoes, from boats and by diving; clear gardens and plant and harvest crops. As noted in Chapter 4, men and women inhabit the place differently according to the season: *sinu* (the start of the dry season), is the proper time for work around the house and in gardens while *ramaga* (flying fish season), takes men out to the sea at night, sometimes sleeping in caves by the sea. Jolly (1994) notes a more extreme version of this gendered spatial division on Pentecost, where men may travel and migrate, but once married, women must ideally remain in and of the *ples*.

Similarly, women engage with political life through a different set of channels to men. While men may hold public meetings, women influence decisions at home (Bolton 2015), or through their involvement with the church (Eriksen 2008). Indeed membership of the church offers women a means to travel, attend meetings and assert their influence over others. The Women’s Project discussed in the next chapter is evidence of this.

Thus relations between men and women on Futuna are complex. The value of work and gender in the Pacific Islands are different to in Europe, though they have been influenced by these. The following section briefly overviews some of the key social changes that have shaped current understandings of what it is to be female on Futuna, and what housework means in this context.

⁵⁸ “*must save how blong kuk, how blong wif, ol samting blong haos...lukoutem pikinini....*” Tolores 10.02.15

5.2.1 Changing Times

Ideas about gender are in a long-term period of change (Jolly and Macintyre 1989). Conversion to Christianity, the labour trade and more recent urban migrations, not to mention governmental and non-governmental development work within the country, the increased use of a cash economy and the increasing development of church networks, means that during my fieldwork men and women frequently discussed ideas around the concept of gender; exploring their own and their neighbours' attitudes to what they consider to be (in)appropriate behaviour. The emerging middle classes in urban areas are at the fore front of these changes, where men and women are experimenting with new ideas of personhood, new forms of relationships and redefining key institutions such as marriage. In Port Moresby for example, women at a boarding house are aspiring to live independently of their family networks, to pursue a career and enter into a companionate marriage (Demian 2017). As will be discussed below, these changes are also starting to be felt in rural communities in Vanuatu.

In the 19th century, many missionaries were initially shocked by what they thought were unequal and improper relations between men and women in the islands and actively sought to change this. As noted in Chapter 2, missionaries encouraged a Victorian idea of domesticity, and tried to prevent women from working away from home in the gardens, for example. European missionaries considered hard physical labour, particularly if undertaken far from the home, to be degrading (Harris 2007, 138-9), particularly to women (Jolly 1991). They thought women should be calm and show restraint and that the nuclear family was the heart of social life. Missionaries introduced Western, Victorian, idealised concepts of womanhood, domesticity and the family and of separate spheres between men and women that were in many cases at odds with existing ways of life in the Pacific (Jolly and Macintyre 1989).

On Futuna, it seems that there was historically some form of class division that distinguished between chiefs, priests and 'commoners', as Takaronga called himself, that has a recognisably Polynesian feel to it. For example, there was a line of 'sacred women', now referred to as 'princesses' in Bislama, who were connected to the Fareriki, a sacred building at Ibau. There is moreover a well-known *kastom* story –

seemingly matched by a similar story on Tonga – that recounts how a man from Tonga came to marry one of the most highly regarded sacred women of Futuna. It is noteworthy that in pre-missionary Tonga, Gailey (1980) argues that these class hierarchies were more important in structuring social life locally than gender. There is however noticeably no mention by Dr Gunn and his wife of how the sacred men and women on the island, with whom they had good relations, fitted into their understanding of ideal gender relations. It is likely a result of conversion to Christianity that there is no longer a clearly demarcated lineage of sacred men and women on Futuna.

Changes in beliefs created a different kind of divide between the secular and sacred (Jolly 1989) and have also affected how men and women use space, and vice versa. Ralston (1989) and Keesing (1989) have suggested that missionaries in the Pacific misinterpreted certain practices as indications of women's lower status in the islands due to their own understandings of purity and impurity. Thus on Futuna for example, footpaths on the island used to be segregated: women used footpaths that circumnavigated the village and they would certainly avoid walking through the *marae*, particularly if menstruating. Indeed the seclusion, bathing and ceremonial practices around a girl's first menstruation are now rare on Futuna, and women no longer seclude themselves during menstruation. Ralston and Keesing suggest that such taboos surrounding women are actually to be understood as evidence of their close connection to the spiritual realm. In altering these spatial practices to 'improve' the social position of women in the islands, there is evidence to suggest that expatriates in fact created a new moral order that denigrated women.

Encounters with missionaries therefore influenced social relations between men and women and shaped ideas of domesticity so that women on Futuna became associated with childcare and softer, easier work that is closer to the home. Mrs Gunn taught sewing classes and trained girls in housework – providing her household with maids, nannies and cooks in the process – and initiating what has become an indigenised form of female labour in the country, now known as 'house-girls'. Indeed during colonisation, women were employed as house-girls while men worked in plantations. This paid work of house-girls, female domestic help, has further enforced the association between women and domesticity and has helped define housework in the

islands as concerned with washing, cleaning, cooking and caring for children. This domestic work is not stigmatised by ni-Vanuatu, unlike the Europeans they initially worked for (Rodman, et al. 2005).

The labour trade and urban migrations have also impacted gender relations. These were opportunities for women to change their life, marry abroad and earn new material goods (Jolly 1987, Rodman, et al. 2005). While local trade networks between islands had historically been used by women to start a new life for themselves, European ships to Fiji, New Caledonia and Australia provided a new range of possibilities. This female independence was not always viewed positively by ni-Vanuatu and men on Pentecost for example tried to control what they thought of as sexual deviancy (Jolly 1987, 134).

Similarly, colonialism, life in town and the increasing use of cash in everyday life has created new dynamics between men and women as the meaning of work has changed and new contexts have encouraged new ways of life. Life in town has raised questions about contemporary ideals of female modesty (Cummings 2009) and the perceived dangers of town life mean that women are thought to need protection (K. Rio 2017). In contrast, young, unemployed boys in town feel the need to reclaim a lost sense of masculinity that in the islands is defined by attachment to *ples* and *kastom* so they try to create and enact connections to their urban *ples* (Kraemar 2013, 52-55). A growing number of ethnographies demonstrate that the reality of life in town presents its own difficulties and tensions for men and women and what they do. Some aspects of gender and work are emphasised whilst others are turned upside down.

Nevertheless, education and paid employment has also changed the concept of gendered work; in town, educated men and women have equal access to wage work. Women can therefore control the family finances or even live independently of their families (Kraemar 2013, 54). It is notable that the commoditisation of pandanus work in the outer islands is similarly a means for women to gain in power and independence from local leaders (see Robbins and Akin (1999, 23) for a wider discussion of this in the Pacific).

Men and women are legally equal in Vanuatu and governmental and non-governmental programs encourage church and *kastom* communities to espouse and adapt to this. Ideas about women's rights and children's rights are met by some as an affront to *kastom* but ni-Vanuatu feminists are pushing to once more redefine *kastom* to ensure that it concords with ideals of non-violence (Forsyth 2009, 13, Jolly 1996).

On Futuna, many women I spoke to were undecided as to whether men and women should be different and therefore complementary, or whether there should be a flexibility and openness in this respect. Should a kind of equality be sought through women and men acting in the same social spheres? Such issues were raised in discussion of household and political arrangements.

One *mama* would often proudly tell me that her son, now married, had never washed clothes in his life and insisted that this was women's work – whether that of a mother, sister, wife or other female relative – but then on occasion it seems she would regret her decision as it made him dependent on others. Kin relations, as previously mentioned, are hard work. Other *mamas* also noted with concern that in contemporary Futuna, women sit near meetings at the *marae* and therefore participate publicly in political discussions; men speak of politics around the household area in front of and with women; husbands spend much time around the household area and involve themselves in the cooking, cleaning and childcare arrangements. Women interfere where they shouldn't, but men also introduce them to politics by talking about village affairs publicly when they shouldn't. These are all thought to destabilise local *kastom* and gendered relations; previous changes to *kastom* and concepts of gender are not taken into account. Yet during fieldwork, women voiced their uncertainty about where they stand and where they would like to stand in these changing contexts.

Pandanus basketry provides an interesting activity through which to further discuss these ideas. As an activity, it is firmly located within the household and yard, but it creates products that travel far beyond the home. It could be argued that women use their pandanus work to look beyond and extend their influence beyond their household. Indeed as discussed in Part 3 of the thesis, local discourse about pandanus work focuses on the consumption of basketry: on how pandanus work can be sold to pay for the

education of children. Women are explicit about the power and control their pandanus work gives them over the futures of their children, yet as discussed below, *kastom* stories about pandanus work, often recounted by these same women, draws attention primarily to the processes of production for basketry and emphasises the importance of it as women's work and as housework.

The contrast between these two is interesting and suggests that the practice of pandanus work, from the gardening to the sale of baskets, has within it a range of contradictions about ideal relations between men and women. This is important: it shows that relations between men and women are not easily bracketed off into different spheres of activity. The contrast between an 'ideal' and reality is also what makes it confusing for men and women trying to decide what proper relations look like.

In this chapter, following the overarching structure of the thesis that follows the making and use of baskets, I focus on the process of making baskets. The work of pandanus basket making on Futuna is interesting as it is loaded with gendered imagery and can describe a variety of different social relationships. To understand relations between men and women on Futuna, it is useful to consider gender as both a social relationship and an image (Moore 1988). As will be seen, the gendered imagery in pandanus work is used as a mnemonic to learn the plaiting construction techniques, but importantly, it also describes an idealised world view that has been shaped by a number of influences, discussed above. In fact, as demonstrated below, the social world on Futuna is discussed, worked out or metaphorically (re)created or in women's everyday practices⁵⁹ of basketry.

5.2.2 Space to Work: Good Women and Good Pandanus Work

The *kastom* story that opened this chapter is a description of a good woman and a good pandanus worker; the two go hand in hand as pandanus work is women's work. Moreover, for practical reasons pandanus work is strongly associated with the house

⁵⁹ See also Hugh-Jones (1979), who discusses how women routinely regenerate the world when they produce and prepare manioc in Papua New Guinea.

and women primarily work pandanus in their yard. The workspace is important in pandanus work on Futuna, and while its products are not necessarily only for use in and about the house, there is a clear connection with an idea of domesticity. As noted above, women's work on Futuna is strongly linked to work around the house and they are valued for this; domesticity is not denigrated in this context (Jolly 1989, Rodman, et al. 2005, M. Strathern 1984).⁶⁰

“With weaving... the woman who stays inside can weave and not think about anything... so she weaves well. But the woman who weaves outside... The woman who stays inside can weave well because she doesn't notice anything... there isn't anything to distract her. Women mustn't go out and about too much... you must stay around the house. Your work is to clean the house; you cook, you weave. Women must stay quietly around the house.”⁶¹ Fitu 04.05.15

Sitting outside the yard area where there will inevitably be distractions is known to cause a loss of concentration and can result both in a lesser quantity and a lesser quality of work. Yet there is perhaps also a lasting sense of danger in areas beyond the yard, indicated by a pre-Christian custom of surrounding houses with reed fences. Whatever the reason may be, there is a noticeable connection here between pandanus work and the house in both the *kastom* story above and Fitu's quote.

In fact the *kastom* story makes clear a causal relationship between domesticity, quality pandanus work and finding a husband. The story describes an ideal woman who attracts a good-looking husband through her focused working habits, thereby suggesting a

⁶⁰ As discussed with relation to pandanus plants, the nature-culture dichotomy is irrelevant in Melanesia and women are no more thought of as being closer to 'nature', which is also an irrelevant concept, than men are thought to be close to 'culture' (M. Strathern 1980). Men and women on Futuna told me that male and female activities are different and complementary, although this perspective has been critiqued in and out of anthropology (B. Douglas 2002, Douglas and Jolly 2003, Jolly 1996).

⁶¹ *“Long saed blong wif ia... hemia wea i stap inside hemi wif bei hemi no tingbout wan samting... wifim gud. Bei hemi wea hemi wif outside... Hemia wea hemi stap inside hemi stap wif gud from hemi no harem wan samting...i no gat wan samting i disturbem hem. Ol woman oli no save wokbout tumas...yu stap kwaet long haus. Work blong yu, klinim haos, yu kuk, yu wif. Woman i mus stap kwaet long haos.”*

different interpretation of the concept of domesticity – where it is connected with sex and attraction rather than European Victorian ideals of domestic calm and restraint. An ability to stay around the household area, to avoid distractions and to maintain concentration on her work are all thought to be positive characteristics for a woman. Work and the energy or capacity to work are valued (see Harris 2007). These characteristics may be seen in a woman’s actions, but they may also be seen in the work that she produces as it is thought that the quality of a basket or mat reflects the attention it was given during the process of its production. Well-made artefacts can demonstrate a craft worker’s social skills and personal virtues (see Gustafsson 2018).

I was frequently told by women at Ibau that a good pandanus worker is someone who sits at home and works their pandanus alone. High quality pandanus work is considered to be the result of a focused mind and not individual skill. Indeed, individual skill or



Figure 26. Pamali working the boxes of boks baskets in her yard.



Figure 27. Papra plaiting a Futuna basket in her yard.



Figure 28. Seieke plaiting a mat in her old kitchen.

intelligence is an idea that Lindstrom argues is foreign to Melanesia: as it is thought that everyone has the capacity to be skilful or creative (Lindstrom 1997).

Plaited pandanus baskets and mats are therefore physical embodiments of a woman's character and her characteristics as the attention, time and concentration she is willing to direct towards a basket are visible in the work she produces. Similarly, on Tongoa Island a woman's focus and attention results in a tightly plaited mat; her spirit enters a mat as she works it (Kelly 1999, 234-5). The *kastom* story therefore suggests that women can attract husbands through their work, through producing pandanus work of quality. Domesticity is certainly valuable in this context.

In the outer islands, pandanus plaiting is an essential skill for women and in the past girls would learn to work pandanus before marriage in order to be fully prepared for married life. Boys would build a house, cut a canoe and prepare gardens. In preparing for marriage through learning to work pandanus and through the very process of making, girls learnt about their changing status within social relations and other key "aesthetic and moral standards" (MacKenzie 1991, 141).

There exists another *kastom* story on Futuna that connects pandanus work to women's ability to attract men, and which by extension clearly suggests that domesticity on Futuna is associated with women and sex. Majijiki, the cultural hero, is thought of as a 'woman's man': "that devil, he's a woman's man. He's not a harmful devil, but he's interested in sex. He's a sexual spirit."⁶² When men are too flirtatious or interested in women, it is thought that they are like Majijiki, or that Majijiki has revealed himself in them. Crucially, two boys told me, Majijiki is interested in women who work pandanus and this makes women want to work pandanus.

⁶² "Devil ia, devil blong woman ia. I no blong kilim man, bei long sex. Spirit blong sex ia." Sam 31.05.15

“He [Majjiki] means that women want to weave... Women weave baskets to attract men.”⁶³ Sam 31.05.15

Tarabe (2015, 139) explains this relationship from another perspective, saying that Fijian gods are attracted to pandanus work as pandanus mats represent women and the gods want to have women as wives.

This second *kastom* story tells of Majjiki’s infatuation with two sisters and his many efforts to marry or seduce them. I was only told this story once and all I was told about the two sisters was that they always worked pandanus and did so very well. The story begins with the sisters sitting calmly working pandanus. Majjiki tries numerous times to seduce the women, each time putting forward a different argument – and focusing on a different sister – and making himself as attractive as he can, but he is repeatedly rejected. Every time Majjiki attempts to seduce them, the sisters run away from him and find somewhere quiet to sit and continue working pandanus. Eventually, perhaps feeling that Majjiki is beginning to tire, the sisters explain that he can either have them both or neither of them. He chooses to have both, sexually, at the same time. While this story can be read as a demonstration of the continued importance of the family bond after marriage, there is also a very clear connection being made between women’s pandanus work and sex. The skilful working of pandanus establishes that a woman is of marriageable age, but as discussed below, it also demonstrates that she has some knowledge of and perhaps an interest in, sexual relationships.

5.3 The Imagery of Basketry

When Vanuatu gained its independence, Keller (1988) turned to the pandanus baskets she knew from Futuna Island and published an article arguing that pandanus basketry was an ideal national symbol. Independence in Vanuatu required a diverse range of islands to join together into a united whole and so there was an intense period of nation building in the 1970s; political leaders sought to create a national identity through

⁶³ *“Hemi stap mekem se ol woman oli stap wantem wifim ol basket... Ol woman oli stap wifim ol basket long attractem ol man.”*

emphasis on *kastom* and national symbols were created to represent the archipelago's new identity (Foster 1995, Tonkinson 1982). Unlike many other national symbols, Futuna baskets describe a social whole and bring together both male and female spheres of activity. For instance, the official coat of arms for Vanuatu consists of a male warrior standing in front of a miniature mountain (*ples*), with the chiefly, male symbols of a boar's tusk, symbol of wealth, and *namele* fronds, symbols of peace, in the background. It took ten years for the yellow banner holding the nation's motto '*long God yumi stanap*' to be publicly recognised as a pandanus mat, a long overdue indication that women and their work was to be valued (Jolly 1997, 147).

For Keller, basketry was an ideal national symbol as it could demonstrate variety within unity: pandanus baskets are made throughout the country but styles, techniques and forms vary from island to island. However as demonstrated by Keller, pandanus work would have been a particularly interesting national symbol as on Futuna it describes a whole cosmology. Pandanus basketry, Keller argued, is therefore unique in its ability to both describe a social world and be relevant to the whole of Vanuatu. The following discussion is written as a conversation between Keller's article and my fieldwork and describes how, in plaiting baskets, women routinely (re)create social worlds and work out their own positions within these worlds.

5.3.1 Pandanus Ribbons are Male and Female

A *Futuna* basket is constructed from pandanus ribbons that are described as male or female, irrespective of the sex of the plant the leaves were harvested from. As discussed below, this gendering of pandanus ribbons provides an interesting opportunity for women to discuss gendered relationships. For the craftworker, it also serves two purposes: firstly, it differentiates between how pandanus leaves are prepared and secondly, it differentiates between the two directions of the weft – although this is not strictly followed during the construction of the basket base. With gendered pandanus ribbons placed in a perpendicular arrangement as described below, a *Futuna* basket maker can linguistically differentiate between the two directions of weft whilst plaiting; the dextral, pointing towards the right and the sinistral, pointing towards the left. These are usually arranged in the construction of the base of a *Futuna* basket so that the

sinistral are the male leaves and the dextral are the female leaves, for as described below, the right tends to be male and the left tends to be the female side on Futuna. This differentiation between the gendered directions of the weft is used in all pandanus work and not just in the construction of baskets. That this imagery is also used as far away as in Pentecost Island (Walter 1984) highlights the pervasiveness of gender as an image with which to characterise and order life in Melanesia.

Plaiting a pandanus basket should be understood as a form of social creativity (Leach 2003) as plaiting entails the skilled manipulation of these gendered ribbons, of combining them, of making them 'work' together and in putting them in a hierarchical relationship. It moreover provides women with a language to discuss relations between men and women.

Firstly, when prepared pandanus ribbons are torn into strips ready to be inserted into the beginning of a *Futuna* basket, ribbons become either male or female. Female pandanus has the tip end of the leaf subdivided into strips, whilst male pandanus is where the base of the leaf is divided into strips. The base and the tip of the leaves are generally called the *traoses* (trousers) and *tel* (tail) respectively, see also Keller (1988, 7).

The construction of pandanus baskets has changed since Keller's initial fieldwork on Futuna as at that time a single ribbon was used to work both sides and base of a basket.

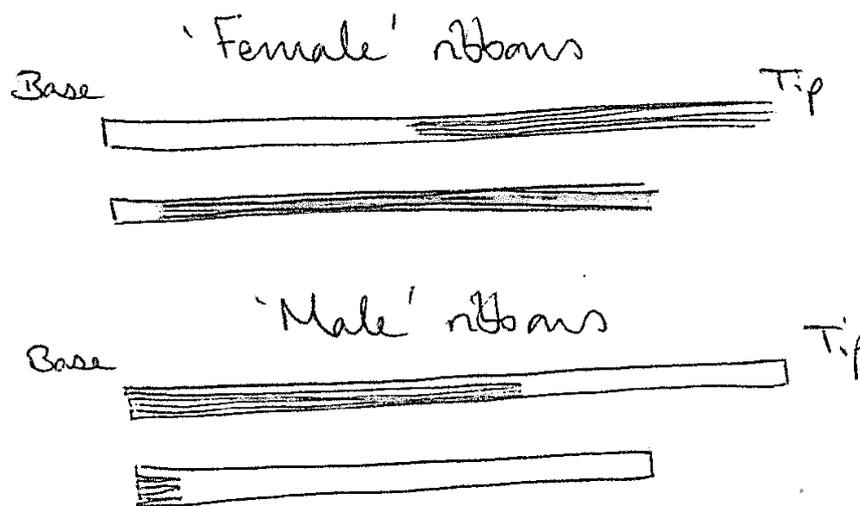


Figure 29. Male and female pandanus ribbons prepared for plaiting a basket.

Now, a change in pandanus varieties available on the island means that pandanus leaves are shorter and a ribbon will only cover the base and one side of the basket: such baskets therefore require double the number of ribbons and this affects the gendering of pandanus ribbons. In smaller baskets, or baskets constructed with long lengths of pandanus, both male and female ribbons are subdivided from their middle, which is where construction of the base of the basket commences. In larger baskets using shorter leaves, the leaves are in contrast not divided into gendered halves, but female ribbons are torn almost in their entirety and male ribbons are torn solely at their base.

No explanation is put forward as to why ribbons that are subdivided at the tip or tail end of the leaf are female and why ribbons subdivided at the base or trousers end of the leaf are male. It could be suggested that the base of a leaf is stronger and less pliable in contrast to the tip of the leaf, ideas that could relate to mobility and men's rootedness in *ples*, but 'tail' and 'trousers' are Bislama, not Futuna, terms and it is more likely that gender is here used only as a metaphor for difference.

Smaller baskets such as that described by Keller in her article are initially constructed by working a row of male ribbons perpendicular to a row of female ribbons to form a rough square (1988, 8). Baskets on Futuna are not constructed through a series of interlocking triangles as on Pentecost (Walter 1984, 46-51), but as a series of rows around the square base. For such a square with pandanus leaves extending outwards in all four directions to be constructed in larger baskets, where construction of the base starts at the base of ribbons and not the middle, additional ribbons must be added to extend the base outwards in all directions. Figures 30 - 32 show three different ways of constructing a basket base. This addition of new ribbons is perhaps the reason for the different ideas on Futuna concerning the correct ordering of gendered ribbons. Indeed the construction of contemporary basket bases does not in fact require male and female ribbons to be perpendicular and these may instead be placed with gendered ribbons alternating male-female, for example. Women find their own way of using gendered pandanus ribbons in the construction of a basket and as I will explain, women use this flexibility in construction techniques to voice their ideas and experiences of relations



Figure 30. The base of a Futuna basket made from short leaf ribbons.



Figure 31. The starting of a Futuna basket with long pandanus leaf ribbons. There is a single leaf thickness.



Figure 32. The base of a Futuna basket made from short leaf ribbons. This was made by a different woman. The male base of added ribbons is visible and there are a similar number on the inside of the basket. Those on the outside will be removed before the basket is turned inside out so that the right side (top side) of the pandanus is outermost. This basket base is two leaves thick due to the addition of extra ribbons.

between men and women.

5.3.2 Plaiting Gendered Pandanus Ribbons

Whilst little comment is made on how or why pandanus leaves are gendered in their preparation, that is, there is little attention given to why the subdivision of female leaves is done towards the tip and male leaves is done towards the base, both men and women often drew my attention to the positioning of the gendered pandanus ribbons as a metaphor for the relationship between men and women. When plaiting, or discussing plaiting, it was often said that ‘women lie underneath men’. There are always dextral pandanus strips (female) lying down for the sinistral strips (male) to lie on top of them into the plait, which is also the case in pandanus basketry on Pentecost (Walter 1984, 46, 51) and on Tongoa (Kelly 1999, 262). This saying, that women lie under men, is understood to describe hierarchical differences between the genders – influenced by missionaries – but it is also discussed for its sexual undertones.

“Girls stay low, men stay on top: you can’t change it. Women stay low; none of us women can sit at the nakamal.”⁶⁴ Fitu 21.03.15

“Women always lie below and men only lie on top. When they sleep together, women lie below, men on top.”⁶⁵ Seirangi 10.04.15

Indeed, the coming together of male and female is central to pandanus work both in its connections to Majijiki and in the physical act of plaiting. The joining of male and female is an image used in Tongoa too (Kelly 1999, 261) and men and women joke about the sexual connotations of pandanus work. This moment when the gendered ribbons meet and lie on top of each other is described by Keller as a symbol of sexual intercourse; marriage between the two elements, symbolising domestic life, then occurs only at the selvage when the plait of the basket is firmly knotted to seal the basket

⁶⁴ *“Gel i stap daon, man i stap antap: yu no save jangem samting ia. Woman i stap daon; mifala ol woman i no save sidaon long nakamal.”*

⁶⁵ *“Evritaem woman i slip daon man hemi stap antap nomo. Taem tufala i slip togeta, woman i slip daon, man antap.”*

(1988, 11). Keller’s analysis allows for the difference between the plait, where pandanus strips trace a journey through a basket by meeting and coming together with many pandanus strips coming from the other set of elements and a selvage, which seals all partnerships and fixes the relationship. Unlike a selvage, a plait can easily come undone. Nevertheless, such a distinction was not reiterated during my fieldwork, when the distinction between marriage and sexual relations was perhaps less important: the coming together of the gendered wefts in the selvage was considered no different to their joining in the plait.

“When we weave, we wed the two. Once they’re married, it’s a different story again.”⁶⁶ Seirangi 10.04.15

Pandanus work is clearly a work of plaiting ‘marriage’ where plaiting physically describes the bind of a partnership between a man and a woman. It might in addition be noted in the above quote that Seirangi is also using the gendering of pandanus plaiting to make an ironic statement on marital relationships. Indeed, the relational differences and positioning of male and female pandanus ribbons is clearly useful terminology to help discuss the construction of a basket, indeed most women first come across this language when learning to plait baskets, but it also provides an occasion in which a person’s experiences of such gendered relations in their own life can be expressed.

Pandanus plaiting provides an ideal opportunity for discussion of the relationships between men and women as it is the coming together of two equal elements. Unlike weaving where the weft works over and under the warp, in plaiting, the two elements, or wefts, are equally active and sinistral and dextral wefts are interlaced into a balanced whole. Therefore, when the wefts are assigned genders in pandanus work on Futuna, not only are these genders equal, but they are also complementary. Indeed, social unity is a key feature of pandanus basketry work (Küchler and Were 2005a, 8). The peace-keeping associations of pandanus mats are made explicit on Paama Island, as these are where families sit and where disputes are resolved (Lind 2018).

⁶⁶ *“Taem yumi wifim, yumi maredem tufala nao. Taem yumi maredem, i difren stori bakagen.”*

As already mentioned, people currently use the gendered pandanus ribbons in different ways when constructing a *Futuna* basket base. This flexibility in the placement of pandanus ribbons therefore also exists in descriptions of the relationship between men and women when plaiting; in fact, the gendered hierarchy in pandanus work described above is not fixed. The supposed hierarchy is played with and whereas men may refer to women as being below men, women invert the order and poke fun at men by doing so. It is similar to the tensions between structure and practice as defined by Bourdieu (1977).

Instead of telling me that women's position is underneath men in pandanus work as in life, several *mamas* I spoke to in Ibau told me that men lie down whilst women work around them.

*“The female ones, you weave them. The male ones, you put down. It's kastom. She said that that's the meaning of kastom... The leaves where you subdivide their head end are male, the leaves where you subdivide their tail end are female. You put the female ones in place, then you put the male on top. You start with the female; you weave female. Baskets are like that.”*⁶⁷ Siki 28.05.15 (interpreted by Shina)

As Siki explained, when working a basket, the female pandanus ribbons are those that do all the plaiting work. They are the dextral elements that are bent back and forth in preparation for every sinistral element. Indeed some women told me that men are the 'sleepy ones' who lie down and rest all the time.

This could be understood as an example of women subverting the official line⁶⁸ promoted by missionaries and expatriates (Bolton 2003a, 55-56, 2015) that they are

⁶⁷ *“Ol woman wan, oli stap wifim. Ol man wan, yu stap putem daon. Ol samting blong kastom ia. Hemi telem se mining blong kastom ia... Hemia wea yu stap pulem hed blong hem, hemi man. Hemia wea yu stap pulem tel, hemi woman. Yu putem woman, yu putem man antap. Yu stat long woman; yu wif woman. Basket i olsem.”*

⁶⁸ Recent research on women's handicrafts in Europe have, for example, highlighted that sewing and knitting are not necessarily submissive and domestic occupations (Parker, 2010).

beneath men in hierarchy. In Papua New Guinea, MacKenzie for example suggests that although men and women see themselves as necessarily complementary and integrated, women assert the balance between genders subversively: for example wearing ceremonial skirts to highlight their own productive abilities (1991, 194). However, these are perhaps not acts of subversion so much as expressions like any other; domesticity is valued on Futuna and some of the women I spoke with positively argued that they are the equals of men. It must also be asked: if these were subversive acts, are they subversive against *kastom* or against the new ideologies? Many of the women I spoke to on Futuna did not seem to feel the need for subversion to assert their independence and have their voice heard.

During fieldwork I spent a lot of time with strong women. Some of the younger women at Ibau were noticeably strong, their strength made visible in their devotion to domesticity and family, or conversely, in their search for personal independence. Three widows, a single mother and two married women also routinely highlighted their strength of character in their interactions with others. One publicly embarrassed her husband, a Church Elder, on a Saturday afternoon as against the Church's teachings he drank kava in a bush *nakamal*; another would publicly voice her anger when community issues were not dealt with appropriately; another was a successful and respected leader. These women thought it was important to talk about the relative positions of men and women and took pleasure and perhaps relief from expressing themselves through the gendered imagery of pandanus plaiting. Discussing ideal or real-life gendered relations through an activity commonly associated with women was therefore not evidence of subversion but a quotidian medium for women's self-expression. Nevertheless, I knew one young *mama* whose attendance at island-wide events was limited by her husband, although this actually may have been the influence of her mother-in-law.

Interestingly, there was a 'missing generation' at Ibau which meant there was a high proportion of older men and women, aged sixty or above and young families, with parents in their early twenties. During the academic year, there were also few youths in Ibau. Most of my time was therefore spent in the company of young mothers and more elderly grandmothers. The 'missing women', in their thirties, forties and fifties, were in Futuna settlements throughout the country; they had grown up with expectations of

wage labour and urban life and had moved to urban settlements to satisfy these needs. Three out of the five middle-aged women who lived at Ibau had husbands in paid employment. Two of these women rarely work pandanus. As highlighted in Part 3 of the thesis, pandanus work is an important source of income for women in the islands and the majority of women in the district make baskets and mats on a frequent basis. The strong, older women mentioned above were all highly skilled workers of pandanus and it is tempting to suggest a correlation between the two: if a good woman is a good pandanus worker then it follows that these women are respected in the district. They are successful in their own realm of expertise. Moreover, as highlighted in Part 3, the importance of these women's skills for the greater *komuniti* puts them in a position of high status.

Pandanus plaiting work, where both wefts are structurally equal, is in fact an ideal context for the discussion of the relationships between men and women for two reasons. Firstly, although there are always female ribbons lying beneath the male ribbons, there are equally always female ribbons lying above them. Secondly however, it is clear that on Futuna the two wefts in plaiting are not considered equal in the construction process, so dextral elements are bent back and forth for every sinistral element, while sinistral elements are only bent back and forth about every 6-14 rows, depending on how many



Figure 33. The repetitious movement of many dextral elements to place each sinistral element when plaiting a basket.

ribbons are being worked. Although the elements may be equal overall, one may be understood to work more than the other because of the way pandanus is plaited. The gendered imagery is therefore open to alteration.

There is an additional aspect to the work of plaiting a basket that should be highlighted as it suggests the basis on which things are gendered. It may have been noted that in the construction of a Futuna basket base of a small size, using long pandanus ribbons, although the pandanus ribbons initially prepared as female and those initially prepared as male may at first be worked as such – i.e. the prepared female ribbons are dextral elements and the prepared male ribbons are plaited as sinistral elements – the gender of the ribbons will have to change in order to work the rest of the basket base. Similarly, when corners are worked into a basket many wefts change their direction and what was dextral becomes sinistral and vice versa. What was female therefore becomes male and what was male becomes female.

This points to the fact that the gendering of pandanus ribbons refers to the work the elements do rather than how they were initially prepared or their initial position. Gender is therefore ascribed to a ribbon according to the activities it undertakes. This, interestingly, is how Strathern (1988) argues that gender is thought of in Melanesia; persons are not gendered in themselves but take on different genders in their interactions with other persons. Moreover, the focus is on the differing, “cross-sex” relations (M. Strathern 2001b). It is a point I will return to. What this shows, is that a plaited basket is, following Keller (1988), a ‘woven world’ that encapsulates complicated social relationships where identity is defined by actions.

5.3.3 Woven Worlds of Basketry

Douglas (1973, 93-112) argued that the body is a ‘natural symbol’ for a social system and it is therefore frequently used as an ‘enormous reference system’ to describe everything in the world (Tilley 1999, 38). The body – both the physical body and the social body – expresses crucial relationships between parts and wholes and connects persons (M. Strathern 1992). For example, Pastor Rosse explained that all things on

Futuna have two sides – a male side (right side) and a female side (left side)⁶⁹ – but added to this, all things are thought to take human form or have human characteristics. Pandanus is in fact thought to be like persons, as are coconut trees, and like coconuts, a human face can also be seen in the characteristics of pandanus fruit.

Linguistic imagery connects people and pandanus basketry in much of the Pacific region. Pandanus mats, for example, represent persons: on Tongoa Island, terminology connects the act of closing the corner of a mat to tying an umbilical cord as well as highlighting bodily parts such as eyes and ribs (Kelly 1999, 274), and imagery commonly used on Futuna such as the front and back of a mat. Mats in Fiji are also associated with the body, notably the female body: they have a stomach and a back, but have a head, eyes and ears as well (Hulkenberg 2018). These characteristics, like mats on Futuna, determine how a mat is positioned and used. Correctly orientated, mats in Fiji can protect and nurture, like the women they represent (Tarabe 2015).

On Futuna, pandanus baskets are also the focus of detailed bodily imagery. Keller highlights how basket corners are named *u*, breasts; the selvage is said to be *gonegone*, gums; basket handles are called *kave*, the term also used for siblings and parallel cousins of the opposite sex; and the *bura* tassels that end the handles are called *fatu uol*, which she translates as ‘woven world’ (J. D. Keller 1988, 12). Alternative interpretations may however note the resemblance between *gonegone* and the Bislama, *gongon*, meaning finished, blocked or gone off; the visual similarity between basket handles and curly locks of hair or octopus tentacles, the other meanings of *kave*; and the more likely translation of *uol* as the English term, wool. The prominence of bodily imagery is nevertheless important and taken together, it is remarkable that these terms construct a representation of social life.

A plaited pandanus basket is, as already discussed, formed of both intercourse and the marriage of men and women. The multiple handles, called siblings and parallel cousins

⁶⁹ While the dualism between left and right is not overtly associated with good and bad on Futuna (Needham 1973), anticlockwise movement (towards the right when looking inland towards Ta Tafu) is considered to be the right direction and is a more poignant opposition. This is also noted by Keller and Kauatonga (2007, 102-5).

of the opposite sex, that grow out of this marriage can therefore be understood to be children, the product of the plait work. They are “representations of male and female offspring” (1988, 12) The use of the term ‘breasts’ to denote the corners of baskets further connects the imagery to social life and the nurturing of children, as well as basketry with women. Moreover, for Keller, the selvage, where what is left of pandanus ribbons is cut off to leave a toothy fringe of leaf ends, “represent[s] a symbolic equation of eating and marriage” as the concept of gums highlights the similarity between the mouth and the basket as containers (1988, 12). Food, nurturing and reproduction are clearly central to pandanus baskets both in the imagery of their construction and in their use as artefacts of everyday life. A basket on Futuna can therefore be thought of as a physical manifestation of the social world, where family life is created and recreated as the physical form of a basket emerges. Women, when working pandanus, are therefore involved in the creative processes of social life.

A key concept on Futuna that seems to be relevant here is the difference between *ata*, the “observable reflection” and *hkano*, “hidden meanings” (Keller and Kuautonga 2007, 5-6). It seems that baskets, like speech and songs and basket patterns, see Chapter 6, also contain visible meanings and hidden meanings. Here, we see a clear distinction between the different aspects of a basket that have visible physical similarities with other things – whether of the human body or the environment – and the imagery and ideas that are inherent within the very construction process, hidden from view and known only by those for whom it is relevant.

The connection between the construction of basketry on Futuna and local social relationships is a crucial one. The gendering of pandanus ribbons helps pandanus workers plait regular baskets, but it simultaneously helps them understand their social environment. Plaiting a basket is a process whereby male and female elements are combined to produce a whole, however as we have seen, the cross-sex relationship between male and female is malleable. The ease with which descriptions of gendered relations can be changed and adapted and how this fits in with the various stages of plaiting a pandanus basket makes pandanus work an ideal setting for a discussion of gendered relations. Although men and women may be understood to be ideally interwoven in a complementary and balanced relationship, in practice, the social

relationships are not always felt to be equal. Yet crucially, pandanus work itself is a gendered activity. The various stages in the construction of a *Futuna* basket therefore provide women with a setting that encourages and enables discussion of the frictions in existing relationships for both young and old. The following section considers these relations between handicraft, gendered symbols and gendered work.

5.4 Handicrafts, Sex and Gender in Melanesia

Pandanus work creates a form of cloth. Considering cloth and its social relevance around the world, Schneider and Weiner note that women are in the majority of cases the producers of cloth and argue that “cloth evokes female power” (1989, 21). They say that the production of cloth is linked to the human life cycle, to birth, death and reproduction.

“The ritual and discourse that surround its manufacture establish cloth as a convincing analog for the regenerative and degenerative processes of life, and as a great connector, binding humans not only to each other but to the ancestors of their past and the progeny who constitute their future.” (Schneider and Weiner 1989, 3)

We see here a similar view as that put forward by Keller, discussed above. Indeed pandanus work on Futuna is certainly not unique as a handicraft in which social life is a significant source for imagery. Although there are many such cases in Melanesia, there is one particularly poignant example that has been studied in detail and which can provide a useful basis for theoretical comparison; MacKenzie’s previously mentioned ethnography of the bilum in the Telefol speaking region in New Guinea is particularly interesting as it discusses the gendered images inherent in processes of production, the focus of this chapter. The comparison is useful to identify certain boundaries to the research.

5.4.1 Bilums in Papua New Guinea

The bilums, also known as string bags, of the Telefol people in central New Guinea are used in both the everyday and in ceremonial life and are described by MacKenzie as a

“a vehicle for their ideas about their world and their place in it... it is a particularly apt medium... to articulate their views on the axis between the sexes” (1991, 191).

Telefolmin bilums are a fascinating site where female and male come together. MacKenzie calls them androgynous, as women work the principal form of string bags, whilst men add to and elaborate some bags to create a subset of bilums to be used in their male rituals; a fairly typical state of events according to Bolton (2003b). Both men and women therefore appropriate string bags. It is said that ‘the bilum is our mother’ as everything in the region fell out of a bilum carried by Afek, the androgynous mother of the Ok peoples who allocated aspects of the production of bilums to both men and women. MacKenzie therefore argues that the Telefol concept of motherhood is androgynous.

It should be noted that the majority of MacKenzie’s claim for androgyny is however based on the bird-feather bilums elaborated by men during male initiations and used to indicate their status. The bilums women use for transportation of foodstuffs and infants, called *aam bal men*, mouthband bilums, do not have the same androgynous character. Indeed the general view of women’s mouthband bilums is very much connected to women as it is through what is carried in the bilum that people are nurtured and fed, while other visual and linguistic clues create connections between women, wombs and bilums.

With such a connection between women, social reproduction and bilums, men’s bird-feather bilums seek to re-address the balance between the role of men and women in procreation and highlight their interdependence. MacKenzie notes that the feathers used by men in their string bags come from wild fowl, hornbill and cassowary birds which are all notable for the role the male of the species plays in incubating and caring for the young. An additional mythological connection between the cassowary and Afek makes the addition of these cassowary feathers to a bilum a physical metaphor of Afek’s womb. Men’s bird-feather bilums are therefore androgynous because they are constructed by both genders but also because they are physical acknowledgements of the role of men and women in procreation.

Interestingly, MacKenzie argues that bilums demonstrate both the clear distinction between genders and their necessary integration. Thus male and female are physically and visually separated in a bird-feather bilum, which has feathers added on its side facing away from the body and which retains its visibly female looping aspect on the face that lies against the back. Yet whilst a bird-feather bilum's outward appearance shows the opposition between men and women, it is said that they hold within them a hidden truth, that of the interdependence of men and women. According to MacKenzie these different relationships between men and women can be physically seen in the segregation of men and women in village life and their coming together in familial gardens:

“The values associated with the public space of the village are oppositional and stress inequality through differentiation and separation of the sexes, while the values associated with the intimacy of domestic partnership are egalitarian and stress interrelationship.”

(MacKenzie 1991, 43).

Bilums therefore contain opposing models of gendered social relationships: they simultaneously highlight the difference between the genders whilst evidencing their underlying complementarity. It is a contradiction that mirrors some of the differences in opinion prevalent in the gendered imagery of pandanus baskets on Futuna.

Similar to the evidence above demonstrating how women on Futuna use gendered imagery in the construction of pandanus baskets, MacKenzie considers the material imagery of bilums to be an important arena through which “problematic situations are rephrased and reframed and somehow made sense of” (1991, 206). The oppositions and contradictions and the interlaced texture of the very fabric of the baskets and bags allow for creative interpretation of stories and metaphors.

It is tempting to see in MacKenzie's analysis of the Telefomin string bag a historic equivalent of the pandanus basket complete with the connections to ancestors and the spirit world that Schneider and Weiner (1989) describe as typical to the production of cloth. Given the early conversion to Christianity on Futuna and their greater and more

frequent contact with Europeans it is clear that traditions have changed and evolved with time and become more aligned with a Presbyterian ideology. Added to this, the 30 or so years between my fieldwork on Futuna and MacKenzie's fieldwork with the Telefomin would also account for any significant differences in local ways of thinking. MacKenzie mentions that in the late 1970s a Christian revival movement caused the abandonment of male cults in the region and the availability of wage work at the Ok Tedi Mine has reformed the segregation rules between genders within villages. Already at the time of her fieldwork, the social situation that MacKenzie describes is the exception and not the norm. Nevertheless, there are many differences between life on Futuna and in the Telefol-speaking region that stop me from pushing this point further and suggesting that a great body of thought concerning the usage and meaning of pandanus baskets has been lost. On Futuna, there has never been a men's house or men's cult and men do not add further decoration to their pandanus baskets. Most importantly, the important imagery in plaiting *Futuna* baskets, its *hkano*, is an element of the actual technique of construction that cannot be understood by sight alone, unlike in string bags, where much imagery instead arises out of visual resemblance. The differing sources of the gendered understandings of social life is crucial.

The ideas concerning social life encapsulated within baskets on Futuna offer a contrasting perspective to Schneider and Weiner's thesis that the work of producing cloth is a work that is connected to "past and present, the dead and the living, ancestral authority and contemporary political claims" (1989, 8). The lack of ritual activity, proscriptions and ties to ancestors or spirits in the processes of making clearly distinguish pandanus work on Futuna, although it should be noted that Keller's dictionary includes a reference for *ara tapu*, a sacred row of plaiting in mats but I was unable to elicit any information about this during fieldwork: neither the term *ara* to refer to a row of plaiting, nor *ara tapu* more specifically. Perhaps this is a concept that was connected to the old *bakhaunea* mats? The only restrictions on pandanus work on Futuna concern access to pandanus trees and a ban on working pandanus on a Sunday, the day of rest.

Similarly, it has already been mentioned that skilled pandanus work, whether of construction or patterning, is not due to the intervention of any spiritual powers but

rather a worker's own focus and attention to their work. In contrast to Trobriand Islander skirts and banana leaf bundles and Samoan fine mats (Weiner 1989), basketry on Futuna has no clear ties to rank or hierarchy. The construction of pandanus mats, baskets and fans is therefore not so much tied to the spiritual aspects of life, but to the key social relationships that underscore life on Futuna: relationships between men and women, that are, fundamentally, relationships that maintain and sustain social life.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter has looked at gender as a lived characteristic and as a form of imagery in the construction of pandanus baskets. The complex ideas about men and women on Futuna have transformed over time after living with missionaries and expatriates and these ideas continue to be discussed by people on the island as they work out their positions and relationships and how they would like these to be.

Pandanus work has been shown to be an important activity that highlights what it is to be a woman on Futuna. Plaiting pandanus has also been shown to be a key tool and opportunity for women to discuss, challenge and express their ideas about gender and sexuality. Women take pleasure in manipulating gendered imagery in pandanus work to discuss and explore their relationships. Indeed women play with concepts of sex and gender to vent their frustration and poke fun at people who do not follow prescribed cross-sex relations. The technique of plaiting is ideally suited to the physical exploration of such ideas as warp and weft are equal elements, balanced in their construction as in the resulting basket or mat. Pandanus plaiting is therefore interesting as it is able to simultaneously demonstrate one point of view whilst asserting the truth of the opposite point of view.

This chapter has shown that working pandanus is something that women do. It is an activity that creates female persons and which narrates processes of social life and its reproduction. The importance of processes of production on Futuna are evidenced by restrictions on the sharing of basketry construction techniques with people from beyond the island. In contrast, as will be seen in the next chapter, the more visible basket patterns can be freely shared, copied and reproduced throughout Vanuatu. Chapter 6

explores these decorative forms, the *ata*, visible meanings of baskets as the metaphorical basket of this thesis is constructed.

6 Perceiving Patterns

Trade and exchange are central motivations in pandanus work on Futuna, both historically, see Chapter 2, and in contemporary work, see Chapters 7 and 8. Attractive basket types and eye-catching designs are crucial in enticing people and women who work pandanus are keenly interested in making their work *flas* (flash, attractive, eye-catching). They seek to attract buyers but also to produce work of quality and develop their own skills. This chapter analyses how baskets, the most decorated forms of pandanus artefacts on Futuna, are made *flas*: these decorations are part of the very fabric of a basket and are essential aspects of most named basket styles on the island. The chapter considers how these visual forms are thought of by both pandanus workers and non-pandanus workers and how these decorations effect people.

Indeed pandanus workers throughout the Pacific and beyond work patterns, designs and ornaments into and onto their basketry. Local natural dyes – or store-bought fabric dyes on Futuna – are used to colour pandanus ribbons before being worked into baskets or mats or pandanus textiles are resist dyed. Colour and plaiting twill are manipulated to great effect; geometric figures are integral to the artefact and yet also decorate and instil it with meaning (see Bolton 2003a in Vanuatu and for a thought-provoking comparison, Gow 1999 and Lagrou 2005 in South America).

Pandanus basketry decorations on Futuna rely heavily on the twill of a plait to create patterns; that is, the creation of a pattern in the plaited fabric through changing the number of opposing elements a pandanus ribbon is worked over. These decorations are for the most part only worked in pandanus baskets and *kastom dres* textiles as the width of the ribbons used in *Futuna* mats means that complicated twills would risk the structural integrity of a mat. Dyed pandanus patterns are also rarely used in these mats. Pandanus baskets on the island in fact hold a unique position within all other local

handicrafts as it is the sole medium in which patterns and designs are actively and regularly worked, discussed and reflected on.⁷⁰

In contrast to the previous chapter that considered the processes of construction of a basket and the meanings inherent in the techniques – unique to Futuna – this chapter explores the visual decorations of baskets, an aspect of pandanus work that is visually similar to much pandanus basketry in Vanuatu and beyond. Whether or not the basketry patterns on Futuna are consistent within an island-wide system of aesthetics (Gell 1995), it seems that there is a shared aesthetic, or style (Gell 1998), of basketry patterns within Vanuatu – although it is of course possible that the meanings represented by these patterns may differ (Morphy and Banks 1997, 22).

This chapter is split into two parts. The first analyses why patterns are worked into baskets and what their effects are; that is, how they express ideas (Coote and Shelton 1992, 3). I consider baskets as aesthetic artefacts with decorative patterns that through the concept of brilliance (Morphy 1989), work as a technology of enchantment (Gell 1999). I suggest that on Futuna as throughout Vanuatu, workers of pandanus challenge themselves to confuse others by the patterns they create in their baskets.

The second part of the chapter, Sections 6.3 and 6.4, explores the politics of sharing pattern knowledge on Futuna and questions to what extent the meanings within the

⁷⁰ Coconut frond plaited work and split bamboo wall plaiting are worked into simple patterns and several people explained to me that bamboo plaiting on Futuna is in fact inspired from the patterns women make in their pandanus baskets. Patterns in bamboo walling is described as *niseni fakarabesi*, *niseni fagatu* or *niseni kiliwini*, according to the direction and angle of the bamboo. As in the case of pandanus basket patterns, *niseni fakarabesi* refers to a seemingly sideways orientated pattern; *hemi go across*. *Niseni fagatu* is in contrast a pattern with a more vertical orientation; *i gat plante hill tumas*, whereas *niseni kiliwini* refers to bamboo plaiting fixed with vertical and horizontal strips of bamboo.

Another platform from which patterns have been discussed in Melanesia is tattooing, however this is no longer practised on Futuna. Gunn (1924) writes that tattooing used to exist on Futuna, but a lack of visual records and local recollection of tattooing prevents any discussion of this. Local outrigger canoes and their prow boards are another form of handicraft that is richly decorated in other Melanesian societies, yet on Futuna sculpture is rare and the only decoration I saw on an outrigger was a sculpted lizard. Magic *marae* stones were carved however, and the Australian Museum collections in Sydney include rare sculpted coral figures from Futuna collected in 1884 by Captain Wolsch. Although *kastom* dancers in town use wooden dance sticks, these are not used on Futuna and I was not aware of any being made during my fieldwork. Lobster traps, *najiji*, are not decorated. Pandanus work therefore holds a unique place within handicrafts on Futuna.

decorations are shared between communities and islands in Vanuatu. I then analyse how workers of pandanus on Futuna perceive patterns. Here, I develop the idea of plaited literacy, a knowledge and understanding of the craft techniques, that enables pandanus workers to break down patterns into their constitutional parts and (re)compose and (re)construct new patterns. While many theories of art take the perspective of the ‘other’, that is people who are not literate in the art techniques, I am interested in the perspective of the craft worker and how they perceive pandanus decorations. In so doing, I aim to demystify technology and see the other side of the ‘enchantment of technology’ (Gell 1992). I aim to make the incomprehensible patterns comprehensible.

First, the key terms ‘pattern’, ‘design’ and ‘ornament’ and their local relevance are discussed. These are all forms of decoration, not to be denigrated, and are essential aspects of the artefacts.

6.1 Terminology

Firstly, a pattern can describe anything from a surface decoration to an expressive performance (Were 2010). In this discussion of the decorations characteristic of pandanus work in Vanuatu, I restrict myself to a meaning of ‘pattern’ as defined by Washburn and Crowe (1988), that is a decorative form consisting of a geometrically repeated design. The idea of repetition is key here and in Vanuatu such patterns are integral to the plait and the construction of the basket. On Futuna, patterns are known as *rapakau nea*, or *paten* in Bislama. The term *paten* is very general and relates to all forms of decoration, be it colour, design or ornament, whereas *rapakau nea* can be literally translated as ‘wise thing’ (J. W. Dougherty 1983), where *rapakaua* means wise and *nea* means thing; an accurate name, given the skill or wisdom needed to produce such patterns. An alternative reading of the term could however connect the concept of wisdom to the patterns themselves, hinting at knowledge or power inherent within the decorations. I suggest that both of these interpretations are accurate; one describing a wider understanding of patterns, the other describing a more restricted understanding from the perspective of a pandanus worker. This idea of ‘wise patterns’ points to how we can understand patterns have effect.

Secondly, I distinguish between patterns and motifs, or designs, as although both are integral to the plait, unlike patterns that are repetitive by definition, motifs will commonly appear in isolation, as a single design worked into the middle of a basket. Designs are finite and have no translational symmetry (Crowe 2004, 16). I include plaited text in this definition of motifs as it is used and worked in the same way as any other design. As will be seen below, designs and motifs can also be distinguished from patterns by the language (Futuna-Aniwa or Bislama) of their name and the basket types they are applied to. Designs, known by their Bislama names, are generally restricted to the more recent forms of pandanus work such as *boks* and *hanbag* baskets, whereas patterns that hold local names can be worked on both *Futuna* and other forms of baskets.



Figure 34. *Rago* pattern worked on a boks basket



Figure 35. Breadfruit leaf design worked on a boks basket



Figure 36. Burao tassled handles



Figure 37. Dyed pandanus ribbons inserted into a boks basket as a colourful ornamental pattern

Finally, the third form of decoration to be defined here are ornaments. Here, I follow Brett's (2005, 4) definition of ornaments as "applied decoration, especially of the three-dimensional kind ... the term ornament derives from the latin *ornere*, which generally means to fit out or complete", which captures the idea of ornaments as decorative yet also essential to the artefact. Ornaments, just as patterns and motifs, are often thought to complete the work and thus are thought of as integral to the overall basket. All contemporary pandanus baskets on Futuna contain *bura* tassles that are worked into the basket handles to lengthen and visually improve these. *Bura* tassles are a recent addition to basket work but they have become a vital element of a completed quality basket for use outside of the home as they are what make a basket eye-catching. In Bislama, people say that such decorations are to "*mekem i flas*". In addition, some baskets, notably *boks* baskets, are decorated with ornaments, where coloured strips of pandanus or wool are sewn into the wall of the basket to form a textured and colourful ornamental pattern that repeats itself all the way around the sides of the basket.

The aims of working such types of decoration centre firstly on the ideal of a *flas* (flash or attractive) basket that stands out, is eye-catching and attracts the interest of others, and secondly on a pandanus worker's personal interest in developing their own skills and knowledge.

6.2 Perceiving Patterns in the Pacific

Pandanus workers told me that their ni-Vanuatu clients choose baskets according to their form, firstly, and then following the pattern or design that attracts them the most. Most clients, whether from Futuna or further afield, do not know the names of patterns or designs and show little interest in the form of basket decoration so long as it is colourful and eye-catching. They see a basket and acknowledge the presence of a *flas* design or pattern, but do not have the interest or need to take a closer look. This section therefore considers the perception of patterns by people who are not pandanus workers and who are not pandanus plait literate; indeed this, how visual art forms are comprehended by non-initiates, is the subject matter of much of the literature on understandings of art – perhaps due to our own illiteracy in the techniques, our own

misunderstandings (Washburn and Crowe 2004, xi). These understandings are based on the visual, that is that which is plain for the untrained eye to see.

6.2.1 Visual Decorations

Patterns, adornments and visual artworks or displays are visual forms of communication and can highlight important aspects of social life. The visual appearance of an artefact offers equal possibilities to describe or explain a world-view as does the physical aspect of an artefact (Coote and Shelton 1992) and in many cases an artefact is not considered complete until it has been adorned and decorated.

In the Pacific, a number of important analyses describe how decorated artefacts work to maintain the social structure, how meanings are inscribed within the artefacts and how the technology of decorations effects people. Here, I am most interested in this last aspect of art, that is how the technology of art effects people and what this effect is; I therefore introduce a few key examples from around the region to give a theoretical overview of the subject before discussing ni-Vanuatu basketry.

Morphy's work on aesthetic systems in Northern Australia is an important example of how visual systems communicate ideas. Yolngu paintings feature detailed cross-hatching that causes a visual effect that is locally understood to be a direct manifestation of ancestral beings. Yolngu distinguish between the dull and the brilliant and that with or without power and so the brightness and brilliance of cross-hatched paintings creates an aesthetic response that is interpreted as being a representation of an ancestral power (Morphy 1989). Aspects of this shimmering effect, or brilliance, seems to be an attribute of decorative work throughout Oceania (see for example Thomas, Adams, et al. 2016), where the visual is frequently understood through the main oppositions of light and dark, or bright and dull; however there are different techniques to create brilliance and its interpretation, that is how it effects people, varies.

One example of brilliance can be seen in the bodily displays of the Papua New Guinea Highlands where men dress up and adorn themselves for formal occasions and during celebratory dance presentations. Strathern argues that the presentation of adorned bodies allows clans to demonstrate their "wealth, strength and power" (1979, 244). It is not the

adornments themselves that demonstrate wealth and power, but the objects of adornment – the dancers – and the effect of the total presentation. Ornaments must be ‘dazzling’, skin is made to ‘glisten’ with oil and the total effect must be ‘overwhelming’. This is clearly another version of brilliance. Colourfulness is also important: the darkness of black skin is emphasised by charcoal to be intimidating and bright colours are used to attract attention; however the interplay of light and dark must be carefully balanced for decorations to not be too dark or too light. In a discussion of similar self-adornment practices amongst the Wahgi, also in the Highlands Region of Papua New Guinea, O’Hanlon (1989) emphasises the role of glossiness, glow and brightness in effective displays.

According to Strathern (1979), Hagen personal decorations are an externalised revelation of what is concealed within the body and bodily displays are therefore used to convince others of a person’s capacities and capabilities and influence others in their perception and interactions with those adorned. O’Hanlon (1989) sees such displays as non-verbal communication of ideas that were not previously known; people reveal themselves to others, but also come to know themselves. These adornments and decorations are therefore not powerful in themselves, but they are a “mechanism of revelation” as for example a wig’s success in display is dependent on the stability of social relationships of the wearer of the wig (O’Hanlon 1992, 606).

Similarly, in the Trobriand Islands, decoration on canoe prow-boards are designed to “dazzle the beholder and weaken his grip on himself” to make Kula exchanges profitable for the voyaging party (Gell 1992, 44). Bright colours and eye-spot patterns are arranged to produce visual or cognitive confusion. Gell takes Strathern and O’Hanlon’s readings of the effects of forms of decoration further and argues that it is not the motifs themselves that create effect and influence a person’s actions, rather it is the interpretation of this effect as magical power that confers power onto prow-boards. Gell’s theory rests on the proposition that people are enchanted by technological processes that they do not understand, yet which others can skilfully manipulate. The materials and the difficulty of their manipulation are vital for the proper potency of the art object for Gell.

There has also been particular focus on pattern work in Pacific visual artforms. Pacific arts, writes Küchler, are “typically of fractal composition and consist of singular motifs that are multiplied through scaling and additive construction” (2009, 17). Patterns are a form of technology that results from transformations of forms and they can therefore be understood as a system of relations, connecting people, artefacts and places through space and time.

New Ireland *kapkap*, constructed from a white clam shell disk overlaid with a smaller tortoiseshell disk carved into concentric circular patterns is an example of this. *Kapkap* patterns order local knowledge about seasons and life cycle events and embody ideas of leadership, clan power and renewal (Were 2010). New Ireland Nalik engage with the world around them through *kapkap*, which can also be said to feature a form of brilliance due to the contrasting colour work and detail of the patterns. People use patterns to express and understand the world in which they live and as a technology, patterns simplify and create order in memory and knowledge processes; we think through patterns (Were 2010, 179).

6.2.2 Perceiving Patterns in Vanuatu Basketry

In Vanuatu, patterned pandanus baskets present another form of brilliance as defined by Morphy: many geometric patterns on baskets on Futuna and elsewhere in Vanuatu are decorated with vivid and contrasting store-bought dyes, wool or nylon string. These patterns are a ni-Vanuatu technology of enchantment, as a technical system that has power and can alter perception within its own social sphere (Gell 1992). The patterns seem to be displays of virtuous skill, designed to attract and confuse, although Kaepler suggests that similar designs worked into Māori baskets may be connected to genealogies (2008, 45). As described below, plaited patterns make use of three techniques to have effect: colour play, repetition and visual multistability.



Figure 38. Boks baskets with bright pattern work



Figure 39. Hanbag baskets with bright patterns

6.2.2.1 ‘Colour’ Play: Contrasting Light and Dark

Contrasting colours are worked together to achieve radiant patterns; light and dark are balanced carefully to achieve the greatest impact. As discussed in Chapter 4, people in the Pacific are historically less interested in ‘colour’, as understood in English, as they are in brightness and luminescence, in contrasting light and dark, which can also be understood to be the difference between bright and dull. On Futuna there is an opposition between *hkego* meaning both light and bright, and *hkosi*, meaning dull.

The use of store-bought dyes highlights this interest in visual contrasts: purple is frequently used in baskets, but it is used as an alternative to black. On Futuna, black dyed pandanus is highly sought after but no dye has been found that can give pandanus ribbons a true and lasting black quality, so the pure purple dye is used instead⁷¹. It is noteworthy that there is no evidence on Futuna of ever using natural dyes in pandanus work: as discussed in Chapter 2, basketry used only to be white, likely a result of the island’s Polynesian connections, and so this is a relatively new technique for pandanus workers on Futuna. In contrast, in Central Pentecost red and yellow dyes are created using local plants (Geismar 2003, 136) and in Kiribati and Fiji, for example, pandanus workers have a history of dyeing their pandanus black. It is possible that the colours have other symbolisms in these islands, as for example in Polynesia white is contrasted with black to be associated with the divine world (Ewins 2009), but this was never mentioned on Futuna.

The importance of colour work in baskets on Futuna can be understood by considering ageing baskets. Patterns and particularly the brightness of their colour is frequently

⁷¹ Women on Futuna dye their pandanus ribbons one by one. They create a dye solution by dissolving small amounts of dye powder in hot water, usually by placing an empty tin can directly on hot coals, and submerge individually coiled ribbons for about 30 seconds each using sticks or other instruments to protect their hands from the hot solution. If someone is easily distracted, this process can result in a batch of unevenly dyed ribbons as the pandanus absorbs more dye the longer it is left in the solution. It is perhaps because of this that I only witnessed the process once, recently after arriving on Futuna. I was at Pamali’s house one day when she dyed enough ribbons for a small basket. Rather than working in the kitchen hearth, Pamali took embers from the fire outside to make the solution. In the heat of the solution, the pandanus coils loosened and expanded, lengthening into loose curls as she pulled them back out of the tin and threw them to the side to cool and dry.

commented on when a basket is new and so as the initial strength of the dye wears off, or when the pandanus becomes dirty with soil and use, a pandanus basket will be described as old and rubbish. As a basket ages, it moves from being displayed publicly as an adornment to the body, to a domestic space, where it becomes static, used within the household – in a kitchen, for example. Such baskets are still used as containers, but their dull colours lessen their effect and make them ill-suited to public display.

6.2.2.2 Repetition

It seems that the repetition of patterns is also crucial to their effect. While patterns are by definition repetitive, the frequent use of all-over repeated designs is notable in contemporary pandanus work. Whether this was the case historically, however, is not clear: the majority of baskets from the area in museum collections are undecorated, yet there are a handful of artefacts from Erromango, Aniwa and Aneityum that feature all-over, detailed pattern work, all with undyed pandanus. Contemporary *Futuna* baskets are for the most part only decorated with pattern work around the selvage, yet *boks* and *hanbags* are often decorated all-over. The variety of pattern coverage levels in baskets suggests that pandanus workers work the patterns according to their own interests, the time available to them and the use to which they will put the basket. An interesting comparison can be made with the decorations of woven Amerindian Cashinahua textiles: Lagrou (2011, 80) notes that unlike cloth for local usage, commercialised versions of these feature all-over decorations; moreover, ‘invisible’ patterns, created without contrasting colours, are highly valued locally for the skill that goes into making them and the greater difficulty in perceiving the pattern. On Futuna, ‘invisible’, plain-coloured patterns are valued no more or less than those created with dyed pandanus but what is valued is the difficulty of comprehending the pattern.

Repetition and symmetry may be linked to pleasure or a hypnotising effect, but they may also be statements of the connection between things (Layton 1991, 145-6); between parts and wholes and cyclical repetitions in time (Lind 2018). Repetition is deemed important in other mediums on Futuna: notably speech and songs. Ammann (2012, 29, 38) distinguishes between the role of text and melody in songs on Futuna and describes the melody simply as a means of communicating the words. A song does not however

gain power through the specific words used, but through their repetition. Similarly, Keller and Kuautonga distinguish between two different modes of speech on Futuna: *ata*, the “observable reflection” is compared to *hkanō*, the “hidden meanings” of a verbal exchange (2007, 5-6). People create and play with images in their everyday life. It therefore seems likely that patterned pandanus baskets gain effect through similar techniques: the repetition of a pattern makes it powerful and multistable patterns, see below, confuse others, hiding different interpretations.

6.2.2.3 Visual Multistability

Visual multistability, also known as figure-ground reversal, is the third technique seen in pandanus patterns. Although a row or two of such patterns typify undyed *Futuna* baskets – most frequently decorated with the pattern known in Bislama as both *boks* and *dimon* – colour and plaiting twill are combined to form ambiguous patterns on a particularly great scale in *boks* baskets. A good example of this is the four-pointed star pattern, see Figures 40 and 41. In Figure 40, the pattern can be perceived as a series of rectangles delineated by brown lines, it can be seen in terms of the dominant red and white stripes, or it can be seen through a combination of both perspectives as a series of interlocking four-pointed red stars, more recognisable in Figure 41.

The use of dyed pandanus ribbons in such a pattern serves to highlight different aspects of the pattern and so women experiment with their use of colour to this goal. Greater contrasts between the light and dark pandanus ribbons emphasises the criss-crossing diagonal stripes, whereas more muted tones draw out the rectangular pattern.

Pandanus patterns may appear visually unstable to onlookers, but to the women who work pandanus patterns these patterns are stable, as they are comprehended not visually, through colours and bright contrasts, but through their construction techniques. Indeed, as described below, plaited patterns and designs themselves are often not considered by workers of pandanus as a whole, or as a finished pattern, but in terms of their components and the different twill techniques. Pandanus workers look beyond the colour work and see the techniques.



Figure 40. Four-pointed star pattern in progress.



Figure 41. Four-pointed star pattern.



Figures 42-44. Visually multistable patterns: variations on *rotoa*.

The ambiguity and multistability of patterns, particularly those of the brightly coloured kind that cover the whole basket such as in Figure 40 can be thought to work as a visual trap, a plaited version of the ‘turned’ speech characteristic of the island. A handful of women on Futuna actually stated that they aim to make patterns that will confuse others; they didn’t want other pandanus workers to understand the techniques and reproduce the patterns, or for non-pandanus workers to understand what they were seeing. Gell’s thesis that traps are works of art and works of art are traps is useful here; as these patterns are visually arresting and can “induce [people] to stand and stare... Every work of art that works is like this, a trap or a snare that impedes passage” (1996b, 37). The complexity and visual instability of these patterns is crucial: these patterns are carefully designed to trap people by their multistability as they are left confused about what they see and become ensnared in an ‘unfinished exchange’ with the artefact (Gell 1998, 81). This technique of figure-ground reversal is what makes art powerful for the Barok of Papua New Guinea (Wagner 2012) as well as for the Amerindian Caduveo,

Yekuana and Shipibo (Lagrou 2011, 79). Moreover, it seems that there is a long history of this in Tafea province and on Futuna all the named patterns worked on *Futuna* baskets, thought to have a longer history of use on the island, feature these techniques.

6.2.3 Designs and Motifs

As previously stated, motifs are never worked on *Futuna* baskets, partly because of their scale, but also because it is deemed inappropriate: only variations on the named Futuna-Aniwa patterns discussed below are considered suitable for *Futuna* baskets. New *boks* and *hanbag* baskets are in contrast rarely made without highly visible designs and motifs. These new basket styles, recognisably from Futuna, enable new creative work (Geismar 2003, 114). These are the baskets that tend to be gifted and sold locally within Vanuatu; *Futuna* baskets, in contrast, are more commonly used in monetary and non-monetary exchanges that reach outside of the nation.

The most common design is a flower motif worked centrally on both sides of a *boks* basket, or as two or three flowers in a diagonal on the front of a *hanbag*, see Figure 45.

A breadfruit leaf is another common motif of such baskets, see Figure 36, however a form of design that is more popular than the breadfruit leaf is text. Phrases, messages or individual words and names are popular both in baskets and in other forms of pandanus work such as *kastom* dress and *wiriwiri* and other forms of banners. These designs are gaining in popularity.



Figure 45. Flower motifs on a hanbag basket.

Friends, family and visiting ni-Vanuatu NGO or governmental workers often commission pandanus workers on Futuna for baskets with personal names as a central design to give these to friends and family. Whether names of people, names of islands, or names of events, text designs work differently to patterns: they create a physical *memori*, memory, of a person, place, time or event, physically connecting people and

places (Geismar 2003, 229). The display of pandanus work at CARE International's Agriculmplantation Festival contained many such commemorative texts as it was an event to be proud of and to be celebrated, but more importantly, an event to be remembered. Women chose to note the name of the festival, the dates on which it was held, see Figure 46, and the place in which it was held, that is, Futuna.

Despite the interest in commemorative works, other forms of message are also worked at Ibau: for instance, Papra decided to decorate one of her *boks* baskets with the word 'smile' worked into the side. Benefitting from a naturally positive and happy countenance, Papra thought the design to be fitting. In addition to being a friendly message, it is likely that the choice of the word 'smile' was linked to the local telephone company Telecom Vanuatu Limited (TVL). TVL's branding uses 'smile' as a key marketing tool and company logo. TVL is currently the only network provider on Futuna and is greatly appreciated for the possibilities of connection it creates, the local employment opportunities it produces (individuals can sell credit), but also for its brand.



Figure 46. Commemorative text and flower motifs in hanbag baskets during the Agriculmplantation Festival.

On one of the TVL representative's trips to the island, bright orange TVL t-shirts were bought by many at Ibau, eager to get their share of the 'smile'. This text is used by women to express what is important or of interest to them at that moment in time.

Pandanus patterns and designs of all kinds are in fact a clear outward demonstration of the things of significance on Futuna: friendships, memories, places, plants, *ples*, but also key brands. This is "what is meaningful in life" (Bunn 2010, 139). While designs and motifs on the new forms of baskets discussed above focus on representing memories and playful images; plaited *Futuna* basket patterns seem to gain significance locally as they are physical representations of the *ples*. For workers of pandanus, these *kastom* patterns and the terminology associated with them asserts that their work is *kastom* of the *ples*, see Section 6.4.

6.2.4 The Effect of Basket Patterns, Designs and Motifs

During fieldwork, women often pointed out to me the visually ambiguous basketry patterns, highlighting the visual trickery of the work and enjoying my reaction. Whereas visually unstable images in South America are thought to reflect local interests concerning the shape-shifting abilities of their environment (Gow 1999, Guss 1989, Lagrou 2005), in the Pacific Islands, analyses focus on themes of concealing and revealing. "Things are not what they seem" (Hanson 1983, 84), but the exact nature of the persons and spirits behind this is often unknown – and perhaps shouldn't be known. Knowledge in Bolivia, Papua New Guinea, is sometimes hidden in plain view, but when shared is presented in an incomplete form, requiring additional information to be made whole and comprehended (Crook 2007). On Futuna, the 'turned' words people use in speech on Futuna, when they *turnem toktok* and play with metaphoric images to communicate serves a similar purpose. Simple phrases may have different meanings on Futuna as in Hawai'i and Tonga (Kaepler 2008, 7). In basketry, whilst I am not sure that patterns directly hide meanings, I see parallels between the playful use of hidden patterns and linguistic imagery. In pattern work, people 'turn' what the eye sees and understands, hiding multiple interpretations and trapping it in the confusion. Skill in creating and manipulating this verbal and visual imagery is highly valued.

As elsewhere in Melanesia (Forge, 1979; O'Hanlon, 1992), the motives for such patterns and decorations are not verbalised on Futuna. This emphasis on visual instability and how people perceive their baskets is therefore important.

Decorations of baskets on Futuna are not designed for large celebratory presentations but are an aspect of an everyday object that is used for personal belongings. Brightly patterned baskets are highly sought after throughout Vanuatu and it is these baskets that are used and given within Futuna, usually informally. Women and men however use different sorts of baskets on the island. Whereas women favour cotton bags or pandanus baskets they have received as a gift from a friend from another island, men are avid fans of the small, lidded *boks* baskets made on the island that have the brightest and most eye-catching patterns and designs. Women commonly only use baskets during church events where, as in Polynesia, everyone wears their 'Sunday Best' (Addo 2003). Men, in contrast, are rarely seen without their baskets. Men and women therefore relegate their baskets to household use at different stages in a basket's lifecycle. For men who always have a *boks* basket around their neck, these baskets are worn until the colour has faded, the basket has lost its shape and holes are starting to appear. For women who use baskets only to attend church, and who usually can make their own, a basket becomes old as soon as it no longer looks bright.

While men and women have different stylistic preferences and ways of using baskets, what they do have in common is how they obtained the baskets. Women do not use baskets they themselves have made and so baskets are commonly a gift from a family member or friend: they are the result of personal relationships. The use of a basket is therefore a clear visual display of these relationships that extend within and beyond the island.

I suggest that the powerful use of colour and pattern in ni-Vanuatu baskets can be understood to have effect in a similar way to the radiance of self-adornment in Papua New Guinea, which attracts attention and indicates the social well-being and strength of a person. Baskets are containers, but like the pandanus work of *kastom dres* on Futuna, they are in addition an element of clothing: they accessorise and form a kind of outer 'skin' (Küchler and Were 2005). As discussed above, the condition of skin in Melanesia

is considered revealing of the well-being of social relationships (O'Hanlon 1995) and considering the use of baskets on Futuna, it seems that patterned baskets in Vanuatu serve a similar purpose. The patterns on the outside of baskets are specifically designed to be visually arresting, not to conceal what is contained inside the basket, but the social inside of the person they adorn, that is, their social relationships.

In carrying brilliantly decorated baskets around the body, it seems that ni-Vanuatu trap others through the brightness of the colour work, the repetitive patterns and their visual multistability that catch the eye; thus asserting their power and the wealth of their social connections. Wearing a patterned basket can create “a connection ... between the idealised attributes of the article and the person wearing it” (Küchler and Were 2005a, 154). Wearers of such baskets are revealing their close connections to skilled and knowledgeable pandanus workers within the island (Gell 1992) and use baskets to prove their rootedness to the *ples* – or their connections beyond it, in the case of the baskets from other islands favoured by women.

Although some of the basket patterns are considered to be ‘stolen’ from places outside of the island, see below, the pattern technology is well-known within the island and the structure of the basket is decidedly of Futuna origin. On Futuna, both *kastom* patterns and the new patterns are demonstrations of the *kastom* of Futuna, that is “as the practices of the place” (Bolton 2005, 22) but they are perhaps alternative versions of *kastom*. Indeed while both are rooted in *ples* due to the styles and techniques of the baskets, one version is connected to a historic time while the other continually reaches into the future driving forward fashions and testing the creativity of pandanus workers.

Basket patterns are therefore an outward indication of a person’s social relationships and their identity as a person of the *ples*. Through complex pattern work that shines with light and brilliance, baskets work as traps, confusing the viewer through unstable images and arresting their attention to reveal the social connections of the wearer.

6.3 The Politics of Sharing Basket Patterns

It has already been noted that there is a recognisable style of ni-Vanuatu pandanus basket pattern work. Indeed Geismar (2005b) argues that pandanus basket patterns in Vanuatu are free resources, unattached from people and their *kastom* rights of access: working a pattern seen on a basket in the street is akin to working a pattern from a plant or insect. The similarities between basket patterns throughout Vanuatu is testament to how eager pandanus workers are to develop their skills: how quick they are to pick up new ideas and to create new designs. In striking contrast to the majority of artwork in Vanuatu, basket patterns are freely shared and copied: these patterns are rarely localised or the focus of restrictions and taboos. Local forms of copyright (Geismar 2005b, Lindstrom 1990b) or ‘patents’ (M. Strathern 2001a) do not apply to plaited pandanus basket patterns in Vanuatu.

Nevertheless, on Futuna, a number of the patterns discussed below have clearly defined names in the Futuna-Aniwa language. These are said to be original to the island, created by women who were inspired by their environment – notably plants and animals. Thus the two basic pattern types are called *rago* (fly) and *nufe* (caterpillar), while more complicated patterns are named *raoniseni* (fern leaf), *bakhaumanu* (bird’s wing), *rotoa* (arrowroot leaf), *rotoanibi* (wild palm) and *nafatu hlafa* (nobody could suggest a possible meaning of *nafatu*, but *hlafa* relates to big leaves that are wide or flat). Thirty years ago, Keller also reported that the pattern names worked on baskets in Futuna were directly linked to plant and animal life, “...patterns named for small animals, flies and caterpillars, for example, or named for particular leaves” (1988, 9). The source of basket pattern knowledge is therefore clearly different from the origins of songs on Futuna, or ceremonial resist dyed textile patterns in Penama Province, or other forms of knowledge elsewhere in Vanuatu where spirits and dreams inspire new creations (Lindstrom 1997).

This distinction between sources of inspiration for basket patterns and for the composition of songs points to a major division in ways of thinking about creativity in Melanesia and reveals local ideas about baskets on Futuna. Whereas creativity in business ideas, for example, is a resource open to all and can be freely copied by others (Leach 2004), creativity within a clan is protected and can only be obtained through the

spirits of ancestors or other meaningful sources (Lindstrom 1997). There is therefore a clear difference between creativity in individualistic Western-style work such as in business, and creativity in *kastom*, whose subject matter is tied to people and *ples*. The pandanus baskets on Futuna are however situated in the middle of this dichotomy: emanating from the *ples*, they are now a crucial aspect of local business, discussed further in Chapter 8.

6.3.1 Inspired Creativity

On Futuna, inspiration for some things, such as for the composition of certain songs, *fakamimiji* (Thomas and Kuautoga 1992, 28), comes through the medium of a spirit, but sources of inspiration for pandanus baskets seem to be material and direct from their source; the island. Pandanus basket pattern names reflect this, their meanings are discussed in Section 6.4. The patterns were not created by women or spirits and are not named after individual women or events; they already existed in the place.

The decorative repertoire of pandanus work on Futuna is not however static and it continually grows, notably following the movement of people (and basketry) between islands; inspiration for basket patterns is therefore frequently now said to come from beyond Futuna. A distinction is however made by pandanus workers between patterns for *Futuna* baskets and patterns for *boks* and *hanbag* baskets. *Futuna* baskets are decorated only with the patterns that come directly from the *ples* and which have names in Futuna-Aniwa. In contrast, patterns used in *boks* baskets, more commonly designs or motifs, are commonly said to have been ‘stolen’: to originate elsewhere and in consequence to be distinct from the *kastom* of Futuna. The different design structures of the decorations are used as a means of differentiating between ‘us’ and ‘them’ (Washburn 2004, 225-6). Indeed Geismar notes that basket styles, which she defines only in relation to their material, colour and pattern, in Vanuatu are “fundamentally grounded in localities” (2003, 114, 116).

Papra and her husband Nasawa often told me of women on Futuna: “they steal the decorations from somewhere”.⁷² Seirangi was also careful to differentiate imported decorations from local patterns:

*“Some designs they brought here, to make those baskets nicer. But kastom values are a bit different.”*⁷³ Seirangi 10.01.15

Despite great interest in all kinds of decorative forms, on Futuna the imported patterns – often actually designs, motifs and ornaments according to my definitions above – are clearly considered to be distinct from the patterns used on *Futuna* baskets; they have been adopted but not assimilated. Unlike the named Futuna patterns, the new basket decorations quite simply do not belong to the *ples*.

An interesting comparison between the assimilation of people, plants and patterns can be made here that follows on from the discussion of belonging in Chapter 3. It was argued that people and pandanus can only come to belong to a *ples* if they maintain a productive relationship with local *kastom*. I would suggest that the new forms of basket and their new patterns have not (yet) become productive enough to belong to Futuna. Thus for Seirangi, although he understands the attraction of the different patterns and designs, he considers them devoid of meaning and of value for Futuna. Seirangi, like Leona, the chief’s wife at Ibau, think that imported decorations and even the new basket styles are of lesser significance and interest for the island and its people. For them, *kastom* has its *ples*. Some basket patterns are therefore physical manifestations of the *ples* that is Futuna: they arise from the people and their environment.

The majority of women at Ibau are nonetheless eager to learn new techniques and methods of decoration to give them an advantage in sales but also to further their own skills. The interest women have in learning new decorative styles and techniques and their ability to do so is therefore held in high regard by all. As such, when people talk of stealing patterns, what is important in the phrase is not the theft, but the idea that the

⁷² “*Oli stealim paten sam ples.*” Papra 7.10.14

⁷³ “*Sam disaen oli karem i kam, long mekem basket ia i nice mo. Be kastom values i defren lil bit.*”

patterns are not of local provenance. Thus in the conversation with Seirangi from which comes the quote above, he described the use of new patterns not as an act of stealing, but as an act of creativity. Similarly, Magret told me how creative women on Futuna were for working both the new forms of pandanus baskets and the new patterns and designs in pandanus work:

“Women now are creative. Now, women are more creative because of their education. They instigate changes to kastom.”⁷⁴ Magret

30.04.15

Here, creativity is clearly a valued transformation of ways of acting (Rosaldo, Lavie and Narayan 1993, 5), which Wagner (1981) argues is central to the perpetuation of practices. Magret thinks that these changes to *kastom* are positive and like Seirangi, considers women as the instigators of change, see Chapter 2.⁷⁵ Indeed women who work pandanus and who have an interest in the new styles actively seek out new techniques, whether by experimentation or by learning from a friend. Lindstrom notes that on Tanna, sources of inspiration are always external to the being and in instances where the inspiration comes from another person, this is usually from the old and wise, or from opportunities gained from schooling, reading and travel (Lindstrom 1990b, 317); as discussed in Part 1 of the thesis, the movement of people and things is an important source of opportunity.

Plaited basket patterns on Futuna can therefore be distinguished between *kastom* patterns on *Futuna* baskets that come from the *ples*, and designs only ever used on new styles of baskets such as *boks* and *hanbag*. Following Lindstrom (1997), if we take pattern knowledge that belongs to Futuna to be the local equivalent of the clan

⁷⁴ *“Ol mama naia oli creative. Naia mo creative woman from education. Olgeta nomo i stap jangem kastom.”*

⁷⁵ From the two quotes it may seem that Seirangi holds a view of *kastom* as fixed and unchanging, in contrast to Magret who considers the introduced styles a part of contemporary *kastom*, but this is in fact not quite true and is instead a result of the context of each of our conversations. What this does demonstrate, however, is the flexibility of this term and its different meanings. Whereas Seirangi was considering *kastom* in opposition to the *kastom* of others, Magret was using the term to describe local manners of being and doing.

knowledge he discusses, then the patterns of *Futuna* baskets must be protected, their use and the creation of new patterns restricted. If, on the other hand, we follow Leach (2004) who argues that business ideas are a resource open to all, then the decorations found on *boks* and other new forms of basket on Futuna are a free resource and can be shared and copied by all. At face value, the dichotomy seems to hold up; nevertheless, if we consider the range of patterns and decorations and how craft workers think about these, then the situation becomes more confused. As detailed below, on Futuna, plaited patterns are thought of and worked in terms of their components and once a craft worker has achieved literacy in the terminology (or grammar) of plaited pattern work, the sharing and copying of these decorations cannot be restricted in any way.

6.4 The Components of Plaited Patterns

Women who work pandanus perceive plaited patterns differently than those who do not. Workers of pandanus learn and work patterns in terms of their components, rather than as a total image. This is similar to weaving cloth for example, where “the process of weaving a fabric is one of consciously constructing a plane... symmetries... indicate how the weaver believes the plane can be divided” (Brezine 2004, 80). In pandanus plaiting, symmetries are important in determining how to (re)construct a pattern through components, but what is more important is the difference in techniques, that is twill patterns.

When working a large plaited pattern or design, or learning a new plaited pattern or design, it is commonly divided into smaller sections, with only 6 rows of pandanus being worked, for example, even if the pattern spreads over 24 rows. These sections will usually be lengths of the *nufe* (caterpillar) pattern described below, which forms the basis of most patterns.

*“Start with the bottom, then the middle, then the top. The bottom first,
if I don’t get it right, I take it out. Middle...”⁷⁶ Nai 08.04.15*

⁷⁶ “*Startem witem botom, afta medel, afta antap. Botom fistaem, spose mi no kasem gud, mi karem out. Medel...*”

When I was learning to work the four-pointed star pattern with Pamali one day, see Figure 40, I realised that I had been trying to learn and reproduce patterns from how I perceived them as a non-pandanus worker. Pamali had already started the pattern of the exterior basket and so I had a sizeable section to use as a reference point. Working the pandanus ribbons, I was incorrectly trying to follow the colour sequence I was aiming to achieve – comparing what I was doing to identical sections of the pattern elsewhere on the basket and using the sequence of colours as my guide. Following the colour work, which we saw in Chapter 4 is perhaps not an emic understanding of the basketry pattern, I was trying to reproduce a system of criss-crossing red stripes: what I thought was the key to the pattern both visually and in terms of its construction. It was not, however, what Pamali had emphasised when showing me how to work the pattern. Pamali, like others who showed me how to work patterns, taught me through a quick demonstration.⁷⁷ The colour work was ignored and a practical presentation of the rhythmic workings of the pattern was always given.

I realised a while after Pamali's demonstration that day that my attention had been misdirected during her presentation: I was focused on the coloured pattern and not the rhythmic sequence of movements effected by the pandanus strips. This rhythmic movement is the embodied pattern, and it is important for the work to be effective (Bunn 1999, Franquemont and Franquemont 2004, Lindsay 1996). I had demonstrated my lack of skill in plaiting by approaching the pandanus pattern visually and not as a plaited construction, surveying it from a distance rather than following the path of movement (Ingold 2007a, 90-6). To work the pattern and to understand its construction, I had to disregard colour and view it in terms of the oblique lines I was working with. I had to think of the four-pointed star pattern in terms of its components and the twill techniques: as a variation on *rotoa* and in terms of multiple instances of *nufe*, see below. This is exactly what women had told me about patterns: that for the most part, patterns are in fact composed of *nufe*, worked in different ways.

⁷⁷ Learning patterns in pandanus work consists of a demonstration of the sequential movement of pandanus strips from the teacher, followed by the student taking on where the teacher left off. The teacher keeps an eye on the student's work, initially observing closely, then as the student improves the teacher gradually returns to their own work, looking up from time to time to check up on progress.

6.4.1 Pattern Components

I was told that all patterns, and many designs and motifs, are a combination of the three key elements:

Nufe - literally, caterpillar.

This pattern is a plaited twill that creates lines of varying thickness and of varying directions. Nufe is worked by passing pandanus strips over 2 or more elements of the other direction.

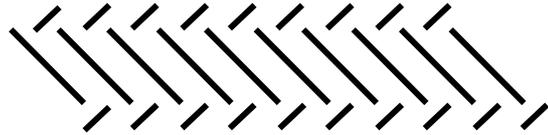


Figure 47. Nufe (caterpillar)



Figure 48. Nufe in the selvedge of a basket

Rotoa – literally, arrow root leaf.

This pattern forms a square and can be extended horizontally or vertically into rectangles. It is constructed by incrementally increasing the number of elements successive pandanus strips go over then under, and then reversing this to complete the design.



Figure 49. Rotoa (arrowroot leaf)



Figure 50. Rotoa seen on the inside of a basket

Rago - literally, fly (the insect).

This pattern repeats itself over 4 rows: with every other pandanus strip passing over 3 elements of the other direction.

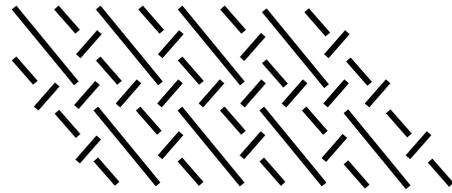


Figure 51. Rago (fly)



Figure 52. Rago worked into the selvedge of a basket

Nufe is the basis on which all patterns other than rago emerge. It is a direct component of such patterns as hlisi and raoniseni, see below, which may be understood as versions of herringbone in English. During separate conversations, Seieke and Kapiapi described two versions of raoniseni (hlisi, or raoniseni fakarabesi and raoniseni fagatu) as “it’s just the same pattern”⁷⁸ and “when you compare the patterns it’s just the same”⁷⁹. The names indicate this too: fakarabesi means *i lei*, it’s on its side, whereas fagatu means *stanap*, to stand up. Raoniseni faghatu fagharabesi can in turn be understood as a caterpillar that crawls both sideways and vertically. Discussing nafatu lafa, Siki said “it’s a caterpillar, it crawls, it goes up...”⁸⁰.

These three components of patterns compare interestingly with those described by Geismar (2003, 119-20) in Central Pentecost, which apart from the simple weave would on Futuna all be described as versions of nufe.

⁷⁸ “*same paten nomo*”

⁷⁹ “*taem yu komperem ol paten hemi sameac nomo*”

⁸⁰ “*hemi wan caterpillar hemi crawl, hemi go antap*”

On Futuna, *nufe* is for example also seen in a slightly altered form in patterns such as *rotoa*, *rotoanibi*, and *nafatu lafa*, see below. *Rotoa* is extended through *nufe*. *Rago*, on the other hand, is rarely used as a component of other patterns, except occasionally to create the positive diagonals of *rotoanibi*. As Seieke explained, “*nufe*, that’s what makes every pattern”.⁸¹

Ngafato lafa



Figures 53-55. Variations of *ngafato lafa* on Futuna baskets

Raoniseni



Figure 56 (above). *Raoniseni fagharabesi* = *hlisi*

Figure 57 (left). *Raoniseni faghatu*

Figure 58. *Raoniseni faghatu fagharabesi*

Figure 59. *Raoniseni faghatu fagharabesi*

⁸¹ “*nufe*, hem nao i mekem everi paten”

Nufe is indeed the structural component of the majority of patterns and should be understood firstly as a technical name for the twill construction work, and then as an artistic representation of a caterpillar, that is a visual image. In fact, nufe, rotoa and rago are technical terms describing techniques of construction. It is only for those who don't work pandanus that they are representational patterns. This is also true of nafato lafa and raoniseni: these are not pattern names as such, but names of techniques. When people on Futuna assert that their basket patterns are *kastom*, they are therefore affirming the historical roots of the craft technique on the island and its importance in the *ples*. They are confirming the skill of pandanus workers at manipulating nufe, rotoa and rago to create an unlimited range of patterns.

Rotoa



Figures 60-62. Rotoa, boks design on three Futuna baskets



Figure 63. Rotoa, dimon design on the selvedge of a Futuna basket

Figure 64. Rotoanibi pattern on a Futuna basket

Comparison of pattern terminology in Bislama and Futuna-Aniwa languages interestingly highlights different ways of seeing and understanding the patterns: from 'the inside' or from 'without'. While Futuna-Aniwa terms are technical, describing twill techniques of construction and therefore usually relating only to small elements of a larger pattern, in Bislama, pattern names describe the visual whole. All versions of rotoa and rotoanibi are therefore called *boks* (box) or *dimon* (diamond). The manner in

which Bislama pattern terminology refers to visual wholes is particularly noticeable in designs and motifs.

6.4.2 Craft Literacy

Gell's theory of art (which of course includes craft) emerged from the experiences of un-initiates as they encountered art forms (1992). A theory of 'enchantment', it could just as well be called a theory of confusion and incomprehension if he did not emphasise the magic effect of artwork on those who engage with it. For Gell, artwork "achieves its effect via the enchantment cast by its technical means, the manner of its coming into being, or rather, the idea which one forms of its coming into being" (1992, 47). Thus Trobriand kula canoe-prows are "not dazzling as a physical object, but as a display of artistry explicable only in magical terms, something which has been produced by magical means" (1992, 46); a matchstick model of Salisbury cathedral can therefore leave a small boy "utterly at a loss to imagine the degree of manipulative skill and sheer patience needed to complete the final artwork" (1992, 47); a photo-realistic painting becomes prestigious because of how we "conceptualize the technical processes of painting" (1992, 50). Artworks therefore resist being comprehended by those not literate or experienced in the technique and they gain value because of this.

Gell was interested in uncovering what makes artworks different to other material things and argued that artworks should not be analysed through their aesthetic properties, but through their effect on the world (1992, 1998). He therefore emphasised the incomprehension of un-initiates when encountering artworks, drawing on the idea of magic to explain this. In doing so, Gell mystifies art. In his theory, art is an enchanting technology that is indecipherable to others. Who the other is, and where the boundary limits of a particular 'style' of artwork are, is however not clearly explained. In the examples listed above, the other is defined first as a different cultural group and in the second and third examples as people who are not proficient in that particular art technique. It is not clear if the other is defined by culture, or by literacy in the craft.

Artefacts embody technical processes and skill and Gell argues that these need to be comprehended within their social context. Yet if our focus is on the technology of art,

then the technological context is equally important: indeed, as Mauss (1979) argued with respect to techniques of the body, technology is also an aspect of the social context. The context of the technology of art is the extent to which techniques determine the resulting art form and the manner in which the technique determines how ideas are expressed and form takes shape.

As mentioned above, my understanding of craft is founded on the practical technology of making. Following from my first-hand experiences of plaiting pandanus patterns on Futuna, I am interested in what it means to know the techniques of a craft form and to be a knowledgeable craftsperson. Ryle's (1984) distinction between an embodied 'knowing how', necessitating understanding, and a propositional 'knowing that', located in the mind, is crucial, but I think that to understand knowledge in craft work the concept of literacy⁸² is more useful, a concept that combines these ways of knowing, which as in fact not so distinct (Marchand 2007). This is a skills and context-based understanding of literacy that is in line with the New London Group's concept of New Literacies, or Multiliteracies, where the focus is on multimodal meaning making from linguistic, visual, audio, gestural and spatial practices (Cope and Kalantzis 2009, 166). It is a relatively new understanding of the term 'literate' that pushes the term beyond its etymological background arising from letters and the ability to read and write, and instead emphasises skills and knowledge about a particular subject (Merriam-Webster 2018), the focus being not on a person's knowledge, but on their ability to put this knowledge to use to navigate different social and technological contexts (UNESCO 2005, 147-50).

Literacy in craft work, meaning knowledge and understanding of the craft, exists at many scales. There is craft literacy, specific to the craft and the technology of making that means that a knitter from Vanuatu would comprehend and be able to reproduce

⁸² I first used the term in relation to oblique plaiting at the Woven Communities symposium at St Andrews in 2017 and have since used it at the Royal Anthropological Institute's Art, Materiality and Representation conference in 2018: both at a smaller scale to describe the type of knowledge required for pattern work (pattern literacy), and at a larger scale to refer to the social and technical knowledge of a craft (craft literacy).

knitting work from the UK. Oblique plaiting, embroidery and pottery are therefore examples of craft literacy. Another concept of literacy in craftwork is pattern literacy,⁸³ a more specific version of craft literacy as it refers only to the techniques of pattern work and does not include knowledge of additional techniques such as how to start plaiting a basket or how to form corners. However a form of literacy more commonly discussed in anthropology is social craft literacy, where knowledge and understanding of the craft must include not only the techniques of construction, but the meanings inherent within these. For example, social craft literacy in pandanus work on Futuna would be not only the ability to construct a basket, but knowledge of the meanings inscribed within the actions, as discussed in Chapter 5. These forms of literacy cannot in practice be so easily distinguished from one another: as of course there exist multiple techniques and ways of doing things even within a craft and these techniques are often tied up in other meanings. For instance, baskets in Tafea province feature smooth bases and corners that are thought of as breasts, whereas square based baskets from Penama province can be recognised by their tasselled corners and fringed edges.

This definition of literacy in craftwork is therefore not to be confused with how we comprehend the symbolism of patterns and designs: while some forms of art are explicitly designed to have meanings that can be 'read', this is dependent on the craft and its social context. In the case of plaited pandanus on Futuna, as detailed above, pandanus patterns have multiple meanings and their visual meaning must not be prioritised above their technical meanings. This wider understanding of literacy in craft work is therefore not so much based on the visual aspects of craft work, but on the techniques of making. It is, following Ingold (2007a, 90-6), a case of inhabiting the movement. Literacy in this sense is a deep comprehension of the craft technique, an in-depth understanding of the inner workings of the pattern and, crucially, the technology of the craft, which generally consists of layers of meanings. To be literate in a craft

⁸³ Gell (1998, 77) describes how in Europe we comprehend visual patterns through breaking them down into their motifs and the translations that have been applied to them. While he is concerned with the relationship between parts and a whole, he nevertheless notes that seeing a pattern means registering how it is constructed. In plaiting pattern literacy, I take this to mean not only how the visual parts are joined together to form a whole, but also how the plaiting technique is manipulated to construct a pattern.

therefore means being able to translate between what is seen and what the body does: between the visual surface and the technology required to create it as well as understanding what the local meanings of this are.

Marchand discusses this translation work of the brain in respect to craft demonstrations and explains that when seeing the bodily movements of another, the brain simulates and imagines the bodily movements for itself, thus gaining experience of the physical actions (Marchand 2008, 263-4). In discussing literacy in craft work however, I am interested not in the process of learning, but what literacy means in this context, that is to say what skill and knowledge are needed to be competent in basketry work.

It is important that to be literate in the craft technique does not require being an expert in the technique. While plaiting literacy is only really apparent in the pattern and design work of pandanus basketry – more complicated and requiring more skill than the simple twill that forms the base or most of the sides of a basket – to be literate in oblique plaiting it is enough to have a basic understanding of the techniques. A person is literate in a craft such as plaiting if they can mentally separate patterns into their constitutional parts; that is, if they can (re)compose and (re)construct new patterns. The use of the term literacy, in the sense of multiple literacies, is a way to defend the value of craft as a technology and, crucially, to demystify it.

6.5 Conclusion

Pandanus basket patterns are therefore sites where workers of pandanus can “challenge their mental powers” (Gell 1998, 54) by exploring and developing their skills, playing with images. The patterns are a form of technology that can trap people who become entranced by the detail, the instability and skill of what they see.

Basketry patterns on Futuna are distinguished between *kastom* patterns, the only patterns used on *Futuna* baskets and patterns that have been ‘stolen’ from elsewhere. This dichotomy, an opposition between things of the *ples* and things from other places, is a guiding principle on Futuna as seen in Chapter 3 where people and plants are categorised and ordered according to their provenance and their rootedness within

Futuna. In basketry decorations, we again see that people are eager to use and adapt things from other places for their own use. The dichotomy however reinforces a view of *Futuna* baskets as historic, ‘traditional’ baskets of the *ples*, as the distinct category and format of new patterns worked on *boks* and *hanbag* baskets is said to be where creativity, novelty and skill are focused. Nevertheless, the unique basket forms created on Futuna mean that these baskets are none the less identifiably of Futuna; the pattern components and the history of technique and skill in multistable patterns also connects these baskets to *ples*. The wearing of these new baskets is therefore still a promotion of *kastom* on Futuna: rooted in *ples* through technology rather than appearance.

We have seen that three techniques are commonly used to arrest people’s attention: brightly contrasting use of colour; repetition; visual ambiguity. While the designs and techniques are neither unique to Vanuatu nor to pandanus plaiting work, the manner in which they are combined and incorporated into pandanus baskets creates a recognisably ni-Vanuatu style of basket decoration. Pandanus basket patterns are uniquely placed within Vanuatu as an effective and meaningful technology that can be shared both within and beyond an island.

It is because baskets are everyday artefacts, used daily for routine activities, that the technology of their pattern work can be freely shared and exchanged. Skilled pandanus workers can work out how to reproduce patterns seen fleetingly around them and this, coupled with the high rate of movement of baskets around the country following people and as gifts for friends and family, means that fashions and styles are quickly picked up and spread; patterns have an innate “capacity to move through networks and across boundaries” (Were 2010, 8). This movement of basket patterns contrasts with the decorations of certain ceremonial artefacts, such as the red pandanus textiles of Ambae (Bolton 2003a) and the kapkap of New Ireland (Were 2010, 29, 34-5), which are produced by specialised craftspeople and are only shown publicly during ceremonies; even if a craftsman had the right to create a red textile or kapkap, they would be unlikely to get close enough to see the pattern in full and so the movement of the pattern is more controlled.

The movement of pandanus artefacts, that is their use in monetary and non-monetary exchange, is the focus of Part 3 of this thesis.

Part 3

The Object of Baskets: Balancing Diverging Views of the Future through Monetary and Non- Monetary Exchange

7 Making the Sale

This thesis began by looking at pandanus basketry as whole, finished artefacts as Chapter 2 explored how and why pandanus basketry artefacts have changed since the earliest records we have of them. Subsequent chapters took baskets apart to then reconstruct them, exploring the aspects of baskets that women on Futuna say makes them unique: from the materials, to the actual practice of plaiting and the pattern work characteristic of ni-Vanuatu basketry. Thus by considering aspects of pandanus basketry such as the preparation of materials, the work of plaiting materials together, important structural elements and the complicated patterns around the rim of the basket, we in a sense constructed a basket. With this basket now constructed, we therefore return to one of the questions touched upon in the first chapter, now reformulated into the present tense: what are these baskets and other pandanus artefacts made for? The title of Part 3 of the thesis, the object of baskets, thus emphasises the physical state of the basket and refers back to this central question of its use.

As detailed in Chapters 2 and 6, there are many different types of baskets and these all have different uses. Many of the baskets described in Chapter 2 are no longer made on Futuna as tastes and needs change and styles go in and out of fashion. While the object of a basket in Scotland may primarily be its use as a container, Chapter 2 demonstrated that on Futuna, pandanus baskets have historically had many other practical uses and can take the form of protective clothing or musical instruments, for example. However if we consider not just baskets, but all types of pandanus basketry, then on Futuna as throughout Vanuatu and other Pacific Island countries, we see that they have an equally important use in exchange. A seemingly simple question concerning the use of pandanus basketry on Futuna can therefore lead to discussions of the political, economic, musical or spiritual spheres of life, although whether these are in fact distinguishable as different spheres of life is of course debatable.

Pandanus basketry is embedded in the very fabric of social life and the finished artefacts furnish houses, decorate people, carry and contain food and belongings, accompany the deceased in death, decorate churches and buildings, clothe people, celebrate and cement

relationships and finance church activities and school fees. This latter aspect is what was emphasised in discussions about basketry on Futuna; I was frequently told “weaving is money”.⁸⁴

Rather than the ceremonial or household uses of basketry artefacts listed above, the monetary aspect of pandanus work was always mentioned and discussed in my conversations around Futuna. When considering pandanus work, men and women would regularly connect it with money and more specifically, with paying children’s school fees. Rather than giving local pandanus textiles of great value directly to a school to pay for school fees, as is possible on Pentecost Island for example due to efforts to promote what has been called the *kastom ekonomi* (Regenvanu & Geismar, 2011; Rousseau & Taylor, 2012), on Futuna, women sell their baskets to pay for school fees.

During my time on Futuna conversations would often turn around the problems women faced in selling their baskets, which are the main source of trade on the island. Living on an outer island, it is not the infrequent and unreliable shipping service or the expensive, if regular, air service that is the problem, but the reliability of middlemen and the speed at which money is received in return for baskets. This chapter explores these issues as well as the difficulties of pricing pandanus work.

While this chapter explores how women sell their basketry, Chapter 8 considers what the sales are for. The seemingly vital role of pandanus work in the running of the Church is notable, and as people got to know me on Futuna, the extent to which women’s pandanus work is relied upon as a source of funds became clearer, as were women’s feelings about this. However, despite the importance of pandanus in funding both Church and education as well as celebrating life and community, defined below, its importance was only ever discussed publicly as a contemporary method for earning money, particularly for paying school fees. This final part of the thesis explores the market of pandanus work from a seller’s point of view and examines why such emphasis is placed on the use of pandanus work in paying school fees.

⁸⁴ “*Wif hemi mone*”. Lily 06.10.14

It is interesting that in exploring the use of pandanus artefacts, we come up with this tripartite division between church, education and local community that is better known in the literature as church, school and *kastom*. While this division, that started as an opposition between *kastom* and *skul*, where *skul* represented school, church and European ways more generally (Jolly 1994), also exists in a variety of more complex forms including distinctions between politics and business (Jolly and Thomas 1992), as discussed in Chapter 8, the case of pandanus basketry on Futuna seemed for most women to be a matter of church, school and *kastom*. One family alone was known for its use of pandanus basketry as a business.

These spheres differentiate between ways of acting and of gaining power, but they are not reified in life on Futuna. What distinguishes them are the methods and aim of the actions, or work; hence the initial distinction between local ways and interests and European ways and interests. Thus, for example, business is the way of money and is associated with the individual's accumulation of goods and profit; in many places, it is considered the antithesis of *kastom* (Foster 1992, LiPuma 2001, 186-207). The difference between church or *kastom* on Futuna, which are both concerned with the redistribution of goods for the benefit of the larger group, is discussed in Chapter 8.

The contemporary *kastom* use of pandanus artefacts in lifecycle exchange ceremonies is well-documented in Vanuatu and further afield in the Pacific (Bolton 2003a, Kelly 1999, Mauss 1969, M. C. Rodman 1981, Weiner 1985) and so I do not focus on that here. Moreover, despite celebrating circumcisions and many burials during fieldwork, I took part in just two events featuring the exchange of pandanus work: a wedding and the closing of a period of mourning. Other celebrations were restricted to the exchange of cooked food. These two celebrations were both said to be small events and relatively little preparation (food or pandanus work) went into them. The *kai ta rua* that closes the period of mourning was to be finished the following Christmas when a greater number of family members would be present on the island and a 'flower ceremony' would be held to decorate the grave. I am therefore hesitant to draw any conclusions about the significance of pandanus work in ceremonial exchanges on the island, however it should be noted that on Futuna people speak about the giving of gifts in exchanges as motivated by a person's *kanieni*, their *gladhat* or goodwill, and stipulate that the

exchanges are not guided by any *kastom* rules. Due to the timing of my fieldwork, I do not have sufficient material with which to fully explore this concept of *kanieni* in ceremonial exchanges on the island, a concept that was important enough to be painted on a set of island dresses in 2017, but it is certainly an interesting avenue for future research.

The following two chapters demonstrate women's entrepreneurship and resourcefulness in the way in which they sell and manage their pandanus work. In addition, the clear association between pandanus and the paying of school fees highlights the well-known association between women, pandanus work and nurturing qualities but places this in a new light. Moreover, rather than celebrating the activities and achievements of the Church – that are in large part due to women's continual fundraising through their pandanus work – women demonstrate an ambivalence that suggests an underlying unease. Finally, we see that the use of pandanus artefacts on Futuna, whether for school, church or *kastom* usage, is united in its orientation: it is clear that pandanus artefacts are above all made to be given, sold and exchanged with people living beyond the limits of the island to develop and enhance the existing community. Tensions however exist in how the community should be developed.

7.1 Roads to Market

The idea of roads, from the Bislama *rod*, is a key concept in Vanuatu. They are not roads in the physical sense, but are concerned with similar issues of connectivity, circulation and growth (Dalakoglou and Harvey 2012). Writing about Tanna Island, Lindstrom draws attention to how access to a *rod* provides rights to cultural knowledge and thus the possibility to produce and consume this knowledge. For him, “the ‘road’ is the basic, underlying blueprint for the restricted circulation of knowledge statements” and ‘roads’ are crucially linear in order to control and limit the spread of knowledge (1990a, 123). Keller and Kuautonga (2007) call this a ‘line of communication’ on Futuna, where this concept of *rod* is considered the *kastom* way of doing things. A *rod* is what Ingold (2007a) would call a ghostly line, which while intangible, influences what we do. Moreover, according to Ingold, life is the entanglement of our journeys

with the journeys of other life forms and so we should think of all movement as one along paths rather than across surfaces.

Communication of all kinds should follow the appropriate *rod* on Futuna, which will certify it as true and therefore meaningful and so these networks, or meshworks, to follow Ingold, regulate not just knowledge, but the exchange and movement of goods, language and people (Lind 2014). A *rod* may take a physical form as a footpath, but more commonly it is a network of people through which information must flow in a specific direction. On Futuna, the largest and most prestigious *rod* circumnavigates the island and takes the form of a physical footpath that joins neighbouring chiefs, but the concept is also useful at other levels of communication; notably, in the sale of pandanus artefacts.

Pandanus artefacts are sold through what is best understood as “a vast interpersonal network” (Harding 1967, 243) where sellers rely on a restricted number of social contacts to make a *rod* and sell their work. Trusting relationships between the successive members of a *rod* are essential for the network to be properly maintained, but the difficulties outer islands face in accessing markets, spaces where people buy and sell things with money (Dilley 2012), and receiving payment for their goods has recently been identified as one of the main weaknesses in the ni-Vanuatu handicraft industry (Pandanus Consulting Ltd 2016, 33). Bonnemaïson (1987, 165) and Lindstrom (1990a, 123) refer to the intermediary connections in a *rod* as a ‘gate’, which can be either open, facilitating the transmission or exchange, or closed, blocking the movement of knowledge or goods. This suggests that these *rods* are not necessarily made up of trusting relationships.

On Futuna, women access markets and sell their pandanus work via this concept of *rod*. Whilst many make sales locally within the island, the majority of sales are made through personal connections in formal markets located on other islands, usually on Tanna or Efate. Obstructions in the *rod*, for example the presence of an untrustworthy connection in a sale, can disrupt communication; a difficulty also faced by Maisin tapa makers (Barker and Hermkens 2016, 198). For example, Seieke lost ten *hanbag* style baskets she had made for an order from the Lennakel hospital, Tanna, when the man to

whom she had entrusted the baskets to make the delivery for her disappeared with the baskets.

Looking at such cases where the *rod* is not smooth, where the *rod* has become disconnected or where the *rod* leads to the wrong destination illustrates the local importance of this concept and particularly the importance of following the correct connections. For example, the importance of following the correct *rod* in arranging pandanus sales can be seen in the difficulties encountered in setting up a business arrangement with ACTIV Association (Alternative Communities Trade in Vanuatu Association). A *rod* was created between representatives of the six districts of Futuna and staff in Port Vila and the partnership peaked during the island's Agriculimaptation Festival⁸⁵ in 2014, organised by CARE International. However a lack of communication between the different people involved in this *rod* resulted in much disruption and upset at the handicraft market in the Agriculimaptation Festival. Despite there being problems with the chosen *rod* between pandanus workers on Futuna and ACTIV, the existence of one *rod* blocked the creation of a new one.

This example shows that women on Futuna do not sell their baskets through organisations, so much as through their personal relationships. A *rod* is therefore a string of personal relationships through which a line of communication is created. When the relationships change or the position of the people in the relationships change, the *rod* breaks or is temporarily suspended. The *rod* is nevertheless respected and, to use a metaphor from road works, no diversion is taken.

The nature of the market on Futuna is complex due to its reliance on personal relationships. Exchange is a crucial means of distinguishing between kin and strangers following the premise that things are shared with kin but exchanged with strangers (Dalton 1996, 1999, 73-4, Robbins and Akin 1999), and this means that relationships are continually negotiated in exchanges. Overing (1992) similarly notes a difference

⁸⁵ The Festival celebrated the completion of CARE International's 4 year Disaster Risk Reduction programme on the island that aimed to promote adaptation to climate change through finding agricultural solutions to problems and vulnerabilities worsened by a changing climate (agriculimaptation).

between exchanges with outsiders, typified as competitive and risky, and the productive exchanges and sharing of insiders. People will lay claims to kinship through the manner in which they make an exchange: for example, purposefully avoiding cash transactions and the direct exchange of artefacts to emphasise their familial connections. These two spheres of exchange, recognised by their own set of values and practices, relate to what Gudeman (2010) refers to as Mutuality and Commerce, and are of course open to manipulation and contestation.

There is therefore some uncertainty and instability in selling basketry, which women combat by multiplying the markets they access and diversifying the types of *rod* to these markets. To meet their many social and economic needs, women in the Pacific prefer to diversify their activities to minimise risk rather than focus on maximising profit (Brookfield 1969a, M. C. Rodman 1987b).

In what follows, I discuss three types of market, the space(s) where exchanges occur and the *rod* women use to access them and sell their pandanus basketry. Given the small population resident on Futuna Island and the lack of tourists or other visitors passing through, women on Futuna wishing to sell important quantities of pandanus work must access markets on other islands. The Chairman of the Council of Chiefs on Futuna in fact aims to restrict visits to the island by tourists and other foreign visitors and the island now has a reputation for being difficult of access for NGOs (Barnes 2017). A *rod* to markets in the more profitable Lenakel town market on nearby island of Tanna and the numerous market stalls in Port Vila, Efate are therefore essential to workers of pandanus and can be differentiated by their associated values and practices (Gudeman 2010).

7.1.1 The Tanna Market

*“Tanna is fast: one, two days. In the months of July and August, you hang [your baskets] one day, but they’ve already bought them. Quick, quick, quick, quick.”*⁸⁶ Seieke 04.06.15

Women at Ibau speak about the Tanna market at Lenakel, the capital of Tafea province, as greatly profitable. Speed of sale, and therefore the speed at which cash can be obtained, is highly valued on Futuna and the market on Tanna satisfies this need. Seieke told me that the large *kastom* ceremonies on Tanna drive purchases as the ceremonies require important quantities of pandanus baskets and mats. July and August are when the majority of large ceremonies take place on Futuna and Tanna as this is considered the time of plenty, when gardens are full and large feasts can be organised. Ceremonies such as circumcisions and the cementing of graves are therefore frequently held in these cooler months when yams and bananas are ready for harvest.

*“I think that Tanna wins over Vila. They make kastom. Their kastom.”*⁸⁷ Papra 04.06.15

Although Tanna is a well-known tourist destination with over 10,000 visitors in 2017 (VNSO 2017), the Lenakel market’s main business comes from the local population around the island and a high number of migrants from all around Tafea province if not further overseas. Whilst Futuna also has large ceremonial events, the scale and number of those made on Tanna far exceed those on Futuna: Tanna’s population is 53 times greater than that of Futuna (VNSO 2009), but the proportions the Tanna *kastom* take on are on Futuna said to be much greater due to a closer local observance of *kastom*. On Futuna, people say that contemporary ceremonies are small due to the stronger position of the church on the island, see also Rawlings (1999) on people’s perspectives of ‘losing’ *kastom*. It is said that Tanna, in contrast, follows *kastom* more closely and

⁸⁶ “Tanna hemi kwik: wan, tu dei. Long manis Julae, Ogis ia yu hangem wan dei, be oli karem aot finis. Kwik kwik kwik kwik.”

⁸⁷ “Tingting blong mi Tanna i win bitim long Vila. From olgeta oli mekem kastom. Kastom blong olgeta.”

therefore holds vast celebrations. People living near Lenakel town on Tanna may also have more purchasing power.

Futunese pandanus work may have a competitive edge over the Tannese equivalents on the island by virtue of their ‘otherness’ and singularity as the majority of baskets and mats from Tanna resemble styles made in the Central and Northern regions of the country. However according to many of my friends on Futuna – both those who worked pandanus and those who didn’t – the quality of Futunese pandanus work far exceeds the local equivalent on Tanna. People on Futuna describe the way people from Tanna do things as careless because *oli hariap tumas* (they hurry too much). Futunese baskets may therefore be preferred over the local equivalents for their unique styles and the quality of the work.

Despite the proximity of Tanna and the existence of Futunese communities on the island, women on Futuna largely only work the market if and when they themselves spend time on the island. There is no set *rod* for women to sell their basketry in the Tanna markets. Similarly, despite the vast number of cruise ship passengers passing through ‘Mystery Island’ off Aneityum, no *rod* connects workers of pandanus on Futuna with this considerable market opportunity. Aneityum and Tanna are therefore different kinds of places to the Port Vila markets. Concepts of *ples* and belonging in these outer islands restrict who has access to the markets and who can sell their produce. There is perhaps an expectation that sales can largely only occur in one’s own *ples*.

7.1.2 The Port Vila Market

The Port Vila market is the largest market used by women on Futuna in terms of potential buyers, but it is also the market that causes them the most problems as the *rod* is a difficult one. Since the *rod* between Futuna and ACTIV has not yet been fixed, Futunese pandanus basketry is at present only to be found in the numerous handicraft markets run by women around the capital, also known as *mamas makets*. Geismar explores the history of these informal markets in her thesis and notes the key role of the Outdoor Women’s Market Association, created by women from Pentecost, not only in

obtaining important infrastructure such as toilets, but also in offering women support by forming a new community around them, distinct from their island affiliations (Geismar 2003, 201-8, 217-28).

Women on Futuna access these Port Vila markets in three different ways. The first is to use their personal connections; prepared with a number of finished pandanus baskets, they will approach family and friends in the capital in search of a *mama* willing to sell their baskets in her market stall. The second method is the reverse of this: a market stall owner in Port Vila, often from Pentecost Island, will send *toktok* (talk, speech, a message) through a friend or relative on Futuna to the effect that she needs baskets for her stall. The *toktok* will be shared around Futuna and women will then send their baskets through this connection, selling things they already have in stock, or making some baskets especially for this order. Unlike in the outer islands, people living in town have little access to the plant resources needed to produce baskets and so most market stall owners rely on their social networks to connect themselves with the islands and obtain the stock they need (Geismar 2003, 219-20). Finally, the third method is sale via the local Women's Project, described in the next section.

Currently, women on Futuna sell only their pandanus baskets in Port Vila. Unlike the mats made on Futuna that can weigh in at 2kgs each and are difficult to fold, pandanus baskets are light and easily transportable. These characteristics are important: as mentioned above, women on Futuna are eager to make quick sales where there is a quick turnaround between their pandanus work and receiving cash. Transport away from Futuna is possible by ship, however these are infrequent, unreliable and slow and so pandanus basketry is commonly transported by plane. The light weight and transportability of baskets are perhaps just as important for the women on Futuna as for the purchasers of pandanus work in Port Vila; much of the Port Vila market in pandanus work comes from tourist trade (Geismar 2003, 213) and small, portable artefacts make the perfect souvenirs (Graburn 1976, 15).

Although many baskets are bought in Port Vila and women on Futuna use a variety of methods to access the Port Vila markets, many complain that selling baskets in the capital is difficult. There are two causes for their complaints: the first is due to the price

their baskets are sold at in Port Vila and the second is with regards to the reliability of the *rod*. On Futuna, women complain that the prices found in towns are too high and so dissuade tourists from buying baskets. Women on Futuna have worked out approximate prices for their basketry, but these prices are different to those found in town. When women in the *mama's maket* in Port Vila set the prices at which they will sell baskets, women on Futuna say that these prices are too high and prevent tourists from buying. Baskets that on Futuna will be sold for 500VT are advertised at 1000VT to 1500VT, prices fixed by women's Market Association in town (Geismar 2003, 227).

“Yes, we sold them [to Port Vila], then they started doing things in a different way, so we gave up... We would set the price for them, send them to a friend. The price we set, we would get back... they would then change the price we had set, put their Vila rates, this meant that the baskets would stay hanging for a long time.”⁸⁸ Seieke 04.06.15

Complaints by women on Futuna should be understood within the women's wider concerns in selling their basketry, that is, the importance they place on speedy sales. It takes months, sometimes up to a year, for women to see their earnings from basket sales in Port Vila as payment is only ever made once the baskets have been successfully sold and so this delays the transfer of money. However women on Futuna do not critique this system for making payments, but the slow rate of sales in the *mamas makets*. Although women on Futuna set the initial cost of the basket, which will be their pay, they are unhappy with the prices set by the *mamas* in Port Vila, which they consider the cause of slow sales.

The second problem faced when selling baskets in the Port Vila market is the reliability of the connecting *rod* to the market. Sellers in Port Vila can be unreliable, but so can the connections within this *rod*. Experience had shown women on Futuna that friends and relatives can often not be counted on to pass the baskets on to the *mama's maket* for sale – some have been known to keep the baskets for themselves or share them amongst

⁸⁸ “Yes, mifala i stap selem, afta oli mekem long wan defren fasin, mifala i leggo... Mifala i putem praes long hem, sendem i go long wan fren. Praes wea mifala i putem, mifala i holem... oli changem praes blong mifala, i putem praes blong olgeta blong Vila, i mekem se basket i hang long taem...”

their own family and friends for their personal benefit. The people who form the *rod* can also not be counted on to send the money earned through basket sales back to the rightful owner – this is the other reason why it takes months for women on Futuna to receive their earnings. Women often come up against this problem in dealing with friends and relatives in the capital on other business too. As noted above, people are expected to share with kin but exchange with strangers and so these ‘problems’ in the *rod*, as perceived from the pandanus worker’s perspective, are perhaps actually claims of kinship.

It is said that people in Port Vila *kakai Vatu*, which can be translated literally to mean that they eat Vatu.

“...sometimes they eat the money first... so none of the women trust them now.”⁸⁹ Papra 04.06.15

When women do not receive returns for their artefacts, it is said that the money held in Port Vila is put to other uses more locally. Papra spoke from experience in the quote above, as after several unsuccessful attempts at using a *rod* to Port Vila through her own familial connections, she decided that enough was enough and she has been trying to find a new *rod* to replace the broken one. While she cannot prevent the people in a *rod* taking cuts from her parcels of baskets, she can find a new *rod* to connect her to a market stall owner. It is due to problems like these that women on Futuna use a number of different types of *rod* to sell their baskets in various markets: they are ensuring that they will always be connected to markets and purchasers of their pandanus work even if relationships break down.

Selling baskets in Port Vila can at times be a slow and uncertain process but it can also be hugely rewarding. The new *rods* created between pandanus workers on Futuna and some of the upmarket hotels on Efate, as well as with the aptly named boutique shop Pandanus, selling a wide range of mostly locally made fashionable items are particularly profitable in 2017. With business training planned from the Tafea branch of the

⁸⁹ “...sometimes oli kakai fastaem...mekem ol woman oli no trustem olgeta.”

Vanuatu Skills Partnership, previously known as TVET, the Vanuatu Technical and Vocational Education and Training Sector Strengthening Program, the selling of basketry looks like it is set to increase on Futuna.

In addition to an eagerness to create new styles and designs on baskets, women on Futuna are constantly on the lookout for new *rods* to markets through which to sell their artefacts. The Women's Project was therefore started by women on Futuna in 2008 to facilitate the sale of baskets. This project is interesting as a concrete example of reactions to a closed *rod*. It is also noteworthy for what it says about the concept of *komuniti*, defined below, moral economies and the role of the Church on the island.

7.1.2.1 Sara's Women's Project

Churches in the Pacific Islands have a history of promoting community wellbeing, harmony and development (Clarke and Halafoff 2017, Demian 2017). The concept of community in English and as promoted by missionaries finds a local version in the Bislama *komuniti*, a term that groups people living together and unites them into a single, harmonious, body (Stephenson 2001). Unlike the imagined communities of Anderson (2006), this is a group of people who know each other, often work together and where any two members can probably find some common relative if pushed.

“In this place, everyone's family around Futuna. All family.”⁹⁰

Sarashi 30.08.17

Komuniti is also actively worked upon and sought after by all members in solidarity, as opposed to a community created at the top, to group together those at the bottom. Perhaps inspired by missionaries, *komuniti* also crucially suggests a virtuous quality (Love 2016), based on a conflict free environment (McDougall 2003, Stephenson 2001). Harmony is in fact understood to be a necessary condition for community development and prosperity (Brison 1991). For Eriksen (2008), writing about women's sociality on Ambrym, *komuniti* is a feminine, Christian ideology that opposes *kastom*. I differentiate between the two forms of community linguistically, using the English

⁹⁰ *“From long ples ia family nomo round long Futuna ia. Famili nomo.”*

spelling for the *kastom* community created by Chiefs and the Bislama spelling for the grassroots version of the term.

Komuniti ideals moreover influence the local economy, and while missionaries also introduced concepts of individualism and capitalism (LiPuma 2001), *komuniti* also defines a moral economy based on welfare (Gudeman 2018). Sara's Women's Project on Futuna is a clear example of a *komuniti* project.

The Women's Project was designed to help women sell their baskets and simultaneously form a fund for women to use in emergencies: to pay medical fees, charter planes in emergencies, or pay overdue school fees for example, and in this sense bears similarities with the Maisin Anglican Church's use of *tapa* (Barker and Hermkens 2016, 200) and the wider involvement of church organisations in social development (Demian 2017). It is also an example of a 'good business', which Brison describes as "a way of building community potency rather than as a means of individual prosperity" (1999, 162). The Women's Project was created and continues to be managed by Sara. She only ever attended primary school, a point she was eager to tell me, but is a diligent bookkeeper and is always on the lookout for new business opportunities both for her family and the church. Women's groups, church and community development are closely linked (Douglas and Jolly 2003).

The project follows a strict structure developed out of the church's organisation of the island. The Women's Project is therefore divided between the six districts of Futuna following the local land boundaries and not the *kastom* definitions of belonging. Each district is allocated 10,000VT a year to buy baskets from women within the district at 500VT a basket, which works out as 20 baskets per district. The women selling their baskets receive their pay immediately and the baskets are then sent to Port Vila via Rita's daughter Ragana, who has proven herself to be a respectable and responsible connection in the *rod*. Ragana passes the baskets to a non-Futunese market stall owner at the waterfront in the town centre, who sells the baskets at a higher price. From these sales, the Futuna Women's Project receives 600VT per *Futuna* basket. Initially, the profit went straight back into the project to repay the initial investment, but it quickly surpassed that, and the women's fund started growing. Seven years on and as no woman

has yet asked for a loan from the Women's Project, seemingly due to a lack of awareness of its existence, the funds have reached over 100,000VT. Nevertheless, the project is currently experiencing difficulties obtaining the recent earnings from the basket sales in the Port Vila market. Sara's records show that this problem has intensified in the last 3 years.

The six districts around Futuna work independently of each other and Sara has now had difficulty obtaining the cash return for the majority of the districts. The market stall owner repeatedly promises to send the cash, but nothing comes of her promises. As part of efforts to regain their payment, Sara threatened the market stall owner with police involvement, but before the threat could be carried out, the *mama* in question said that she was applying for a bank loan to be able to repay her debts. In April 2015, the latest excuse given to Sara was that the destruction following Cyclone Pam had made it difficult to receive a bank loan. These justifications provide an interesting contrast to the arguments based on illness and the profitability of the social relation used by rural Mount Hageners to plead for the return of their relatives living in urban areas for wage work (M. Strathern 1972, 27-28). In comparison to the rural Hageners in the 1970s, people on Futuna have very clear ideas about life in town; the majority of households at Ibau have actually lived for at least a year on Tanna or Efate so may not fully understand the complexities of running a profitable stall in a *mama's maket* but are fully aware that money rules in town and is quickly consumed.

The difficulties the Women's Project has encountered in their *rod* to market means that Sara has created a new business plan for women on Futuna: she wants to reinvest the money earned so far into building a guesthouse. Although tourists are few and far between – during the year I spent on Futuna there was just one air passenger, an independent journalist with a prior interest in the island, and one visit from a sailing boat – visits from government and NGO workers are relatively frequent. These visitors are currently housed in a privately-run guesthouse. A guesthouse owned and run by the PWMU would in contrast allow the income these visitors represent to be beneficial to the *komuniti*.

The Women's Project follows church organisation both in terms of how belonging to a district is defined, and in terms of communication, or the dissemination of information, which passes through branch or session PWMU meetings, the only regular opportunity women around Futuna have to meet together. We saw in Chapter 3 that a PWMU pandanus grove next to the mission house at Ibau encourages an alternative method of belonging for women without the familial – and therefore land connections – to the district, and the Women's Project is another instance of this. The Church is replacing moieties and lineages in organising social life. Instead of following *kastom* and descent to decide who belongs to each district, where people belong to the district of their father unless they have been exchanged with somebody from another place, the project follows residency, which is how church branches are organised. This is particularly noticeable in Ibau where a relatively large number of households do not live where they are 'from'.

Sara's recent goal for the Women's Project brings it more explicitly into the realm of the church, where *komuniti* is determined by residency. Sara aims to build a cement guesthouse and space for women at Ibau for the Futuna PWMU Session to run. She hopes that the guesthouse will offer women a new source of income through the cleaning, gardening and cooking activities that come with it, but she in particular hopes that the guesthouse will give women a profitable way of fundraising for their PWMU branches and session. This contrasts with the current basketry project, where women gained funds for their own household's needs and like for the Maisin, profit was put towards the *komuniti* (Barker and Hermkens 2016). The guesthouse would also include an office and a room for women to hold meetings in, which could also be rented out. As of July 2015, Sara had not yet discussed or publicised these plans with many other women; as previously discussed the initial Women's Project sale of baskets was running into problems and although she had entered into discussions with the Community Liaison Committee (CLC) about building a guesthouse at Ibau, obtaining land for the building was proving to be problematic.

Initially, Sara considered repurposing a run-down small cement building in Ibau that is currently used as an oil drum store. This had been purposefully built by the Futuna session on the mission's land as a guesthouse, however for various reasons it had never

been completed and so had been abandoned and left to rot: the building has a ‘grass’ roof. When Sara suggested her project use this building, there was resistance within the CLC as apparently the Men’s Fellowship also had plans to use it to create their own guesthouse, again for church fundraising purposes. As it stood in July 2015, “*graon i fas long mifala*” (land is stuck for us, finding land has stalled our progress).

Clearly, this new venture of the Women’s Project would strengthen the religious and geographical dimension of the local definition of *komuniti*. This has the potential to affect how people on Futuna come to identify and make a sense of place and belonging. Whereas community is currently defined through *kastom*, that is descent and family connections, a church promoted, geographical and feminine definition of *komuniti*, building on the governmental definition, could metaphorically create roots for some, whilst uprooting a number of people who are not resident in their true place on the island. Added to this, there is the difficulty of creating *komuniti* based on church affiliation where there are many churches. In Ibau, where there is only the Presbyterian Church, and everyone is a member, this would have little effect, however in other districts and at the island level it could be expected to have repercussions. The different church denominations on Futuna are in fact already a cause of disruption within the island-wide *komuniti*, particularly with regards the recent arrival of the Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) church. For example, SDA members were noticeably not present at the Futuna-wide Christmas celebrations in 2014, held in Ibau.

The Women’s Project is characteristic of development projects in the region. Created with a buzz of excitement and goodwill, interests wane, relationships change, and the project starts to peter out (Brison 1991, 326, 332-3, M. C. Rodman 1987a). When the existing *rod* to the Port Vila market showed signs of trouble, rather than try to create a new *rod*, Sara decided to circumnavigate the problem and modify the initial project. The physical distance that separates workers of pandanus from their customers is what really creates difficulties for women on Futuna, who ultimately want control over their sales. It is for this reason that the market on Tanna is preferred over that of Port Vila. It is thought that control over basket sales will result in the ‘appropriate’ pricing of baskets, discussed below, and therefore a fast turnover of sales. Women see evidence of this

logic when they sell their baskets within Futuna, the third and final market used by them.

7.1.3 The Futuna Market

The way baskets and mats are acquired on Futuna is interesting as it is visibly different to sales made in established markets. It is also important that unlike in the Tanna and Port Vila markets, many of the exchanges are with kin, with family relations often requesting baskets and mats and highlighting their family connections to avoid making any direct monetary or non-monetary exchange. This sometimes takes the form of ‘demand-sharing’ (K. Rio 2017, 78). As Overing (1992), Wagner (1977) and Robbins and Akin (1999) note, society is structured and differentiated through different modes of exchange.

At the moment, the Futuna market is a market in the sense that basketry is exchanged for money throughout the island, but no physical establishment or meeting place currently exists where pandanus work can be displayed for sale. Plans are however in place to create such exhibition spaces at Ibau. A large-scale project from the Futuna Fisheries, a local co-operative that is the recipient of much international funding, recently received funding to build a cement shop to house both a fish market and a handicraft stall, with the possibility of locally prepared frozen chickens too, but progress in the building is very slow and in 2017 the new cement shop was finished and operational, but was only selling fish. Women in the Futuna Session also have plans for a market stall project to raise funds for the Church. In July 2015, work began on the building of a grass house style building next to the Mission House on the mission’s land that would house a market place for the sale of cooked foods and handicrafts, with all proceeds going to the Presbyterian Futuna Session, but this was no nearer completion in September 2017.

The local interest in building a physical market space for the sale of pandanus basketry would enable women to advertise and exhibit their work and control their sales. Drawing on Rio’s (2017) distinction between village stores and household stores in town, perhaps women on Futuna also seek to form a market to regulate the demands on

their work and prevent demand-sharing. A market space would moreover provide women with a public space for sociality, a theme noticed by early anthropologists of Pacific Island markets (Epstein 1961) and now returned to as contemporary Pacific Island women voice their interests in market spaces and their wishes for village meeting houses in which they can work pandanus together (Geismar 2003, 215, Painsi 2003b, 90). In Port Vila “the open-air market is as much about creating a support network for women as it is about making monetary profit” (Geismar 2003, 227). This ties in with Rio’s (2017) view of village stores as welfare institutions. I would in addition suggest that exhibiting baskets and mats is of interest to pandanus workers for the possibilities it offers of display and knowledge exchange among practitioners. As discussed in Chapter 6, pandanus workers challenge themselves to create complex patterns and out-do each other.

Without a formal market space on Futuna, pandanus basketry transactions are currently made within a woman’s household grounds where customers – family, friends or more commonly, visitors to the island – will seek out specific types of baskets or mats.

“They come looking for them...carry them away.”⁹¹ Papra 04.06.15

Most people on the island want ready-made baskets and mats. Direct access to the pandanus worker is only rarely considered an opportunity for tailor-made customisation and personalisation, and this is usually only by visitors to the island. If a woman does not have baskets and mats stored ready in her house when somebody comes in search of one, then it is *trabol* (trouble) for her. Women gain a reputation for their productivity and for always having pandanus work ready (or the inverse) and will get customers and respect based on this. Seieke, for example, is often solicited during the run up to Christmas as she is known to have mats ready.

Indeed this is another important distinction between the Futuna market and the markets on Tanna and Efate: as well as there being a direct *rod* between buyer and maker, the item for sale is as likely to be a pandanus mat as a pandanus basket. This reflects local

⁹¹ “*Oli kam lukoutem... karem i go.*”

usage of locally made mats and baskets. Pandanus mats are an essential piece of furniture within a Futunese house: they are either slept on directly or placed under an imported foam mattress from China. These mats are never placed directly on the ground in a house or kitchen but will always be laid on top of a layer or two of coconut frond mats for protection and safe-keeping. Pandanus baskets in contrast have a more tenuous role in the everyday on Futuna but are appreciated in town for use as a carrier bag, or something with which to *flasem* (decorate) a house.

Locally made pandanus baskets are rarely used as bags on the island as women favour cloth bags or baskets from other islands and men, particularly smokers, prefer a small lidded *boks* basket for the possibilities it offers for concealment:

“That’s to fill up with tobacco, and matches... you fill it up with all small things, mobile, pen, important notes. If it’s got a lid it’s better, you know, as people can’t see everything inside.”⁹² Sam Seru 31.05.15

Young children in contrast favour small practise baskets that have no lid: they fill these with the small round black pebbles found on Iarofi beach which they use to shoot birds with using a slingshot, or to practise aim by playing a bead game on the ground.

Pandanus baskets and mats are also appreciated by visitors to Futuna who often want a souvenir. Lidded baskets are again popular for their concealing characteristics, useful in town, while mats sell for low prices and are difficult to find in town. The regular visits from government and NGO representatives are a particularly profitable outlet for pandanus workers at Ibau, through which all such traffic must pass due to the presence of the airport. Visitors to Futuna will mention their interest in purchasing pandanus work to the guesthouse owner, Teata, who will take them to her closest family relations with stocks of pandanus work. Visitors are asked what they are interested in buying (a basket, mat etc.) and a selection of the said article is brought out for inspection. In the case of mats, often only one is presented, rolled up. The buyer will then ask the price, which is decided on by the seller. In many cases, people will leave having bought much

⁹² *“Hemia long fulem up taba, witem majes... yu filem up ol smol samting, mobile, pen, ol impotan note. Spos i gat lid bai hemi mo gud, yu save, from ol samting inside bei ol man oli no save luk.”*

more than they originally set out to buy. Some of the more regular NGO workers will place an order if they have a specific basket style or pattern in mind, that they will pay for and pick up on their next return to the island.

The Futuna market is therefore a direct one, where women mostly exert full control over their basket sales, deciding what to make, how to decorate it and how much to sell it for. The customer base is limited, however, and the majority of government and NGO worker sales are directed through select families rather than shared among the women of a district. Therefore, despite losing some control over the sales when accessing the Tanna or Port Vila markets, these are necessary ventures for basket workers.

It will be interesting to see the effects of the upcoming creation of market stalls on the island. How these stalls will affect the manner in which sales are made; whether sales will increase and whether greater profits will be gained; how the stalls will affect competition among women; how prices will be decided upon and who will decide on this. The pricing of pandanus basketry is, as we have seen, an important point of contention for pandanus workers on Futuna, many of whom prefer to set low prices to make a quick sale. The next section explores how pandanus artefacts are priced and what characteristics are key to the work's value. The effect of a physical market bringing comparable basketry artefacts together, such as those planned at Ibau, is also discussed.

7.2 Pricing Pandanus Work

Pricing pandanus work is a negotiation of an artefact's monetary value based on local ideas of the value of money, the artefact, its place in the market and how the sale should occur (Alexander & Alexander, 1991; Dilley, 1992). The monetary value of an artefact is therefore open to change in different exchanges and in different regimes of value (Appadurai 1986). Whilst in many areas, prices are fixed according to supply and demand, this is not the case in Pacific Island markets, which are characterised by an absence of competition and a preference for collective unity (Brookfield 1969a). This is clearly seen in the pricing of pandanus work on Futuna, where determining the value of an artefact also requires balancing up an interest in selling the artefact quickly,

receiving a fair payment for the work and maintaining a competitive pricing on a level with other pandanus workers without under-pricing others. Pricing pandanus work is a moral act and while there is no just price, there is certainly the possibility of justice in pricing (Walsh and Lynch 2008). Pricing basketry is therefore a contentious process, often the subject of discussion on Futuna.

Rather than consider the external forces effecting the value of pandanus artefacts on Futuna, I focus on the ideal of fairness and unity between workers of pandanus on Futuna. The external market forces – buyers, traders, the market etc. – were less visible during my fieldwork and instead what was apparent was women’s interest in fairness. Fairness drives the regulation of prices for market vendors in Pacific markets (Brookfield 1969b, Geismar 2003, 227) as well as on Futuna, where one can say that “attempts to make a sale by unilateral price reduction involve[s] an element of competition which is destructive of the competitive strength of the group as a whole” (Brookfield 1969b, 18). This links back to our previously noted understanding of *komuniti*, where harmony is seen to be a necessary condition for prosperity.

There therefore tends to be agreement on prices between sellers in Pacific Island markets (Brookfield 1969b, Salisbury 1970) and prices tend to be fixed, with prices of goods changing according to quantity (or equivalently, size) rather than weight, for example. This is also seen on Futuna. Basket prices are set according to two criteria: firstly, the type of basket (*Futuna, boks, hanbag* etc.) and secondly, the size of the basket. Similarly, pandanus mats are priced according to their size. This approach to pricing means that a number of other characteristics are not taken into consideration, such as: the level of difficulty due to the finesse of the plait; the technicality of the design and the number of patterns; the use of dyed pandanus; the overall quality of the plaited work and the number of mistakes; the overall quality of the materials, to be seen in the colour of the pandanus and *buraō*. Interestingly, these characteristics are often commented on by pandanus workers, but they usually do not enter into their decision-making process when pricing their artefacts. Old Siki at Ibau, an elderly widow who is known for her finely plaited detailed designs on Futuna baskets, is however a notable exception to this rule and she asks for higher prices for her baskets: a size of basket that would cost 500VT if worked by another woman would cost 7-800VT if worked by Siki.

The creation of a basket pricing system for the Women's Project discussed above emphasised this method for assigning value to baskets. Baskets are therefore categorised only according to type and not size; *Futuna* baskets are bought at 500VT and since they came into fashion, *hanbag* baskets have been incorporated and are bought at 1500VT. The project however makes visible the different sizes, characteristics and qualities of women's baskets by bringing them together in the same place at the same price. The comparability of baskets causes discussion. Women who make larger baskets are thought to make it difficult for others as there is too much variation within the set prices: fairness is at stake. But also, women who work baskets with narrow strips of pandanus into a fine⁹³ plait think that those who work with wide pandanus strips are bringing down the quality and the reputation of pandanus baskets from Futuna. Interestingly, rather than questioning the organisation's pricing system, the focus is on fairness and ensuring the *komuniti*'s reputation.

For example, Seieke told the following story to exemplify the problems in the pricing of baskets from Futuna: a while ago in Port Vila, Fitu, who tears the pandanus ribbons into very narrow 2mm strips for plaiting, and a friend of hers worked some *Futuna* baskets very finely: "*tufala i wokem i gud i gud*". Saute's mother was also in Port Vila and worked a *Futuna* basket, but unlike the other two women, she used much wider strips of pandanus. When it came to sell the baskets, being the same size and of the same type, both were sold for the same price. The buyer obtained two versions of basket for the same price.

Pamali also gave me another, more recent example of this from the large Agriculimaptation Festival held in September 2014 on Futuna that marked the end of CARE International's work on the island in relation to agricultural adaptation and climate change, saying:

⁹³ I use the word 'fine' here to mean very thin or narrow. Women do not use any particular word to refer to such finely woven baskets, but describe them in turn as "*i gud wei*" (it's really good) or explicitly say that "*hemi terem tintin*" (she tore narrow strips). Thus locally, the concept of a good basket, like the English word 'fine' incorporates both the idea of a detailed, narrow plait, as well as a description of something of good quality.

“Eh... my aunt tore it wide, but it was still the same price.”⁹⁴ Pamali

04.06.15

The festival featured a large handicraft stall and many women had made finely plaited baskets for sale. Yet Maitea, Pamali’s aunt in Matangi, had made some baskets plaited with wide strips of pandanus that had been put into the same price category as similar sized baskets that had a much finer plait. Again, basket prices did not take into consideration the time and skill that went into them and the festival market made these differences visible for all makers to see.

The festival’s handicraft stall moreover featured a sale at the end of the festival where all unsold artefacts were marked down. The reduction in prices caused great consternation amongst pandanus workers and many chose to immediately remove their baskets and mats from sale to prevent them being sold at the wrong price, a price that was not considered fair as it did not fit in with the market conventions (Walsh and Lynch 2008, 129-39).

Whilst the sale of basketry on Tanna or Efate generally works on a household, or familial level, where women in one household or family will collaborate and use the same *rod* to sell their basketry, markets on Futuna and organisations like the Women’s Project require collaboration among households and families. This brings about such difficulties as working out an appropriate pricing system, which women seem to want, and makes evident cases where the existing ‘system’ is not fair.

Within households, women can to a certain extent set their own prices for their work and decide how to price baskets and what characteristics of the baskets they want to take into account. The pricing problems arise when women who follow different approaches to the pricing of basketry sell their work together, side by side. Up until now, these collaborative projects have all removed the control women have over the pricing of their own baskets. The fact that baskets made by different women are sold next to each other means that discrepancies are plainly made visible for all to see.

⁹⁴ *“Eh...anti blong mi i terem i big wan, bei sem price nomo.”*

In the Women's Project where the size of a basket is irrelevant, there is a notable discrepancy between the size of different *hanbag* style baskets. This is perhaps due to the little time in which they have been included in the project. Whereas some women are known for making large *hanbag* baskets, others are named as working *hanbag* baskets that are very small. One particular family was singled out as regularly making small sized *hanbag* baskets. This concerned others: it conflicted with their own ideas about appropriate prices and there seemed to be a worry that potential buyers would be put off buying Futunese baskets if such high prices were asked for such a small basket. The women were not considered *smat* (smart, clever) for using the system to their advantage, instead it is thought to be risky, a problematic change. In selling small baskets, the women were setting themselves apart from others and creating competition, making their activity into a *bisnis*, which is antithetical to the community ideals of fairness (Dalton 1996) based on sharing (K. Rio 2017, 79). This also means that the so-called 'easy' approach to pricing baskets used by the Women's Project is not really considered to be a simplification at all: instead it is perhaps a stipulation of the exact size and type of basket required.

The existence of an ideal or fair price in part explains why the prices of baskets in the Women's Project were fixed and did not allow women to set their own prices, as they do in all other sales. Women were trying to create a normalised pricing system that could work island-wide. But by fixing price and basket type alone without agreement to the many other characteristics of a basket, disagreements were inevitable.

There are two main points here. First, we see that women have their own understandings of how baskets should be priced, hence the concern for having control over the price, but they would like to agree upon a Futuna-wide pricing system to work cohesively as a *komuniti*. Secondly, it is notable that in agonising over the correct price for baskets, women are not so much concerned about getting the appropriate price for their labour according to a Marxist definition of value and the just price of work, so much as how the price will influence the purchaser and whether this is fair on other women. Pricing is a moral, community strengthening act. Thus women who try to maximise their earnings by reducing the materials used and the time spent working pandanus are viewed as having acted unfairly towards the other women both in the short

term as they have not worked hard enough to sell their work in that particular price category, and the long term, as their actions can impact buyers and the reputation of Futunese pandanus work outside of Futuna.

7.3 Conclusion

The process of selling pandanus work is a delicate balancing act of negotiating social relationships and values within communities on Futuna and beyond. Baskets are for the most part sold only on the island or in the capital, where personal connections create a recognised *rod* for the movement of goods between these spaces. The inexistence of a *rod* connecting pandanus workers on Futuna with markets on Tanna and Aneityum suggests that these places are not the open market spaces they appear to be but conform to concepts of rights of access linked to *ples* and belonging.

The difficulties of costing basketry appropriately and an explicit interest in creating an island-wide pricing system highlights the importance of *komuniti*, of unity, harmony and wellbeing amongst community members. The Women's Project is an example of *komuniti* ideals in action. The project enables workers of pandanus to collaborate in a project that supports households and the greater *komuniti*. Differences in basket size and quality are a challenge for this project as they go against convention and social unity.

The next chapter looks at the professed reason for selling pandanus work – to pay for the formal school education of children – and considers how pandanus work is also used in Church fundraising. The concept of *komuniti* is further discussed as pandanus work is put towards *kastom*, church or school uses. Studying the uses of pandanus work as commodities in exchange highlights tensions between these different ideologies and their structures.

8 Using Pandanus Basketry on Futuna

Pandanus basketry is put towards household use, *kastom* ceremonies, church fundraising and education. Whilst for men, these spheres are perhaps perceived as different routes towards power (Otto 1992), for women, they seem to represent different forms of community (Eriksen 2008). Work, that is what people do, demonstrates what is important to people and for Harris, “work is an affirmation of human personhood, and of the community to which they belong” (Harris 2007). Work is valued and the direction to which pandanus work is oriented is therefore significant, suggesting imagined futures and ways of being (Féaux de la Croix 2014). For women on Futuna, this imagined future is based on *komuniti*.

I focus on the use of pandanus artefacts to pay for education and as a fundraising tool as these call for the greatest input of pandanus baskets and mats. As previously noted, concepts of school and church were conflated as one and the same thing before Vanuatu’s independence as they were both aspects of white European ways more generally, but this is no longer the case. Considering the ways in which pandanus work is used in relation to church and school, and why only the latter is commonly emphasised, draws out key differences between how these institutions are perceived to work on Futuna. The different structure of these institutions and the local ideas concerning them is important (McDougall 2011), but as demonstrated below, we must also distinguish between discourse and reality.

8.1 Pandanus Work and School Fees

“Because people here pay school fees just from selling baskets.”⁹⁵

Papra 04.06.15

Although pandanus work is vital in fundraising, gifts and household use at Ibau, people will first associate the baskets, mats and fans with income generation, specifically

⁹⁵ *“From se ol man long ples ia oli stap payem school fee long ol basket nomo.”*

income towards paying for the school fees of their children. Despite its use in non-monetary systems of exchange as well as everyday domestic use, in discourse pandanus work is quite clearly tied to the formal education of children. Pandanus work on Futuna is associated with earning money, but interestingly it is not commonly thought of as a business activity and its role in educating children is deemed more important than its role in funding church activities.

It could be assumed either that cash is only needed on Futuna to pay school fees, or that the sale of pandanus work is the only available income generating activity on the island, however neither is the case. Households have access to several other sources of income of various scales: there is an important local production of sandalwood as a cash crop; fish is regularly exported to other islands; women often sell small bread rolls, or more frequently, *kato*, a kind of local doughnut. Other sources of income come from the sale of mobile telephone credit, cigarettes, rice or fuel. Copra is not worked. Whilst some of these activities largely circulate cash around the district or island, others, particularly sandalwood and fish, bring large amounts of money into the island. Unlike the sale of



Figure 65. Cargo of sandalwood being loaded up into the plane.

pandanus work, these other sources of income are infrequently linked to school fees: pandanus work is a different sort of activity.

These activities are gendered: sandalwood and fishing are typically male activities from which women are often excluded and pandanus work is therefore the only viable option for a woman to be economically active on Futuna. Nevertheless, both men and women celebrate pandanus work as a means of funding a child's education to a greater extent than this would give cause for.

For women living in the outer islands, the sale of pandanus work for a cash income is considered necessary. Girls are repeatedly told, even warned, that if they don't succeed in school they will have to learn the art of basketry to support and care for themselves and their families in the future. This informal schooling to learn the ways of life on the island is often referred to as '*skul blong yumi*', our school, to compare it to formal government-run schooling and recognise the different forms of knowledge and skill, see also Kupferman (2013) and LiPuma (2001).

On Futuna, all children of primary and secondary school age either attend the local school at Ishia, or further afield, schools on Tanna, Aneityum or Efate. This is in part decided on by the school fees the parents can afford; the better the school's reputation, the higher the school fees. Many students from Ibau board at Onesua Presbyterian College on Efate, costing 65000VT (Laws of the Republic of Vanuatu 2005), on top of which must be added transport costs to the capital and back; although nationwide, households spend on average 3,800VT a month on education related costs (VNSO 2012). Children whose parents cannot afford the school fees cannot continue their formal education (Kalsuak 2004, 110-1). Attending school is considered important for the future employment possibilities it offers a child and the access it gives to new knowledge and capabilities; this is the same worldwide.

What differentiates schooling on Futuna is perhaps the assumed implications of a successful education for the wider kin network. A good education implies a good job and a steady wage, it implies the ability to bring wealth to the wider family and *komuniti*. Education, while seemingly directed towards an individual, benefits the

komuniti due to the local mode of sociality. Education is therefore considered essential to the development and reproduction of social life in the islands (Smith 2016, 141-4), an activity commonly associated with women and their textiles in the Pacific region (Geismar 2003, 103, Hulkenberg 2018, Weiner 1989). The large number of pandanus textiles given to students during the Y10 graduations further consolidates this connection between pandanus work, education and women, see Figures 7 and 8. Women clothe students with the pandanus work which funded the students through school; women wrap students in their work and in doing so, women make public their claims of relationality and the anticipated future returns on their investments.

The importance of pandanus work in generating funds also gives the women themselves greater power and control within their family and indeed the larger community (MacIntyre 2011, Robbins and Akin 1999, 23). Women gain respect by funding a child's formal education. Importantly, the paying of school fees is not only considered beneficial to the child and the *komuniti*'s future, but it also gives the payer rights over the child. Funding a child's education is a contemporary way to care and nurture; as noted by Bolton, "children are adopted when a person invests parenting into a child" (2015, 156). This was made explicit one day when one of Papra's sisters was made to take a forced break from her schooling on Tanna by her adopted parents. She was in a relationship with a local boy and her adopted parents, those who were paying her school fees, considered such a relationship a threat to her education. For most girls, motherhood prevents any further formal education. When the girl's biological parents, with whom she stayed when she was banished from Tanna, tried to send her back to school to resume her education, their actions were countered by a very public message to the effect that they could have no say in the matter as they had not contributed to the upkeep of the girl. This message caused great tension around Ibau but only because of its public nature; the message itself was largely undisputable. Indeed her adopted parents were so named precisely because they were the ones paying for her education.⁹⁶

⁹⁶ Adoption is common in Vanuatu. Here, it is important to note that there is great flexibility in the configuration of adoption, which is frequently informal and arranged outside of a courtroom.



Figure 66. Kristel, Tasha, Teltel and Miriam sitting around Papra as she works Futuna baskets for sale.

The connections between pandanus work and social reproduction around the Pacific are well known. The material qualities, the techniques of production, *kastom* stories and the use of artefacts are recognised as evidence of this association, however less attention has been given to the contemporary forms of sociality that pandanus work facilitates: the focus has been on transnational relationships, see for example Herda (1999). The role of pandanus work in paying for a child’s education is therefore a new way for women to reproduce social life. It is a shift in focus away from finding continuity after death (Tarabe 2015), towards the younger generation, perhaps inspired by Christianity.

In relation to pandanus work, Sekanu is particularly proud to have been able to support her children by her own resourcefulness and says that her hands are a means to money. She knows that her hands are skilled at working pandanus and accredits her income to this and not to her other activities – notably the sale of fuel.

“I can earn money by my hands.”⁹⁷ Sekanu 04.06.15

⁹⁷ “*Mi save karem mane long han blong mi*”

Through working pandanus, Sekanu was able to support her daughter through nursing college as a single mother and derives great satisfaction from this. By working pandanus to pay for her daughter's school fees, Sekanu quite literally had a hand on her daughter's destiny and her care is evidenced in the mother and daughter's continued relationship. In contrast, Maslita, another of Sekanu's daughters who as a child was adopted by Sekanu's older sister, became estranged from her adopted parents when they failed to support her education. Maslita fled Aneityum, where she had grown up, and moved to Futuna to live with her biological mother, Sekanu. Through her work, Sekanu created opportunities for one of her daughters and brought one of her other daughters closer to her.

The generation of funds is viewed positively when these are directed towards the reproduction and development of social life (Bloch and Parry 1989, 22). Rather than pandanus' inherent capacities to protect, sustain, and connect, the focus here is on the new possibilities basketry as a commodity offers; when directed towards the family, money "is conceived as feeding and forming the family" (MacCarthy 2015, 458). Women are doing 'develop-man' (Sahlins 1992): they are using the same skills and following the same nurturing ideology as before they used cash, but are taking advantage of the capitalist market to develop their family and *komuniti* to be better able to do what they are interested in.

The sale of pandanus work therefore gives women and their children some form of status, a degree of independence and allows them to choose their future. Textiles, as Weiner (1992) argues, are a female source of power. Girls are told that they must choose between a formal education and the local informal education that centres around learning to work pandanus. Parents at Ibau consider education to be important; it provides children with new opportunities and the possibility to contribute to and develop the extended *komuniti*. Women enhance the *komuniti* through their work, but they are also caring and nurturing their children by sponsoring their formal education. Importantly, funding a child's education confers rights on the person who initiates the movement of resources. Women are socially recognised, they become 'activated' (M. Strathern 2004, 98-9), by selling their pandanus work to raise funds for school fees. Pandanus work is therefore a crucial means by which women exert their influence over

others, how they claim parentage and develop the *komuniti*; it is how women become people.

Yet it is interesting to note that despite the quantity of pandanus work exchanged for money and the scale of the money amassed, the personal sale of pandanus work is not considered a business activity; unlike the Auhelawa marketing of garden produce in Papua New Guinea (Schram 2010, 454), the selling of pandanus work is not considered a selfish activity. This is because of pandanus work's fundamental association with the reproduction of social life and the development of the wider *komuniti*. Moreover, rather than the accumulation of cash, pandanus is worked intermittently, towards completing a project such as the school fees for that term; it is rarely worked beyond that aim and what money is accumulated is quickly dispersed. In contrast, the fundraising activities of the church are increasingly compared to a business, despite, as Schram argues for the Methodist Church, "the accumulation of a fund [being] a sign of the viability of the congregation" (2010, 458). For example, many women complain that the weekly PWMU meetings centre around fundraising and finding new ways of making money to the neglect of the other needs of the members.

8.2 Fundraising

Missions have always provided an opportunity for the sale of women's work, whether pandanus basketry on Futuna, tapa in Papua New Guinea (Barker and Hermkens 2016) or cooking in Australia (Godden 1997). While fundraising and the sale of basketry for household usage and school fees both convert the objects of pandanus work into money, the sale of basketry in fundraising follows a different structure to its sale for household and educational use. The Church has its own network of *rods*, markets and principles for pricing artefacts and this delimits fundraising as a completely separate domain of activity.

Contemporary leaders of the Presbyterian Church on Futuna are very much aware of the monetary possibilities that pandanus work represents; for them, it ensures the proper functioning of their church. On other islands in Vanuatu, copra and food are the main methods of fundraising (Roze 2014), but pandanus work is the main export on Futuna

and so this forms the basis of all fundraising activities on the island. Funds must be raised to host festivities in celebration of the key events in the church calendar: Mother's Day, Children's Day, Father's Day, Christmas, Easter. The salary for the Pastor of the Futuna session must be paid and the travel costs covered for church representatives to attend Presbyterian meetings around the country.⁹⁸ Fundraising therefore occurs at the level of the Futuna session, district branches and the different organisational levels of the PWMU, Men's Fellowship, Youth group or Sunday School, which all additionally require separate budgets for their work and activities.

At Ibau, the various church groups organise regular fundraisers from a Bring and Buy, Eat and Donate or sales of fish, fowl and *gato*, see Figures 67- 69. In a Bring and Buy, members bring anything from a pandanus mat to garden produce and hold a market – usually only attended by the PWMU members themselves – where donations are given for the various items. Fundraisers are an exception to the general rule preventing the use of money as payment between kin as these are community orientated events (see Akin 1999 in Solomon Islands). Eat and Donate and the fish, fowl and *gato* sales also work like this. While the sharing of food features in some of the fundraising events, it is of a very different style to that described by Eriksen (2008, 101-3) and Roze (2014, 226-9) in Ambrym and Espiritu Santo Islands respectively, where people cook together and share food in a very similar way to during *kastom* ceremonies. On Futuna, women mostly 'pool and share' among themselves, and as highlighted by McDougall (2003, 71), this form of fundraising plays a crucial part in the making of an ideally egalitarian and harmonious type of *komuniti* defined above.

Fundraisers at the district and island levels focus on the circulation of money within and around the island that speed up the circulation of money (M. Strathern 2004) but raise limited funds; Eriksen (2008) suggests that the main purpose of these fundraisers is social rather than economic. In contrast, the various church meetings, conventions and assemblies held at provincial and national levels are prime opportunities to attract funds to Futuna from overseas, outside of the island. These events form a particular kind of market, exclusively for the church. The large number of attendees at these assemblies

⁹⁸ Inter-community meetings is also a focus for funding on Lifou (Paini 2003b, 86)



Figure 67. A Bring and Buy of pandanus baskets, mats and fans during the island-wide celebration of Christmas.

A EARLY PLAN OTA C.L.C. NIO 2015

| FEBRUARY | MARCH | APRIL | MAY | JUNE |
|----------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------|
| | | 1st Talent Night 4 MON | 1st Talent Night 4 MON | |
| | | | LOVE offering | Eat & Do 8 |
| Fish Sale 7 16 | qato ia ganafune 18 | Thanks giving 19 | | |
| | | | Fishing com 19 | |
| | Fun Raising 31 | | | |

Figure 68. Yearly plans for Ibau district's CLC (the whole district).

IBAU PW:MLU

| FEB | MAR | APRI | MAY | JU |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|--|---------------------|
| | | | 6 | Report 2 Compine |
| COMB | VE | | | |
| 11 Worship opening offering | 11 Singing offering | 8 Combine managi repears. | 13 clinim round long church. | |
| 18 clinim round long church. | 18 Meditation long mountain | 15 Spika | 20 | |
| 25 Project & Eat & Donar. | 28 visitation | 22 Free Sharing | 27 Meditation long mountain | |
| | | 29 | | |

Figure 69. Yearly plans for Ibau's PWMU

and meetings provides an ideal consumer base; people eager to support the church and keen to purchase souvenirs of the meeting. Whilst cooked and uncooked foods present transportation difficulties due to their perishability and weight, pandanus artefacts and baskets in particular, are ideal as they are light and can withstand long journeys relatively unscathed. The distinctiveness of Futuna baskets is of relevance here too as in the manner of a good souvenir, they stand out and are immediately recognisable. Pandanus work on Futuna is therefore intimately linked to church fundraising.

Whilst church meetings evidently offer interesting market opportunities for the sale of basketry, women do not use these meetings to further their own income as it is a restricted, church-only market. They are said to benefit in other ways. The church-orientated context and nature of the sales means that the focus is on developing the church and its ability to meet the needs of its congregation (Barker and Hermkens 2016, Eriksen 2008, Roze 2014, Schram 2010). This is similar to the customary role of chiefs, discussed below. While contributions to church-fundraising may be gifts to God (McDougall 2011), they are in practise clearly directed towards the *komuniti*. Selling baskets directly enables the participation of church leaders at provincial and national meetings where they gain new knowledge that they can use and share with their congregation on their return to Futuna. Like selling pandanus work for children's education, church fundraising is again a productive flow of resources towards another in a formative and developing capacity. Pandanus work is therefore vital in establishing and recreating the *komuniti*. The requests of church leaders for basketry are deemed necessary and the use of the markets is limited to church, not personal, activities.

The pressure to fundraise is greatest in the run-up to large events, such as Christmas or inter-island church meetings. Events which are celebrated at the island level, bringing the dispersed population of Futunese together in one district, are said to be 'shared around the island'. Following the footpath anti-clockwise around the island, each district will host all events occurring between January and December of a particular year. This includes the smaller Easter and New Yam, *maka ufi* feasts, and the larger ceremonies that include the *kai ta rua*, the closing of mourning when graves are cemented for recent funerals in that district and the extended festivities that join

Christmas to New Year, which bring substantial numbers of Futunese living throughout Vanuatu and abroad back to the island.

8.2.1 Christmas 2014

In 2014 when I first arrived on Futuna, Ibau district were hosts and therefore also had to finance that year's celebrations. Arriving in late August, I had missed the season for the cementing of graves, but less than a month later, preparations for Christmas started in earnest. Money was needed to pay for fuel – to run chainsaws for constructing stages and for the electric lighting, music and video systems – but money was also important to pay for sufficient rice and fish to feed everyone during the celebrations. Ibau held various village-wide fundraising events, such as a talent night, but also made use of the structure of the district into cell groups and the Futunese communities outside of Futuna Island for added contributions. Each cell group, containing about four households, was asked to raise 10,000VT towards Christmas. The PWMU, the Men's Fellowship, the Youth group and the Sunday School also contributed. Much like fundraising in Tasiriki, Espiritu Santo, where workgroups are commissioned to undertake coconut plantation work (Roze 2014, 224), work groups at Ibau made the most of the ongoing airport project to keep the runway clear of trees and bushes and worked a section of the runway for payment that went directly towards the fundraising efforts. More typical fundraising methods were also used, and large sums were raised through the sale of basketry, fresh fish and cooked food.

Although both men and women work hard to fundraise, as elsewhere in Vanuatu (Eriksen 2008, Roze 2014), women, and the PWMU in particular, were the greatest contributors. For example, the requested 10,000VT per cell group works out at around five baskets per woman, assuming that each cell group comprises four households, each with one pandanus worker, which isn't always the case. Each woman therefore had to work a full seven or eight days of long working hours – dawn until at least the middle of the night – to both prepare the materials and work the baskets. Considering that this was just one aspect of the Christmas fundraising efforts, and that the Church makes these sorts of requests of women at least every three or four months according to what events and meetings are planned, the demand for resources is significant and the pressure is

high. Women are nevertheless expected to contribute voluntarily and with gladness: the contribution of their time and work demonstrates their moral worth as Christian individuals.

The sale of pandanus basketry for church funds can sometimes create surprising results. For example, Shanin's cell group made an exceptional sale of a large pandanus mat she had woven with Sepoa's help on Tanna. The mat was bought for 4000VT. Given the discussion of pricing above it may be thought that this price would cause contention back on Futuna, however particularly when the sale occurs in urban areas, the specific context of church fundraising allows for greater variance in pricing (Eriksen 2008, 101). Artefacts may be bought at elevated prices if the buyer has the means and motivations, or they may be sold at bargain prices to encourage quick sales, which we have seen is often sought for on Futuna.

How are we to understand these fundraising activities and what importance do they have in the eyes of women who work pandanus? To answer these questions, it is worth considering the relationship between pandanus artefacts, the women who work them, and local chiefs. The structure of these relationships bears remarkable similarities to the structure of the relationship already described between pandanus artefacts, the women



Figure 70. Fitu, Shanin and Sepoa working pandanus for their cell group's fundraising effort in the Provincial House.

who work them and the leaders of the various church groups, and this describes the *rod* used by the Church in its fundraising activities.

8.2.2 Church and *Kastom* Communities and their Structure

Namruke and Kawiameta chiefs on Futuna have authority respectively over all Namruke and Kawiameta in their district. Within their district, a chief will have highly skilled *wokmen* (workmen) who help them run the village (Tepahae 1997). For example, the weather men who control the weather, or the numerous families each with rights to different magic stones that can be used to control different fruit, crops or sea foods – as well as the knowledge of medicines to treat illnesses caused by these. Takaronga compares this system to contemporary governments, where the head of state has specialised ministries that advise and carry out the wishes of the president. He represents the moiety system on Futuna, the dual governments and their respective leaders and ministries, as two triangles mirroring each other to form a diamond shape (Keller and Kuautonga 2007, 62).

Considering their role within a district, it seems that pandanus workers also seem to be *wokmen*. Women support the chief's work in leading the district by providing pandanus baskets, mats and fans to be given as gifts to respected visitors or supporters of the island. In supporting chiefs, women's pandanus work is the equivalent of men's fishing activities and physical work, or the more secretive skills linked to resource management. When basketry is needed, an announcement is made and women who have the time, materials and motivation, will present the chief with some of their work. It is likely that preparation for the historic *niele* exchanges where basketry, food and other goods were exchanged between islands were organised in a similar manner, with chiefs amassing a collection of pandanus work from their women *wokmen* to facilitate their trip and create opportunities for new knowledge and goods to be brought back to the island.

Nowadays, chiefs ask their *wokmen*, women of the district, to help them to prepare *hmatagafara*, pandanus gifts to present to visitors to Futuna at their departure from the island. Together, this is a form of *rod* as it is a line of communication that exists due to

specific key relationships. Such visitors, commonly NGO workers or missionaries, will have undertaken a community-orientated project and so this transaction is a public and official recognition and expression of gratitude for the work undertaken by the visitor to the island. Chiefs present gifts for work that had a political or economic side to it, but church representatives present gifts to visitors doing church related work. Although the Church at Ibau is led by an elected Pastor, in accordance with the United Free Church of which Dr Gunn was a member (A. Miller 1913), the Church mirrors the existing hierarchical structure and ways of working between the leaders and their workmen on Futuna.

The pandanus baskets, mats and fans given as *hmatagafara* gifts are described as small tokens of gratitude, but also as gifts that will help the visitor remember their friends on Futuna when they have left. Joe from Mouga joked that the gifts of pandanus work were like a code of theirs: an empty pandanus basket is given in the hope that it will metaphorically return, full; a fan may be given as it refreshes, reminding one of Futuna and encouraging the person using it to return to the island. This idea of stimulating some form of beneficial return (Mauss 1969) is seen in *hmatagafara* gifts to friends, *niele* exchanges between islands, but also when church representatives attend meetings on other islands. Pandanus baskets, mats and fans are the enabling and facilitating materials through which new knowledge and goods are sought out. *Hmatagafara*, as the word *fara* suggests, is directly associated only with pandanus. Pandanus work in these three contexts encourages a return to Futuna and the creation of a long-term relationship where material and immaterial goods can continue to be exchanged.

Chiefs and church leaders see pandanus baskets, mats and fans as objects with inherent potential. The chiefs and church leaders' ability and their methods to make use of this potential and convert it into tangible benefits are similar. Both extend their reach, developing their networks and creating overseas connections by moving resources and relying on the structure of the organisation and the skills of its members to make these resources. The church congregation and the inhabitants of districts on Futuna are clearly *wokmen* for these leaders.

For women who work pandanus, these fundraising activities take up a lot of their time and resources (Roze 2014, 222). The number of visitors to the island is exceedingly low and so the need for *hmatagafara* gifts for either church or *kastom* visitors is manageable. *Hmatagafara* gifts are usually requested with a visitor in mind and so they are also an opportunity for women to express their goodwill towards the visitors and their work on the island. Requests of baskets for church fundraising, on the other hand, are frequent and have no upper limit. The church promotes *kanieni* amongst its members, (happiness and joy, used in the context of giving and participating to mean goodwill), however the extent of the PWMU's focus on fundraising activities has led a small number of women in Ibau to distance themselves from this group. In 2015, mounting pressure from the different frameworks became too great and rather than navigate the path between church and school, some women felt forced to prioritise one of these.

Despite its importance in paying school fees, most women put a lot of effort into creating pandanus work to further the activities of the Church. While some encouragement comes from above, from the higher ranks of the Presbyterian Church, the leaders of the local PWMU branch and session are also highly ambitious. For example, every year the PWMU covers one month of the Pastor's salary but last year, instead of simply raising the monthly 2600VT, the PWMU decided that they would offer him 3500VT. The sums raised and the amount of time, work and resources that go into these fundraising efforts is important. Women are strong supporters of the Church and demonstrate their virtue through their continued and ever-increasing contributions (Dolan 2009).

As highlighted at the beginning of this chapter, pandanus objects on Futuna are not only produced to generate an income. As objects of exchange, pandanus work is also closely tied to fundraising and developing the church *komuniti*. Given the fullness of the church calendar with island-wide celebrations of key religious dates and large provincial and national meetings outside of the island every year, it is surprising that the accomplishments and aims of the church, aided in large part by the hard work of pandanus workers, is not celebrated more.

Amongst women, private conversations concerning church fundraising are often to express concern about the high demands being placed on the congregation, rather than to convey joy at the beneficial work they are hoping to produce. I suggest this is a result of discontent. I do not think that this is due to the gender of the *wokmen* as women's work in raising funds for education is in contrast, highly valued. Similarly, this is not the beginnings of class antagonism (Gewertz and Errington 1999) or jealousy between those who have and those who do not have, as these are both irrelevant in this context. The majority of inter-island church meetings are attended by the same representatives and back on Futuna, the tangible or intangible benefits from these are hard to perceive. Indeed, it was noted that some representatives forget to make a report to the Church on their return to feed the knowledge and experiences they gained back into the congregation. Some asked what was the benefit of gifting the local Pastor, who is elected every four years, an even greater salary? It seems that the benefits of women's gifts of pandanus work to the church are not visible enough. While the church ostensibly follows the *komuniti* ethos of sharing amongst kin, in reality, it seems to deal in individualistic exchanges. Moreover, women's sociality in the region is focused on horizontal, egalitarian relationships as opposed to masculine, hierarchical inter-generational forms of being (see Bamford 2007, Eriksen 2008) and this difference may underlie the dissatisfaction with church fundraising that appears only to strengthen the institutional structure rather than other fundraising activities that create personable ties.

In contrast, working pandanus to pay for a child's education is understood as a kind of local pension plan. Children and grandchildren look after their parents in their old age as delayed reciprocity for the care and love fostered upon them in their youth.

Contemporary *hmatagafara* gifts are offerings of thanks for work already, or in the process of completion, but much church fundraising offers little return or evidence of change. Schram (2010) notes that church fundraising follows an ethic of mutuality rather than reciprocity, but whereas this is seen as positive in Auhelawa, on Futuna, reciprocity seems to be essential even for the church. The importance of recognising the other (Robbins 2009) within the concept of reciprocity may be important here.

The importance of women's pandanus work in furthering both their children's education and the development of the local church clearly pulls people into two directions.

Situated at the crux of these frameworks due to their pandanus activities and their responsible role as parents, women must navigate between church and school as best they can, making choices by balancing their personal beliefs and needs with pressure from family, friends and the many different social groups (Wagner 1974) to which they belong.

The church on Futuna is therefore promoting a sense of *komuniti* based on unity, wellbeing and harmony, but it is not fulfilling its promise to share and be of benefit to all of its members. The benefits of church leaders attending regional and national meetings, where most of the funding is directed, are not felt to be passed on to the congregation. In contrast to a locally-run store, which may involve the social relationships associated with kin and insiders and leads to equality (K. Rio 2017), the church on Futuna is creating difference, meaning that some benefit from the exchanges more than others. The reality of church fundraising, to be distinguished from its ideology, is not centred on light-hearted sharing between community members to create a social whole (Eriksen 2008) but on competitive exchange (Overing 1992). This makes the Church similar to an individualistic business (Foster 1992), distinguishing it further from *kastom* as it was originally defined, and, subsequently, also separating it from the way of education.

In Chapter 2, we saw that the historic exchange of pandanus artefacts with neighbouring islands has driven the production of pandanus artefacts and this point becomes relevant again here, with reference to the contemporary usage of these artefacts. Whether for the school, the Church, or life-cycle festivities, pandanus work is nowadays clearly a method of connecting to the world beyond the physical island. More than its local use as household artefacts or as items for exchange within the island, the object of pandanus is for it to be exchanged with communities outside of Futuna.

8.3 Conclusion

Pandanus work is overwhelmingly associated with money in local discourse despite its many practical and non-monetary exchange uses on the island and so this chapter has compared the use of women's pandanus work in paying for children's education and

fundraising for the Church. The Church, households and chiefs seek out new relationships and markets outside of their own community to extend their reach and thus develop the social group, whether this is by paying for a child's school fees or by creating relationships with visitors to the island through *hmatagafara* gifts. The form the structures of the church and the household sales or the chiefly system take may be similar, but some are considered more profitable, or beneficial, than others. It is noticeable that the successes of the Church *komuniti* resulting from women's pandanus work are rarely mentioned publicly. Education, on the other hand, is always referred to. This seems to be due to people's discontent with church fundraising. While in discourse, church fundraising is beneficial to the whole *komuniti*, in practice, it acts like a business and serves a limited few. Funding children's formal education in contrast ensures that parents continue to have rights over their children and ensures that the child has access to knowledge, capabilities and new relationships that will in turn benefit the *komuniti*. In selling pandanus basketry, women are caring and nurturing their children and are reproducing and developing social life on the island. They are working to develop their *komuniti*, rather than, as may be expected from a European perspective, to develop an individual.

Intertwined with the use of pandanus artefacts in monetary exchanges, is their use in non-monetary exchanges. Pandanus artefacts have been associated with creating new relationships and enabling beneficial returns since before the arrival of traders, missionaries and formal schooling when neighbouring islands would exchange pandanus artefacts, food and other goods and people still use them to develop personal connections and stimulate reciprocal gifts. The way these relationships are being created has continued today in *hmatagafara* gifts to visitors to Futuna and the exchanges at weddings and the cementing of graves. They are gifts of pandanus work to those residing for the most part outside of Futuna Island and with the increase in size of Futuna communities living on Tanna or Efate, this association between pandanus work and people living physically outside of the island is set to increase. Interestingly, we see that pandanus work for people living on Futuna is a key method of creating and affirming relationships with those people from, or living amongst, other communities and it has been for a long time, see Chapter 2.

With the adoption of the cash economy, the church and the increased accessibility of formal education, pandanus work has proved vital in making the most of new possibilities offered by these different frameworks, but it puts women into the difficult position of having to choose between them. Different forms of *komuniti* and different ideals meet in the practice of plaiting pandanus on Futuna and women who are adept at working pandanus find themselves in the middle of these three institutions: school, church and *kastom*. Few choose to focus their energies on just one framework and households must navigate the pressures of each, making a path for themselves and their family towards an imagined future. In the same way that women employ more than one *rod* to access markets for pandanus artefacts, they also keep numerous paths open towards the future.

9 Conclusion

Pandanus work, more than the distribution of pandanus mats and baskets, absorbs women's interest (Bolton, 1993). However as I argue in this thesis, the work of pandanus is much more than the activity of giving form to pandanus. Pandanus work on Futuna is a process of gardening; it is a process of preparing materials; it is a process of plaiting. Pandanus work is also a process of gifting and of selling and therefore of nurturing social life. The seemingly insignificant, mundane aspects of pandanus work are in fact vital processes through which women explore and express complex and fundamental ideas about the world.

The three sections of this thesis highlight how pandanus work offers different forms of engagement with the world. Firstly, the preparation of materials consists of working with live plant materials; the environment is inhabited by spirits on Futuna and so such resources must be respected and managed. Secondly, pandanus work involves plaiting pandanus leaves and this entails engagement with the metaphorical and symbolic aspects of life; materials are given meanings and decorative patterns are created to explore and test this. Thirdly, the use of basketry artefacts is also a form of pandanus work and particularly on Futuna where their main use is in exchange, the use of baskets is strongly connected to the creation and development of relationships between people. Pandanus work is therefore a holistic process through which people on Futuna encounter the world around them and explore the complex web of relationships around them.

This is true of craftwork more generally. It is a multi-layered and multi-faceted activity through which we come to know the world around us. The variety of processes that are entailed by the hand crafting of an artefact – from growing and processing materials to the eventual uses of the artefact – connect the craft worker to a range of fields of activity, each with distinct, but inter-related, territories and histories of knowledge and thought (Ellen 2009). From this perspective, craft work really is a process of 'coming-into-being' for both the craft worker and the artefact they are working on. It is, as

Ingold (2011) argues, a process of formation where relationships, meanings and new ideas are continually being explored and worked with (or worked against).

For workers of pandanus on Futuna, we have seen that a long history of travel and exchanging pandanus basketry artefacts for produce from other islands has motivated an ongoing development of their craft. Workers of pandanus cherish and reproduce the work of their ancestors whilst continually seeking out new varieties of pandanus plants, new plaiting techniques, new patterns and new markets for their work. They are keen to adopt and adapt new forms and materials into their basketry practices, from the Polynesian style sleeping mats to the more recent *boks* and *hanbag* basket types, and this has made them leaders of the ni-Vanuatu basketry market.

Throughout the changes seen to pandanus work on the island, it is notable that the underlying ideas and meanings of the plaiting work and of the artefacts remain. Some of these are explicit, others are voiced in other ways. For example, the ability of pandanus work to create belonging and to root people within the island – to make them part of the *fenua* – is important. Pandanus plaiting is associated with women and because marriage is commonly virilocal and women are the ones who must move and settle in a new *ples*, pandanus work is an essential means by which women assert their position and their commitment to the new relationships they have entered into. In Chapter 3, I compared local ideas about how women and pandanus plants can come to belong to the island. I found that pandanus on Futuna becomes *fara iotea*, of the *ples*, when it is enmeshed in social life, that is when the pandanus is used to carry, tie, gift and sustain life on the island. Similarly, women become of the *ples* when through their continued engagement with the island they become intertwined in social life; when they understand the *kastom* of the *ples* and when they, like pandanus, carry, tie, gift and sustain life on the island.

The relationship between pandanus work and social life is made explicit in the processes of plaiting a *Futuna* basket. In Chapter 5, we saw that plaiting is a process of joining two complementary elements together to form a larger whole (or group). Men and women come together and work together to maintain and reproduce social life. The idea of a hierarchy between men and women and cross-gender relationships more generally is played with and explored by women through the technique of plaiting and

the order in which the male and female pandanus strips are placed. This aspect of plaiting, inherent to the process of making a basket, is learnt at the same time as the techniques themselves. Crucially, the importance of plaiting work is indicated by a taboo on teaching and sharing knowledge of the techniques with people from beyond the island.

In contrast to the secrecy and restrictions surrounding basketry techniques of Futuna are their *ata*, their observable face. The bright, colourful and visually multistable patterns characteristic of ni-Vanuatu basketry are used to great effect on Futuna and younger women especially put a lot of effort into developing their skills in pattern work, looking to not only follow trends, but start new fashions themselves. These patterns distract, confuse and trap those who look at them, notably those who are not familiar with the techniques. Plaiting pattern work knowledge in basketry is a free resource that is available to anybody with the interest to (re)create and (re)produce what they see and so unlike the formal structure of baskets, of which there are regional styles, the same patterns are seen throughout Vanuatu and beyond.

Women's preferences in basket work highlight their ideas about *ples* and belonging. Patterns, like pandanus plants and women, are again considered either to belong to local *kastom* or to be have been adopted from elsewhere: they are categorised according to their provenance. Yet by working new patterns, women are continuing the tradition of creativity in their basket work discussed above. Moreover, they are incorporating these new patterns into the *kastom* of Futuna by working them into basket forms characteristic of Futuna and by the success with which these baskets are then received by others. Basketry on Futuna is an important source of income for the island and so it is essential that the island's high reputation for pandanus work is maintained.

Now, as before, pandanus basketry is made for exchange on Futuna. The sale of pandanus work is in fact crucial in contemporary understandings of the association between pandanus work, women and the reproduction of social life. Most importantly, a woman's basketry sales nurture her family and develop the *komuniti* as they contribute towards funding children's education. Pandanus work develops and extends the reach of a kin network through raising funds for school fees in a similar way to how it is used in

ceremonial exchanges. Pandanus work creates the settings and means for new relationships to be created and for existing relationships to be consolidated. Women gain power and respect through this work. Yet pandanus work is also used on Futuna to develop and extend the reach of the Church on the island. Pandanus work is crucial to raise funds for the local Presbyterian Church's activities and so the *kastom* hierarchy between chiefs and their *wokmen* has been replicated by the church to harness women and their skills as its own *wokmen*. While the structure and outlook of the two organisations is the same, their returns are however different. I suggest that this is the cause of tensions, of which women and their pandanus work are at the centre.

Church fundraising, historic *niele* inter-island exchanges, contemporary *hmatagafara* gifts and the use of pandanus work to pay for school fees strengthens existing relations and creates new relationships with people and places beyond Futuna. The *kastom* use of pandanus work in exchanges and in caring for children through funding their education creates a debt and almost guarantees a return on the investment, it is a classic understanding of gift exchange and is well understood by people on Futuna. Church fundraising is similarly couched in a rhetoric of gift exchange and the return gifts consist of greater faith-based learnings and knowledge and an improved *komuniti* life, yet in practice, the return gifts are hard to find, to see or to hear. Women must navigate their way around and between the requests and needs of the organisations and families they find themselves caught between, choosing which goals to focus their work on and what benefits they may gain from each. This is a different side of pandanus work, one heavy with responsibility and fraught with tension: a metaphorical basket full of goods.

Looking at the recent and more distant history of basketry on Futuna, the emphasis on creativity in style and form suggests that the future of pandanus work on the island as artefacts for exchange is bright. The government's ban on single use plastics and the regional campaigns to use locally crafted baskets as sustainable and economically viable alternatives may add new value to these artefacts. Contemporary ideas of sustainability have generated a new kind of interest in materials and their properties and plant fibres are revalued in light of this (Drazin and Küchler 2015). The new training from TVET may also suggest new ideas and generate new markets for women to sell their work.

Nevertheless, there is a trend to use recycled materials, such as packaging plastics, in existing basketry practices in the Pacific Islands. Further research with practitioners would elucidate whether this reflects a changing relationship with the concept of *ples* in the face of changing values, concerns and challenges, or whether it is perhaps a new expression of the importance of *ples*, as an awareness campaign against climate change.

Similarly, pandanus mats have been replaced by blankets within households on the island and people living in town give blankets and calico rather than mats and baskets during ceremonial exchanges. Despite the importance of pandanus plants and the meanings within the techniques of plaiting pandanus, not only have the materials themselves been replaced, but the finished artefacts have been replaced with new technologies. The appropriate form is more important than the item itself (M. Strathern 2004, 89). The new materials are therefore used in the same ways: plastic gloves replace *si mo tu kai* baskets that prevented people touching their food following the death of a family member and pandanus sleeping mats are still considered an essential part of the bed despite the use of foam mattresses. Although new materials may stand in for old materials, pandanus work still has a central place in the continuation of life on the island.

The pandanus work of Futuna is in fact remarkable for the way in which it has maintained its relevance despite changes to social life. Women on Futuna actually create new styles of pandanus basketry to ensure that their work is essential to contemporary life and new technologies. ‘Mobile phone baskets’ and ‘laptop baskets’ are obvious examples of this, see Figures 11 and 12. Workers of pandanus on Futuna have created a name for themselves due to their continual interest in pushing style and technique to new directions and the vitality of this craft will ensure that pandanus work continues to be a *kastom* rooted in *ples* but looking outward and to the future.

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